

A RACE ANTHOLOGY:

DISPATCHES AND ARTIFACTS
FROM A SEGREGATED CITY

EDITED BY DAN MOULTHROP
+ RA WASHINGTON

A RACE ANTHOLOGY



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Edited by Dan Moulthrop and RA Washington

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Introduction

Louis Stokes first addressed the City Club of Cleveland on September 16, 1966. He would go on to become a congressman, Ohio's first African-American U.S. Representative. In 1966, he was a well-respected civil rights lawyer, often working on behalf of the Cleveland chapter of the NAACP. He was not the only speaker that September day. He was one of four on a panel that had been billed as "The Negro Looks at Cleveland." The impetus for this particular event was to provide a forum for leaders in the black community to respond to a grand jury investigation into the causes of that summer's notorious race riots in the Hough neighborhood. That investigation was led by *Cleveland Press* editor Louis Seltzer, and the grand jury had pinned blame for the riots on the Communist Party of Ohio and a local criminal element. Stokes and the others on the panel, most notably Baxter Hill who led the Congress on Racial Equality, had another point of view to present. In the form of Stokes and Hill, the "Negro" looked at Cleveland and Cleveland's power structure, and eviscerated them.

Stokes reminded City Club members that the grand jury had been given two charges—to find the cause of the riots and to articulate why the 60,000 residents of Hough were living in such abject poverty and isolation. It completed neither of those charges adequately or accurately, he said.

The resulting report, however, ignored the specific charge of the courts, and utilized the occasion to give a clean bill of health to an inept, leaderless, and indifferent city administration. It chose instead as a scapegoat members of the Negro community and the Communist Party. By assigning the cause of Cleveland's rioting to a small group of outside agitators and communists, a real disservice was rendered to this community.

Of 38 cities throughout the United States which have had riots this year, only Cleveland's Negroes have been subjected to the charge of lacking sufficient education and intelligence to know when to protest

slum existence. Only Cleveland's Negroes needed communists to come here to inform them that it was their time to riot. To add injury to insult, the report contains the following statement, and I quote, "The opinion has been expressed that the Negro people may be attempting to exact too much too fast for the community to bear within an arbitrarily fixed time."

At the end of his comments, he helpfully reframed the riots for the City Club audience:

...two weeks before the riots, the Cleveland subcommittee of the United States Civil Rights Commission had pointed out the explosiveness of the Hough situation—the general conditions of unrest that were apparent to any concerned person, the inattention given this area had made it ignitable to any little spark. Ironically, a glass of water started it in Hough.

The Hough riots were a protest by people who had reached the depths of despair. By reverting to the Stone Age, they were telling you in the Jet Age, that they need help.

This moment, fifty years prior to our publication of this volume, is the touchstone of our regional understanding of race and race relations. Those unfamiliar with the riots and the "glass of water" Stokes mentions should know that a black customer of the Seventy-Niner's café requested a glass of water as he waited for a takeout order. Bar owners refused and later posted a sign in the window reading "No Water for Niggers." That was the final straw for a beleaguered and battered community.

As Stokes said, and others have noted, riots are the outcry of the voiceless, an act of desperation by people who feel powerless. That is no different today. We saw the same in the demonstrations in Cleveland in the wake of the shooting of Tamir Rice or of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams before him and the riots following the death of Freddie Gray at the hands of the Baltimore police. The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, and Tanisha Anderson and many others are part of what are now widely perceived to be a national pattern of the antagonism that has marked police-community relations.

Baxter Hill, the leader of the Congress of Racial Equality, was also on the panel in 1966. And if Stokes had adopted a pedagogical stance, seeking to be a teacher, Hill stood before the City Club as the street preacher he had always been.

I come here today to say to you that many of you people here are responsible for the recent Hough Riots, in my opinion, by your failure to move upon problems in the inner city. Most of you people here are of the high salaried, well-educated bracket. You could have moved on many of these problems, which would have, in my opinion, brought about a change significant enough to hold down the things that happened in our community.

But by your failure to act—and this goes as well for the Negro members of this club—you are equally responsible for what happened in Cleveland. These are community problems. They're not Negro problems. They are problems of the inner city. And this inner city here, the things that happened here, can determine what happens around your homes in the suburbs, where everyone retreats and leaves us with the same problems, lingering on and on.

Hill was not the first to tie the fate of the inner city's poorest neighborhoods to the fate of other communities across the region. And he wouldn't be the last. More recent dialogues have focused on "regionalism" across Northeast Ohio and the importance of a strong urban core. We are always, it seems, reminding ourselves that our fates are tied to those of our neighbors. Few, though, put as fine a point on it as Hill did that day. "You can either help," he told the audience,

...or you can keep holding your forums every Friday, and sit here, until the City Club starts burning. It's up to you. I'm not threatening you, but I am telling you that there's work that needs to be done, and holding forums is not even a good start. Most of you here have the power and have the ability to do way more than what you are doing.

Indeed.

And yet we offer this book as another contribution to the ongoing dialogue we have in our community about race and relationships across

racial differences. We do this even though holding forums and, presumably, continuing the dialogue is “not even a good start,” as Hill might see it. But we do it with hope and optimism that we are making progress and ultimately, if incrementally, improving the community.

In recent years, a number of forums at the City Club of Cleveland have focused on race and the structural issues contributing to racial inequity. Meanwhile, throughout our communities, teachers and activists and lawyers and developers and city administrators and many other advocates have been pushing for justice and remedy to those inequities. We wanted to assemble an anthology that would capture some of that work and put it all in a kind of conversation. And as we put out the call for submissions, what came in was inspiring and unexpected: poetry, comics, personal essays, and oral histories all accompanied the more analytical pieces we had anticipated.

We’ve structured this anthology around time. It’s a useful construct because it helps us see where we’ve progressed and where we’ve failed to progress. Listening to that 1966 forum can be depressing, for there are moments, listening to Stokes and Hill and others when, but for the scratchiness of the recording, you might think they were speaking in 2016. It may be useful to remember that despite the importance with which we view our current era, and the indomitability with which each generation sees itself, we are still untangling the legacy of slavery. In a training often repeated throughout the country, the Racial Equity Institute uses a timeline to remind participants of the weight of our national history. The year 1619 marks the beginning of slavery, which lasted 244 years, to 1863, to be replaced by Reconstruction and Jim Crow. That period was characterized as a time of domestic terrorism by white forces against blacks in the South and in the North by institutional racism in the form of housing, employment, and economic discrimination and often, the outright criminal transfer of wealth out of black communities. That period lasted until 1954, which was the beginning of the civil rights era, the era in which we still live.

To summarize, of the 325 years since slavers brought slaves to the New World, we can really only claim that the last six decades have in-

volved a collective push by a majority of the nation for equality. And that's if we're optimistic.

We begin with Today, which opens with a public service announcement in the form of a comic strip. In *Is it Dark Over There?* Lawrence Daniel Caswell and John G. decode the language of covert racism.

An excerpt from a particularly strong City Club forum follows. *A Conversation on Race* was organized by the City Club Youth Forum Council, a group of high school students from across the region who produce City Club forums for other high school students. This one was put together in very short order, a response by the council to the shooting death of Tamir Rice and the announcement of the consent decree between the U.S. Department of Justice and the City of Cleveland.

Next is something that falls into the Artifacts category. It is a Facebook post detailing what may have been an episode of "driving while black." Michael J. Houser is a special assistant to Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish. In this widely read and shared post, he explains how he became another black American pulled over by the police for no apparent reason and how much he feared for his life.

Local playwright Eric Coble contributes a one-minute play he wrote while in Ferguson, Missouri, participating in a workshop for artists and advocates seeking ways to respond to the shooting of Michael Brown and other race-driven injustices.

The next piece comes from Ajah Hales. In *One Plus One Equals Too Little*, Hales weaves her past with her present and voices her frustration with well-meaning but ill-informed white allies to the struggle for equity and justice. Interestingly, it's the first of two pieces exploring the efforts in this journey of congregants at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church in Cleveland Heights. The second, in Yesterday section provides a more optimistic, and, frankly, a whiter point of view.

That piece is followed by an oral history in which local artist, educator, performer, and facilitator Morris Ervin discusses his work and how he turned a violent confrontation with police into a performance piece to drive difficult conversations.

In *If it takes a village...* poet and actor Darius Stubbs challenges the

reader to confront our complicity in what may be the most tragic casualty of fractured race relations in our community—the death of 12-year-old Tamir Rice.

In Julia Murphy's simply titled *Personal Dispatch*, we get the perspective of young, white and “woke.” Murphy explains the decisions she makes, the search for understanding that drives her and her willingness to fail, if necessary.

Every single cop in Cleveland is here is a dispatch in the truest sense. Local writer Arthur Chu walked with the demonstrators protesting the acquittal of Cleveland police officer Michael Brelo. Brelo had been charged with voluntary manslaughter for his role in the deaths of two unarmed black citizens at the end of a 22-minute car chase. His contribution is excerpted from a longer dispatch originally published on the website *Salon*.

Ali McClain's two poems examine totally different elements of the racial divide. *Kinsman* is a response to the tragic shooting death of an infant victim of the internecine gun violence that has gripped parts of Greater Cleveland in recent years. *After School* explores the vast gulf between black children in inner city neighborhoods and the well-meaning but sometimes insensitive white people who try to help.

The white-people-trying-to-help theme continues in a more hopeful and helpful manner with *Were You Scared?* Writer and secondary educator Sarah Marcus brings the reader directly into her experience teaching black teens in an urban environment. That is followed by another teacher voice (yes, it's a theme here), this time in poetic form, *A Secret Home* by Melissa Kullman, reminding us of that cultural expression is often mistaken for a lack of intelligence.

In *I'm Yellow. I'm in Cleveland: What Now?* Jeanne Li discusses how as an Asian and an ally in the Black Lives Matter movement, she both fits in and doesn't. Hers is a unique voice, offering a pointed perspective on both blacks and whites.

From Shaker Heights High School, we get a contribution from the Student Group on Race Relations. SGORR recently produced a piece of theater called *Staying Human*. We've included an excerpt that provides

a range of descriptions of the integration for which Shaker Heights is reputed. Suffice it to say, it's a mixed reputation.

Local freelance journalist Kyle Swenson is next. His 2010 investigative reporting for the *Scene* is credited with launching the re-opening of the fabricated case against Ricky Jackson. In 2014, Jackson, a black man, was exonerated after a 39-year imprisonment, the longest time served by any exoneree in the United States. In deft prose, Swenson manages to simultaneously hold the optimism of that moment with our fundamental failures to address the systemic problems we too often ignore. It is, as he says, a *Cleveland story*. To close out the Today section, Mary Weems shows us a mirror with a trio of poems revolving around the latest police shooting of unarmed black men. As she has done through out her long career Dr. Weems pulls no punches and these poems show a poet at the peak of their extraordinary powers.

Yesterday opens with a return to Congressman Stokes. In an excerpt from his final City Club address, eight months before his death, Stokes reflects on the struggles and progress of the community in its journey toward greater equality. The vision he shares, ultimately, is mixed, simultaneously proud and tinged with regret. His remarks are followed by two pieces from Tunisian poet Ali Znaidi, whose poems *Skin* and *Colour is One* remind us of the essential human experience underlying racial strife.

Dispassionately presented but deeply affecting is the history of the work and death of white civil rights activist Reverend Bruce Klunder, contributed by local essayist Dana Arintonovich. *Spitting* is a poem by Dianne Borsenik. It continues a theme of Rev. Klunder's alliance with the racially oppressed, reminding us of the power of words. A warning may be in order: That piece contains everybody's least favorite racial epithet; if you don't want to see the N-word in print, please avoid that piece.

Black intellectual Jason Riley spoke twice in Cleveland in recent years, once at an event convened by the Republican Party of Cuyahoga County and once at the City Club. Many black voices who speak at the City Club tend to line up on the political left. Riley does not. Formerly a member of the editorial board at the *Wall Street Journal*, his analysis of

racial progress points to a fundamental failure of social programs to find traction on the issues they were designed to address. In a challenge to progressive ideas, he notes, "Racism has become an all-purpose explanation for bad black outcomes, be they social or economic. If you disagree and are white, you are a bigot. If you disagree and are black, you are a sellout." Many will disagree with him, but he is worth listening to.

In *The Most Segregated Hour*, three congregants from Forest Hill Church Presbyterian describe their own efforts to address unconscious bias in their own gathering, pointing to the small but significant impact individuals can have in this struggle.

Milenko Budimir's (*re*) *Union* brings us the first of two personal perspectives on integrated schools. His poem starts in conflict and ends somewhere else entirely. The second, from Lee Chilcote describes how racism is dismantled, generation by generation. Two historical analyses follow. The first is an excerpt from a policy brief prepared by the Kirwan Institute on behalf of the Cuyahoga County Place Matters Team, detailing the impact of federal redlining policies and local housing covenants on historical neighborhood settlement patterns and, ultimately, public health outcomes. Brad Masi's essay follows, discussing the impact of highway construction on local communities, along with what was saved when the Clark Freeway expansion was blocked.

The final piece in this section is an excerpted transcript from another City Club forum featuring two lions of the civil rights era, Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. and Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, both of whom walked with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Finally, we look to Tomorrow, starting with the winner of the 2015 Anisfield-Wolf Award for fiction, Marlon James. James, author of *A Brief History of Seven Killings* spoke to the City Club on writing, race, and, importantly, the difference between not being a racist and being actively anti-racist.

Well-known Cleveland voice, Amy Hanauer of Policy Matters Ohio, brings us *The History in Our Wallets*. Her essay is anchored in history and policy and moves through the present, ending with strong recommendations about how to overcome the inequities created by our shared

history, built as it is on structural racism and inequalities.

The chief executive of the region's largest public healthcare provider has made racial justice one of his own personal missions. An Egyptian immigrant, Akram Boutros contributes the transcript of a speech he gave to a signature YWCA's convening focused on ending racism.

Sharon Holbrook, another white, female writer, offers her perspective as a mother in a racially diverse extended family. It is the language her children use that offers the most resonant hope in her essay.

Andrew Higgins contributes one of the most surprising and layered essays, a profile of an Afro-Puerto Rican resident of Cleveland's West Side. Higgins' work forces us to see beyond labels of black, white, urban pioneer and longtime resident, gentrification and economic growth. Next, Cleveland high school teacher Charles Ellenbogen's focus on his students leaves the reader with the knowledge that the work to be done will likely require much of us and more of the next generation.

The final piece begins, "Here am I. Over here." In dense, almost stream-of-consciousness prose, P. Nasib Whitt directly addresses the reader. Here, Whitt imagines a listener who, for whatever reason, is unable to fully see the humanity of the speaker. This voice of the invisible black male feels like a direct connection to Richard Wright, and the immediacy of the voice anchors us clearly in our present moment and in relation to contemporary voices, such as Ta-Nehisi Coates and Michelle Alexander, whom Whitt mentions directly. His final lines offer as much hope as they do a challenge: "I believe in me and I have to believe in you too. I see you, just be courageous and look beyond what you take for granted and have assumed about me for generations. See me."

We end with this piece because it is that courage that we hope will stay with you.

Today

“We don’t have a language for the phenomenon that happens every single day. We see it every day, and we don’t perceive it because we don’t have words for it, but we walk away angry.”

—*Anthony Jordan, Cleveland Attorney*

“This is our system. We have to take control of it, and I ask all of you to take control of it, because 10, 20 years from now your children and grandchildren will look to you and ask you, what did you do for me?”

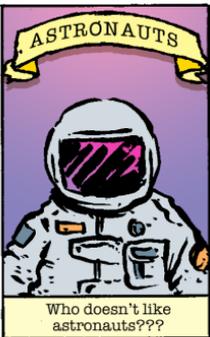
—*Shakyla Diaz*

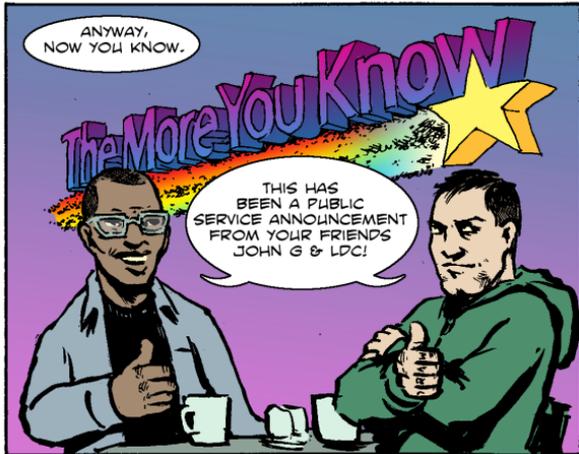
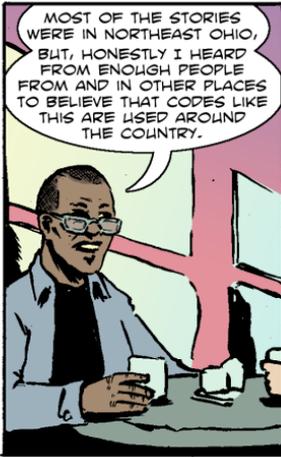
IS IT DARK OVER THERE?

A
Public Service
Announcement

By
Lawrence Daniel
Caswell
&
John G







In December of 2014, following the shooting death of 12-year-old Tamir Rice by a Cleveland police officer and the release of a report from the U.S. Department of Justice detailing its investigation into the patterns of unreasonable use of force, the City Club's Youth Forum Council quickly organized a panel conversation to address some of the underlying issues. Those in attendance knew it was a significant conversation. Many others encountered it in its local broadcast or when it aired on C-Span. Here, we present a transcript of part of that forum.

A Conversation on Race

Excerpts from a City Club Youth Forum, January 14, 2015.

Good afternoon and Welcome to the City Club of Cleveland. My name is Phillip Hedayatnia; I'm a junior at Hawken School in Gates Mills and a proud member of the City Club's Youth Forum Council. Thank you very much for coming to see our panelists today. Our goal at the Youth Forum Council is really identical to that of the City Club, it's to host conversations, debates and discussions that empower us, to engage, and further understanding of the world around us and the people that comprise it.

It is for that reason that it is my pleasure to introduce our forum today entitled A Conversation on Race. Poet Langston Hughes wrote in his poem "Democracy"

Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
in a great need,

I live here, too.
I want freedom
just as you.

It may be safe to say that in the age we live in today in many ways that

freedom has been granted to races of people that have been subjected to oppression throughout our nation's history, but there's a difference between, in some cases, freedom and liberty.

Freedom being a state of being able to make decisions without external control, perhaps guaranteed by a government, while liberty can be totally different altogether, it regards the freedom granted by society and the world around us, and in light of the recent deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and Tamir Rice, many questions have emerged. Even as we've come far, how far have we actually come? And as even many blatantly racist laws have been erased from the books since the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, what liberties are afforded to those of racial minorities within our community and within our country? With today's discussion we seek to answer those questions as well as many more and to develop a clear picture of race in America.

Joining us for our conversation today is Shakyra Diaz, policy manager for the Ohio Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. As policy manager she's worked on policy campaign regarding political activism, reproductive healthcare access for Latinas and other initiatives.

Andres Gonzalez is the chief of police for the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority and he previously joined us here at the City Club as a panel member at our forum "Turning the tide on sexual assault" in October and we're very glad to have him back.

Jonathan C. Gordon is a professor of lawyering skills at Case Western Reserve University teaching legal analysis and writing to J.D. students and international law students in Case's LLM program. He was also one of the inaugural members in Case's provost scholar program working with youth from East Cleveland, and before joining Case he was a trial attorney for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission where he handled many cases, including cases involving racial discrimination.

Basheer Jones is a political and community activist, radio host, spoken work poet and public speaker who hosts a variety of radio shows in the Cleveland area and during the 2012 presidential campaign; he was also the regional field director for Organizers for America.

Now without further ado, I'll cede the stage to my fellow council

member and moderator of today's forum Anthony Price of Shaw High School. Thank you very much.

Price: Good afternoon, as Phil said I'm Anthony Price, I'm a Youth Forum Council Member here at the City Club, and I just want to thank you all for coming out to this very special forum, and for teachers and administrators who are here today, we also have a second forum on the 29th which is called "The Cleveland Renaissance" so that should be good as well, and which will be moderated by Nick Rutherford.

I just want to thank all of our panelists. I was talking to them briefly before the forum started and I just want to thank you guys for taking out of or time to come and talk about this topic, so thank you.

When you hear the word *race*, what comes to mind and how has that impacted you personally throughout your life? Anyone can start.

Jones: Well first I'm thankful to be here to see so many wonderful faces and for you to put this event on, and you're moderating, can I be truthful? You sure?

Now if I lie it may feel good at first, but in the long run it's going to hurt. If I'm going to be truthful is that all right? Is that ok with everybody?

When we have a conversation about race, and I look in the room and I see majority African American, that's a problem, because we have to bring to the table, black, white, Latino, Asian—all groups of people to have this discussion, but when we're having the discussion with those who are receiving the most oppression, who are receiving the hurt more than any other group, then we're not having a full conversation a full dialogue, we have to have those from Hawken, and have those who are from University School, and have those from other schools across Northeast Ohio and have an equal conversation, but what we're doing right now is just talking to the people who are being brutalized and who are receiving the most pain.

We know we understand the pain because we deal with it every single day. Recently the U.S. Department of Justice came out with a study

that showed the Cleveland police department engages in excessive force.

Now many of us didn't need no Department of Justice to come out with a study to tell us that the police department has been excessive, because we have been dealing with it on a day-to-day basis, so I appreciate the conversation and I hope and pray that we all can learn and engage and always appreciate the City Club, but for future references we have to have an array of different people in order to have true conversation.

Diaz: With regard to what I think of when I hear the word *race*, I feel that there's another word that needs to come with it and it's *racism*. In order to really evaluate and change structural racism, we have to talk about race and how it manifests itself in various different systems, and many ways. While we do not have laws and policies or legislation that specifically outline ways to marginalize specific groups of people as we did in the past, what we do have today are policies and legislation that are specifically enforced in a way that desperately impacts people who are traditionally marginalized. I'll give you a good example.

There were laws at one point in this country that prevented black people, Negroes, people of African descent, from standing outside. You're not going to find those laws anymore, and those laws do not exist. However with this country being still very segregated, Cleveland being the 5th most segregated city in this nation, laws are often enforced in black communities. Who lives in black communities? Black people... and everyone who raised their hands.

I call that the scenic route to racism—that you can get the same outcomes even if you're not explicitly articulating that. So when I think about race, I also recognize that we have to talk about racism.

Price: Anybody else would like to add to that?

Gonzalez: When I think of race, of course, I think about differences. I think about diversity, I think about different backgrounds, different experiences and there's a word that I learned when I was young, it's called paradigm, and the best way for me to describe paradigm is looking at

other people or trying to understand other people, through their glasses, through their lenses. And so what I try to do in my role as chief of police, what I try to do is impress upon my staff and those men and women that go out every day to provide a service to be accepting of that diversity, of that difference, of those different cultures, because we should not be treating everyone the same. However, everyone has the right to be treated equal under the law, and so when I think about race that's what I'm thinking about. Also I'm thinking about myself, my family, my heritage and where I come from, because it's no secret that if it were not for equal opportunity I would not be here, representing my career, my profession, as police chief being the first Hispanic police chief in Cuyahoga County. And so race is very important, it's something that we should not take lightly, but it's something that needs to be respected, appreciated and accepted.

Gordon: I cannot speak as an African American, but I am acutely aware in our society that discrimination still exists and I think there are many people today who think we're in a post-racial world where it doesn't exist, and that the law does treat people equally, and I just don't think that's the reality. I think perhaps even well-intentioned people may not be aware of their implicit biases. I'm not a social scientist either, but there are all sorts of studies that detail sending out people with identical resumes, but perhaps a name that is more typically African American and another name that's more typically white and a greater percentage of the white resume, even though it's the identical information will get call-backs or job offers.

I even read a recent study about eBay cellphones being sold and in the pictures, you could see a black hand in some pictures versus the white hand and the purchases of the person holding the same cellphone but with a white hand, and there are all sorts of other social science testing that has come up with similar results and it's really shocking the percentage differences in some of those.

We have to understand that the police acting in inner city communities that are predominantly African-American people of color, police

are human they have implicit biases too. And then if there is equality supposedly under the law, people have these implicit biases that come out in different ways and somebody can be, there's great discretion, especially when we're talking about minor petty crimes, stealing cigarettes, jaywalking, Ferguson or selling cigarettes to avoid taxation on Staten Island. There's a great deal of discretion as to how people are going to be treated in those circumstances and we have to have better rules and policies that prevent the abuse of that discretion, and an abuse treatment in people of color.

Price: So where do you think—since we're talking about race—where do you think in order to have a greater understanding and accepting thinking of race, where do you think it starts? Embracing the race and culture, in the schools? Do you think it starts at home? Where does it start?

Diaz: It starts, continues and has to persist throughout society. It has to involve conversations that happen at home, it has to involve these great systems, whether it is education, social service, criminal justice, healthcare—all of these systems have to be held accountable to ensuring that equity is something all of us realize, that all of us know, that all of us live and breathe.

Even to that extent we have to have some conversations about how we recognize injustice, and I'd like to add the name of Tanisha Anderson to the names that were recently raised of people who had died at the hands of police.

We mentioned Tamir Rice, we mentioned Eric Garner, we mentioned Michael Brown, but we also have to uplift the names of women and girls who have experienced disproportionate abuse or have died at the hands of police and have experienced injustice. It's a conversation that has to happen every day in every city in order for us to move past our past as a country and our present.

I've heard people say, "Well we just have to get over it. Slavery is over with."

But we have iterations of disproportionality and racism today, so these are constant conversations that have to happen in a number of different sectors, in a number of different systems and we all have to collectively be a part of that in the same way that we have many people of various races, and ethnicities and ages, uplifting the Black Lives Matter movement. You will see in pictures throughout social media and protests, you see black and white people and Latino people and people of Asian descent, young and old, all participating in uplifting the value of black lives, again it's another example that we all bear responsibility to have these conversations and push and demand for more.

Gordon: I think it begins in the home and it begins at school, and it begins everywhere in our community, we all have that responsibility to discuss these issues. I'm deeply saddened by the events in Ferguson and New York, and here in Cleveland and in Paris last week, such tragic events and the Black Lives Matter mantra that is followed. I think people need to understand that, and that goes back to our schools and our educational system and understanding that there is this entire history where people didn't value black lives.

Slaves weren't full human beings, or weren't deemed to be full human beings even under the law and even after emancipation we had Jim Crow laws. Today Michelle Alexander has written about the new Jim Crow, we have mass incarceration with very disproportionate numbers of African-American men in our prison system. Mass incarceration, the numbers are staggering in the sense that I think there are more men who are subject to our prison system or on parole or on probation, having been in the criminal justice system, not necessarily all in prison, those numbers are greater than the number of slaves prior to Emancipation.

We can't ignore that disproportionality, we can't ignore that history the police have co-opted in blue lives matter too. Police serve a very important role in our society, and they take great risks in their job and many if not most are dedicated to being public servants and upholding the law and observing the constitutional protections, but there are bad

apples out there and they need to be weeded out, and we need to understand that it's through education, Anthony, to answer your question, that we, I hope, will be able to address these problems.

There are programs like Facing History, that I think some of the students here are part of, and I think serve that purpose. I know that I see people from Shaker Heights High School where the Student Group on Race Relations has been serving the community for a quarter of a century and doing wonderful work and I think to fight intolerance and hatred, I think that's really where it starts before we can expect the criminal justice system just to change on its own.

Jones: Alright so there are two sides of it real quick.

Of course there's more that we can do as a community and for the students that showed up here today, I see some of you with notebooks and others with no notebook. Like any time that you come to events like this, you should come prepared to write down things, because there's no way possible that you're going to remember everything.

For the adults that are here, anytime that you go to events like this make your students bring their weaponry. There's an African proverb that says "Do not build your shield on the battlefield." So you have to come to these types of places, you're going to meet different people, get cards, contact, network, that's how you're going to be successful.

So of course we know that there is a sense of hatred that exists in the world, but the real question is how do you feel about you? Do you love yourself?

When you look in the mirror, do you see a beautiful person or do you see a hateful person? There's a community responsibility that we have, but on the flip side of it, the media plays a strong part in the perception of how we are viewed. For example every one heard about France, and we are very sad about what happened in France, very sad.

But who's talking about Nigeria, and what happened in Nigeria or what's going on in places like Somalia and West Africa and East Africa for a long time. I was driving here, I was driving through Little Italy, and it's a beautiful place and I'm, like, look at the history that is here,

and no one feels offended when you hear Little Italy, you say wow it's a very beautiful place. When you're going through a Jewish neighborhoods, you don't feel offended; when you go to the Maltz museum and you say this is a very beautiful place that is talking about the history of the Jewish people, you don't feel offended by it. You don't feel offended when you go to Chinatown and see the history of Chinatown. But why is it that you feel offended or that people feel offended when you call our community Little Africa, why would that be offensive?

As a matter of fact, more importantly, why is it that some who are African Americans will be even offended to call it Little Africa, and some of them get offended say, "Oh wow you look like an African." Why would you be offended by that, when some of the most beautiful people come from that place. Why? Because media portrays Africa as a place that is extremely impoverished.

Anytime that you see Africans you see skinny Somalian, the skinny Nigerian, or Nigerians are all crooks or this is all that, so you don't even want to view yourself in that light, so there's a sense of self-hatred that the media plays a part in. We had an event—Chief, you were there—there was a media panel, all of the media people here in Cleveland, and the majority of stories that come out in the media about African Americans are not positive. I appreciate C-Span being here.

Why isn't Channel 3, why isn't Channel 5 here? Why is it at positive events that you come to and you don't cause no problems, no one shows up, but let something [bad] happen and all the media is there depicting. You know what I'm talking about, why is all the media there, so you have to understand that the media plays a part as well. So why is it that people feel offended?

I was in Australia, we are very color-conscious here in America, I was in Australia, she said, "Why is everything so black and white in America?" Everything is so black and white here in America, but at the same time she said, "Can you tell me about Atlanta Hip Hop Wives," you know what I'm saying.

The media sends this perception of who we are and some people play in to that perception, but the majority don't, and before you even get a

chance to open your mouth, people already have a perception of who they think you are. So before you open your mouth, young ladies, it's already like, she's got an attitude problem, as soon as you walk in, you know what I mean. If we were to right now pass around a survey about how you feel about Iranians, or North Koreans or Iraqis or Afghans, if you were to put out a survey many of us would say very negative things about them, and you may not even know somebody like that, but yet you already have a perception of who you think they are.

What I want to say to us is that there is as community responsibility and every person in here, must speak to their children and talk about humanity, that we all deserve to be treated fairly. Why are you mad at me, because I am saying that I deserve justice? Why are you upset that I'm marching for justice? Why does that offend you so much? Why are you so angry when I say that I'm a proud black man? Why does that offend you? Why are you so angry that I'm proud to be who I am? Why does that make you afraid of me? So that when you walk up to my car, you already have your hand on your gun.

What messages have been sent to you to make you feel that I am dangerous? I could be in a tailor-made suit and walk in to an elevator and somebody will hold their purses closer. This is an issue that we are dealing with, but in closing, but as young people you have a responsibility as well. I was talking to my guy Dom right here, it's young people like Dom and young people that are here today who will change the world that you won't be as discriminatory as your grandparents were, as your great-grandparents were, but that time is now. That time is now or if not, this issue of race, these race issues that we're dealing with in America, it will be the downfall of our country without a doubt.

Price: Mr. Gonzalez.

Gonzalez: I want to say something, let me be the first to say, because I noticed, as a police officer I'm trained to look at people and try to gauge responses, it's true and as my colleagues were speaking I just couldn't help but see everybody looking and then looking at me.

So let me acknowledge a couple of things first of all. In this conversation, cops, we don't always get it right, that's the truth.

We don't always get it right, and unfortunately because we're police officers, and because we took that oath of office and because we made a commitment that no matter what, we were going to lay our lives down if we had to, that just puts an additional factor into how we make decisions. Now because we don't always get it right, the challenge for us is to work to get it right. When we sit back if we as officers, if we as enforcers, if we just sit back and do nothing, then you need to get rid of us.

You need to get rid of that police chief; you need to get rid of that police department, because they are not serving you in the way that you need to be served. The truth is this, folks, a police department is only as strong as the community allows it to be, and when the community loses confidence in its police department, then that is almost the beginning of the end. I would say to you all the young people in this room, you know we asked about where does this start? Does this start in the family? Does this start at home? In the community? I would say that it starts with you. I'm not going to be a police chief forever, someone has to step up and step into my role. Someone has to be a police officer in the future, someone has to be an attorney, a judge, and all those professions that you hear about. The issue is getting to a point where you're going to start making a contribution, a positive contribution regardless of your background, regardless of your race, regardless of what you believe in, at the end of the day, are you making a positive contribution to your community, to your school, to your family and to your total environment? So for me, it's about you. It's about what commitment, what decisions are each of you going to make that is going to lead you to be a productive citizen in the future and eventually a more productive community?

Thank you for listening.

Gordon: I just want to add that after Chief Gonzalez and Mr. Jones, I just want to echo the sentiment that you guys will make all the difference. I'm saddened by those recent events, these tragedies, but I'm also extremely hopeful because you guys are here, and you care, and I think

that our communities in France, communities in Africa, communities all over the United States that now, because of these tragedies, I hope, will come together. And it's not just the public discourse which this fine institutions stands for, and has for so many years, but action needs to be taken and the Cleveland Police Department is going to need to make changes, the Department of Justice Report is scathing in terms of the abuses, whether many of us in the community have known about those abusive practices for years and the DOJ reported on it over a decade ago. Not enough has been done, and perhaps through our action, through our collective effort, through our concern, all of us can help make a difference, but we have to make sure those actions are taken, so public discourse and education aren't enough by themselves, we need to take action.

Price: We're in a room full of teens, and it may be a few leaders or maybe we're all leaders in a way, but some don't have that particular push to do something in their community. So what can we as teens or young leaders, or game-changers, however you want to call it, what can we do as teens to ensure justice in our communities?

Diaz: Well first I want to start answering that question by asking all of you a question. Raise your hand if you know anyone with a criminal conviction.

Jones: Everybody got a cousin or a brother.

Diaz: It's important for us to recognize that this country is the number one incarcerator of adults and children in the world. It's important to recognize that Ohio is the 6th largest prison state in this nation, that we rank 4th in the nation with regards to incarceration of women, so when we talk about contributions, we have to be mindful that when people are saddled unfairly, unnecessarily, with a criminal conviction, we are preventing them from contributing in some ways. We have to be real about that, we have to be real about the collateral consequences

of criminal convictions, and not only how they impact us as individuals, but our families and our communities.

To answer your question, I'd say that we all have to tell our stories, we have to tell our truths, whether you have been treated unfairly, whether you have witnessed someone else being treated unfairly, you have to speak to that, because there is value in validating experiences, there is value in demanding that our systems change. Anthony, you and I were having a conversation before the program began and I shared with you, that I worked with a student once and I asked her what her perceptions were of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Detention Center, and her response to me was, "I wish my school looks that nice." The fact is that we get our return on investment. And this country has prioritized investing in the incarceration of people which is why we are the number 1 incarcerator of all people in the world. Now if we invested in education, and valued it the way that we value incarceration, things would be very different.

One of the things that I value most about young people is that they have zero tolerance for hypocrisy, and because I am here, I am using that word instead of another that I would normally use, but young people have zero tolerance for that.

Young people will not accept rhetoric if it's not followed with action. Don't talk about it, be about it and the fact is that many adults and many systems are talking about this beautiful equity that we all have to work towards, but the truth is that policies are not made in that way, budgets are not allocated that way and we have to call it out. Basheer, you and I were at a program a few years ago and a young man from Martin Luther King High School said that his biology project consisted of dissecting a cookie. I will never forget that.

I will never forget how that child was violated, he was prevented in many ways from pursuing a career in medicine, you know why, because he was not properly educated. This city was a city that spent 23 years testing crack pipes to charge people in the city of Cleveland with felony cocaine possession instead of misdemeanor, possession of paraphernalia—23 years!

Approximately 35,000 African Americans have a felony conviction that they should not have, because Cleveland was the only city in the entire State of Ohio to have that policy. Some of those people went to prison, they cannot get any financial aid to go to college. You know what Cleveland did not test? Rape kits.

The City of Cleveland did not test rape kits, dating back to 1950. So it's all about priorities, when we evaluate the priority that we've given to the war on drugs over other more important issues, we have to really look at ourselves, we have to look at ourselves and the choices that have been made in our name. The truth is that we all pay taxes, whether we make a little bit of money or a lot of money, we all pay taxes.

This is our system. We have to take control of it, and I ask all of you to take control of it, because 10, 20 years from now your children and grandchildren will look to you and ask you, what did you do for me? To save me? We have to demand better, we cannot allow these choices that are made in our name to continue to drive wedges and to give us a distinction that we should not have, the land of the free cannot be the land of the locked down.

In November 2015, a civil servant and leader in Cleveland's young professional community was pulled over by police, in what might be seen as an episode of racial profiling. The following is what he posted to his Facebook page. It has been edited for clarity.

Facebook Post

Michael J. Houser

On the night of November 3, 2015 around 9:45 PM after my grad class at CSU I went to Penn Station in Biddulph Plaza to get something to eat. I parked in a parking spot, never turning off my car lights. During this time I was debating if I wanted to go in or just make food that I already have at home. I saw a Brooklyn police car with his lights on in front of me. The police car pulled away and I sat debating for another two minutes and decided to save my money and go to my apartment. When I pull out from the parking spot and stop at the stop sign in Biddulph Plaza in front of the Applebee's, I see three cop cars and it looked to be nine Brooklyn police officers all with their guns pointed at me to stop my car and come out with my hands up. I can hear them so I roll my window down and he repeats put your hands up and step out of the car. I do as I am asked and open my car door (this is the first time any officer has asked me to step out of my car) and see the red light from the cop's gun in my face. I realize I still have my foot on the brake and ask the officer can I can I put my car in park. He agrees, and I put my car in park. He asks me to step out of the car with my hands and turn around. I do, and he asks me to turn around again and I do. He then has me walk backwards to the police officer in the nearest car, I slowly walk backwards to the nearest officer who takes my hands from my head and puts me in handcuffs (again another first) the office proceeds to drop me to my knees. At the time, in fear, I protest, "I am Michael J. Houser, Special Assistant to County Executive Armond Budish." As soon as I say that I am allowed on my feet again but still in handcuffs. The officer said after running my plates my Vehicle Identification Number was

coming back stolen. (I am still not sure why the officer ran my plates, or do they run every person's plates in Brooklyn, Ohio?) I told him my car is not stolen, and I am driving home after a long day. He asks me to sit on top of the hood still in handcuffs while they figure it out. I do what I am asked and tell him my car is not stolen, so please get it right. The officer looked in my car and asks me about my K&M towing sticker that I need for my apartment parking. One officer then without asking put his hand in my pocket and took my wallet (still fearful, I didn't protest) I again repeat, "I am Michael J. Houser, Special Assistant to County Executive Armond Budish, I have worked for both Congressman Tim Ryan and Senator Sherrod Brown." I tell them, too, to please get it right because we will be on the front of Cleveland.com. I hear the dispatcher say "Michael J. Houser" so I know they are pulling up my information. While sitting on the hood of the police car I try to make light of the situation by asking one officer did he vote today (since they knew I was in politics by all the "important people" I name-dropped). He laughed and said he did. I said that I did as well, then he asked me if I lived in Brooklyn and I said I just moved over here a couple months ago. He asked, did I like it, and I said I did (thinking, I did until you guys pulled me over, but I didn't say that). I asked if he lived in Brooklyn and he said he didn't and none of the other officers did either (which I thought was very interesting). I asked him again why I was being stopped and he told me my VIN was coming back as stolen. I asked him how could he see my VIN and he said it is attached to my license plates. After some small talk about what I am in grad school for, what I thought about the Brooklyn mayoral race, and what I do for the County Executive which felt like 15 minutes the police finally let me out the handcuffs and told me Cleveland police put in the VIN information wrong, and I should get it taken care of as soon as possible so this doesn't happen again. I jokingly (and sarcastically) said, yeah, because next time they might not be as nice as you officers (meaning next time I might get killed). I am allowed to get in my car and drive away.

After posting on all my social media outlets and telling all my friends I called Cleveland police at 216-623-5200 around 11 PM and talked to

Officer Dudley. I told the officer who I was and what had happened and ask could he run my plates because I was fearful to drive. After ten minutes Officer Dudley asked me if the car was in Agatha Marshall's name and I said it was (she's my mother). He said my car is not and has not been listed as stolen. I was confused and asked if he was sure. He said yes but trying to cover up his comment said the officers could have just put the plates in wrong. I understand it was a mistake but a mistake that could have gotten someone killed.

I am not sure what the protocol is for stopping a stolen vehicle but I wonder if the car had actually been stolen would they have killed me on a warm Tuesday night in Brooklyn. I felt like a slave that had been stopped by the slave catchers and asked to see his papers and after name-dropping every white man I knew, I was able to keep my freedom. I cannot remember if the officers apologized or not, and I don't care. Our system is clearly broken; I wasn't going to say anything but I feel it is my duty to bring light to this situation. You can't just stop people with guns drawn because their car might or might not be stolen, what if the next time they are not "Michael J. Houser, Special Assistant to the County Executive"?

Eric Coble is a local playwright, known for often funny and usually socially relevant work. This brief play was part of the "Every 28 Hours" project in Ferguson, Missouri, which brought together playwrights from around the U.S. to delve into race relations via 1-minute plays.

Just Do It

Eric Coble

A WHITE GUY and BLACK GUY sit in chairs near each other, facing out to us. Could be a subway car, could be a waiting room. Clearly both are deep in thought. White Guy glances at Black Guy. Goes back to looking straight ahead.

White Guy again turns to face Black Guy. Opens his mouth to speak... Thinks better of it and turns back to mind his own business. Black Guy subtly notices all this.

Pause.

More thought. White Guy more agitated... clearly something is bothering him, doesn't know how to phrase it. Turns to Black Guy again, opens mouth, slightly raises a hand to get attention... Black Guy looks at him. Waits. White Guy hesitates... goes back to facing front.

Black Guy shakes his head, goes back to facing forward, in his own thoughts and concerns. More pause. More agitating thought.

White Guy really torn... seriously wants to speak...

seriously uncomfortable... He turns to face Black Guy, opens mouth, intake of breath... Black Guy simultaneously turns to face him... White Guy again pauses...

BLACK GUY: Say something.

White Guy is torn...

BLACK GUY: Say. Something.

White Guy still hesitates... waiting...

BLACKOUT.

What follows here is one woman's perspective, and it's a compelling one. Ajah Hales reflects on the impact teachers—whose voices run through this anthology—had on her. And as the essay evolves, she writes of the frustration she feels in her integrated church, despite the efforts of white and black lay leaders to create the spaces for cross-racial conversation and understanding. Later in the anthology, others from the same congregation write of those efforts from a different perspective (see "The Most Segregated Hour in Cleveland," p. 151). In this essay, she references the "Overton window," which sent at least one of our editors to Wikipedia. Joseph Overton was a vice president at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. The window refers to the constraints on acceptable public discourse. What's acceptable is inside the Overton window.

One Plus One Equals Too Little Why Pushing Back Isn't Moving Us Forward in Cleveland

Ajah Hales

I am young, gifted, and black.

Okay, so thirty isn't exactly young, my "gifts" are, sadly, nonrefundable, and so is my blackness.

I was raised to love and live in this black skin. From the earliest age, my mother insulated me, equipping me with an extensive vocabulary that often got me beat up on the playground, cloistering me indoors during long Cleveland summers. While other kids in my neighborhood pried open the hydrant to play in its stream, I sought refuge in the temperature-controlled haven of North Branch Library.

I went to Chambers Elementary School in East Cleveland. I was in the S.C.O.P.E (Selected Curriculum for Optimum Performance and Enrichment) program, meaning I was a known nerd from age seven. The entirety of my experience at Chambers and its influence on my id can be boiled down to my experiences with two women: one black, the other white. The first was Mrs. Elizabeth Clarke, our special educator who made weekly visits to teach us about our young, gifted, and black souls.

Mrs. Clarke was a tiny woman with skin the color of Starbucks Chestnut Praline Latte. She was around five feet tall and wore voluminous kaftans and African head wraps. She weighed as much as a fourth grader and had to be in her late seventies. Her physical presence wasn't much, but her psychic weight was such that it was difficult to look her directly in the eye. Mrs. Clarke spoke with the smoky purr of Eartha Kitt. Her voice was both soft and resonant; she never had to yell to wrangle us into submission—she could do that with a look, or a softly spoken Ago.

She had high expectations of us, and she taught us to have high expectations for ourselves. “You are the descendants of Kings and Queens of the largest continent in existence,” she would tell us. “Your ancestors were the founders of civilization.” She played Nina Simone for us, taught us Swahili, gave us research projects on Shirley Chisholm, Marcus Garvey, Garrett Morgan. She told us that we were the “Talented Tenth.” She instilled a sense of black pride in us, and, although we didn't understand it then, equipped us to survive the death-of-a-thousand-paper-cuts that is inhabiting a brown body within a white world.

The second woman is Ms. Jane Kappeler, a young white teacher who reminded me of Sally Field circa the “Smokey and the Bandit” era. She wore flowered dresses with shoulder pads, had hair like my Barbie, and remains to this day the nicest person I have ever met. Ms. Kappeler taught me to embrace my writing. I was in third grade, rattling off girlish rhymes by the dozen when Ms. Kappeler suggested I write a book of poetry. I had read Dickinson, Shakespeare, and Silverstein. I was enraptured by Giovanni and Dove, could easily recite Cullen or Hughes. Those giants were poets. I was a kid with a better than average vocabulary who was good at rhyming.

Ms. Kappeler refused to give up on me. She bought me a tape recorder and told me to speak my poems into them. She transcribed them and bound them into a book. She pushed my mom to get it copyrighted. She even submitted a poem I wrote about my absentee father to a national children's poetry anthology. It was chosen. I became a published author at nine.

Ms. Kappeler never stopped encouraging my writing, and she never stopped inspiring young minds in East Cleveland. Her students are a small but devoted tribe of millennials that adore her with cult-like fervor. I proudly count myself among that number.

These women affirmed for me the two things that have shaped every subsequent interaction in my life: the full personhood of my black body and the inherent value of that which is unique to me—my voice.

I have spent my life challenging ideas, individuals, and structures that deny the former while attempting to silence the latter. Following that path led me to student activism at Hawken, counterculture escapism at University of Florida, community organizing in Cleveland and St. Louis, a stress-induced TIA and a brief, voluntary stay at a state sponsored mental health facility because I—as they say—have zero chill.

I keep it simple. I don't have a lot of friends, but the ones I do have I would die for. I spend time with my family, I work, and I am making the effort to be more involved with "kingdom work" by being active within my church. The only problem is... I'm an agitator.

My church is a predominately white organization, and I am far from its poster Presbyterian. I smoke, I'm not married, oh, and I can't seem to stop pointing out the hypocrisy of the white supremacist structure that persists within the modern church.

Five years ago, when my church started having Courageous Conversations on Race, I thought my prayers had been answered, only to realize fairly quickly how little I understood the breadth of the problem, and how naive I had been in assuming a timely resolution. The majority of my church questioned the existence of white privilege, and many of them had myriad arguments as to why they were not beneficiaries of structural racism. At the time, I felt white privilege deniers should be met with the same attitude as climate change deniers: mild condescension and pity. To deny either was ludicrous when confronted daily with the physical proof. Our church had a lot of work to do, long haul work, and I'm a classic commitment-phobe. My longest adult relationship was two years, and it didn't so much end as implode. Yet here I am, five years later, still hanging in with a congregation whose hearts are in the

right place, but their heads (no offense) are up their proud, Presbyterian sphincters.

I'm supposed to applaud my church for having difficult conversations about race, for even questioning whether white privilege exists within the structure of our church; but at five years in that feels like praising a kindergartener for using the potty instead of a diaper.

Many in my church still question the existence of white privilege. Others words contain the right PC sentiments, but their actions advance an inherently white power structure.

I am black everyday. But I am most viscerally made aware of it from 11–12:30 on Sundays.

“Oh how do you get your hair like that?” a fellow parishioner asks. She is white, thin, and prominent within the church hierarchy. “I wish I could get mine to do that!” Her hair is short and chic, cut like Robin Wright in “House of Cards.”

She does not want her hair like mine. She is being rude. But to point out her rudeness directly would be gauche on my part.

“We could get you a weave, girl!” I tell her, throwing a little extra hood in my inflection while smiling.

She smiles back, a bit too brightly, and wanders off moments later to speak with someone else. Score! Two points for the queen of clapbacks.

Someone lauds my blog entry as being “articulate” and I cringe. Am I being too sensitive? Did I imagine the hint of surprise in their tone, implying that full comprehension of the language I have spoken since birth is surprising coming from someone with my skin color? I've already clapped back once today. Should I just accept the papercut/compliment, knowing I am dying a little inside every time someone utters it?

Do good Christian hearts supersede unintentionally biased Christian mouths?

Does a willingness to admit that racial disparities exist insulate those whites who want diversity on their own terms from any form of criticism from their black counterparts?

For example, our church promotes intentional diversity by putting one white and one black leader at the helm of any race-related discus-

sion, ministry, or committee. This is a nice idea, but in execution simply serves to clip the wings of fledgling black leaders by assigning them a white accountabilibuddy for their authority.

Black leadership must be coordinated, initiated, and above all, supervised by a white person. The development of black leadership must be tailored to fit an existing white power structure. In no area of our church does white leadership take a backseat to developing or established black power structures.

When having a recent small group dinner discussion on racial reconciliation, married black couples were separated to meet the envisioned optics of twelve percent diversity per dining group, while white married couples were allowed to participate as members of the same dining group. When a black church member suggested opening up the discussion to include Christians from other (predominantly black) churches, they were told that it would be better for our congregation to keep these intimate conversations “in house”—for now.

We can fundraise for Haiti, but balk at fundraising for Black History Month. We use the unwieldy and painfully out-of-touch hashtag #AskMeWhyYouMatterToMe, yet refuse to embrace the simple and powerful #BlackLivesMatter. We are willing to open a dialogue between the community of Cleveland Heights and the police, but our primary concern is making sure the police don't feel unfairly attacked and targeted.

Because #PoliceLivesMatter, too.

My church is not alone. Churches are as complicit as the rest of America in perpetuating structural racism, which I define as intentional economic and political oppression for the purpose of controlling black or brown bodies.

Sunday at 11 AM remains the most segregated hour in America. The black/white wealth gap has increased exponentially since the civil rights movement. Police are still murdering people of color and getting away with it. Black and brown bodies still exist in perpetual fear of domestic terrorist action against them, and whites still question the irrefutable proof of the supremacy of their race.

Still, I stubbornly cling to the hope that the gospel that possesses

the power to reconcile sinners like Jeffrey Dahmer to co-heirship with saints like Mother Teresa can also somehow reconcile brown bodies to peach ones.

My church is trying to move forward, and I'm sure other communities of faith are too. The problem is, it's not a physical move that Christians in Cleveland and cities across the globe need to make. It's a psychological one. We have to change the way we think about race, privilege, and power, and that starts by changing the way we talk about it.

John Metta wrote a brilliant article for Huffington Post entitled *I, Racist*, which sums up the problem succinctly: "The entire discussion of race in America centers around the protection of white feelings."

We're having conversations. We're just having all the wrong ones.

Imagine for a moment that you wake up one morning, and on your way to get the paper, discover a crisp, clean one hundred dollar bill on your porch. What would you do?

You would put it in your pocket, right? Me, too.

Now imagine that on your way to the door, you saw a stranger ring your neighbor's bell. When your neighbor answers the door, the stranger stabs him ten times and takes his wallet. The thief pockets the cash and runs away, dropping a crisp one hundred dollar bill that the breeze catches and lands...

Right on your porch.

How do you feel about the money now?

Would you give it back?

What if you went next door and his wife yelled at you for not saying anything when you first saw the thief? What if she cried and lashed out at you, if she called you a coward for not risking your life to save her husband's?

Would you feel responsible for bringing the killer to justice? How involved would you be in the investigation?

For the past 400 years in this country, whites have been eyewitnesses to the crime of structural racism. Yet they have largely turned a blind eye to systemic injustice, which padded their pockets at the direct expense

of their neighbor's lives.

When blacks have the audacity to react poorly to plunder and murder, whites essentially respond with: "It's not like I killed the guy, geez."

Until #BlackLivesMatter more than white feelings, blacks will continue to get angry, whites will continue to be defensive, and progress will remain incremental.

Until we close the door on conversations centered around perception and reception, we will never move the Overton window on viable solutions.

In his rigorously introspective piece on the economics of structural racism, *A Case for Reparations*, Ta-Nehisi Coates quotes Lyndon B. Johnson as saying: "Negro poverty is not White poverty."

This holds true today and understanding the difference between the two is central to moving the Overton window on reparations work (I'm pretty sure right now it is somewhere between "unthinkable" and "radical"). Black poverty is systemic and intentional. White poverty is incidental, the cost of maintaining this most American system of control over black and brown bodies.

Let's breakdown the "racecraft" that white liberal Christians are so fond of constructing.

Pew Research Center says educational attainment, family structure, and savings are the key contributing factors of upward economic mobility within the United States.

If blacks were brought here to be slaves, our purpose to exist "at the Bottom of the Well," as Derrick Bell would say, then the aim of structural racism is to politically and economically silence blacks into accepting the plunder of our bodies, our neighborhoods, and our wallets.

Each generation is complicit, finding innovative and effortless ways to generationally divorce black and brown bodies from the ability to become upwardly mobile through the benefits of educational attainment, functional family structure, and capacity to maintain savings.

The indentured servants of the 1600s became the slaves of the 1700s. The slaves of the 1700s and 1800s became the debt peons and sharecroppers of the 1800s and 1900s. Their children, who migrated north

to find “the warmth of other suns,” became the redlining victims of the fifties, sixties, and seventies. The residents of those neighborhoods became the “thugs and addicts” the war on drugs was waged upon during the eighties and nineties.

And for the last decade, those shattered remnants have comprised a disproportionate percentage of the more than ten thousand men, women, and children who have been killed by police.

One of them was Tamir Rice.

The complete abortion of justice involved in this case calls to mind Roxane Gay’s eloquently condemning op-ed for the *Times* last July where she said: “As a black woman, I feel this tragedy through the marrow of my bones. We all should, regardless of the identities we inhabit.”

She was talking about Sandra Bland. But by this point the “litany of black and brown bodies” being denied justice have become so commonplace as to be interchangeable.

Many in Cleveland called for the resignation of prosecutor Tim McGinty. Yet by focusing on one officer, prosecutor, or victim at a time we ignore the true scope of the crime. This latest iteration of domestic terrorism is our most dangerous and insidious to date.

The FBI says members of white supremacist organizations have been infiltrating police stations since 2006 using a technique called “ghost-skinning.” To further complicate matters, the same prosecutors who depend on police cooperation to win cases are responsible for bringing charges against the very officers who ensure their paychecks.

The system has not *been* corrupted. It is corrupt. Policing in the United States (like pretty much everything else) is rooted in the control and dominion over brown bodies. A study done by researchers Mahesh Nalla and Graeme Newman reports the colonies relied mainly on a system of community policing called night watches. Their chief responsibilities:

Controlling slaves and Indians; maintaining order; regulating specialized functions...; maintaining health and sanitation; managing pests and other animals; ensuring the orderly use of streets by vehicles; controlling liquor, gambling, vice, and weapons; and keeping watch for fires.

Note the primary responsibility of our earliest police officers was to control black and brown bodies. The racial residue from the institution's inception persists today, reminding me that black and brown bodies have not *been* criminalized. They are criminal.

The highly militarized tactics we employ in policing black and brown bodies have become the proverbial “backfiring gun” in America’s face. Out of the 1,202 Americans killed by police in 2015, more than half were black. Most were Christians. Eighteen were children. This is not Justice.

This is the crime, and Cleveland stands witness. Individuals and communities of faith have a decision to make—keep going around the revolving door of privilege-accusation, privilege-denial, or break open the Overton window on who deserves full personhood in America.

I am no longer so naive as to believe that this massive shift of cognizance will happen overnight. But I am ever prayerful, ever hopeful, and ever vocal.

When a white girl at the Tamir Rice rally on New Year’s Eve tells me without any irony that she is not in charge, she’s just here to support black leadership, I take it as a sign from God.

When Bakari Kitwana tells me he would be thrilled to come to our church in February to discuss *The Case for Reparations*, I “credit it as righteousness.”

And the next time someone tells me they didn’t recognize me because I changed my hair, I’ll smile and tell them to look at my face next time. That never changes.

Hey, I’m saved, not a saint.

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Morris Ervin is the Ambassador of Culture at Open Doors Academy where he created a Restorative Justice (RJ) Program. He is a Mindfulness Instructor at University Hospital. In his work as the Founder and Youth Development Specialist of The Real Mansa, he uses Restorative Practices in his work daily in Cleveland and across the U.S. In this oral history, he explains the personal experiences that drive some of his work along with his views on allyship and dialogue across racial lines.

Healing Racial Injustices Using Restorative Practices

An Oral History, Morris Ervin

as told to Diana Sette

So, I call myself an educator, an entertainer, a motivational speaker, and a Youth Development Professional. And in addition to that, I am working with adults now, and I'm also a storyteller. I go into schools or colleges and I tell stories over music, and it's more of an interactive performance. Right now, I do a performance on racial profiling.

April 23, 1999, I was with my wife and my infant daughter, and I was pulled over by police, and basically—and you can go on my website and watch the whole performance—but basically, I was pulled out of the car, I was beaten up, in front of my family, taken to a parking lot, took the cuffs off me, and basically my life was about to be taken, and I got out of that situation after a night in jail, and I went to trial, and it was very traumatic. For my wife to witness that, and my baby, fortunately, she stayed safe during the whole traumatic incident.

You know, I blog, I've been writing in my journal since I was 19, and I've wrote about the incident for years, and now it's just so fascinating that now I'm on stage and I'm going through the incident like it happened every time I share it, and it's powerful. It's like I wrote a play about it basically. It's about my own experiences—it's relevant to what's going on today.

I have a partner who I work with, he's my DJ, and he helps me with the technical parts of the show, and he's like "Every time you share it, you get more intense and powerful, and you get more emotional." And when I'm sharing it, every time, I'm back in that moment. I'm back in that moment. But when I'm done, I'm back to the present. It's such a powerful experience.

It is kind of a piece of me. But I'm detached from it now, so after it's over, I use my interactive and facilitation skills to really be with the audience, and connect with the audience, feel the audience, and give them encouragement, and we talk about what they're going through, and it's a really powerful experience. I have healed, but I have to go back to the past to really get back in the moment to get back into the present.

(Laughs)

Sharing traumatic experiences is not a weakness, it's actually a strength. And it can actually heal you. You can get this psychic energy from the crowd, people can relate. It's just beautiful. It's just beautiful that God allowed me to be a vehicle to share that, especially during these troubling times.

I did it for one particular school, and the principal came up to me after, and was like, "Man, I don't know how you get this level of engagement, but you are amazing." So then I went to the school the next day and I noticed that some of the teachers came up to me and expressed their experiences, and hugged me, and then some of the teachers really gave me some scowls. So I talked to the principal, and he said, "Yeah, a certain number of our teachers really thought your whole performance was about police bashing." And I was like, really? Really, you're going to make this about you, again?

If you look at my performance—telling my story—and then you look at the whole entire journey, it has nothing to do with police bashing.

Because guess what, when I'm doing my presentation I ask some questions, and I asked this question, "Raise your hand if you've ever had someone incarcerated, a family member incarcerated, if you've ever experienced police harassment." And every kid in the auditorium raised their hand. And they weren't joking around.

Now, if I'm a school teacher, and I'm standing against the wall, and looking at this, I'm like "This is some information! This is like an evaluation, an assessment, about what my kids are going through." And some of the teachers are sitting there—and I'm making an assumption—are focused on me "police bashing" and missing the whole entire point.

There's an opportunity in that resistance. One of my ultimate goals is to work with a school district for six months to a year, because I don't mind dealing with resistance, it just takes time.

If I have the opportunity to talk with those teachers, I want them to feel comfortable to say exactly what is on their minds. And if these teachers are just seeing me for an assembly, and I'm not having the opportunity to really be intimate with them, and really allow them to say whatever they need to say to build that trust... then I think adults are just like young people. They don't trust easy, they're skeptical, they're cynical.

I don't just do nonviolent communication and mindfulness work so I can walk around dancing and feeling happy. I do this stuff, because things need to be resolved, people need to be heard.

You know, there are a lot of injustices. I try to tell people "You can't just be mindful in a vacuum. What's the point?" What's the point? To have all these skills just to have them? You know this world is an ugly place. It's beautiful, but to bring some more beauty, we need to have these practices to help people, to enrich people, to be able to be self-expressed and be honest.

When you sit down in those conflict situations—first of all, emotions are very thick. Tension is very high. A lot of times the first thing you want people to do is kind of reflect, right? What happened? What was I thinking? What have I thought about since? How have my actions affected the people around me? How have my actions affected myself? What do I need to do to make this situation right? And then the other set of questions is, hey, what did I first realize when I was affected with the situation? What is the hardest thing to deal with?

The first thing I do is I have people just write and reflect, and that kind of brings down the emotion, and gives them the opportunity to

settle. And then I kind of facilitate the dialogue. Usually I say, you know, “One person speaks at a time, the other person listens.” And before the other person speaks, they have to validate and give that person’s empathy. “Use ‘I statements,’ you have to refrain from judgment.”

And so, it’s kind of like a dance. And you have to stay focused on the specific issue. No going back into the past. No bringing up old stuff. If there’s a situation where something was said on Friday, we’re going to deal with Saturday first. So, it’s a playful dance.

I’m a facilitator. People feel safe, and I let people express themselves after they reflect. I hear what the other person was saying, and vice versa. You’ve got to make sure people are heard and you have to make sure people really get each other, because usually it goes deeper than just what was said or done. Usually, it’s someone’s own insecurity, or somebody, 99 percent of the time, someone heard it the wrong way, right? Everyone has their own perspective, and vantage point.

So, again, it’s just using my nonviolent communication skills, having people express their feelings, having people express if they needed more respect in the situation, if they needed more understanding. So you really get to the root of the problem by using the restorative practice questions and then the nonviolent communication skills, people can speak and listen from the heart.

If I’m a white, middle-class male listening to a black, 20-year-old male, and I really get to listen to how he’s affected, and how I’m affected, then we can really start to get somewhere.

That’s where nonviolent communication comes in because if people start to use labels and judgments, we can stop the conversation, process, and again, get back to, “we want to speak from our own experiences.”

What is important about restorative practices is that, you know, we might not be getting to a solution that day, but the process is really what’s important. It allows people to really hear from underneath our current circumstances, and it builds a greater sense of awareness and connectedness.

As the facilitator I can use my own mindfulness practice to take care of my own thoughts and judgments. When I feel some anxiety in my

belly. Or I feel some anxiety in my face. To notice it, and loosen it. Get back to my breath. To really get to the present moment.

I have white friends who are concerned about me, because they know my story, and because I'm also Muslim. If you think about the history of this country and when we were brought here as slaves—a lot of white people helped. They were a part of the Underground Railroad. They risked their lives, they used their resources. Right is right, and they helped. They were very courageous. That is on a higher level of sacrificing your time. And you look at these protests now, and half the people are white.

To me justice has no color. So I would say you can definitely be an active part of the struggle. Because everybody's struggle is really the struggle. If you look at the universality of it—whether its a woman's struggle, whether it's the struggle for racial justice, to combat what's happening to the Muslims—it's a struggle. So being part of a struggle, to me, is really all of our responsibilities.

I have some white friends who are speechless, and they don't do anything but listen to my pain. You don't have to do anything with it, but be present. To be present for somebody's suffering without having to feel like you have to do anything with it.

Because I don't know what is like to be a woman, but I can be present with the struggle. Just be present.

If It Takes a Village...

Darius Stubbs

If it takes a village to raise a child
Then it certainly takes a village to kill one.
To box and sort and itemize him
Advertise him like a commodity
Price and sell him short but never sell him as a child
Never as a child
Always as a man.
A twelve year old man who seemed older
and looked menacing
and brought about his own death sentence.
and who ever heard of a twelve year old man before?
Hell, at least give him the Jewish benefit of a doubt and give that boy
another year.
Is he old enough to be bar mitzvah'd? ...Then think twice before that
cold blood shooting.
And don't talk to me about crime that's black on black.
These hoodlums running up and down
repping they hood and not squashing beef,
it aint they job to protect these streets
to keep they heat tucked up tight at they hip.
That's another problem entirely that our killer village is far too keen
to ignore.
No. It aint those thugs' jobs.
It's the job of those bullies in blue to protect you
to protect me
if I don't look too scary that day.
If I grin
and shuffle
and say yessuh that day,
maybe I can make it home to my roommates. And my cat.

But if I dress the wrong way
Or talk the wrong way
Or move the wrong way
Or just don't feel like playing the house nigga that day,
I may not make it home to my roommates and my cat and my books
and my dirty laundry
And I don't even have to do much,
don't have to do anything to deserve that shot to the head
to the chest
to the gut.
To deserve that chokehold tackle or that fractured police van neck.
I don't have to do nothing but not be white and not be in Bay Village
or Beachwood.
In Fact
I wouldn't
have to do nothing more
than be a little kid,
playing in my neighborhood
and happen to catch a bully in blue on a particularly racist day.
And he could roll up on me
right up on me
not take the time to even count to two
roll up on me
shoot at point blank
and get off scot-free
cuz yall want him to
And I
We
can't do nothing
but stay black and die.

Personal Dispatch

Julia Murphy

I'm from Shaker Heights and I live in Tremont. I went to public schools and work in public service in Cleveland Heights. Here is my dispatch. Here is what I'm working with. Here's what I'm trying. I'm hesitant about this topic, but that hesitancy is what keeps many white people, who also don't think the status quo is okay, out of the conversation.

I used to brag about being able to skip class in high school. A smart-looking (but not necessarily smart) white girl on an open campus had free rein. Now that I understand the other implications of this bias I'm embarrassed at how flippant I was about this immunity I once had. Even in the racially-diverse, open-forum-cultured Shaker Heights High School I was treated in deference to the way I looked.

I still have that same privilege, but on an even more serious scale. I'm not afraid of the police. I can walk, or bike, or drive where I'd like without fear of being stopped without warrant, frisked, knocked to the ground, taken into custody. I'm not afraid of being shot by a police officer for moving my hands the wrong way.

While Jim Crow and redlining are no longer "legal," their impact is still apparent in everyday interactions between people and formal interactions with "the system." It's an implicit segregation, it's an institutional segregation, it's a psychological segregation. I live in a different Cleveland than do my black neighbors.

On the night of the Michael Brelo verdict, I saw the police in their militarized riot gear at West 6th, waiting to herd the protesters into the alley to arrest them. Their attire spoke louder even than their actions; like storm troopers they were protected by bulletproof shields, face masks, and weapons in their hands. Their attire was inflammatory. I wasn't protesting; I was in a car that police let pass by. This privileged, unequal treatment is our segregation.

I hear my white family and friends speak respectfully about the horrific killings in our community and country, so many that I can't list the

names here. They're upset. They should be. But being upset is a privilege; being afraid is a reality for black people here. This is the state of segregation in Cleveland: yes, it is public health and economics, but it is also mental and emotional.

I sat in my car and cried about Tamir Rice, but I wasn't afraid.

I see people implicitly enforcing this segregation every day, often under the guise of something else. I see it in people laughing at names on job applications, misunderstood instructions, and mispronounced words after people have left the room: "It's *library*, if you want a job here you better say it right."

I see it in my uncle, speaking in pedantic punctuation marks, as he explains the "teach a man to fish" proverb to articulate why he's against the welfare system.

Instead of just steering me to white neighborhoods, my real estate agent said, "Well there's some things I'm just not allowed to comment on," when I asked her about seeing a house on the north side of Cleveland Heights.

I sit on a committee aimed at spurring community conversation about culture and race issues and in the first meeting there wasn't a single black person who had been invited to contribute.

I was catching up with a friend of mine living in Brooklyn, New York, who got a good job and started volunteering as a math tutor. He felt overwhelmed by the lack of opportunity for the kids he worked with. In a city where he could reach to touch anything he needed, there were kids who had never left the borough, whose soaring and sometimes delusional aspirations to be athletes and musicians were going unguided. This friend is from Conneaut, Ohio. He knew what it was like not to have a lot, and he said with unwarranted guilt, "How is it that I got to the point where I can work for free to help people who have so much less than me now. I wasn't unlike them, but look at how different we are now. What can I do?"

He and I are small people. We are only recently interacting with adults as adults ourselves. We aren't on boards. We don't have a population of followers on social media. People don't ask us what we think,

and then go out and act on our thoughts. So what can I do, what could anyone do?

I can look you in the eye and smile back. I can be friends with my neighbors, and ask if I can run through their sprinkler too. I can carry the pamphlet from the ACLU that explains what to do if you're stopped by the police. I can give it to my white friends also, if only to show them what black kids have to deal with. I can know not to interpret curtness as "black aggression," and not to assume someone's intelligence by their voice over the phone. I can act with compassion and try to communicate my humanity in everything that I do. I can be unassuming and fair, and try to serve as a role model for other people who may also only be able to contribute in small ways. I can bear witness, and learn to be better, and not discredit my community's ability to do the same.

While helping digitize my organization's archives I recently found a photo from 1929 of four white elementary school girls in blackface. The caption reads, "In the study of cotton and the life on the plantation, the boys and girls learn the first elements of clog dancing." For some reason, they could make a cartoonish class game out of black history, but couldn't say the word *slavery*.

I showed the picture to my black colleague and she looked closely, just saying "Nope... Nope. Nope." I wanted to delete the photo, for shame, but resisted the urge. Wiping this piece of our history would have been our own, contemporary version of the inappropriate way of addressing it, like the blackface dance itself. Was this the right thing to do? Should I have shown it to her in the first place?

I exercise at the rec center in Cleveland Heights, and often use the corner of the basketball court while kids are shooting hoops. I'm often the token white person and girl. I use a pen and Post-it note to keep track of my exercise plan, and once I saw a boy deliberately but nonchalantly crush my pen under his basketball shoe until it broke. Part of me couldn't blame him; he was a preteen showing off to his friends. Maybe he looked at me and knew he could get away with it without consequence. Maybe it had nothing to do with my race or gender, and I just read too far into it.

I almost walked away, but couldn't. "Why'd you break my pen?" I asked quietly, stepping onto the court with it.

"Yeah, why'd you do that? She ain't a bitch." His friend threw the ball over my head for the hoop.

"Most white girls are," he said under his breath, laughing.

I heard him and, in a rare moment of articulateness, said, "Do you really think that? They're probably just afraid to talk to you the same way you might not want to talk to them." I didn't need a response. I just wanted to hold him a tiny bit accountable, and not live up to my own stereotype. I wanted him to hear my voice, and to acknowledge him as a real person.

I don't know if I'm doing this right, but I use a quote by the writer Samuel Beckett to help keep me out on that limb: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

I acknowledge that I have no idea what chronic fear and institutional suppression can do to a body, and maybe it's naive of me to think that kind words or acknowledgement can help dismantle this wall that's been built between me and my black neighbors, but this is my dispatch of my small quest to collapse the differences between us.

On Saturday, May 23, 2015, Cuyahoga Common Pleas Judge John P. O'Donnell gave a not guilty verdict in the trial of police Officer Michael Brelo. Brelo had been charged with voluntary manslaughter in the killings of two unarmed, black occupants of a car involved in a 22-minute police chase, from downtown Cleveland to East Cleveland. Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams were killed at the end of that chase, when 139 rounds were fired at the 1979 Chevy Malibu they drove. One of 13 police officers who fired at the car, Brelo fired the final shots while standing on the hood of the Malibu. The chase had begun when the Malibu backfired and the noise was mistaken for shots fired. The judge's acquittal of Brelo touched off protests throughout the region and nation. What follows here is an excerpt of a dispatch to Salon.com by local writer Arthur Chu.

Excerpt from
Every Single Cop in Cleveland is Here

Arthur Chu

The voice that keeps ringing in my head is Brian O'Halloran from *Clerks*: "I'm not even supposed to be here today."

I'd, of course, seen the initial Facebook announcement of a protest to take place this weekend in memory of Tamir Rice; it turned out also to be the day the verdict was announced in the trial of Michael Brelo for the shooting of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams. I'd also seen, and signal-boosted, the creepy counter-protest stacked with people promising to bring concealed weapons to "protect" their neighborhood.

But I'd told everyone I couldn't be there in person. We're starting tech rehearsals for the play I'm in, "Johanna: Facing Forward," which opens next week. My Memorial Day weekend is already spoken for.

And, if I'm honest, I was relieved it was. I'm not completely an arm-chair activist. I was there for the Tamir Rice protests at City Hall back in December. I put in my time hanging out in McPherson Square with Occupy D.C. in 2011, I marched with No on 8 in L.A. in 2008.

But I have to be honest. I'm tired. I'm old (I'm 31, which means I'm already overdue for the Carousel in "Logan's Run"). I'm increasingly risk-averse. A friend recently assured me that I could do more good by writing impassioned articles from the safety of my home than by just being another anonymous body to be shoved by cops into the back of a van, which was a wonderful argument because it was exactly what I wanted to hear.

But then, around 5 PM, as I'm leaving rehearsals for "Johanna" at Cleveland Public Theatre in Gordon Square, I find my way back to the freeway on Detroit Avenue blocked by a slow-moving cordon of police vehicles—every kind of police vehicle, squad cars, motorcycles and, yes, a row of cops mounted on horses.

My brain fried from a long rehearsal, my stomach empty, I very briefly wonder if this is an early Memorial Day parade. Then I remember.

I see spectators in front of bodegas, pharmacies, gas stations, smartphones in hand. An elderly white man shouts, "Thank you!" to the cops. His neighbor, a black man, glares and mutters under his breath, "What exactly are you thanking them for?" A lady—apparently totally out of the loop—pulls up to a squad car and shouts out the driver's side window, "Is downtown closed today?"

The sharp reply, "No, but I wouldn't go down there if I were you." The same cop looks back at me, crawling along behind her squad car at five miles an hour, and angrily gestures for me to turn around.

I have no water, I haven't eaten in hours, I have no idea what the plan for the protest is or who's organizing it. I'm not even dressed for it—I put on nice slacks and a dress shirt this morning for a TV interview before going down to rehearsals for the afternoon. My phone is at a 4 percent charge.

I'd had friends send me messages warning me the mood downtown after Michael Brelo's acquittal was really ugly, and the cops far more on edge after the riots in Baltimore than they had been last year. They said it was best to stay home, to vent on Twitter or Facebook—even friends who I knew cared deeply about this issue were counseling caution. Intellectually, I agreed.

But I'd written all those articles about #BlackLivesMatter. Half the people who follow me on Twitter followed me because of those viral tweets I made. I have talked a very big talk about caring about police brutality against black Americans.

And it's one thing to simply not intend to go to a protest because you don't think you have time. It's another to have the protest suddenly turn out to be a few hundred feet in front of you and to choose to physically turn your car around and drive away.

There's an empty parking spot on the street at Detroit and 55th. I jump out, click the fob and start striding briskly past the cop cars, trying to catch up. They pay me no mind. It's around 5:30 PM, and it turns out my day is only beginning.

When I catch up with the protesters I gather from snatches of conversation that they're traveling back from the Cudell Recreation Center, where Tamir Rice was shot, to regroup at the Justice Center.

No one really sees me start walking with the others or acknowledged me once I did—people were already tired, focused on keeping one foot in front of the other. We've apparently reached the stage, after having already been walking for hours, when one of the leaders shouting out "NO JUSTICE?" only gets half the people responding with "NO PEACE!" (I shouted back "NO PEACE!" every time, if only to confirm to myself I was a protester, not a curious bystander.)

The most surreal thing about the whole situation is that the protesters as a whole are enough to stretch across a single city block—maybe a hundred people max—but are surrounded on all sides by a phalanx of police officers who easily outnumbered them. A double row of police cars in front, a double row of police cars behind, motorcycles and horses stationed on the lawn to either side. If I hadn't known what was going on I'd have thought it was a presidential motorcade and the cops an honor guard.

The only sounds are the intermittent chants of "NO JUSTICE, NO

PEACE” and the steady rumble of motorcycles and horses peeling around to keep up with us, like some twisted version of a relay race. A better metaphor than a presidential motorcade, I think, is that we’re being herded—like we were dangerous animals in a slowly moving cage. There’d been police presence at the first Tamir Rice protest I attended, but not nearly so much—maybe a quarter as many cops watching more than twice as many people. This is insane, I think to myself, every single cop in Cleveland is here.

A wild thought comes to mind—this would be the perfect time to commit a crime on the other side of town, they wouldn’t even hear about it for hours. I wonder how many people on Facebook have already made that joke. I wonder, if there is a burglary or shooting somewhere on the East Side today, how many people will say it’s the protesters’ fault.

I’m the only Asian guy in the crowd, and the only person stupid enough to go on a long walk like this in dress shoes. The crowd shifts over time, people discreetly peeling away and joining up. There are a few faces that stick in my mind. The teenager with a T-shirt saying “The New Slavery” who’s wearing a rusty metal chain wrapped around his shoulders. (“Be careful,” his neighbor says to him. “They’ll call that chain a weapon, and then next thing they’ll be saying we all had knives and tire irons.”)

The crowd is mostly black, with a scattering of white allies. There are a few people with lime-green baseball caps marking them as observers from the National Lawyers Guild, taking notes on paper pads (how quaint, but I guess then there’s no issue of battery life). I find their presence disturbing—there hasn’t been a perceived need for them at past protests I’ve been to, but now there are three of them that I can see, and more will join us later in the day.

The cops’ steady staring at us is starting to spook me, and I find myself gravitating toward a knot of white girls—almost as incongruous as I am, in skirts and bright lipstick. I wonder if people will think I’m a “mactivist” here to get laid. Really, I just want to avoid getting shot. (A

guy behind me somewhere in the crowd expresses a similar sentiment: “When shit gets hectic ain’t gonna be no little white girl’s body on the front page of the paper.”)

A few people are on bikes, circling around the pedestrians, concentrically mirroring the dance of the horses and motorcycles surrounding us. One of them sticks out, a white girl in a dark blue dress. She briefly steps down to chat with her friend, saying that as a trans woman she feels that different activist communities need to stick together, that she wishes the LGBT community in Cleveland—which is very outspoken—did a better job speaking up about this issue.

Later on I will read on Twitter that one of the people arrested tonight is trans and in need of extra support, and realize it’s probably her. I will think of all the horror stories I’ve heard from trans activist friends about how trans women are treated in lockup. I will try to put it out of my mind, to stop thinking about when the last time I saw her was, when it happened, to just get over it and get to sleep. I will fail.

And then shit gets hectic.

The cops have decided the violent incident at Harry Buffalo merits reprisal. A cadre of policemen on foot, backed up by mounted officers, surges into our midst, grabs a young black man and wrestles him to the ground to be cuffed.

I don’t think he was one of the guys pressing up to the windows but I admit I have no way of knowing—that scene was too chaotic to see anything clearly. What I don’t get is how, if I don’t know, how the cops possibly could, when none of them were as close as I was—eyewitness testimony from someone sitting at the bar with a cellphone?

Without warning they grab another guy and cuff him too—this one a white man with a gray beard. (“Why are you arresting an old man?” someone shouts.)

I’m tense, waiting—surely if the crime they’re arresting people for is the crime of crowding up to the windows, then they’re looking for ten to

twenty perps, none of whose faces were clearly visible to the people inside—but no, they’ve made their point for now. Two squad cars come to collect the two men, the younger guy screaming “I can’t breathe! These cuffs are too tight!” as he’s taken away.

At this point I want out. I curse myself for cowardice but I can see one of the mounted cops hover-handing his holster while looking us over. Today isn’t going to end well—and there isn’t even a game here, we came here for no reason.

But we can hear the baseball game going on next door. And the cops that aren’t shouting, “Back off!” are shouting, “Keep moving!” And so, without anyone giving any explicit order that I can hear, we move toward Progressive Field.

It takes a little while, again, for the cops to realize where we’re going, but once they do the whole group from the Q—which has upgraded from “small army” to “medium-sized army”—swarms over to separate us from the swirling throng of sports fans who’ve just watched the Tribe beat the Cincinnati Reds.

We’re once more crowded uncomfortably close to the cops, who’ve decided to set up a formation of motorcycles and horses four ranks deep between us and the gate to the stadium—this even though the outflowing fans outnumber us hundreds to one, and don’t seem particularly scared of us. Several of them, in fact, walk right past the cops and through our protest on the way to their cars, one guy nudging another and whispering, “Get a load of this,” by which he probably means the surreal irony of people chanting “HANDS UP DON’T SHOOT” in time with the stadium’s sound system blaring “Cleveland Rocks.”

I hear a series of loud banging noises as the cops assemble. I hope the sound is fireworks from the stadium, even though the sun is still high and fireworks would be invisible. I think, with some irony, that it might be a motorcycle’s engine backfiring (it was the sound of their car’s backfiring engine that got Tim Russell and Malissa Williams targeted by a

police chase in the first place). I fear, despite knowing that it's against police policy, that it might be someone firing warning shots.

I wish my phone hadn't died hours ago. There'd be no better image to capture from today than this weird expanding cone of people, about 70 protesters facing down over a hundred cops in front of thousands of bemused bystanders in Indians gear.

A white girl with glasses suddenly says she's having an anxiety attack. "What are you scared of?" a dude snorts at her dismissively. "The cops!" she says, voice cracking as she tries to stifle a shout, clearly afraid of drawing the cops' attention.

I'm freaked out by how I've almost gotten used to seeing police officers circling us every time I look around—despite having just seen two guys get wrestled into squad cars. I watch as people roll their eyes and ignore the girl in mid-panic attack. I feel upset on her behalf—I'm freaked out, too. I think about how I'm used to cops being dismissive or unsympathetic to me but not actively hostile.

I think about how when I was younger I actually did lead a highway cop on a "high-speed chase"—because I was too zoned out from ADHD to realize the person the cop was trying to pull over was me—and got away with nothing more than a lecture and having to take traffic school, rather than being surrounded by squad cars and shot 137 times. I think about how careful the organizers of the last protest I attended were to avoid "antagonizing" police officers, and how from the moment I joined this protest the antagonism has been at 11. I think about how you can only swallow so much fear before it turns into rage.

I want to say something to the girl, but the next time I think to look for her, she's gone.

A circle forms. The man who called for the action, a tall black man with

a sign about his brother having been shot and killed by police two years ago, orders the media reps out of the circle and the cameras turned away.

No one's there to photograph me as part of this human chain. I make a mental note for myself that I'm here, forming the southwest corner of the circle. I wonder if I might get away with total anonymity tonight—only to suddenly have the guy who just linked arms with me on my right turn to me and say, "By the way, I know this isn't the time, but I'm a big fan." I give him a forced smile.

Our leader speaks about serving in the U.S. Marine Corps—just as Michael Brelo did. He talks about the victims in Cleveland—Tanesha Anderson, Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams, Tamir Rice—as well as the victims who've made national news—Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray.

I've heard this speech before, or rather, speeches similar to it. I've heard this speech enough that I can give it myself, as can most of my friends who care about politics. I wish it weren't so terribly familiar.

The bulk of the protester trickles out of the Justice Center courtyard, now moving on East 4th Street—a trendy Cleveland spot for fine dining and entertainment. East 4th itself is no longer a through street, it's a pedestrian mall where people stroll and eat at outdoor tables and peer through shop windows.

This is set up to be a direct collision with people drinking and partying on a Saturday night. People are shouting, "Hit them in the pocket!" and even though I don't see Cavs fans among us it seems like he's been successful at spreading his message.

I take stock of who's in the crowd as we head out. DeRay isn't with us. The orange-shirted Puncture the Silence reps aren't with us. The Marine isn't with us. The banner we were marching behind isn't with us—its bearer wandered off somewhere unknown after we got back to the Justice Center.

The National Lawyers Guild reps are still with us, which isn't all that

reassuring—they're primarily there, after all, to provide evidence in case people go to jail. Everyone I saw as a leader earlier in the day has apparently decided going down to East 4th Street is a bad idea. I'm probably a fool for choosing to do so—but I'm only here in the first place because of my urge to run toward trouble, not away from it.

As we walk down Prospect Avenue the chant becomes "Unity is Power! Power in Numbers!," even though our numbers are now the smallest they've been all day.

I hear a voice behind me shout, in a mocking cadence, "We Don't Know What We're Doing! We've Never Led Anything!"

I turn and I'm surprised to see it's a black dude who's started walking in line behind us, not a heckler on the sidewalk. He's tall, got hipster glasses and is clutching a Starbucks bag. He adds, "What other ignorant, offensive, unhelpful shit can you think of to chant?" to the girl walking with him. He seems to have a black belt in hipster irony—I would know.

"I've been in this movement for five minutes and I'm over it," he adds. "Could do the same amount of yelling back home and accomplish as much, without getting shot."

He turns his withering gaze on the cops surrounding us. "Look at this. How scary. Look at these terrifying rioters. They're going to set the city on fire. Save us, save us." The tone indicates the sheer absurdity of the police presence, the Blues-Brothers-level disproportionality. Destroy the city? This crowd? I wouldn't be scared of us either.

I try to tune the hipster out. He's pissing me off. He's getting under my skin. He sounds too much like the voice in my head.

I hear him speculate on whether one might get a better caliber of protest using Facebook and Google Plus to organize an event that only reliable, trusted people hear about. I wonder if he thinks a better-organized protest would accomplish anything if it consisted of only ten people you personally knew.

Then I look again, and he's gone.

East 4th Street is packed. It is, I suppose, Memorial Day weekend, and people either didn't get the memo about the Brelo acquittal or decided to defy the dire warnings of "riots" and enjoy a nice night out anyway. People turn from their craft beers and \$25 entrees to take in the sight of us. The smell of food makes my empty stomach rumble. I find myself getting irrationally mad—exactly what I was afraid would happen. My feet hurt, my throat and stomach are sore, a man who shot an unarmed couple was just acquitted and called a hero in the media, and these well-fed people have the temerity to be annoyed.

I've been one half of a couple dining at an overpriced East 4th Street restaurant before. I try to empathize, I remind myself I'm not any better than these people, that my first impulse when being interrupted eating would be irritation too. But I think of meeting Tim Russell's father at the two-year-anniversary memorial service last year, held at the school parking lot where Tim and Malissa were shot. I think of all the times I went out for a nice meal after tsk-ing about an atrocity in the paper. I think of my dad's story about the helpless frustration he felt, traveling through China in late September 2001, seeing Chinese citizens happily oblivious while the United States was in mourning.

I want to be here. I want to see this play out. Just like my response to #BlackBrunch on Twitter—it might not be the most effective tactic but it's a conversation that needs to happen. How do you make grief and pain real to people who have the wonderful privilege of ignoring it?

I see a skinny kid in a pink T-shirt get approached by a big guy in Indians gear. I worry for a second things will get ugly, but the guy smiles and shakes his hand. He tells the kid, "I saw that fat fuck give you a hard time at the Indians game and I was so impressed by how you handled it."

I hadn't even noticed that happening. I want to get to know this kid. Suddenly I see someone pushing his way through the crowd—it's the Marine, and he's got a large woman in a green jacket with him, a woman I recognize as one of the leaders from the protests last year. She pulls out a megaphone and begins exhorting the crowd.

I doubt the Marine had a sudden change of heart. I think he's here

to salvage the situation. I think for a second it might be salvageable.

The kid in the pink shirt is talking to the white street musician parked near us. He'd stopped strumming his guitar when we came in, but now starts singing full-throatedly, "This Land Is Your Land." God bless you, Woody Guthrie. That kid has a knack for developing rapport with people. Maybe with him, and the Marine, and the lady in the green jacket here, things will end all right.

Then I suddenly realize a girl who's walking among the patio tables of the Greenhouse Tavern isn't a waitress—she looks like one from a distance, with her black skirt and white shirt, but the shirt has a "Black Lives Matter" slogan from it.

Apparently the Greenhouse Tavern management also realized this too late, because she's getting close to a customer, she's getting in his face, she's shouting and he's shouting, and her friend is now there backing her up, and suddenly there's the sound of a glass breaking.

Chaos.

Everyone who isn't immediately drawn into the scuffle at the House of Blues is running for the mouth of East 4th Street. We realize the shit has well and truly hit the fan when we see a solid wall of cops in full riot gear—vests, masks, batons—blocking our escape.

We are fucked. Most of the protesters retreat back into a solid mass at the center of the alley, realizing they are fucked. One girl holds up her smartphone and films the advancing cops, walking backwards just two paces ahead of them. Christ, she's brave.

I am not proud of what I do next. It ranks among one of the things I've done I'm least proud of in my life. Later, as I write this piece, I will go through it over and over again in my head, telling myself that adding my name to the list of 71 people arrested that night wouldn't actually have helped anyone. That escaping to tell the story is more important, that telling the story from a jail cell would only harm, not help my credibility. (Later I will see a photo of one of the National Lawyers Guild

observers being cuffed, his notebook abandoned on the ground.)

I will read the stories of people crammed into tiny rooms used to store rotting milk, given only piss-yellow water to drink, left to swelter without air conditioning, crawled upon by spiders.

I will read the newspapers saying “people were firing pepper spray into the crowd.” It’s possible, I guess. I didn’t see or smell any such thing, didn’t see anyone in the crowd of onlookers clutching their face. People were just standing, gawking, like they were watching TV. People in the crowd of onlookers certainly acted and felt like they were completely safe.

I know because I was one of them.

When I see the cops I jump up on the sidewalk. I want to say my next actions were “instinctive,” but they aren’t. I know what I’m doing. I tuck my shirt in, roll my sleeves down. I’m dressed up, in my nice pants and shirt, rumpled though they are. I look like I’m out for a drink.

I blend in. I go from protester to onlooker, just like that. Because of my clothes. Because of my facial features. Because of my skin.

The cops don’t witness this transition. (Not that my moving from the street to the sidewalk matters, there were onlookers walking across the street straight through the crowd while we were protesting anyway.)

Indeed, in a scene right out of *Run Lola Run*, a cop taps me on the shoulder and motions for me to get back from the edge of the sidewalk, concerned for my safety.

The kid in the pink shirt is the first one they lead out in cuffs. The street musician just stands there, frozen, while he protests he didn’t do anything—his voices dies as the cuffs snap on. Another man comes out, shoved against the hood of a squad car, shouting “I was peacefully protesting! I told those girls not to step off the street—you can’t do this!”

I hear more cop cars come. The riot gear cops march shoulder to shoulder down the street with purpose. I realize they really are going to arrest everyone—and by “everyone” I mean everyone they identify as a protester, and by everyone they identify as a protester I mean everyone who looks too scruffy or too hippieish or too black to be on East 4th Street.

The crowd of curious onlookers splits into two groups—one that

apparently just wants to get the hell away, and one that sees this mass arrest as a free piece of dinner theater. (I hear a guy start his own rhythmic clapping and chanting, “Thank you officers!”)

I slip behind a group of college kids—all white or Asian—strolling casually past the police cordon. We pass without them so much as looking at us. One of them remarks to the other, “Yeah, this happens every time there’s a shooting,” as though discussing the weather.

My heart is racing. I am, I realize now, honestly horrified by the thought of how close I came to being arrested. I’m thanking God for my good fortune and cursing myself for taking advantage of it. I feel like a coward, like a traitor, like a piece of shit. “Model minority privilege” has never been so real to me as the moment I walked past those cops right out of that alley.

Once we were out of sight of the cops I stop and collapse on a bench, trying to find my breath. I see more police vehicles pass me this time—vans, not cars, ready to collect a fresh harvest of detainees. The abandoned campus of Aviation High School will be crowded tonight.

My car is still parked near Cleveland Public Theatre, at 55th and Detroit, two miles away across the bridge. It’s gotten dark. It’s a long way to walk alone, and I’m already dead on my feet. My wife is out of town—there’s no one to pick me up.

I think about ducking into one of the downtown restaurants and bars, filling my stomach, emptying my bladder. The thought of joining the yuppie revelers who are even now discussing “the news from the protests” makes me dry heave.

Instead I start the long walk back.

Once I cross the bridge, it’s eerily quiet—no officers patrolling on foot, no cop cars barreling down to the scene of the “riot.” It’s like a different world.

I pass a small convenience store—by “small” I mean the whole store is smaller than the living room of my parents’ house. A Middle Eastern

man is struggling with a heavy steel table next to his outdoor gas grill. An older man is watching him impassively.

"Hey, friend!" he shouts to me as I walk past. "Can you lend us a hand? I can't carry anything." He gestures to his back.

Why not. I walk over to the other end of the table, lift when the younger man tells me to, carry it the few feet back into the store. He thanks me profusely, I tell him not to mention it but ask if I can use his restroom.

The restroom is packed with boxes and the lights in it don't work. I'm past caring. I pee in the dark.

As I'm about to leave it suddenly clicks for the older man that I'm a pedestrian. "Hey, where you walking?"

I gesture up the street. "My car's just a few blocks that way."

"You seem like a nice guy. You need a ride?"

I'm hesitant, but after today, having my luck run out finally by randomly getting mugged would almost be a relief. "Sure."

He adjusts the seat in his car for me, asks me what kind of music I like. Introduces himself, tells me where he's from (Cairo), asks me where I'm from (Broadview Heights). His remarks go in one ear and out the other, mostly. But he does make a comment about the kindness of strangers.

He, mercifully, does not ask me where I'm walking from. He doesn't comment on the thickness of my voice, the way I keep wiping at my eyes.

The stupid marketing slogan runs through my head. "This Is Cleveland" (#ThisisCLE on Twitter).

That was Cleveland, today. The shooting. The acquittal. The frustrated, disorganized rage bashing itself senseless against the walls of the system. The people being herded into cramped smelly vans, charged with "unlawful assembly" for being in East 4th Street when two girls started a fight, based on their clothes and the color of their skin.

The man pulls up next to my car and shakes my hand, tells me to have a nice weekend, drives off.

This is Cleveland too.

I drive home.

Kinsman

Ali McClain

the day after the baby is killed
by a gunshot wound to the chest

you still have to ride behind
death's blood red breath.

you still have to picture
the baby in the car trying

to grab the bullet as if it were
a glossy sweet thing.

you do not want to imagine
the pitch of the baby's wail.

you do not want to see the women
walking with bright white Save-A-Lot

bags wrapped around their wrists.
you do not want to see the man

at the RTA bus stop swatting at a bee.
you do not want to see

anyone trying to hurt anything.
you do not want to face

the red lights, the teddy bear memorials,
the trash, the raggedy strollers, the slow

slow walk of the low-down folks.
you do not want to ride by

the hand painted Casino Trip! sign
stapled high on a pole like a goal.

you do not want to hear the radio
scroll through tragedy and woe.

you hear the beginning of the word
Oregon and you know the next

stories will be about more shootings.
you think about the baby killed by the bullet.

After School

Ali McClain

a fancy white
woman wearing pearls
and a cardigan
talks solutions to
gun violence.
she does not have an answer,
only offers hope and a worksheet.
she tells the after school girls to
picture their ideal community.
Draw what it looks like, she says.
one girl, let's call her Mimi,
wants golden and chocolate streets.
Mimi is a dreamer so she draws big,
fat \$100 bills and labels them as grass.
two citizens are pictured
riding unicycles with red
safety flags that read,
"FReE FOOD fOR aLL".
when Mimi is done
the woman stares and says,
that's wishful thinking.

Were You Scared?

Sarah Marcus

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***All students named in this essay are at least 18 years of age and have given their consent.**

It's 4:30 and we are sitting around on the floor of the dirty hallway outside of my "cloffice," which is literally a very small utility closet that I joke about doing yoga in each morning. We are using the paper cutter and several children's-sized, safe, "microbiotic" scissors, preparing "pocket poems" for National Poetry Month. I am in charge of posting poems all around the school next week, so I offered extra credit to any seniors in my Creative Writing class who wanted to help. Anthony grabs the paper cutter and insists on cutting too much card stock at one time. He doesn't cut down in one smooth motion; he's chopping them up. I keep bugging him about the terrible grinding sound, about the ragged edges and being careful, but he tells me to "relax" because "they look great."

Dajah and I opt for the kid scissors, and Devonte watches and pretends to do work for another class. The hallways won't clear out for another hour at least, so people have to step over us as they pass by.

Because of the book we're reading in my Resistance Writing class, Jodi Picoult's *The Storyteller*, our conversation naturally turns to funny family stories and funerals. We laugh and talk about my "character first" boarding school for delinquents, and why I wasn't home "growing up" with my sister. I love these moments the most, when we are relaxed and sharing secrets. I spot two of my freshmen making out in the stairwell. I say in my teacher voice, "Okay, less touching, more leaving please," and, trying to be serious a few moments later, "Come on guys, let's leave a little room for God." I chuckle, picking up the poems again, and Dajah says, "What?"

"I'm old now," I say, "and I finally understand the hell I put my teachers through."

“Yeah, and you lived at your school!” she says.

“You was bad, Ms. Marcus,” Devonte chimes in.

“Yeah,” I say. “I was.”

Anthony looks up and asks, “What’s the difference between me and you, Ms. Marcus? I mean, besides your graduate degree? Teachers are always saying that... their degree.”

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“You know what I mean!”

“Well, I’m a woman,” I smile. Dajah and Devonte snicker at my jest.

“Forget it... it’s stupid,” he says.

“No, it’s definitely not stupid, and I honestly want to answer your question—I’m just not sure what you’re asking. Can you try to explain it to me?”

“What’s it like to work with a bunch of black kids, Ms. Marcus? You know, urrrrban kids?”

“What do you mean?” I ask.

And he says, “Were you scared?”

I think for a moment. I say that I had never been in a situation where I needed to discipline anyone before. That when I taught college and someone wasn’t behaving right and I asked them to leave, they would just leave and go wherever adults go when you kick them out of your classroom. “But I am responsible for you. It’s different,” I say. I’m responsible for keeping you safe—for keeping you in my classroom. I was scared to discipline you, because I didn’t know how.

I tell them a story about my first day teaching high school when, after I asked him to move seats, a very tall male student sneered, “You think you’re the fucking queen of the classroom.” I told them that he went on aggressively like this, standing over me, for what felt like several minutes. How I stood there like a deer in headlights watching, waiting for another teacher to step in and rescue me. How I immediately knew that this was the wrong choice. (I don’t explain to them how this power dynamic felt so impossibly heavy in that moment. How when he said “queen of the classroom,” I heard “white,” and was mortified for a million reasons.)

I tell them how, finally, another teacher did come to my rescue, and after he calmed down, the student apologized. I do not say how eventually, although I still flushed with guilt, I realized that I had forgotten that I was the adult, because in that moment I could only think of my whiteness. I tell them what I learned: if I wanted this student's respect, I should show up with a handmade crown and give him a hard time for at least two weeks. They laugh. I say, "I have learned to take my job seriously and not myself." I want to say, I have learned that nothing that I could do, any consequence I might give, would punish you more than you already are every single day.

I've developed a good relationship with that student. Around 10:30AM., daily, he gives me a high five and asks for the keys to my cloffice.

"How are you today, Ms. Marcus?" he asks.

"I'm great, thanks! How are you?"

"I'm pretty black," he smiles widely.

In the beginning, this was some sort of test.

"Right bottom drawer," I say, really as a reminder for him to not snoop around the graded papers on my desk, but he already knows where I keep them. I buy boxes and boxes of granola bars. I ask my parents to help me buy more. They are always gone within days.

I make a decision. I turn back to Anthony and say I was scared, but I wasn't scared of you. I was scared of what's inside of all the "bandos" (derelict structures). I was scared to walk past the entrances with the police officers in bulletproof vests. I was scared the morning I could see that the lone crosswalk officer had to choose between walking students across the street and dealing with the domestic abuse situation at the house on the corner. The man screaming, "Let me in, you fucking whore," and "I'll kill you, bitch." I was scared that first month of school when there was a double homicide outside of our building, a drug deal gone bad, the bodies found a day later in the yard. When the loudspeaker told us we would not be going into lockdown. When the loudspeaker told us we were safe. When I wanted to tell you that murder in my neighborhood was a movie, was a television show, was an "over there." I

tell him how my heart breaks each time one of our students is mugged, is held at gunpoint, in this neighborhood, because it's well known in the community that many of our students have iPads from school. I want to tell him that I am scared most of failing you, because you deserve the world. Because I am one person, and I am deeply flawed.

"You're all a bunch of young, pretty white people who think they can just come in here and save the poor black kids," a female senior tells me in the art room where I am sitting and unconsciously picking up and gluing paper clips, dirt, and salt back onto the already crusty table.

"You're probably right," I say. I talk freely of my privilege. Pretending is worse. I wonder out loud how we can provide these desperately needed opportunities to families of modest means without people feeling like we are trying to "save" them.

I try to show my students how we are the same and how we are not. We share our freewrites and poems with each other. We talk about the value of empathy and vulnerability. We create a safe, supportive space. My seniors really get to know their classmates. They feel connected to kids they didn't get along with before. They let down their guard. They care. I teach my seniors June Jordan and Lucille Clifton, because the only black poet they have ever read is Langston Hughes. I teach them about Nelson Mandela, but only think to do so because he is dead and Maya Angelou wrote a eulogy poem.

After I assign homework, there is the usual cacophony of teeth sucking and exacerbad sighs. "Are you blowing kisses at me," I ask? "That is so sweet!"

"Ewww, gross. Ms. Marcus that's just wrong! Uuck!"

"I think it's beautiful," I say. "Thank you."

My younger sister, Michelle, comes to visit from L.A. She is an editor at

an artsy fashion magazine. I ask her to come in and talk to my students about her job. I know that my girls will fall in love with her and they do. She is all of the girliness that I am not. Sometimes, in the study hall I proctor, one of my senior girls asks to braid my hair. This feels so childish, so foreign, so loving, so uncomfortable. She's terrible at it, but I would never say so. Everyone teases her for being my favorite, because she is. I let her practice grading all of the freshmen papers even though I have to regrade them all afterwards. Her comments are fantastically blunt. I cross most of them out and write something less antagonistic. I know that she will love my sister, too.

I tell my sister to stay on the main roads, to not follow her GPS, to lock her doors, and to put her purse in the trunk. These are the things I used to do. My boyfriend recently installed a new stereo in my beaten-up 2003 Honda Civic. My car is falling apart. I have electrical tape on my windshield and mustache-themed duct tape on my door handles. My students tease me. My boyfriend asks me to please take my stereo out when I park at school. He makes me promise. I do this faithfully for one month.

I remind Michelle to dress modestly—after all this is a Catholic School—and to bring cookies—a lot of cookies. When she's on her way here, I wonder if I've made a terrible mistake asking her to come. I wonder if I have the relationship with my students that I think I do. I have seen the wily noncompliance that destroys the morale of many substitute teachers, but this is someone I love, and they love me, right? I have to leave the building to get Michelle. I bring keys because every door on the outside of the entire school is locked to keep our kids safe, and every door inside the school is locked to keep our things—our wallets and phones and computers—safe.

My freshmen girls love Michelle and her outfit—they love her magazine. They love the dresses and the hair and the beautiful pictures, and they all want to hug her. I forgot to warn her about the touching. I tell them how sweet they are and that the other Ms. Marcus might appreciate having some personal space after her long trip. I am someone who has always needed complete trust to be affectionate with people, but I

have adapted here. Even when I don't want to be touched, even when it's clear that my students have not had the opportunity to change their clothes in a few days or take care of their bodies, even then, I tell myself that these kids need love.

At the end of my senior class, Michelle walks with me around the room to collect highlighters. Anthony is literally running around the classroom in circles. I see him pocket at least five highlighters. He hands me the two that he is holding. I raise my eyebrows and hold out my hand. He smiles and looks at Michelle, who is now looking a bit uncomfortable.

"Please don't steal my highlighters," I say.

Anthony starts to giggle, "Are you accusing me of stealing... because I'm black, Ms. Marcus?"

"No," I roll my eyes, "I'm accusing you because I can see them in your pocket right now."

Anthony thinks this is funny and it is and it isn't.

Sometimes I don't know what to say. One of my freshmen girls approaches me in study hall, leaning off the back of her desk and smacking her bubble gum and says, "Ms. Mar Mar, you seem like you'd be cool to hang out with" and "Did you know I almost got shot last week?" Then this 14-year-old proceeds to tell me about being at a party on Tuesday night where there was a drive-by. She and her friend were standing outside talking about Instagram. When she saw the car, she ducked, but her friend didn't move in time and was shot. The bullet entered in her ear and came out through her eye. My student describes the horror afterwards, her friend screaming that she couldn't breathe, how she fought the paramedics and police. She describes her friend's family collapsing in grief in the same tone that she always speaks in: "real." She tells me that she spent the night in the hospital.

When I say that she must have felt absolutely terrified, she says that she's seen worse. She says it's not like her friend died or anything. This,

like many of Cleveland's shootings, was not on the news. I ask her if she can avoid returning to that place. She shrugs and says that her great aunt lives four houses down. I try to give my best "you are supported and loved and it's okay to grieve over the trauma of this situation" speech, but she's one step ahead of me. "It's just how it is, Mar Mar" she says. I tell her that I am so proud of her for being here, and I reiterate the importance of keeping up with her schoolwork (she's almost failing my literature class), which seems so trite in this moment and also like the most significant thing in the whole world.

We are finishing up with the poems, and the halls have mostly cleared out. The school begins to feel empty. I ask them if they are ever scared. They don't talk about this neighborhood, but rather, Anthony tells me a story about the time he and his cousins were pulled out of their car by the police while they were waiting in a friend's driveway in a white neighborhood. The police accused them of being in someone's backyard where a break-in had just occurred. He says that three cop cars followed them two cities over, tail to tail. He talks about how terrified his cousin was. How his cousin had never been in a situation like that. I say, "I can only imagine how terrified you were." I tell him that this is unfair and awful, but he already knows.

I look at my watch. It will be dark out by now. "Let's get out of here!" I say. I thank them for their help, I tell them how much I love them, I promise a ridiculous amount of extra credit, and we walk down the three flights of stairs. We give high-fives. I remind them to do their homework. As I begin to leave, I look over my shoulder and call out, "Be safe," and they turn back and say, "You too, Ms. Marcus." I walk quickly to my car so I can release the tears I have been holding back, because I get to drive home.

A Secret Home

Melissa Kullman

[name] is reading a book to me
it is a book about a hike
he is reading to me to prove he can read
though we both know he can

i slash through each mistake
with my bright red pen
he does not know the word 'arachnophobia'
he stutters over it
he sighs big

i tell him the word and what it means
i do not slash through it
because
let's be real
why the fuck should this ten year old boy
any ten year old boy
know the word
'arachnophobia'

he does not see the 's' or 'ed' at the ends of words
'he pointed' is 'he point'
'she yells' is 'she yell'

i do not slash through them
because the way he speaks
the way his mom speaks
the ones who love him most
is not wrong

and i wonder how many times
the person across from me
the person with the power
knew i was capable of more
and did nothing

I'm Yellow. I'm in Cleveland: What Now?

Jeanne Li

"Just so you know, there's another meeting across the street."

"Dude, I'm pretty much white. I think I should be at this meeting." It wasn't until later that the silliness of the interaction hit me. It was the night the Tamir Rice non-indictment was announced. I wanted to contribute in some way, even if I couldn't quite join a protest. I did see that there was black safe-space meeting; I truly felt I could not attend. The community that had been viscerally affected had requested a safe space, and I wanted to respect that. While I am a person of color (Asian, specifically), I would be an intruder. As an Asian American, I do not fear brutality from police on a daily basis. I can wear a hoodie any day of the week and probably shoplift with no questions asked. I had and have no place being in a black meeting gathered to support each other. So, I attended the white folks meeting. New to Cleveland activism, the simple comment seemed absurd. I often forget that I am a person of color, as I so strongly identify with white culture. To me, it was either white or black; white meant that I did not face the injustices that black people do. However, in a society that is built on race, I am not white. White activists were doing their part to deconstruct their white privilege, break down the white fragility of other white people, and support black activists. Where do I fit into this picture?

I've had people surprised, intrigued, or just downright confused by my support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and why it is more important to me than my personal demographics. Really, why shouldn't I be more focused on the discrimination against Asian Americans, participate in Asian culture, or choose sexism as my battle? This is not to say that I do not experience discrimination due to my race or gender: getting asked if I speak English, being the target of Asian fetishization and sexual harassment, or experiencing simple straightforward racism and misogyny. However, having lived in Cleveland for eight years, I cannot help but feel the omnipresent racism against blacks in this city.

I feel constantly surrounded by the systemic racism against blacks in a way that affects me more than I feel as an Asian or a woman. Cleveland is my home, and to me, racism is its forefront battle. I am angered by the racism and sexism directed toward non-black people of color and women, but the visibility of structural racism against blacks is something that has reached such levels of not only physical but also cultural violence that I cannot but become emotionally invested in a movement that is not, perhaps, “mine.” Perhaps this is a selfish motivation, but it is one that I cannot seem to help.

I went through the journey that many Clevelanders have gone through, being “enlightened,” or whatever you choose to call it. The racism I experience bothers me, and so I have a faint understanding of micro-aggressions and unwarranted perception, at a level that pales in comparison. I do not suffer from white guilt; it wasn’t my ancestors who participated in the enslavement of an entire race and its perpetuation. My ancestors were the victims of white supremacy in their own ways. I’ve noticed that I seem to be more receptive to supportive white people driven by white guilt or some sort of messiah complex. Some of the black activists I have met are wary of white supporters, and for good reason. If I imagine an Asian protest or meeting being co-opted by over-eager white people, I cringe at its hypocrisy and can only imagine the anger black activists must feel. I am in the shallow end of an ocean of a structural destruction.

This strange middle ground allows me to interact with racism in ways I did not expect. When I discuss racism against blacks, I have discovered a strange way to play the race card, if you want to call it that. As an Asian American, I have been given the title of “model minority”—which roughly translates to, “if Asians can do it, why can’t blacks?” Most white people do not even regularly interact with Asians, let alone black people. So the simple act of defying that idea throws many white people for a loop. I can pull off an innocence that does not create the defensiveness that whites often default to when confronted. I can describe the micro-aggressions that I face, and they believe me because on some level, they’re predisposed to identify with me—I’m just a young Asian,

free of any ulterior motives. This provides a segue into racism toward blacks. If I have to deal with these minor racist incidents, what difficulties do blacks have to face? And most importantly, why don't you believe them? To me, the admission of white privilege begins with the simple awareness of the severity of racism in this country, in Cleveland. Truly facing white privilege head-on means that white people must believe black people, that they are not exaggerating, that they are not trying to make excuses, and that the inherent dignity provided to white people also extends to black people.

I am almost always the only Asian at meetings or protests. Supportive white people are doing their part, actively trying to understand their privilege and working to make other white people understand. How do I partake? I do not have white privilege. I have something we don't have words for. Maybe it's non-black privilege. When I speak to white people, I feel as if I bring discomfort when I discuss my privilege. If they are trying to dismantle white supremacy, aren't I a victim? Am I one of them? In my interactions with black activists, I am not sure how I am perceived. Am I part of the enemy? I would like to call myself an ally. The housing segregation of Cleveland does not allow for much black-Asian interaction. Being asked about whether or not I speak English has historically always occurred in primarily black areas. I do not hold this against anyone; I am just as clueless of black experiences as they are of Asian ones. Anecdotally, Asian immigrants are notoriously racist against blacks. I have come to an agreement with my mother that we do not speak about racial issues as it usually ends with someone slamming a door. I think flipping this on its head can be powerful. I think Asian allies provide a particularly strong voice. And not just Asians, but other people of color. Bigoted white people expect many white people to support the Black Lives Matter movement, but what if they walked into an Asian establishment with a Black Matter Lives sign? Asians are seen as the anti-black, the minority that does everything that black people should be doing. They are seen as apolitical and mild-mannered, a group that does not want to cause any kerfuffle. This opposition in stereotype can provide a strong message to white people. While Asians are not a

large portion of the population in Cleveland, they occupy spaces that are primarily white and not participatory—white collar jobs, universities. Cleveland has a large Hispanic and Middle Eastern population; people of color are an untapped resource in Cleveland's fight against racism. If there are white ally groups, there can be groups of people of color. We can force a space for us, or if need be, create our own. They can create that discomfort that white people must feel before they can take any further steps, even if it simply means a begrudging acknowledgement of white privilege.

No, I am not black. I am not white. But I am a believer, and I am a Clevelander.

Of all the communities in Greater Cleveland, perhaps none is as famous for having publicly combated segregation as Shaker Heights. And despite its public integration struggles, there are ways in which it visibly remains as segregated as any other place in northeast Ohio. Nevertheless, for many years now, Shaker High School students interested in racial justice and cross-racial understanding have worked together to educate their fellow students. What follows was submitted by that group.

Excerpt from
Staying Human

**written by members of Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR)
 and the Junior, Senior and Advanced Acting Ensembles
 of the Theater Department at Shaker Heights High School
 SHHS Theater Department Chair: Christine McBurney
 SHHS Ensemble Program Director: Erik Johnson
 Writing Coach and Scripting: Katie Daley**

What It's Like

**written by members of SGORR
 and SHHS Advanced Acting Ensemble**

[Spaces between lines and paragraphs indicate a change in speakers.]

A girl enters stage left and wanders gingerly past groups of students, appearing both bewildered and curious as she looks at the people she's passing. She mounts a box at front of stage and asks:

What's it like living in an integrated place like Shaker Heights?

Members of the cast rise randomly and answer her question:

Hmmmm. Let me think... Okay. Do you remember having fondue on your birthday? That strange mix of flavors? Chocolate, vanilla, peanut, marshmallow, lemon and caramel all at once. We made faces and cried "Ew!" when we read the menu, but it tasted much better than it sounded. Integration's kind of like that.

Sometimes, it's like hearing a perfect note sung by someone who is deaf and mute. Highly unlikely, and utterly amazing. It makes you wish you could do it, too.

No! You're getting way too romantic about this. Think about how Shaker's always trying to force diversity and togetherness on us. Let's face it: it's like the anti-tartar toothpaste they make super-sweet to get you to use it. "You want your teeth to last?" they say. "Here, brush with this." But no matter how much they fine-tune the flavor, it doesn't cover up how gritty the texture is.

Most of the time, being at Shaker feels like we're lying on our backs, floating in a warm pocket of an ocean that's crowded with other species. Everything we touch is smooth, but there's always a barnacle hiding somewhere that pinches a finger. Every once in a while, an air-raid siren wails from above: "Integration! Integration! Integration!" We plug our ears and dive underwater to drown out the sound, thinking, Okay, okay, we get it. At least, we think we do.

Sometimes, on some days, it's like doing a triple axel jump on ice: few attempt it, even fewer master it, and most people never even hit the ice. But when it works, when you get it, you feel pretty freaking good.

On the slow days, when it seems like racism is never going to end, it can be like waiting at the bus stop. It's drizzling with just enough rain to speckle the ground, but every now and then, the sun peeks out from behind the clouds. Hundreds of people are there, waiting for the same bus, but they're not speaking a word to each other. The bus is due to

arrive any minute now, but you lost your ticket, so you figure you'll just wait there until God stops crying. He cries a lot in Cleveland. But you don't mind, and you can't blame him. You'd cry, too, if you were God.

Sometimes, integration at Shaker feels too official. It's like getting greeted with a firm handshake, respectful but guarded, a moment of contact that's over in an instant. But other times, when we forget that it's happening, it's like being approached with laughter and a two-finger pistol lovingly firing away at you: Pow-pow.

In a nutshell: Shaker integration is like being at a spice bazaar, where all the different aromas are competing to be the most prominent. Not all the smells are pleasant, but the good ones make up for the bad. For a while you'll smell cherry, then mildew, then almond, then skunk cabbage, then freshly baked rolls that took all night long to knead, rise, punch down, and rise again.

Listen, y'all—if you've never gone to an integrated school, coming to Shaker for the first time can be a little like walking into a Bath and Bodyworks store—you feel like if you breathe, your lungs will go into spasms. But you have to breathe, so you do, just real shallow breaths at first, then after a while you get used to it, and you start breathing normally without even thinking about it. You survive.

Meanwhile, you're surrounded by people talking about war and meditation, music and silence, food and starvation, and art and money—all at the same time.

You end up feeling a little like the alphabet.

C'mon, y'all. The diversity at Shaker is no big deal. It's just a bunch of shoes: church shoes, skate shoes, tennis shoes, basketball shoes, high-heeled shoes. In the end, they're all shoes.

Yeah, but it can make you feel like you've misplaced your shoes entirely. At the same time, when you look around and see you have three friends with three different skin colors, you have the feeling that you probably won't need your shoes anymore. You seem to have lost all shame.

At Shaker, all the diversity makes me feel like I'm zooming around the world in 80 days, trying to learn about everything and everyone, but I don't have enough time. I'll never have enough time.

Huh-uh—the way they do diversity here is not like the world at all. It's like living inside the steep walls of a secluded castle on a hill. In the valley, you can hear a hurricane raging, but up on the hill, you only get a scattered drizzle with a jolt of lightning to the watchtower when you least expect it.

Every once in a while, you try to think of what it's like outside your multiracial utopia. Every once in a while, you want to savor the imperfectness of the world.

Shaker integration is like eating the frosting off cupcakes—it's delicious, but sometimes it tastes a little artificial.

No, it's not artificial! It's just unpredictable! There'll be a blizzard one day, and the next, a July heat hot enough to melt the hail that's been pounding on your roof. So you run for cover and dress in layers, peeling off raincoats and piling on sweaters as you go.

No matter what you wear for integration, though, it's not going to protect you from the weather—not really.

That's okay with me, because everyone in this climate tells me that no matter what I'm wearing, I look good. I'm annoyed that the rest of the world isn't like this. Is there any way I can stay here forever? Do I need a visa for this?

Let's be honest—integration at Shaker is like sloshing through a puddle: some days it's fun, but when you're wearing your most expensive, most nonwaterproof shoes, you tend to walk around it.

Yeah, let's get real—it's like having a permanent bruise—you forget about it till somebody applies pressure.

No, no—real integration just takes time. Like looking at a mysterious piece of art: you give it enough time, and eventually, you understand it.

It's like a first love—you're not sure what you're feeling, but whatever it is, you like it.

Watch it—you're getting too romantic again! If integration at Shaker has anything to do with the heart, it's just someone prying it open and yelling into it: "This is how the world is! Get over it!"

Even so, once I turned the doorknob and pulled open the door, I knew there was no going back.

Just like there's no going back when you're on the roller coaster:

It's slowly, inch-by-inch clacking up the steepest incline you've ever been on.

You're getting more and more terrified, and you know when you get to the top, you're going to scream for dear life.

But that's why you got on in the first place, isn't it?

At this moment, one often wonders what frame of mind is called for: optimism, realism, or pessimism. Local freelance journalist Kyle Swenson finds a way to hold all three in his heart in a moving reflection on the significance of a recent high-profile exoneration in which his reporting played a key part.

This is What a Cleveland Story Sounds Like In 2015

Kyle Swenson

This is a Cleveland story, so that means there's going to be a bar involved. That's one of the rules of a Cleveland story, per unwritten regulations, sunk deep as DNA. This time the bar was Wilbert's, a downtown spot, one long gloomy room near the ballpark. The kind of place your friend's dad tells you he wasted too much money in when he was your age.

This time it was May 2012. A hip-hop record release party was filling the bar. Music drilling from the speakers, the floor space a joyful mash of black faces. Young faces—and that's important. In the bar that night you could feel it, the blood thrill brewed from a summer night and the open city and your friends and new girls and strangers and tough looks and angry words and the open city, again. When you're young, it's all lighter fluid. At Wilbert's this time there were words. Shoves. Fists. Feet rushing the door. And finally, gunfire in the parking lot.

This is a Cleveland story, so that means there's going to be some cracked pavement involved. Another rule.

This particular chunk of municipal pour was in better shape than most. Not too chewed by the weather, just lightly spidered with damage. It was where five downtown streets tangled under crossing signals and lamps, traffic steady at all hours, East 9th and Prospect.

This time the streets were busy with cars leaving an Indians' game,

suburban folks aiming for home. But soon the Wilbert's crowd, fleeing gunshots, were zipping past police cars wailing in the opposite direction. More sirens, more tires hustling this way and that way. Soon, an off-duty Cleveland officer with a smoking Glock and a dead twenty-year-old boy were on this particular piece of cracked pavement.

His name was Kenny Smith. He and his friends had been at Wilbert's when the troubled kicked off. They scattered, lost one another. Kenny jumped into the car of a guy he knew from the neighborhood. He likely was just trying to get home. He likely didn't know there was a gun tucked under the driver's seat. He likely didn't think there would be trouble when the car was flagged down by an off-duty Cleveland officer with his Glock out.

After Kenny Smith was shot, the city initially announced he'd been reaching for the gun when the officer shot him in self-defense. That was the story, even after it came out that the off-duty officer himself had been drinking in a downtown bar; even after the evidence clearly showed Kenny Smith had not been shot inside the car but on the cracked pavement; even after a witness emerged who said she'd watched Kenny Smith die with his hands in the air. Still, the city maintained the off-duty cop was a hero.

Those details were enough to catch my attention. I began writing and reporting on Kenny's death for the newspaper I worked at. But there was another twist to the shooting: Kenny Smith was a young rapper. The record release party at Wilbert's on the night of his death was for his own debut single, a catchy club anthem he recorded with a friend, "Dinner Date." And while Kenny was buried and the police declined comment, Kenny's song became a regional hit. Shaking from club speakers. Pouring out of open car windows. All summer.

The track granted him an afterlife. It was less a monument to who he'd been—because you can't be much when you're 20, you haven't had the chance, the time—than a reproach on all of us. On the city. Because

when we tried—or when I tried—to ask the city about what had happened, I got a perceived threat and use of force and no comment and restricted duty and still an open investigation. Kenny Smith disappeared under piles of factory-issue equivocation.

Those phrases turn up a lot in Cleveland stories.

Ricky Jackson was eighteen when he was sent to death row. This was in 1975. If you haven't had much chance to be anybody at 20, at 18 you're just the hints or coming attractions of who you'll get around to becoming. That was who Ricky Jackson was when the State of Ohio decided he and his two best friends—Ronnie and Wiley Bridgeman—were guilty of robbing and murdering a white money order salesman.

They didn't do it. This became clear to me three decades later when I began investigating the case in 2010. By then, Ricky had had plenty of time to become the person he was going to become. Considering what was thrown at him at 18, you might expect someone reduced, pinched, wounded.

But not Ricky. James Baldwin noted that there is type of black man in America who has been “forced each day to snatch his manhood, his identity, out of the fire of human cruelty that rages to destroy it.” He writes, “If one is continually surviving the worst that life can bring, one eventually ceases to be controlled by a fear of what life can bring.” The survivors of this are, in Baldwin's words, “the only genuine aristocrats this country has produced.” This was Ricky. And the fact of his innocence was driven through his center like a spine.

What surprised me when I dug into the case that sent Ricky and his friends to death row—and later, after state executions stopped 1977, to prison for life—was how clear their innocence was when stacked against the case sealing their fate. They were not guilty, that fact as simple and

self-evident as sunshine.

Yet when I published my article in 2010 laying out their innocence, it took four years for the legal system to understand, to bring Ricky Jackson back inside a courtroom to decide whether or not he should receive a new trial.

I sat in that courtroom when the day finally came. I had Kenny Smith and a half dozen other names swimming in my head then. I knew plenty of Cleveland stories. I'd gotten used to the incomprehensible machinery that seems always to be clanging away somewhere unseen. Simple matters of right and wrong or placing blame or fixing accountability—by the time they end up in a courtroom, they've passed through that clanging, have come out different. Disfigured so they're never as simple as before. Blasted into parts like a light beam splintering inside crystal. I was not hopeful.

But on the final hour of the hearing over whether the simple matter of Ricky Jackson's innocence should be reexamined, we had a Hollywood finish. Real courtrooms teach you never to expect a Hollywood finish—Atticus Finch or Erin Brockovich. But just as closing arguments were set to begin, Tim McGinty, the county's elected prosecutor, swept into the court and began speaking to the judge.

The city would stop fighting against Ricky Jackson's claim of innocence, McGinty said. "The state concedes the obvious."

My head was a pile-up of stray thoughts and shoving ideas. This isn't happening. This is incredible. Is this really happening? Muscling to the front was a high-volt sense of dislocation. The wood paneled walls bouncing around Ricky Jackson's joyful sobs were the same. Same uncomfortable jury benches. Same municipal carpet. But I felt we'd been lifted up and put down somewhere else. That old machinery wasn't clanging away then. This, I clearly remember thinking, is different.

That Baldwin phrase—"the only genuine aristocrats this country has produced," the men who have had to snatch back their manhood from

the country—remember that one. Those lines apply to people in a lot of Cleveland stories. They could wear them, tattooed in ink, on their arms as the ultimate marks of pride.

At 39 years, Ricky Jackson's wrongful incarceration was the longest in U.S. history to end in exoneration. The record. That is quite a Cleveland story.

If at 18 you are barely you, at 12 you're nothing solid: a babyfat face, your mother's love, feelings and hurt and bad choices, afternoons playing alone in the park.

A day after Ricky Jackson walked out of prison after 39 years, a victory lap for the city, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was gunned down by a quick-draw Cleveland cop.

2014 flipped over to 2015, and I began fighting with my friends. We argued. Real heated-opinion OK Corrals. The kind of live-fire emotional exchanges where you feel guilty later, maybe said too much.

The topic: whether or not Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Tim McGinty would file charges against the quick-draw cop who killed Tamir Rice. In one corner: my friends. They knew enough Cleveland stories. I did too, true. But I had been inside that courtroom when Ricky Jackson finally won his freedom. I'd bumped into that other feeling.

The news about Kenny Smith initially slipped by me. This was September

2015. The headline pulled a fast one. “Jury awards \$5.5 million to family of Euclid man killed by Cleveland cop.” Euclid man? I remember thinking after realizing the story was about Kenny Smith. Twenty years old—a man? At 28, I didn’t think I could even hang that on myself.

Kenny’s mother had filed a civil action against the city and the police officer involved in her son’s death. After the city and cop were caught in numerous lies—about where Kenny died on the cracked pavement, where his hands were when he was shot—a jury sided with the family. This was another victory lap for the city. And reading the news, I felt it again, that same dislocation that came inside the courtroom when Ricky Jackson was exonerated. I wasn’t ready yet to slap a name to it, or throw the doors open completely, invite it in to stay for good. But I wondered then if the city was finally learning a new story.

In retrospect, I had bricked together some optimism in defiance of historical precedent and gut. I forgot this was a Cleveland story.

This part is a Guatemala story—sure, at first blush not much of a Cleveland story, but just wait for it.

In 1998, this tiny scrap of Central America was pulling itself together after decades of civil war—bloody struggle, neighbor ratting on neighbor, trust no commodity worth its risk, lots of footsteps in the night. But as the century closed, the country was soul-searching anew, picking through that rubble. Some said peace could come only with a true and full accounting of what had happened in the turmoil.

This was controversial—naming names. One man—a Catholic bishop—pushed forward with a report that would detail who did what to whom, an accounting that would likely make neighbor confront neighbor once again. Yet only by this, the bishop believed, could the country begin to tell a new story about itself.

Before his report was published, the bishop was murdered. The crime was committed by a conspiracy of military officers who had the most to lose from the report. This was nothing new in Guatemala.

But this time, the powerful officers were actually arrested, actually charged, and actually found guilty of the crime. In a country where a uniform had always been a free pass to immunity, for the first time officials were subject to justice.

Watching television hosts openly discussing what for decades was hush-hush, the writer Francisco Goldman had a moment. "I thought, 'This is how a country changes,'" he writes in his book on the case, *The Art of Political Murder*.

The sense, I think Goldman is saying, is that a people—an ill-fitting, many-hued hunk of individuals roped together by shared geography and history and camaraderie and all things they've done to one another—can turn a corner together. Swap out old. Invite in new. Arrive elsewhere. Learn to think differently about themselves.

But because Goldman is a wise man, thoughtful, and also—even if he's never scuffed his shoes close to the 216's pavement—a natural Clevelander in spirit, he didn't stop there.

"I also thought, and told my friends, 'Enjoy this moment. Another one like it might never happen again.' So much had to come together perfectly for this victory to happen."

Goldman didn't realize he was telling a Cleveland story, too.

You could also call my Cleveland story about Kenny Smith and Tamir Rice *The Art of Political Murder*.

This time it's 2016. Weeks ago, County Prosecutor Tim McGinty an-

nounced there would be no official charges from the grand jury in the death of the 12-year-old boy. This news chased another headline: the city was putting up a fight against the Kenny Smith judgment; the 20-year-old's ugly death would not be balanced with civil justice. In both these announcements, you could hear it again, the old machinery clanging away, business as usual.

I stood outside in late afternoon, the light all charcoal-colored and rain-splattered, watching demonstrators march before the Justice Center. My sweatshirt soaked with the needling precipitation, thoughts began landing into place. All those boys who didn't end up becoming the people they were going to become, who didn't get the opportunity to be what Ricky Jackson became, they now were hashtags and campaign issues and xeroxed faces on flimsy cardboard.

I needed some distance. This is a Cleveland story, so that meant I ended up in a bar.

I was talking to a civil rights lawyer. This was just last week. My fresh cynicism brewed from recent events must have sloshed onto our conversation, because he played a consolation card. He offered that in his law office, they have a motto about pushing for social change: "relentless incrementalism."

The phrase rattled around my head for a bit, for another week of dwindling demonstrations outside the Justice Center, another week of soaked sweatshirts.

Eventually I decided "relentless incrementalism" was beaming out of the same place as Goldman's own mixed emotions over his country's about-face. Eventually, we all have to look back at the history flapping around behind us like unscrolled Kodak. Look hard. Account for what we'd done to one another. The first step into the new story is the look back.

"Relentless incrementalism." It's good phrase for us Clevelanders. Words we should keep around, rolled up in our pockets. Or better yet,

tattooed on our necks, a place of pride, the script as looping and gothic as a headbanger's album cover. That way, when one Clevelander sees another, we'll both spot it, relentless incrementalism, that promise to keep inching our gaze back as a way of edging onward.

Stop Killing Black People

Mary E. Weems, Ph.D.

*Protest Sign

(Philando Castile, 37, Father of Five, Falcon Hts. Minnesota)

Watching the video
I'm reminded of a cliché about images
his girlfriend beside daughter behind
recording live
him bleeding
traffic stopped for a broken taillight
a story cop will tell
long after this Black man
who obeyed the rules bleeds out
his legal gun still in its safe place
in his car
the arm that announced then reached
for his wallet
murdered by cop
dotted with blood of hundreds
slaughtered Black men
all crowded under roof
of coffin
cover him like shroud
as his woman
loves him to death
declares *us* innocent to a Lord
she still believes in while
spirit-hands add his name
to list written in wind
as his girlfriend whispers
Stay with me

Head Trip

Mary E. Weems, Ph.D.

(Terrence Crutcher, 40, Tulsa, Oklahoma)

When my vehicle broke down
 I was waiting for help
 expecting to be home in time
 for lunch dinner love a night's sleep
 my own bed
 but like Don Cheadle said I fit
 her description
 she white, blue and shouting
 HEY.....my hearing weak
 as a distant radio wave tries to bring her
 in—HEY I.....STO.....I'm terrified
 prosthetic eye tries to see
 I try to obey but can't—HEY.....the rest
 is listening under water and I try to look
 non-threatening, to move like a child
 so I don't look
 like I'm going to do some/thing—HEY
POLICE!.....I already know this
 am confused wondering why she doesn't smile
 look helpful
 understand that I haven't broken
 any laws
 understand that I need protect and serve
 my mind starts blaring S-O-S
 S-O-S S-O-S
 for a moment I think she can hear because
 for the first time she looks me in the eye
 so I try to smile
 but when her eyes widen like saucers

I know I've seen that look before
I know she's afraid
that I'm in trouble
I open mouth to speak
sound won't sound
like what I want to say
so I raise hands high
surrender/walk
toward my car to put my hands
against it like daddy taught me
but she shoots me anyway
bullets as muffled as her voice
when I drop
dead.

A Cane and a Book

Mary E. Weems, Ph.D.

(Keith Lamont Scot, 43, Father of Seven, Charlotte, North Carolina)

neighbors describe him
 wife and seven children
 moved in this summer
 walks with a cane
 he loves to read
 used to seeing him daily
 in his truck waiting
 to pick up his son
 from elementary school
 nice guy friendly why?
 they weren't looking for warrant
 had another man's name on it
 and he was just sitting in his vehicle
 brain focused on book
 not bothering
 not being dangerous
 but being Black
 father
 husband
 man
 his wife is there
 when po-lice looking for somebody else
 see him in his truck
 see weed
 say they see a gun
 his wife screams
"He doesn't have a gun.
He has a TBI
He is not going to do anything to you guys.

He just took his medicine”

his wife’s screams falling
on ears that only hear Black
that don’t give a fuck about his
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
only hear nigger-with-a-gun
only hear danger, dangerous
they want to charge him with his criminal past
they want submission
they want his brain to work
long enough to follow commands
he doesn’t understand
while his wife begs for his life
and records for world to see
a Black cop in Charlotte
execute a Black man.

Yesterday

“Many of the kinds of problems we’re talking about today should have been solved by now. We should not have had you inherit these kinds of problems.”

—*Congressman Louis Stokes to
The City Club of Cleveland,
January 14, 2015*

During his life, Congressman Louis Stokes was a frequent speaker at the City Club. Stokes was the first African American to serve Ohio in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was elected in 1968 and remained in Congress until 1999 when he retired and his seat went to Stephanie Tubbs Jones. The districts he served (the 21st and later, after redistricting in 1992, the 11th) encompassed Cleveland's East Side and many surrounding suburbs. He died August 18th, 2015, seven months after his last address to the City Club. In that last speech,, which we have excerpted, he reflects on his first appearance at the City Club and the slow progress of the intervening 49 years.

The World According to Stokes

The City Club of Cleveland

January 14, 2015

I recall today that my first speech at the City Club was September, 1966. I was a young lawyer, and I was chairman of the Cleveland Branch NAACP Legal Committee. Our city had just experienced the Hough riots. My brother Carl, then a state legislator, and I walked the streets, fires burning and gunshots all around us. Following the riots, Sandy Tolliver and I conducted three nights of hearings at Liberty Hill Baptist Church for the people in Hough to have a public hearing to describe the depressing and oppressive conditions they lived under. And it was not pretty. The City Club invited me to a forum, to speak about a grand jury report chaired by Louis Seltzer, editor of the old *Cleveland Press*. They blamed communist infiltrators who had exploited the despair in the neighborhood and instigated and organized violence. I spoke that day about poverty, police brutality, and lack of jobs, lack of housing, lack of access to health care—all of the elements that fed the anger that exploded in Hough that night. It was reprehensible to ignore the pain in Hough, to make it look as if it took white communists to tell poor black people how badly they were living. At about this time, our legal redress committee began working with Robert Carter, who had succeeded Thurgood Marshall as head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. The

1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* unanimous decision in the Supreme Court had held that the segregation of children by race was illegal and unconstitutional and was detrimental to both the black and the white child. The decision in *Brown* involved only southern states and southern schools, but the law was applicable to schools everywhere. The national NAACP saw the segregation of children in Cleveland as being unconstitutional and illegal, and decided to file the first school desegregation case in the nation in the North, filed in Cleveland. We filed a lawsuit, *Craggett v. Rhodes*. After conducting the case as though we were in a deep Southern courtroom, the judge threw the case out. The national NAACP declared they have never experienced anything like that in a northern city, and they left Cleveland. Cleveland at that time was a hotbed of civil rights activity, in fighting police brutality cases, including several notable cases here in Cleveland of unarmed black men being killed by white police. Our community was also upset with the county prosecutor, named John T. Corrigan, who refused to indict these officers for their conduct. So it was during this time, we began hearing about a dynamic young black preacher, named Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was then leading the famous Montgomery bus boycott. The story had gone all over the world about Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old black seamstress in Montgomery who had been arrested because she had refused to give up her bus seat to a white man.

The eyes of the world were upon this eloquent, charismatic, 26-year-old Baptist minister, named Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was challenging all America to make real the promise of America as a land of freedom, equality, opportunity, and brotherhood. His message was different. In leading the Montgomery bus boycott, he was telling those in the movement that our actions must be guided by the deepest principles of our Christian faith. Love must be our regulating ideal. Overnight, black and white Americans of goodwill were inspired by his words, and blacks all over the country wanted to see him, wanted to touch him. Every city wanted him to visit. Cleveland was no different. When he made his first appearance in Cleveland, it was at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, pastored by Dr. Odie Hoover, Carol Hoover's father.

All of Cleveland wanted to see him. The church was packed. Hundreds surrounded the church that night.

It was a moving night. He inspired us in a way only Dr. King could through his oratory. Not only were we inspired to understand the meaning of Montgomery, but also how our struggle in Cleveland was inexplicably woven into the texture of the struggle of black people everywhere. In 1965 and 1967, he came to Cleveland pursuing a Carnegie Foundation Grant to make Cleveland a pilot project in the registration of black voters. Indeed he did. He registered black voters in Cleveland in record numbers. His registration drives in 1965 and 1967 were a great boon to my brother Carl's campaigns for mayor of Cleveland.

In 1965, Carl lost his first bid for mayor, losing by only 1,700 votes, which made us know we could win in 1967. Carl won election of mayor of Cleveland in 1967, becoming the first black mayor of a major American city. Dr. King was in Carl's campaign headquarters that night, accompanying him was Mr. Abernathy, another great preacher and civil rights leader. We did not learn that Carl had won until 3:00 in the morning. When word came, people were dancing in the streets, waiting for him to greet them. When the decision was made to go out, I was asked to remain in the building with Dr. King, who decided to stay in the building so as not to take any of the glitter off Carl's victory. He was elated. He saw this as a breakthrough for black political achievement across America, and it was. Politicians across America came to Cleveland to find out how we had done it. Carl and Arnold and I worked with them to help them. Shortly thereafter, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Newark all had black mayors. But that night, Dr. King said to me, we must now develop economic parity. He said, and I quote him, "No ethnic group in America has ever gained equality in America without first achieving economic equality." Dr. King was right, but economic development and economic parity have been elusive goals for black Americans.

Congressman Stokes also took questions from two of his children, Chuck and Lori, and from the City Club audience.

Chuck Stokes: About a year or so ago, I was in Alabama, working on a documentary. I had the opportunity and pleasure to sit down with attorney Fred Gray, Rosa Parks' attorney, and the legal architect for so much of the civil rights legislation. He said to me, I am very concerned about the erosion of all the gains we made legally during the 1960s and 1970s. If we are not careful, he said, we will lose all of that. From a legal background, do you agree with Fred Gray? And if you agree with him, why do you think we are seeing so much erosion of civil rights progress we made legally?

Lou Stokes: It is a great question, Chuck. Fred Gray was one of Dr. King's lawyers, and the head of teams of lawyers in the South during the movement that broke down so many barriers. I respect what he says, and I agree with him. It is difficult to put your finger on it, because we have to acknowledge we made a lot of gains. There has been progress over the years. Any nation that has elected an African American as president of this country—that's progress. You cannot deny that. There are other significant gains. But progress has been gradual, and it has been minimal. You would think that in the country, where they have elected a black president, that would be the end of racism. Racism is today on the rise, in keeping with what Fred said. And it is unfortunate that a country that can elect a black man as its president will continue to foster the kind of racism we see being displayed.

Chuck: What do you attribute it to?

Stokes: We live in a society where racism is endemic and institutionalized, and you cannot eradicate it by legislation or anything else until Americans decide that this country is a kind of country where they can live, and at the same time let others live, that they can care about society in which many people live and what we call the basement of the society. These are people who do not have any hope or faith in government or society. You look at what is happening all over the world, where people are trying to find opportunity and freedom—that's still going on in this

country, and we cannot continue to oppress people. We cannot add to it, or exacerbate the problem by seeing what we are seeing in major cities all over America today, where you see marches and protests of hundreds of thousands of people about the fact that white police are killing black males. You can't tolerate that in our society. It is something that we have to stop. But it is all basically gets back to the fact that racism is institutionalized in this society.

Audience: Good afternoon, Congressman Stokes. My name is Anthony Price. I am a junior at Shaw High School, and a Youth Forum Council member here at the City Club. You and the man who inspired you were great, and I want to thank you for that. It took 17 years for Martin Luther King Jr. Day to become a holiday. What did you do to keep going in the years it did not get passed? And what advice can you give to the old and young to fight for what is right?

Stokes: Many of the kinds of problems we're talking about today should have been solved by now. We should not have had you inherit these kinds of problems. I remember when, as a young lawyer, fighting those cases for the NAACP, I did so with the thought in mind that through this work, my children would never have to face that. I have seen them go through the kind of things I fought so they would never have to go through it. And so we failed you, in the sense that you inherit these kinds of problems. I say to you what I say to many of the young students that I teach at the Mandel School at Case Western Reserve University. I have been asked the same question by those young people. Why did it take 17 years to be able to enact a piece of legislation honoring one of the greatest men who has ever lived? Basically, because we had to overcome racist attitudes in Congress. And believe me, January 1969 to 1986, when we passed the bill, it was work. We continued working week after week and day after day, month after month, because we knew that this country needed to give that man that kind of recognition,

for posterity. And so we did what you have to do in the legislative body. You have to be patient. You really have to know where you are going, and then be willing to spend the kind of time it takes to accomplish something that you know should be done. It doesn't happen overnight. I lost many a legislative battle in Congress. You would look up on the board sometimes, and you have been in a fight, and you would see you lost by one vote. That tells you how important one vote is. We knew and understood that the process is slow, but it is sure, if you just keep working at it. As young people, I say to you, we need you. We are going to need your leadership. You will be the ones sitting on the stage and speaking from this podium. And that is why it is so important that you get kind of education that is going to enable you in America to continue the fight in the struggle so many of us have been in for 50 or more years.

Audience: The Voting Rights Act mandated the creation of majority minority districts. It seems to me that that has isolated the African American vote into a relatively few districts across this country. From your vantage point after 30 years in the Congress, has the creation—in your opinion, has the creation of majority minority districts enhanced or diminished the influence of the African American vote?

Stokes: It's a good question. When I went to Congress, it was because my brother Carl, who was serving in the Ohio legislature, and was representing the 21st Congressional District in the Ohio State Legislature—Carl had become so popular, so charismatic, that they were afraid he might just decide to run for Congress. And so in order to stop it in its tracks—the same legislature in which he was serving gerrymandered the 21st district of Ohio. It was historic. So they diluted the district so there was no face to the 21st district. Carl came home and came to the NAACP, and asked them to file a lawsuit for him against the legislature in which he was serving. The NAACP, guess who they gave the case to? They gave me the case, and the legal redress committee brought a lawsuit against the governor and the state legislature, because of the illegal gerrymandering of the district. And as a consequence of it, that

was the case we took to the United States Supreme Court. We won the decision. When we won, the Supreme Court ruled that you had to draw those lines again, and brought them along what they called contiguous constitutional lines. When they redrew the district, the district came out 65 percent black, 35 percent white, which meant that Carl had the base by which he could run for Congress. Unfortunately, I called him up that morning and said, we just won your case. You can go to Congress. He said, I don't want to go to Congress. I'm the Mayor of Cleveland.

So I wind up then having to run for that seat.

[The] real answer to your question, that is what has happened. In many places, that black constituency has been gerrymandered out of power in congressional districts. They have done a better job over the years because when I went to Congress, there were only six black Congresspeople there. There are now 43. There were no black congresspersons from the South. Now, the Southern blacks in Congress outnumber the Northern ones. What has happened, and what I think you might be aiming at, is that in some cases, Republicans have said, because they were in control, that the creation of black districts was causing Democrats to lose power. And there has been a lot of wrangling back and forth around that measure. But when I look at the Congress today and see that by utilizing districts where you can have majority districts—it has inured to our benefit, to the extent that we have gone from the nine who were in Congress on the day I took office to 43 there today.

The following two poems come from Tunisian poet Ali Znaidi. He teaches English at Tunisian public secondary schools. Though not from Cleveland or Ohio, Znaidi's work reminds the reader of some of fundamental human issues at play in the journey towards equality.

Skin

Ali Znaidi

Not a place of reality exactly
but one we like to cherish
and, you could say, we value:
this smooth or harsh contour
that imprisons our existence is but
a surface. Our kernels are more fragrant
than the shells of coconuts.
The time to feel its simulacrum best
is when it burns. Though
it is going to stink, right there
your brain is as fragrant as the inside
of a coconut.
We are human again
when we kiss our skins goodbye.

Colour is One

Ali Znaidi

A colour becomes noble.
Another colour is low and ser[vile].
Between them a fate of a human being
is concocted.
Between them someone touches the moon
and others are trodden on the asphalt
because they are considered asphalt.
Colour is one,
but the wind disperses it and shatters it.
Colour is one,
but the enterprises of domination categorise it
into rubrics.
Colour is one.
Just look at two birds!
One is black, the other white.
Both drink from the same spring.
Each has two wings that touch the surface of water;
and they all fly straight forward.
They fly leaving the face of water as it is:
Not white, nor black.

Underlying the comments made by Congressman Stokes in his last City Club address is the understanding that progress depends on the actions and personal sacrifices of individual human beings. In speeches, in courts and public forums, words and language are the action and time and attention the sacrifice. But in protests, individuals use their own bodies, along with their words, to make the struggle visible. That often constitutes a sacrifice far greater than anticipated.

The Revolutionary Reverend Klunder How One Man's Death Made Cleveland Question its Reputation as the Best Location in the Nation

Dana Aritonovich

"I hope Daddy isn't dead."

Three-year-old Dougie Klunder is visiting the Brookside Park Zoo with his sister, mother, and grandparents on a dreary spring afternoon, when his mother's name is announced over the public address system. As she walks away from her family to answer the call, Dougie's morbid words to his grandfather belie his tender age and highlight his awareness of the dangerous and important work his father is involved in.

During the first week of April 1964, protests in front of the construction zone for the new Stephen E. Howe Elementary School on Lakeview Road in Glenville were heating up. The Klunders had taken their young children to the picket line to demonstrate against the building of yet another ghetto school. "It seems amazing for such young children, but they had a real concept of what was going on," Joanne Klunder said a few years later. The following weekend, demonstrators carried a coffin to the Lakeview site to symbolically lay Jim Crow to rest. The mock burial was conducted on the very spot the Reverend would die soon after.¹

1. Bonnie and Charles Remsberg, "What Four Brave Women Told Their Children," *Good Housekeeping*, May 1967, 152–153.

The Rev. Bruce Klunder, a white Presbyterian minister and native of Greeley, Colorado, moved to Cleveland in 1961 as associate executive secretary of the Student Christian Union. Before settling in Cleveland, he was as active in the civil rights movement as he could be from Oregon, including raising money for the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955. Still in college, 19-year-old Bruce married 21-year-old Joanne the following year and they continued to involve themselves in discussions of civil rights during what Joanne later called their “white liberal” stage.²

After graduation, Bruce matriculated at Yale to pursue his Bachelor of Divinity Studies. He saw his Christian faith and the fight for racial justice as inextricably linked. “It is as we come face to face with our many concerns that we seek to find the meaning of the Christian faith,” he wrote in 1963.³ In a sermon that same year, Rev. Klunder explained that for Christians, “our central affirmation is that, through Jesus Christ, we are all one—one with God and one with each other... Life for the Christian is life which does not deny or ignore pain, suffering, and death.”⁴

Immediately after settling in Cleveland, Rev. Klunder and his wife allied themselves with student and community groups committed to the elimination of racial discrimination in eating facilities, housing, education, and employment. They were regularly found in picket lines and at boycotts, and in 1962 they led an integrated delegation of students from Western Reserve University and Case Institute on a tour of the South so they could experience firsthand the effects of legal segregation and learn how to better cope with the problems that Cleveland faced.

The Klunders’ activism increased when the Reverend helped form the Cleveland chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality. They picketed St. Luke’s Hospital to oppose the common practice of segregating

2. Joanne Klunder, “My Husband Died for Democracy,” *Ebony*, June 1964, 30.

3. “Once more, let death mark a new beginning,” *The Intercollegian*, May 1964 (reprint), Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964–1974, Container 1, Folder 1, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

4. Untitled document, 1964, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964–1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

patients, participated in a sit-in on the floor of the Ohio state legislature to bring attention to a fair housing bill, and protested segregated schools. Rev. Klunder created the Special Cleveland Tutorial Project in 1963, bringing together more than 60 college students from various schools to tutor at-risk junior high students in the Hough neighborhood.⁵ He worked with the United Freedom Movement to demand the creation of additional city jobs and services to aid the unemployed.⁶ Despite this laundry list of crusading, Rev. Klunder was, by all accounts, a quiet, humble man. He was not reckless or unaware of the personal risks he took, nor was he naïve about the dangers such activities posed to his family. "This was not an erratic act on Bruce's part," wrote Robert W. Clarke, his Student Christian Union colleague, shortly after the Reverend's untimely death. "Those of us who were close to him can see his action in a Christian context."⁷

But this Christian soldier was never satisfied to sit back and let others do the work. He was a man of action.

1952 started out on a high note for Cleveland's reputation as a leader in race relations. The National Council of Christians and Jews named the city the top Relations Center in recognition of its "outstanding improvement among its racial, religious, language and national groups;" the Glenville neighborhood's YMCA was commended for being the first completely interracial branch in the world; and the two-year-old Cleveland Community Relations Board was chosen as a model for other cities.⁸ All of this progress took place just a few years after the long-held policy of racial discrimination at Euclid Beach Park was challenged by an interracial group of activists. After a series of peaceful protests throughout the summer of 1946 culminated in an incident between black off-duty city police and white park officers, Mayor Thomas A. Burke closed the park a week before the season would have ended.

5. College Group Conducts Hough Area Tutor Program," *Call and Post*, July 6, 1963

6. "UFM Opens Campaign For More Jobs, Relief," *Call and Post*, November 2, 1963..

7. Letter from Robert W. Clarke, April 1964, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964-1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

8. "Cite Cleveland for Race Amity Record," *Call and Post*, February 23, 1952.

When it reopened in 1947, the dance pavilion area was under the management of a private club, most likely to avoid violation of city council's new rules regarding amusement park licensing and racial discrimination.

Starting in 1956, students in mostly-black Glenville attended relay classes, meaning they had half a day of school in either the morning or afternoon. Schools and housing in black areas were overcrowded in large part due to the Second Great Migration, during which millions of southerners moved north thinking they were escaping poverty, racial violence, and segregation. Carlotta Walls, one of the Little Rock Nine, visited several Cleveland high schools in 1959 and declared that they were in a "very sad predicament." She found that Glenville High School and East High School, for example, lagged behind Little Rock's integrated Central High in terms of college preparatory courses in math and the sciences. Students in Cleveland schools, Walls believed, took advantage of the abundance of elective subjects instead of challenging themselves with more difficult classes that could better prepare them for college.⁹ This contributed to the inequality of education—and as a result, employment—that had plagued the black community for generations.

Black parents had complained to the Board of Education for years about the inferior education their children were receiving, and in 1961 some students started to get bussed to empty classrooms in white schools, where over 12,000 desks sat empty.¹⁰ But this was not a sincere step toward full integration, as School Board President Ralph McAllister, who had previously referred to black students as "educationally inferior,"¹¹ was eager to set white parents' minds at ease by promising

9. Charles Sanders, "Little Rock Pupil Here: Cleveland Schools Called 'Very Sad,'" *Call and Post*, June 20, 1959.

10. School Housing Report quoted in *The Informer*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 1964, 3, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964-1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

11. Al, Sweeney, "PLOT DRIVE TO OUT MCALLISTER: Television Slur Whips Up Indignation," *Call and Post*, February 1, 1964.

that black kids would not be permitted to attend physical education classes, eat in the cafeteria, or use the restroom more than once a day. There would be none of that pesky race mixing in Cleveland schools.

In September of 1963, the BOE worked out a deal with the United Freedom Movement that stated that schools that had been housing the bussed-in black children would be fully integrated by February 1964. When the new semester began in January, only 40 percent of black students were allowed to mingle with white students for a mere one hour each school day. Not only were many white parents upset about what they saw as a reversal of the segregation with which they had been reluctantly satisfied for two years, but the UFM and other civil rights activists were angry that this was not the full integration they had been promised.¹² A riot broke out at the Murray Hill School in Little Italy as white residents counter-protested against UFM members. There was also a near-riot at Memorial School not far from Murray Hill.

The sit-in held at the BOE on February 5 resulted in 20 peaceful protestors being arrested after they were dragged or thrown down the staircase by Cleveland police officers. Civil rights groups then picketed the Central Police Station and attempted to bring charges of police brutality against those involved, but film of the incident seemed to support the police; the Ohio Civil Rights Commission later found that the film had been edited to remove anything incriminating against the officers.¹³

Because of the tensions created by white residents opposed to integration, the BOE decided to speed up its plans to construct three new schools in Glenville only 30 days after the so-called integration of the Brett, Murray Hill, and Memorial schools. In early March, the BOE rejected its own commitment to a two-week moratorium on construction while the issue could be discussed by experts. They were eager to re-segregate Cleveland schoolchildren, and nothing was going to stop them.

12. "The Crisis in Cleveland, Ohio Public Schools: An Interpretive Statement," April 16, 1964, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964-1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

13. *The Informer*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 1964, 2, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964-1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

The three locations chosen to be the new homes for black students were less than ideal, but the BOE wasn't particularly concerned about the objections of activists, or even the objection of the City Planning Commission. Their priority was to appease angry white voters.

The school on Woodside, for example, was only a block and a half from an existing school. It had a tiny lot that would have forced kids to use the roof as a playground. Rosedale was being built next to another school that was not overcrowded, and most if not all of the property was going to be invaded by the expansion of Western Reserve University. Lakeview had no play space, and would be directly in front of a new 6-lane highway that was certain to encroach upon the school's property.¹⁴ *The Plain Dealer* defended construction of these schools by explaining that they "would bring the transported children back to their own neighborhood."¹⁵

Demonstrations at Lakeside continued on April 5. One black protester, Booker T. Eddy, complained of being beaten with a club by an arresting police officer. He was treated at the hospital and received 15 stitches.¹⁶ On April 6, 50 UFM protestors showed up at Lakeview, some lodging themselves under cement trucks and in excavation ditches to try to stop construction. Police removed them, arrested about 20—including Beth Robinson, who was 5 months pregnant—and many were beaten inside the police wagon. Newspaper reports implied that the police were responding to violence by the activists. Mayor Ralph Locher told city council that such demonstrations "bring discredit to the entire civil rights movement."¹⁷

The next day, Rev. Klunder told his wife, "The only way to stop that school is to put our bodies between the workmen and their work."¹⁸ He

14. *Ibid.*, 3.

15. Ann Skinner, "Overcrowding in Schools Is at Heart of Conflict," *The Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1964.

16. "Needlessly Hit by Police, School Demonstrator Says," *The Plain Dealer*, April 7, 1964.

17. "Schools Set to Ask Court to Halt Strike," *The Plain Dealer*, April 7, 1964.

18. Remsberg, 152.

was unfazed by the prospect of getting arrested, which he fully expected would happen, though he was concerned that it would likely mean that the Buildings for Brotherhood camp he was planning to lead in Peru that summer would be jeopardized by a trial. Just a few hours before the Lakeview protest, Rev. Klunder decided he needed to go to the construction site to be part of the struggle and “stick all the way.” Joanne agreed, and said she would keep her promise to the children to spend the day at the zoo.¹⁹

At noon on Tuesday, April 7, 27-year-old Rev. Klunder led a group of civil rights activists from CORE, the NAACP, and the Hazeldell Parents Association through nearby backyards to break through a cordon of Cleveland police officers who were protecting the construction site. Three protestors put themselves in the path of the bulldozer while Rev. Klunder lay down behind it. The driver shut off his bulldozer for two minutes to wait out the unfolding drama. But when he cranked it back up, he shifted into reverse to avoid the protestors in front of him. Despite the shouts from onlookers that there was somebody behind him, he ran over Rev. Klunder and killed him instantly.²⁰ The driver was attacked by three men, while another man attempted to commandeer the bulldozer. Police stepped in to protect the driver and his machine.

The Plain Dealer reported on its front page the next day that it was “the worst outbreak of civil rights violence in Cleveland’s history,” with 300 police officers and detectives on the scene to respond to “gangs” who were looting, breaking windows, and attacking cars well into the night. Tear gas was used to disperse the crowds, though the paper admitted that “the violence was sporadic.” The front page editorial about the Reverend’s death blamed civil rights demonstrators for the tragedy. “The immediate responsibility rests with the groups who took this means of trying to impose their will on the school board,” it read. “City and school authorities had no course but to resist mob rule.”²¹

19. Klunder, 30.

20. Ken Temple, “Rev. Klunder’s Valor Hailed By Rights Groups,” *Call and Post*, April 11, 1964.

21. “A Time for Sober Reflection,” *The Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1964.

But the *Call and Post*, a weekly newspaper serving Northeast Ohio's black community, had a different perspective, a much more stark and realistic view of the events leading up to and following this tragedy. The "unfortunate death" of this white pastor "smears his blood upon the Cleveland Board of Education." BOE President McAllister, whose "policy of ignoring the pleas of Negroes... killed Rev. Klunder just as if Mr. McAllister had operated that bulldozer."²² One story in the *Call and Post* said there were angry interactions between people in the neighborhood and the police, but that they had "fizzled out" as the afternoon wore on. They also seemed to be calling out *The Plain Dealer* by writing that "Vandalism scare stories reported in daily news media were distortions of truth," stating that only two small stores, a few apartments, and several police cars had broken windows, not the mass destruction that had been announced by others.²³

The violence and damage was condemned by activists and supporters. In a public statement signed by five clergymen the day after Rev. Klunder's death, they expressed regret over the "undisciplined people" who became violent upon seeing arrests at the Lakeview site. Their actions, they declared, "were not in keeping with [Rev. Klunder's] ideas or with his personality. They reflect, rather, the pent-up emotions, the surge of resentment, and the frustration felt by Cleveland's Negro community." Those engaged in peaceful civil disobedience knew that there were other groups trying to instigate further violence.²⁴

The mayor and the Board of Education immediately—as in, the same day Rev. Klunder died—responded by seeking an injunction to keep demonstrators from interfering with school construction. Workers were also instructed to begin building a 10-foot chain fence topped with barbed wire to surround the Lakeview and Rosedale construction sites, and officials left open the probability that the Woodside site would be

22. "Death, The Harvest of Official Prejudice," *Call and Post*, April 11, 1964.

23. "Eye-Witnesses Differ on How Minister Died," *Call and Post*, April 11, 1964.

Dr. Harry B. Taylor et al., untitled document, April 8, 1964, Congress of Racial Equality, Cleveland Chapter Records, 1960–1969 and undated, Container 1, Folder 18, MS 5174, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

25. "Racial Crisis Talks Called Here Today," *The Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1964.

fenced in later.²⁵ Instead of sitting down with parents and protestors to come up with an amicable and progressive resolution to the issue of segregated schools, the City of Cleveland and the Board of Education decided they would rather build an iron curtain to separate the people from the machinations of their leaders.

The day after Rev. Klunder was crushed to death, hundreds of people picketed the BOE and later marched to City Hall for a sit-in. Before the end of April, 264 faculty members of the Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University and a group of physicians and dentists took out ads in *The Plain Dealer* expressing their commitment to equality of educational opportunity and denouncing the BOE; dozens of black leaders endorsed the UFM and its methods of direct action; 40 white businessmen and black activists met to discuss issues of housing, employment, and education; and during the Monday School Boycott, 92 percent of Cleveland's black schoolchildren attended the UFM's Freedom Schools instead of their regular classes, even though teachers and students who participated were threatened by BOE President McAllister.²⁶ For the rest of that spring, the people seemed to be leading Cleveland toward equality and justice for all.

26. *The Informer*, Volume 1, Issue 2, 1964, 3, Rev. Bruce Klunder Papers, 1964–1974, Container 1, Folder 2, MSS 4221, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland.

Spitting*

Dianne Borsenik

It isn't raining.
This isn't mist, drizzle or sprinkle;
it's more like the sky is spitting on me.

It reminds me of the story Deidre told
yesterday, where she did the spitting.

She and her young son were walking
through a parking lot when a man in a car
hissed venom at her: Nigger bitch.
Once wasn't enough for him. Nigger bitch.

Deidre is a strong woman, not someone
I'd want to make angry. Even though years
have passed since that incident, her hands
curled into fists; she sizzled and sparked
and her eyes burned holes in the air
as she told how she pounded on his car,
dared him to get out, how she spat on him.

She said it scared her son, who said
Mom, I've never seen you like this.
Mom, I don't like you like this.

It reminds me of the time I delivered a box
of books to Margie at the Lakewood RTA station.

**The phrase used in the third stanza of this poem is an accurate relating of what was said to Deidre. She has given me license to use it in order to tell her story.*

Our happy discussion of poetry was crudely attacked by a bully in a transit cop's uniform. Invading her space, he shoved his face in hers, berated her, accused her, threatened to arrest her for "vending without a license."

Alarmed at his escalating belligerence, I interrupted, said, truthfully, that I had sold the books to her. He backed down, reluctantly apologized to me—very pointedly not to Margie—and walked away, mumbling something about watching for drug dealers.

I was shocked and outraged by the obvious racial profiling, disgusted at the injustice of it. I wanted to spit on him.

Margie started crying, said
You just don't know how hard it is.
This kind of thing happens all the time.

Poets are said to "spit" their words
in spoken performances, and that's not
such a bad description of what we do.
I don't think we should let anyone
get in our way of spitting.
I think we should spit more frequently.
I think we should spit more vehemently,
more descriptively, more publicly.
I think we should work up a good mouthful
of spit and hit pavement and stage with it.

I'm going to spit right now.

I spit on ignorance, both the blind kind
and the ignorant-and-proud-of-it kind.

I spit on bigotry.
I spit on prejudice.
I spit on bullying.
I spit on misogyny, I spit on misandry.
I spit on violence, both foreign and domestic.
I spit on deliberate cruelty.
I spit on injustice,
I spit on hitting a man when he's down,
I spit on knowing the right thing to do
and not doing it;
I spit on doing the wrong thing
to go along with the crowd,

I spit on keeping quiet
when we know we need to spit.

I spit. I spit. I spit.

When it comes to those who choose racial equity as a topic for an address to the City Club, a majority of the speakers tend to come from the political left. Jason Riley is an outlier. An African American and former member of the Wall Street Journal editorial board, Riley counters the traditional view that the Great Society programs of the Lyndon Johnson era just haven't gone far enough. Rather, he argues, those very programs are what has held back progress for black communities.

How Not to Help the Black Underclass

**Excerpts from Jason Riley's address
to the City Club of Cleveland**

March 29, 2015

2015 is an important year in Civil Rights history, because it marks the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's most significant achievement, the voting rights act of 1965. Last year, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, gender, and religion, and gave blacks access to jobs, schools, and public facilities that previously had been closed to them.

But the access to the ballot was still a challenge for blacks, particularly in the South. Lincoln said, we are a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but that is only true if all people can register and vote. The ability to vote is what protects the other freedoms we enjoy in this country. It is how we hold elected officials responsible for decisions they make. After the Civil Rights Act was passed, Dr. King pressed for a voting rights act as well. 50 years ago this summer, President Johnson signed it into law, and it has been a remarkable success. To give you a sense of how successful the voting rights act has been, in 1964, the year before it passed, only 7 percent of blacks in the state of Mississippi were registered to vote. That was the lowest percentage of anywhere in the south. But by 1966, just one year after the voting rights act passed, the black voter registration rate in Mississippi had climbed to 60 percent. The highest in the South and Mississippi was no outlier

in this respect. It went from 19 percent to 51 percent over the same period in Georgia. In fact, in every southern state, the gains were striking. Today, black voter registration in the south, where most blacks still live, is higher than it is in other parts of the country. Recently, the percentage of blacks who voted was higher than the percentage of whites who have voted for the first time in U.S. history. That is how significant the Voting Rights Act has been, along with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It represented the culmination of a modern civil rights movement.

What I wanted to talk about this afternoon for a few minutes is what has happened in the wake of these civil rights victories, what has risen from the ruins of Jim Crow, in terms of policies aimed at blacks in general and the black underclass and particular. Where has there been progress? Where has there been retrogression? What's working and what is not working. And how much of what is not working can be blamed on residual racism in America?

Last year, I published a book about the track record of various government efforts to help the black underclass following these civil rights victories. Just before signing the Voting Rights Act into law, Lyndon Johnson gave a famous speech at Howard University, in Washington, D.C., where he talked about what the government should do next on behalf of blacks. This was merely the end of the beginning, he said. And he said that beginning is freedom. The barriers to that freedom are tumbling down. Freedom is the right to share fully and equally in American society—to vote, hold a job, enter a public race, go to school, said Johnson. But freedom is not enough, he said. You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him and bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say, you are free to compete with all the others, and think you have been fair to that person. Johnson said the next and more profound stage in the battle for civil rights was not just equality as a right, but equality as a fact, and equality as a result. Johnson was pushing for equal outcomes as a measure of black progress. But what if Johnson was mistaken? What if there are limits to what the government can do beyond removing barriers to freedom? What if the best that we can hope for from our elected officials are policies that

promote equal opportunity? What if public policy makers are creating more problems and barriers to progress when the focus is on equal outcomes, where Johnson wanted to put it? I think there are limits, even when the policies are well-intentioned, and I think the past half-century is evidence of that. For more than 50 years, the political left has pushed for more government assistance for blacks through racial preferences, forced integration, expanded welfare entitlements, and so forth.

But the track record here is appalling.

While gains have been made, significant racial disparities remain in some areas, and black retrogression is in others. The black-white poverty gap has widened over the past decade. Black poverty is no longer even falling in this country. The black-white disparity in incarceration rates today is larger than it was in 1960. And the black unemployment rate has, on average, been double the white rate for 50 years. I argue that blacks ultimately must help themselves. They must develop the same attitudes, habits, behaviors that other groups developed in order to rise in America. And to the extent that a government policy, however well-intentioned, interferes with this necessary self-development, it does more harm than good.

Open-ended welfare benefits do not help people to develop a work ethic, which is ultimately what they must develop in order to rise out of poverty. Minimum wage laws price younger, less experienced people out of the labor force, a disproportionate number of whom happen to be black. "Soft on crime" laws make ghettos more dangerous for the mostly law-abiding residents who live there, and make life easier for the criminals who primarily prey on the black poor. And so on. It is also important to note the progress that was occurring among blacks prior to the implementation of these programs designed to help them, programs that often receive all the credit for any progress we have seen. For example, between 1940 and 1960, black poverty in the U.S. fell by 40 percentage points. That was before the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were passed. That was during Jim Crow. That was during a period of open, rampant, legal racial discrimination in this country.

Now, poverty continued to fall after the Great Society programs

were implemented in the 1960s, but at a much lower rate. At best, the Great Society continued a trend already in place. Yet these programs are given all the credit for these reductions in poverty that we see today. The reality is that no Great Society program has ever come close to matching the reduction in black poverty that we saw prior to the Great Society. No Great Society program has ever come close to matching what blacks were doing on their own before the government decided to step in and help in the form of an antipoverty program.

Affirmative action—racial preferences—is another example of a program that gets more credit than it deserves. In this case, credit for increasing the size of the black middle class in this country. I say, not so fast. Between 1930 and 1970, the percentage of black white-collar workers quadrupled in America. That was before affirmative action. That was during a time when you could put a sign in your window that says “we don’t hire blacks.” Yet in the face of these obstacles, blacks were entering the skilled professions at an unprecedented rate. Yes, blacks continued to enter the white-collar professions, but this continued an existing trend. There was a substantial black middle class already in existence by the end of the 1960s. It has continued to grow, but at a much slower rate.

As with black poverty reduction, no affirmative action program has come close to matching what blacks were doing on their own prior to the implementation of the program. Moreover, racial preferences have not been a boon to the poor, as proponents promised. Instead, it has worked mostly to help already well-off blacks become better off. There have been case studies, in Atlanta for example, in the 1970s and 1980s, under black mayors like Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young. The city implemented racial-preference contracting programs for black contractors and black city workers, but average income blacks were left behind, and the black poor lost ground. That has been the story of the black poor not only in Atlanta, but nationwide.

In the era of affirmative action, the black underclass has lost ground both in absolute terms and relative to white underclass. In the 1970s and 1980s, even into the 1990s—those would be the first decades of affir-

mative action policies—the poorest of blacks saw their incomes decline at more than double the rate of comparable whites. Again, the empirical data shows that in an era of racial preferences and quotas, and set-asides put in place to help the black poor, that subset has regressed. We have had more than four decades of affirmative action policies. Let us put aside for now whether they violate the Civil Rights Act or equal protection clause of the Constitution. Let's put aside whether or not a racial spoils system in a country as diverse as America is helpful or harmful. Let's focus on something simpler.

Does affirmative action work as intended? It has been sold as a way to reduce black poverty and increase the black professional ranks. After four plus decades, what does the track record show? I think it shows many of these policies not only are not helping, but are harming. I would argue there is a large cultural component to racial disparities today, whether we are talking about employment, education, incarceration, income, or other measures. Yet it has become almost taboo to talk about black cultural problems.

The book is not an autobiography or memoir, but I tell a few stories about growing up black and male in the inner city. One involves a trip back to Buffalo, where I was born and raised. I was visiting my older sister shortly after I had begun working at *The Wall Street Journal*, and was chatting with my niece, who was seven or eight years old. I was asking about school and her favorite subjects, that sort of thing, when she stopped me and said, "Uncle Jason, why you talk white?" She turned to her friend and said, "Don't my uncle sound white? Why he trying to sound so smart?" She was teasing, of course. I smiled as they enjoyed a chuckle at my expense, but what she said stayed with me. I couldn't help thinking. Here were two young black girls already linking speech patterns to race and intelligence. They already had a rather sophisticated awareness that as blacks, white-sounding speech was not only to be avoided in their own speech, but mocked in the speech of others.

I should not have been too surprised by this, and I was not. My siblings, along with countless other black friends and relatives, teased me the same way when I was growing up. And other black professionals,

from the president and first lady on down; told similar stories. What I had forgotten was just how early these attitudes take hold, how soon this counterproductive thinking and behavior begins. New York City, where I am based, has the largest school system in America. And 80 percent of black kids in New York City public schools are performing below grade level. A big part of the problem is a black subculture that rejects attitudes and behaviors that are conducive to academic success. Black kids read half as many books and watch twice as much television as their white counterparts, for example. In other words, a big part of the problem is a culture that produces little black girls and boys who are already worried about acting and sounding white by the time they are in the second grade.

Another big part of the problem is a reluctance to speak honestly about these cultural shortcomings. Many whites fear being called racist, and many black leaders have a vested interest in blaming black problems primarily on white racism. So that is the narrative they push, regardless of the reality. Racism has become an all-purpose explanation for bad black outcomes, be they social or economic. If you disagree and are white, you are a bigot. If you disagree and are black, you are a sellout. Too often, this is the level of discourse, schoolyard name-calling. Ad hominem attacks aimed at shutting down the debate. Even President Obama has been subjected to this treatment when he broaches the topic of black cultural shortcomings. On several occasions, he has spoken to black audiences about absent fathers.

When he spoke at Morehouse, a black college in Atlanta a couple years ago, he said, "I was raised by a heroic single mother and wonderful grandparents who made incredible sacrifices for me. But I still wish I had a father who was not only present, but involved. And so my whole life, I have tried to be for Michelle and my girls what my father was not for my mother and me. I have tried to be a better father, a better husband, a better man."

Obama told those black men in the audience to be good role models for other less fortunate black men. He said, the brothers who have been left behind, who have not had the same opportunities we have, they

need to hear from us. We need to be in the barber shops with them, at church with them, helping pull them up, exposing them to new opportunities. We have to teach them what it means to be a man. That might sound like common sense to you and me. And I'm sure there are some people in this room who wish this was all Obama would ever talk about. But Obama gets slammed by liberals in general, and black liberals in particular, when he says these sorts of things, because he is seen as criticizing black culture, condescending to blacks, being elitist. Most significantly, he is accused of letting whites off the hook, which is a no-no on the black left. But the facts are on Obama's side.

For decades, studies have shown the likelihood of teen pregnancy, drug abuse, dropping out of school, and many bad social outcomes increases dramatically when fathers are not around. One of the most comprehensive studies ever done about this concluded that black boys without a father were 68 percent more likely to be incarcerated than those with a father. The study said that overall the most critical factor affecting the prospect of a male youth who will encounter the criminal justice system is the presence of a father in the home. All other factors, including family income, are much less important, according to the study. The social scientist James Q. Wilson once put it this way:

"If crime is to a significant degree caused by weak character, if weak character is more likely among children of unwed mothers, if there are no fathers, if boys become young men with no preparation for work, if school achievement is regarded as a sign of having sold out—if these things are true, the chances of reducing crime rates among low income blacks anytime soon is slim."

But try bringing up black culture in a debate over criminal behavior today. I dare you. You will have your head handed to you. Try bringing up the breakdown of the black family in a debate over crime. We do not even talk about crime anymore. We talk about incarceration rates. As if incarceration rates have no relationship to black behavior. We talk about police shootings of black men as a measure of whether America values black lives or whether cops value black lives. We have had people all over the country pretending there is an epidemic of cops shooting blacks

for no reason. And the media has played right along. This is nonsense. Police are involved in approximately 2 percent of black shooting deaths in this country each year. A cop is about six times as likely to be shot by someone black than the opposite scenario.

In March of this year, four cops were killed over a seven-day period, and all of them were black. How many of you were aware of that? Where were the hashtags on Twitter? Where was the media coverage? Where were the outraged protesters, the civil rights leaders, the White House press conference? Do these black lives matter?

There were more than 400 homicides in Chicago last year. And about 300 of the victims were black. That is more than double the number of black deaths at the hands of police in the entire country in a given year. Can we even consider the possibility that perhaps the bigger problem might be racial disparities in antisocial behavior, not racial disparities in the composition of law enforcement agencies and elected officials? Can we even have that discussion? The answer is no, we can't. Blacks are about 13 percent of the population in this country, but commit more than half of all murders. And 90 percent of their victims are other blacks.

The question is not whether cops value black lives or America values black lives. Isn't the more relevant question whether black people value black lives? Whether the black men doing all this killing value black lives? Are we supposed to hold whites to a higher standard than blacks hold each other? Homicide is the leading cause of death for young black men in the U.S., and it is not because cops are shooting them. Rogue cops should be punished to the full extent of the law. And law enforcement should certainly be held to a high standard for violating the public trust.

But if you believe that Black Lives Matter, if you want to reduce the black body count, as a practical matter, should you focus on the 2 percent of black shooting deaths that involve cops, or the 98 percent that don't? Let me close by noting that this concept, self-help and self-development, that I think is essential to black advancement, is something black leaders once understood all too well, and at a time when blacks faced infinitely more obstacles than today. Frederick Douglass said in 1865 that everyone had asked him and the other abolitionists what to

do with the Negro. He said, "I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us. If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, let them fall. If the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is that you give him a chance to stand on his own legs."

Douglass was essentially saying, give blacks equal opportunity, and then leave us alone. Booker T. Washington, who like Douglass was born a slave, echoed that sentiment. He said, "It is important all the rights and privileges of the law be ours."

But it is vastly more important we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges once we have them. Douglass and Washington did not play down the need for government to secure if all rights and both were optimistic that blacks would eventually receive those rights, although neither man lived to see that. But both also understood the limits of government benevolence. Blacks would have to ready themselves to meet the far bigger challenge of a team in position to take advantage of opportunities once equal rights had been secured. Dr. King also understood this. He once told a black congregation, did you know that Negroes are 10 percent of the population in St. Louis and responsible for 58 percent of the crimes? He said, we have to face that. We have to do something about our moral standards. He said, "We know there are many things wrong in the white world, but there are many things wrong in the black world too. We cannot keep blaming the white man. There are things we must do for ourselves."

I used the statements from King in a *Wall Street Journal* column a few years ago, and some readers accused me of making up quotes. They come from a profile of King in *Harper's Magazine* in 1961. I was taken aback by the accusation, because the article can be located pretty easily on Google. But what really struck me about the accusation is that those making it just could not believe that the nation's most prominent civil rights leaders used to speak this way about problems in the black community, and the role of personal responsibility. This might tell you everything you need to know about what passes for black leadership today.

Mr. Riley then took questions from the audience:

Audience: Thank you so much for your courageous remarks today here at the City Club.

I wanted to go back to what you were talking about in the beginning about policies, policies that focus on equality of outcomes versus opportunity. I wonder if there are policies you see that could be helpful in fostering more equality of opportunity, or is it just a cultural problem and the best we can do is stand back and let people sort that out for themselves?

Riley: Well, I think that there are policies in place now that are harmful, and that we should stop doing certain things that I think are harmful. I think that, in and of it, would be helpful. I do not think we need more government intervention. I think we need less. We keep raising the minimum wage in the country. Los Angeles recently raised the minimum wage, voted to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The Brookings Institution did a study last year on the worst places for youths to find work in America, 100 biggest cities. L.A. ranked 98 out of 100. Raising the minimum wage is not going to help that situation. It is sold as an antipoverty measure, but poor households don't need a raise. They need workers. And to the extent that raising the minimum wage reduces employment opportunities, you are not helping to address poverty. So it is policies like that. We have education policies in this country that keep kids trapped in failing schools. We need to stop doing that. We need to give them access to a better education. So I think we should change policy. I think there are things that could be done. I do not know if it is in the form of an additional policy, however. I think a good start would simply be to... stop doing things we know are not working.

Audience: Mr. Riley, I agree with your position that blacks, as with every other group, ought to help themselves. But this notion that government intervention has caused harm is deeply troubling. I would suggest that you are offering a simplistic solution or observation to a very

complex dynamic that has had its roots in American slavery. So let's talk about one of those government policies, affirmative action. Affirmative action certainly is an emotionally charged concept that I believe has failed significantly. And it has a misnomer of providing unqualified blacks opportunities. But the fact of the matter is, it was created to create equal opportunity. But conscious and unconscious biases are preventing equal opportunity. If not affirmative action, what action needs to be taken to in fact create equal opportunity?

Riley: Well, what I have tried to do is look at what was going on prior to the implementation of policies aimed at helping the black underclass. You can point to a legacy of slavery being responsible for the outcomes we see today. But then you need to explain why generations closer to slavery had better outcomes than what we see today. You have to explain how that legacy skipped a few generations and then reinserted itself. As I mentioned before, you had blacks leaving poverty at a higher rate in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. If the legacy of slavery is responsible, how do you explain that? Those generations are much closer to the institution.

You mentioned affirmative action as being helpful. I disagree. I spoke about affirmative action in contracting, with respect to the case studies that have been done in places like Atlanta. Let's look at higher education. We have four decades of this now. When the University of California and its racial preferences in college admissions back in 1996, black college graduation rates went up not just throughout the University of California system but in general. They went up in the most difficult disciplines—math, science, and engineering—by more than 50 percent. Black college graduation rates had been declining in the 1980s. After racial preferences ended, they went up, and they went up because kids were being better matched with schools where they could have equal work. They did what white kids and Asian kids did. They went to schools where they matched the credentials of the average student at that school, and therefore more of them were graduating. A perfect example is a study done at M.I.T. some years ago. Black students at M.I.T. scored in the top 10 percent on the math section of the S.A.T., of

all kids in the country. You are talking about some very bright kids. But they were in the bottom 10 percent among their peers at M.I.T. So kids who would be hitting it out of the park at a less selective institution were struggling at M.I.T., and that is because they were primarily at M.I.T. because the administrators at M.I.T. wanted the racial mix to look right there. They were there for diversity reasons. Whether they graduated was a secondary concern to M.I.T. That is my problem with affirmative action. It does not work. It sets up kids to fail. So again, I am looking at what was going on before these policies were put in place, what has gone on afterwards, comparing and contrasting.

Audience: Good afternoon, sir. Thank you for coming. I enjoyed your speech. I am not as learned as a lot of these guys. I did not go to college. I served in the Marine Corps. But I am going to try to articulate—

Riley: I think that makes you more learned than most people in here. And thank you for your service.

Audience: I read from your op-ed pieces, especially the one you did about Moynihan, the congressman, when you said that he was right. And actually if you look at some of the statistics that maybe you are presenting to this room—somebody can come along and say the statistics are not right. As Moynihan said, as we put this welfare act into motion, people are attaching things to it, like the black male cannot be in the family. These things have been attached since Franklin Delano Roosevelt put ideas into action. It gives states rights to discriminate against the so-called Negro. You said these policies were not able to help. Was it also that policies were hijacked by those who did not want the policies to be in a position to help anybody? You are throwing out the statistics. Are you sometimes scared of a statistic that slanted it one way, you know?

Riley: I guess I would not question the motives of Great Society proponents. I think they were well intentioned. I think Johnson and his sup-

porters—frankly, as I say in the book, I think that the 1950s in particular, the civil rights victories of the mid-1960s, were liberalism at its best. I think that was the cynicism of the civil rights movement and of liberalism. With respect to Moynihan, his report was about what he saw in terms of family disintegration in the black community. He saw trends forming, and he worried they would get worse if we did not do something about them. He was writing particularly about black men and fatherless homes. He was right that those trends have continued. As late as the early to mid-1960s, two out of three black children were raised by a mother and a father. Today, more than 70 percent are not. In some of our inner cities, it is as high as 80 percent or 90 percent. This is extremely troubling. I mean it has real economic consequences.

The black poverty rate in America for married couples is in the single digits, and has been for more than 20 years. There is your antipoverty program. Get married before you have children. We don't need another huge welfare distribution scheme. We do not need slavery reparations. We need to restore the black family. As you said, there have been—prior to the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, which helped in this regard, you had social programs in place that discouraged intact households. If a woman was receiving government assistance, she would risk losing that assistance if the father of her children lived with her. We addressed some of this in the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, but I think we could go much further in that regard. Yes, these policies were well intentioned, but in many cases, they were put in place for incentives, I believe, that have led to the breakup, or done significant damage, to the black family.

One philosophy regarding how to address structural racism suggests that each individual is called to bring his or her gifts to the struggle. Members of the congregation of one local church took this on in earnest. This account is evidence of their commitment.

The Most Segregated Hour in Cleveland A Faith-in-Action Story of How a “Mustard Seed” at Forest Hill Church Presbyterian Grew into Enduring, Essential and Ongoing Racial Change in Cleveland Heights

Peg Weissbrod, with Susan Kaesar and Ajah Hales

In the fall of 2010, 50 members of Forest Hill Church Presbyterian in Cleveland Heights met after worship to discuss a horrifying racial incident involving one of their young members.

Just as the school year was about to start in August, a woman in an outer-ring suburb of Cleveland had called 911 to report that a young black male was going door-to-door in her neighborhood.

A shortened paraphrase of the call transcript describes what happened next.

911 caller: Hi. Um, my kids just saw an African-American male in a navy blue Abercrombie shirt talking on a cell phone and going door to door. We're not sure what he's doing but it looks suspicious. And I'm just wondering if you, uh, could have a police cruiser just come out and ask him what he's doing.

Children shrieking in background: He has a gun! He has a gun! He has a gun!

[to children] You guys, chill! That is NOT a gun!

[to dispatcher] I don't think it's a gun. He's, he's just walking down the street... it is NOT a gun

.

Dispatcher: Where is he now?

911 caller: In the driveway across the street. I think he's soliciting something or other because he's ringing my neighbor's doorbell.

Dispatcher: Do you see a gun on him?

911 caller: I DON'T see a gun! My son said he did, but he has a big imagination.

Child's voice: Lock the doors!

[to dispatcher] I'm going out to see where he is now.

Dispatcher: Don't put yourself in danger! Don't get too close! My officers are on their way.

911 caller: Ok, I see him. There's the police, they've stopped the dude and he's... Oh my gosh! There are two police cars! You guys sent TWO cars out there?!

Dispatcher: I sent them ALL!

911 caller: OH MY GOD! Holy Mackerel!

Dispatcher: When I hear "a gun," I have to send them all.

911 caller: Oh my God! Oh my God!! Now they're SEARCHING him!

What the 911 caller didn't know was that officers from four different police cruisers exited their cars with guns drawn before proceeding to search the terrified boy.

They were not as quick to shoot as the Cleveland police officers who shot Tamir Rice in 2014. In this case, the boy—a student athlete from

the local high school sent by his coach to solicit funds for the athletic team—survived.

No one from the police department or the city ever notified the boy's parents of this incident. When his parents learned about it, they were shaken to the core, and shared the news with members of their church, Forest Hill Presbyterian in Cleveland Heights.

Both parents and church members repeatedly asked the mayor of the suburb where the incident occurred for time to address a City Council meeting.

More than two months later, the City Council finally agreed to place them on its meeting agenda. Members of Forest Hill Church showed up in force seeking an apology for the police overreaction to reports of a "suspicious" African American, and the dispatcher's handling of the situation.

So many members attended that they overwhelmed the council chambers and spilled into the hallway where they, along with local TV crews, listened to officials deny that any apology was due. Instead the mayor, the council, and the police chief all agreed the procedure would have been the same had a call come in about a white child with a gun.

That may have been true. But, as everyone in the room knew, there would not have been a 911 call if the young man had been white.

If he had been white, there wouldn't have been hysterical children crying and claiming a cell phone looked like a gun. There wouldn't have been a jittery parent peering through the bushes worrying about a suspicious white boy in the neighborhood.

Only through the lens of implicit bias does a well-dressed, respectful and respectable young man with a cell phone, going door to door to raise money for his athletic team become a criminal suspect who may be wielding a gun.

The 50 members who crowded into the council chambers belonged to a church with a long history of social activism, especially on racial issues. They didn't realize it at the time, but they were about to open a brand new chapter in their congregation's history.

Incorporated in 1903, Forest Hill Church moved to the Forest Hill

neighborhood in 1950. This neighborhood straddles the boundaries of East Cleveland and Cleveland Heights.

In 1929, the Forest Hill housing development was designed to be a racially and ethnically exclusive residential community for white Protestants only. Covenants included in the property deeds required potential home buyers who wanted to live in the neighborhood to be sponsored by a current resident and go through a screening committee, whose unwritten purpose was maintaining racial and ethnic purity. No specific racial group was mentioned; however, homes could not be sold without the consent of the surrounding neighbors. This system lasted until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the enforcement of such covenants unconstitutional, and the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 made housing discrimination because of race and national origin illegal.

The clash between these historic racial fears and the rising civil rights movement's demand for fair, open and integrated housing came to a head inside the walls of Forest Hill Church in the 1960s.

Between 1960 and 1970, East Cleveland's population went from 90 percent white to 90 percent black. Housing values dropped dramatically as East Cleveland fell victim to white flight and housing discrimination. Many Forest Hill residents, some of whom belonged to Forest Hill Church, were certain Cleveland Heights would be next.

It was during this decade of social challenge and legal change that Forest Hill Church found its voice and became a pivotal force for racial justice and fair housing laws in Cleveland Heights.

The national Presbyterian Church had just called for a "non-segregated society," stating that racial discrimination and segregation were "denials of human worth and contrary to the will of God." Local Presbyterian churches were asked to approve the declaration. After much debate, Forest Hill Church's governing board narrowly voted to endorse the position.

The young Rev. Dr. Ned Edwards became Senior Pastor of Forest Hill Church in 1970. Early in his pastorate, the church openly proclaimed that the "denial of housing opportunities to any person on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin by express agreement, by

custom or by silence” was morally wrong. In response, more than 400 members left the church. Those who remained committed themselves to pursuing racial justice and inclusion as a congregation, despite remaining fearful of the effect racial integration would have on their property values.

Current member Diana Woodbridge vividly remembers a conversation with a respected church member at the time who said he didn’t care who his neighbors were as long as they maintained their property.

“The fear named again and again was deteriorating neighborhoods and housing values,” remembers Pastor Edwards. “Housing seemed to be key to hope for the future. If the issue could be maintaining quality housing and not racial integration, perhaps people of all persuasions and attitudes could be brought on board.”

However, at that time blacks were systemically being denied access to the funding they needed to maintain their homes. A group of church members spent three years educating themselves and exploring ways to address these concerns. In 1971, this small group received church funding to form Forest Hill Church Housing Corporation (FHCHC), an independent nonprofit organization. Its goal was to help residents, especially blacks and others who had been excluded from home ownership, maintain their homes within an integrated community.

The church expanded its commitment to racial justice by helping to form Heights Community Congress in 1972, and the Heights Interfaith Council in 1976—neighborhood organizations promoting open housing and intercultural dialog. In 1980, the church was recognized for its pursuit of open housing by the Cuyahoga Plan of Ohio, then the region’s leading open housing agency.

At the time of the 911 call, it was a member of Northeast Alliance for Hope, and today plays an active role in Greater Cleveland Congregations, working for gun safety legislation and felony over-charging in Cuyahoga County.

In all of these efforts, the members of Forest Hill Church have worked to decrease and even eliminate effects of structural racism, overt prejudice and implicit bias.

All this is to say that its members were no strangers to structural racism, that mundane malady infecting American social organizations and institutional structures below the surface. Still, the racial profiling of its own youth was a powerful wake-up call to new action. Because despite their long history of confronting racial injustice, the group felt powerless to alleviate the kind of covert racial fear that led to the incident. Enforcing laws and raising money for fair housing was one thing. But how could a barely integrated church in Cleveland Heights influence the kind of prejudices perceived to be held by residents living in less integrated suburbs?

Educational initiatives and letter-writing campaigns were being discussed when longtime member Ron Register stood up and said, "Wait a minute. What about the log in our own eye?"

Register, an African-American civic activist and president of the CH-UH School Board, confessed he still felt uncomfortable mingling with his predominantly white congregation after worship on Sundays. "Instead of marching on City Hall or writing letters to the newspapers, maybe we should work on relationships between blacks and whites here at Forest Hill Church," he said.

In that moment, members of the church looked at themselves, took stock, and decided the change needed to start within their own church community. Before the meeting ended, members volunteered to meet to study, plan, and act on race issues within the congregation.

A moving conversation about race and racial inclusivity issues within the congregation ensued. A group of members acknowledged that past efforts at racial reconciliation, including shared programs and activities with nearby predominantly black churches were not sufficient. They agreed Forest Hill Church was a long way from living and being the beloved community described by Jesus Christ. The group of leaders decided it was time to deal courageously with making things right in the congregation itself.

They observed that the most meaningful change in the racial inclusion of the church resulted when music director and organist Anne Wilson began inviting Heights High students with promising musical

abilities, black and white, to sing regularly with the Forest Hill Church choir. These high school singers changed the face and tempo of the choir. They sang solos, directed the choir, offered small group performances, and gave recitals at the church. The congregation wanted to get to know these teenagers who were enriching their worship experience, with many members mentoring and building one-on-one relationships with the students.

Despite the success of this recent history, the leadership group looked at the importance placed on being a warm, diverse, and inclusive church and recognized that not everyone experienced or perceived this warmth.

They looked at their staff and realized that, inconsistent with the congregation's commitment to justice and inclusion, the only African Americans were custodians.

They looked at their pews and saw that despite the growing numbers of African Americans in the congregation, the small numbers still did not reflect the racial make-up of the Forest Hill neighborhood around them.

They realized that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s claim that the Sunday morning worship hour was the most segregated hour in America was still too true at Forest Hill Church.

Throughout the winter and spring of 2011, they wrestled with how to build an inclusive community for all members of the congregation. They decided that just as relationships had been critical to the success of FHCHC, relationships would be critical to changing the culture of implicit bias and fear.

The church asked for help from trained professionals from the YWCA, whose mission has always been to eliminate racism. Together with these leaders, the YWCA offered a program called "Courageous Conversations on Race" in which over 50 church members met to work on recognizing subtle racial bias. Small groups intentionally selected for racial and age diversity met in each other's homes for dinners and discussion. Trained members facilitated the evenings as participants watched parts of the documentary "Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible," broke bread together, enjoyed rich conversation, and most importantly,

formed new friendships.

Since that time, the church has continued to offer experiences designed to foster intentional interracial relationships and to educate and empower members to recognize and change both covert and subtle bias, including:

- A pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., to visit the African-American collection of the Smithsonian Museum of American History, the African-American Civil War Museum, and the monument celebrating Dr. King's life and ministry. The shared bus ride to and from D.C., was an extended opportunity to get to know each other outside of worship.
- The visit of author and Cleveland native Charlise Lyles, a graduate of Hawken School and Smith College, discussing her book *Do I Dare Disturb the Universe: From the Projects to Prep School*.
- Reading and discussing books, such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, Derrick Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, and Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.
- Sermons, presentations, and discussions led by notable scholars, such as Maghan Keita of Villanova University and Dr. Faye Gary of Case Western Reserve University.
- Meeting with a local high school student group promoting racial justice in their school.
- Active involvement with Greater Cleveland Congregations, a large interfaith group building political power to promote justice in the criminal justice system, as well as police reform in Cleveland.
- Reading and discussing Ta-Nehisi Coates's article *The Case for Reparations* with former Policy Matters Ohio analyst Bakari Kitwana.
- Gathering in community for soul food potlucks and gospel concerts.

As a result, today, black and white members of Forest Hill Church are meeting in each other's homes, sharing one another's fears and hopes; and reading provocative texts together that challenge beliefs about race held by both whites and blacks.

The church has hired an African-American youth director and is

searching for a new associate pastor of color.

It's sharing music—old European hymns are sung alongside African-American gospel songs and newer Hispanic melodies.

And members are traveling together in groups, most recently to the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

Forest Hill Church is working to walk the walk, knowing that whites and blacks alike will stumble while trying to share words of unity and respect. When members—white or black—fail to recognize the ways that they perpetuate subtle (or blatant) assumptions about each other and continue to show implicit bias, other members gently continue to educate them, because they are part of a faith family.

As senior pastor Dr. John Lentz explains, “Like any family, we don't always agree. But we know that being part of a faith community trumps any difference—race, gender, age—any kind of difference that humans have ever used to separate themselves into groups of ‘us’ versus ‘them’.”

And that's enough to keep the members and friends of Forest Hill Church Presbyterian working for the day when their Sunday morning worship no longer is part of the most segregated hour in America.

(re) Union

Milenko (Miles) Budimir

1980, the start of 3rd grade,
the year desegregation
came to our Broadway and Union
neighborhood,
when white kids were bused
east and black kids west,

and I, one of the few white kids
to stay in my neighborhood school,
a five-minute walk each day, passing large
century homes and
shotgun shacks where immigrant millworkers and
factory families marked their days and nights;

on that first day, the tension
of strangers invading our turf.
Names, like arrows, flew through the thick air;
(it was the first time somebody called me
a honky)
and there were a few bloody noses,
cut lips, bruised egos,
and a sudden push that sent me
flying through the warm autumn air,
scraping along the ground, and right
back up to push right back;

and then,
the very next day,
we sat down to lunch together,
William and I, the kid who'd

pushed me, and dozens
of other kids, pawns in a
racial chess game we only dimly
understood,
and from then on were on our way
to being best friends.

And when that year
was finished, we looked
anxiously together at next year's
class lists, straining
to see our names, if we'd
be in the same class again,
couldn't imagine
being split apart.

We ended up moving
years later, as so many families did,

but it's something you never forget,

it's why when I hear the
neighborhood kids
at the basketball court by
my house in once tightly
segregated Parma,
kids of Polish and Ukrainian and
Italian immigrant grandparents,
blacks and Hispanics,
kids of every shade and hue together,
mingling, playing, peeling out in
their souped-up Hondas and Toyotas,
their music wafting through the warm
spring air and musty dark nights,

I think back to
Union Elementary
that September morning,

the fruit it bore
and still keeps bearing.

Roxboro

Lee Chilcote

Roxboro Elementary in the 1970s was filled with a kind of aspirational diversity that hardly exists except on Sesame Street: a swirl of skin colors from coffee bean brown to milk chocolate to inside-of-a-banana-peel white.

Yet although black families were integrating Cleveland Heights as they moved up from Cleveland for better schools, subtler forms of segregation persisted in our classrooms. The tracking system started early, grouping African-American kids into lower level reading and math groups and funneling white kids into Advanced, Gifted and Talented (AG&T) classes.

The schools' approach of welcoming kids while ignoring or abetting inequities mirrored my own family's approach to our racism. My grandfather on my mom's side grew up in Amarillo, Texas, one of ten kids. Despite moving north and becoming an educated orthopedic surgeon, in his lifetime he continued to believe blacks were inferior and should not mix with whites.

I remember my mom telling me how she'd once brought a black girl home from school to play. When her father found out about it, he was furious and forbid her from doing it again. Yet most of the time we didn't talk about Grandpa's racism, covering it instead with a blanket of shame.

When my parents moved their young family to Cleveland Heights in 1972, they wanted a diverse community. Yet I could tell my mom was fighting against her upbringing when I saw her strained friendliness and uncomfortable body language interacting with black families at school. When two black kids stole my brother's Schwinn from our yard, she got in her van, chased them down and got it back, muttering "That's how they are" as she wheeled it back into the garage.

My mom wanted me out of the house after my sister was born, so I went off to elementary school a few days after my fifth birthday. Because

I was a little behind the other kids, I had trouble reading at first and was one of the few white kids in the lower track reading group.

Sitting in a hard plastic chair at the wooden semicircular table, next to Amefika with his glasses as thick as a car windshield and Tyrone with his afro, I felt like I'd crossed an invisible line. I already felt like an outsider in my own family, so even though I felt very conscious of my white skin, now I wasn't sure I fit in anywhere.

When I became friends with Lonnie, a black classmate, I asked my mom if I could invite him home for lunch (back then, kids with stay-at-home moms could do this, an anachronism in our test-centric world). I remember eating peanut butter and jelly with him and giggling in our basement playroom as we bounced around on a giant ball.

A month or so later, Lonnie's mom returned the favor and took us on another playdate. We went to the Cleveland Orchestra and ate at McDonald's afterwards. My mom made everything herself and hated fast food, so this was a coveted treat. I remember Lonnie's mom being well-dressed and professional, how she and my mom chatted when I was dropped off.

Fast forward to today, and I live on the near West Side of Cleveland with my family. My daughter Emily attends a diverse public school in Cleveland where she doesn't seem to notice the difference between her black and white friends. Yet I still feel the legacy of racism: there are few black middle-class families in our neighborhood, and we have few close black friends.

Once last year, I remember reading a library book about Rosa Parks to Emily. I started weeping in the middle of it, and when she asked me what was wrong, I fumbled through an explanation of race relations in the 20th century. Prejudice was as close as my own skin when I was growing up, yet to her the concept was a bit more abstract. She hugged me and I managed to finish reading.

My hopefulness was punctured last year when I learned of Tamir Rice's death. Home with my kids on Thanksgiving break, I couldn't stop clicking on the iterative headlines on Cleveland.com. As I watched the video of Timothy Loehman pulling onto the lawn and killing the

12-year-old boy two seconds later, I felt a black pit open in my stomach and fell into it.

In *Between the World and Me*, Ta-Nehisi Coates describes the murder of his college friend Prince Carmen Jones Jr. at the hands of the police. In a letter to his young son, Coates questions Dr. King's belief that "the arc of the moral universe is long but bends towards justice." In this era of police killings and mass incarceration, it seems worth asking whether or not we've taken for granted the inevitability of an end to racism. Lonnie and I knew nothing about that back then, two kids from completely different backgrounds talking about *Star Wars* over a Happy Meal.

In 2015, Cuyahoga County's PlaceMatters Team released a policy brief titled "History Matters: Understanding the Role of Policy, Race and Real Estate in Today's Geography of Health Equity and Opportunity in Cuyahoga County." Prepared by the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University, the brief unpacked the long-term impacts of the redlining and housing covenants that determined housing, migration and community development patterns throughout the county. In his City Club presentation, lead author Jason Reece showed a series of maps. The historical maps showed the manner in which federal housing policy and real estate developers intentionally segregated neighborhoods. Other maps from the modern era showed how those neighborhoods evolved. Unsurprisingly, black neighborhoods received less community investment and now find themselves grappling with high concentrations of poverty, lead poisoning, and other adverse public health outcomes. What follows here is an excerpt from the policy brief itself. The entire brief can be found at kirwaninstitute.osu.edu.

History Matters: How Policy and Practice Shaped Cuyahoga

*Excerpted from History Matters: Understanding the Role of Policy,
Race and Real Estate in Today's Geography of Health
Equity and Opportunity in Cuyahoga County*

*A Policy Brief prepared on behalf of
the Cuyahoga County PlaceMatters Team*

by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

*and the City and Regional Planning program
at the Knowlton School of Architecture*

The Ohio State University

Jason Reece, Lead Author
County's Geography of Opportunity

In 1908, the National Association of Real Estate Exchanges (NAREE) was formed, becoming the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) in 1916 and the National Association of Realtors (NAR) in 1972.¹ The early NAREB was a coalition of all real estate associations throughout the United States.² Community builders, who were adamant about building restrictions, standards and racial exclusions, influenced NAREB's goals.

Members of NAREB were prohibited from contributing to "race mixing" through the buying and selling of real estate.³ In the 1920s, racial segregation in residential developments became a priority, and realtors actively promoted segregated neighborhoods. Race became the determining and organizing factor for the real estate industry, and these exclusionary practices reinforced "that a positional or 'natural' order existed between racial groups and that the order required protection".⁴ Either overtly or covertly, this protection was still enforced decades after its inception, through a variety of means, such as racially-restrictive residential covenants.

The Racial Origins of Zoning

A city's structure does not appear independently. Rather, complex interactions of social ideologies, political structures, and policy interplay to

1. The NAREB of 1916 became today's National Association of Realtors. This is not to be confused with today's "NAREB," the National Association of Real Estate Brokers formed in 1947 by African-American real estate professionals attempting to secure equal housing opportunities.

2. The National Association of Real Estate Exchanges' objective was "to unite the real estate men of America for the purpose of effectively exerting a combined influence upon matters affecting real estate interests." (see <http://www.realtor.org/field-guides/field-guide-to-the-history-of-the-national-association-of-realtors>)

3. Hernandez, J. (2009). Redlining Revisited: Mortgage Lending Patterns in Sacramento 1930–2004. *International Journal Of Urban & Regional Research*, 33(2), 291-313. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00873.

4. Hernandez, J. (2009). Redlining Revisited: Mortgage Lending Patterns in Sacramento 1930–2004. *International Journal Of Urban & Regional Research*, 33(2), 291-313. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00873.

shape the city's form over time. Racism is an embedded social ideology that negatively affects the life chances of a diverse array of people in the United States. It shaped the way people viewed one another, and shaped the way that cities developed. As law evolved to reflect this systemic racism, formal restrictions began to be placed on where minority people could live. Racially restrictive covenants and zoning prohibitions were two of the most successful and popular forms of racially restrictive land use, especially in the northern U.S. While racially restrictive covenants no longer exist and zoning is no longer overtly racist, their legacies have had a profound and permanent effect on the modern city.

As urbanization became broadly pervasive in the early 1900s, diverse people began to settle down next to one another within the confines of the city. However, with this change in neighborhood composition came a fear of racial mixing and a fear of decreased property values. Many cities used zoning to prevent certain races and ethnicities from living in certain urban areas. This form of racial exclusion gained popularity throughout the United States, especially as black populations migrated from the South to the North in an effort to avoid Jim Crow laws and to find work. For example, between the years of 1910 and 1930, Cleveland's black population increased from 8,500 to 72,000. Explicit racial zoning first emerged in Baltimore in 1911, and quickly spread to cities throughout the United States, particularly in the South.⁵ Even after racial zoning was struck down as unconstitutional in 1917, the racist character of zoning ordinances persisted through the use of expulsive zoning and exclusionary zoning.

Race, economic interests, and zoning have always gone hand in hand. While racial zoning explicitly prevented certain peoples from living in specific urban areas, this was ostensibly done to "protect" property values. After racial zoning was struck down as unconstitutional, zoning continued to be used to preserve certain economic and racial interests. Furthermore, in 1926, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality

5. Silver, Christopher. (1997). *The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities*. From: Manning Thomas, June and Marsha Ritzdorf eds. *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

of zoning in the case *Village of Euclid, Ohio v. Ambler Realty Co.* Zoning became the primary method that communities preserved economic interests. This often occurred through expulsive zoning, which destabilized land uses that were often associated with racialized groups, ethnic populations, and poverty. Expulsive zoning allowed the intrusion into black neighborhoods of disruptive incompatible uses that have diminished the quality and undermined the stability of those neighborhoods.

Rather than explicitly stating that certain populations were not welcome in a community, zoning ordinances targeted the neighborhoods of undesirable populations—those that were impoverished, racialized, or of certain ethnic groups—with detrimental land uses, while they restricted certain housing types (such as affordable or multifamily housing) in opportunity-rich areas. Despite the best efforts of vulnerable neighborhoods and community activists, many of these detrimental land uses, such as polluting industry or waste facilities, were concentrated in communities of color, creating continued environmental justice concerns. For example, a study in 2007 found that communities of color were much more likely to be located in areas with clustered toxic waste release sites.⁶ A 2012 public health investigative report by *USA Today* found intensive exposure to lead from historical industrial facilities in Cleveland (Figure 2). The investigation identified significant lead exposure for low-income children of color, and a noted a failure to clean up sites even after contamination data had identified health risks. Exclusionary zoning, which prevents certain people living in a community through various “race-neutral” land use, building and site standards, persists to the present, although this type of exclusion is far more subtle than it once was. Undesirable communities that were either impoverished, consisted of certain ethnicities, or black and brown, were destabilized and isolated by these various punitive land use policies.

Zoning was not the only method that cities used to constrain peo-

6. Bullard, Robert. 2007. *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007. Grassroots Struggles to Dismantle Environmental Racism in the United States.* Prepared for the United Church of Christ.

ple that whites deemed undesirable. Another form of racially motivated housing policy was the extensive use of racially restrictive covenants. Racially restrictive covenants are contracts that are imposed on the deed of a property. These contracts are legal agreements between the buyer and owner of a property and explicitly state what races are allowed to own that property (Figure 3). Racially restrictive covenants also prevent the buyer of the property from reselling the property to a person of a certain race in the future. Not only did these covenants maintain racial segregation, but they also prevented black and brown land ownership and equity building.

Racially restrictive covenants were especially prolific in Cuyahoga County and in Ohio.⁷ In 1914, a NAACP study found that Cleveland housing exhibited “a noticeable tendency toward inserting clauses in real estate deeds restricting the transfer of property to colored people, Jews, and foreigners generally.”⁸ For example, covenants in Shaker Heights and Forest Hill did not specify racial restrictions, but they required the owner to obtain the consent of the developer and the neighbors to sell their property. Covenants upheld racial divisions and prevented minority land ownership. Neighborhood associations aggressively pushed covenants in the Shaker Heights area. The Shaker Heights Protective Association described covenants as preventing the “ever-present menace to every resident of Shaker Village and throughout Cleveland.” The Association warned that “unless a street is 100 percent signed up for restrictions...the danger of an undesirable neighbor is an ever-present one.”⁹ The building and real estate industry used deed restrictions as marketing tools during this time as well. For example, a 1929 advertisement by Abeyton Realty (developer of the Forest Hill allotment in

7. For example, a study of Columbus, Ohio found that from 1921 to 1935, 67% of all subdivisions platted and developed included restrictive covenants (Burgess, 1994).

8. Griffin, W. (2005). *African Americans and the color line in Ohio, 1915-1930*. Ohio State University Press.

9. Morton, M. (2013). *Deferring dreams: Racial and religious covenants in Shaker Heights*. Retrieved from http://www.teachingcleveland.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=767:deferring-dreams-racial-and-religious-covenants-in-shaker-heights-and-cleveland-heights-1925-to-1970-by-marian-morton

Cleveland Heights) described the community as “where your neighborhoods are inevitably people of tastes in common with yours.... The careful restrictions placed on Forest Hill today will never be lowered.”

Covenants were bolstered by a 1926 Supreme Court decision in *Corrigan v. Buckley*, which allowed private property owners to enforce covenants. This official position would not be changed until the 1948 court decision in *Shelley v. Kramer*. While the Court decided that covenants were officially not enforceable, they persisted, maintaining housing discrimination until the 1960s. Racially restrictive covenants and racist zoning practices prevented minority land ownership, minority capital accumulation, and minority suburban living.

Redlining: Federally Sanctioned Disinvestment

In 1939, Homer Hoyt developed the filtering, or “trickle-down” model of neighborhood life cycles, and his theory undergirded the Federal Housing Agency (FHA)’s emerging urban development policies. Frederick Babcock later added to this theory, linking race with rapid neighborhood decline. The National Commission on Neighborhoods adopted the Hoyt-Babcock assumptions, used by appraisal, lending and underwriting organizations. In 1965, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development included this model in their 1975 publication, “The Dynamics of Neighborhood Change”, where “natural” neighborhood decline was delineated into five stages: healthy, incipient decline, clearly declining, accelerated decline, and abandoned. In 1979, the National Commission on Neighborhoods noted that there were other generalizable assertions about older neighborhoods. For example, older neighborhoods, either through market competition or natural forces, “naturally” decline or become blighted as they filter through the hands of poorer residents. Another assertion was that the change in the racial composition of neighborhoods was the inevitable precursor to its decline. The Commission thought, after observing the impacts of the Great Depression and subsequent federal response that neighborhoods

went through life cycles that peaked and declined. This was accepted as the natural, normative process, but in hindsight, they largely served as intellectual justification for redlining “declining” areas.

“Redlining”: “Security Maps” used to Discriminate

The United States Congress created the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) in June 1933. The purpose of the corporation was to refinance mortgages that were in default, in order to prevent foreclosures. In 1935, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board asked the HOLC to look at 239 cities and create “residential security maps” to indicate various levels of security for real-estate investments. The maps were created in conjunction with “competent local real estate brokers and mortgage lenders, believed to represent a fair and composite opinion of the best qualified local people.” These maps were very influential. Banks would not want to take on the risk of making uninsured loans, so affordable, government-backed home mortgages were steered away from certain areas. Each area was assigned a type: Type A (blue), B (green), C (yellow), and D (red). The color-coding, or type, indicated how much federal backing a loan would receive. Red areas received no backing, thus the term *redlined* was born. Yellow areas received only 15 percent backing. This essentially cut these areas off from loans. Red and yellow areas were typically neighborhoods where people of color, laborers, immigrants, and Jewish families lived. In contrast, the more “desirable” areas, blue and green, received up to 80 percent federal mortgage insurance backing. (Figures 4A, 4B and 4C illustrate HOLC designations for areas of Cuyahoga County). This widened the inequity between people of different races and socioeconomic status. These assessments of the 1940s left a lasting impression on the area; the residential security maps created ripple effects of business, retail, education, arts, and health care disinvestment.

Ripple Effects of Disinvestment

These maps institutionalized existing biases and discriminatory practices because they were subjective and openly discriminatory; race, ethnicity and social class were used as determinants of security. The use of such categories as determinants of property value, and in turn credit approval, did not officially end until a federal lawsuit against the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers, the Society of Real Estate Appraisers, the United States League of Savings Associations, and the Mortgage Bankers Association of America in 1976. The court decision legally terminated the use of race in property appraising and mortgage underwriting (*U.S. v. AIREA*). Additionally, suburban communities, with large-lot, single-family zoning and big yards predominating, were seen as the ideal built environment, whereas the older urban areas, often largely African American, were seen as prone to “risk.” Redlining maps and building restrictions influenced lending activities for decades, as the Federal Housing Administration relied on “security maps” up until the 1960s. The racial, ethnic and class biases built into HOLC assessments are readily apparent in language from assessor documents for various Cleveland neighborhoods. As seen in Figure 5A and 5B, Cuyahoga County HOLC map evaluations were heavily influenced by the racial and ethnic composition of the residents.

Figures

Figure 1.

Conceptual diagram of early and mid-20th century policies which enforced segregation and opportunity isolation for racial and ethnic communities.



Figure 2.

A map of former clustered industrial sites contaminated neighborhoods with lead on the East Side of Cleveland. Source: USA Today.

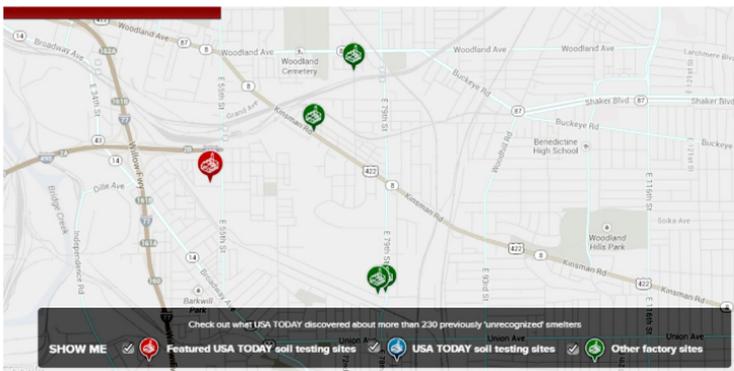
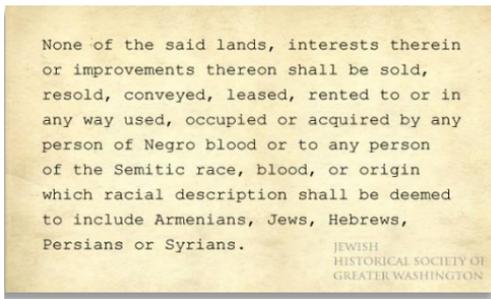


Figure 3.

Examples of the typical race and ethnic restrictions included in deeds during the racial covenant era.



14. **RACIAL RESTRICTIONS.** No property in said addition shall at any time be sold, conveyed, rented or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White or Caucasian race. No person other than one of the White or Caucasian race shall be permitted to occupy any property in said addition or portion thereof or building thereon except a domestic servant actually employed by a person of the White or Caucasian race where the latter is an occupant of such property.

Figure 4A.

Countywide HOLC Map for Cuyahoga County.

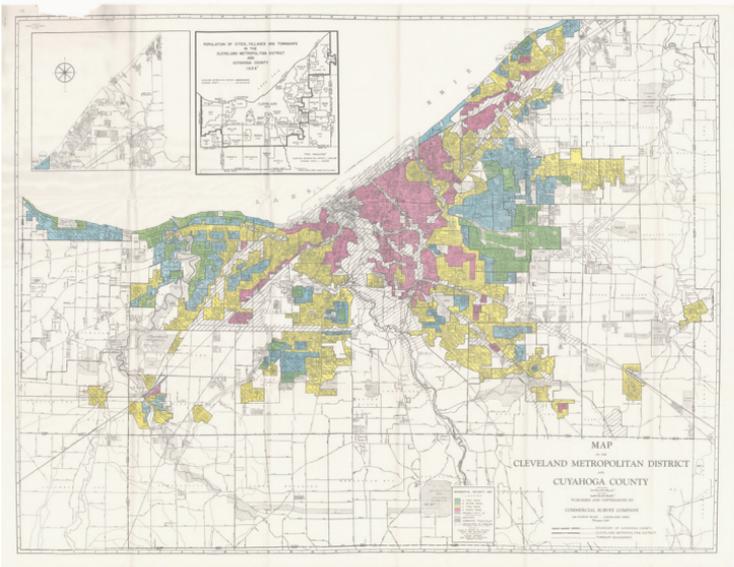


Figure 4B.

Example of HOLC subarea report for Cuyahoga County neighborhoods.

inhabitants. Informed realtor's opinion is that this section should have been, at the outset, developed for colored occupancy as an overflow outlet for the strong movement that has progressed into the northeastern part of Cleveland. However no concerted effort was made and the present occupancy has resulted from the normal characteristic of colored infiltration into Jewish and Italian neighborhoods with the obsolescence of property due to lack of maintenance.

The apparent future for this area will be an increasing occupancy ratio by Jewish, Italian and colored with a steady fall in price values.

1. SUBDIVISION: *14th St. Subdivision* 2. DISTRICT: *C-2* 3. DATE: *1937*

4. PRESENT OCCUPANCY: *Single - 100%*

5. PROPOSED OCCUPANCY: *Single - 100%*

6. TYPE OF PROPERTY: *Single*

7. VALUE RANGE: *1000 - 2000*

8. AGE OF PROPERTY: *10-20 yrs*

9. CHARACTER OF AREA: *Single - 100%*

10. REASON FOR RATING: *Single - 100%*

11. COMMENTS: *See above*

12. SIGNATURE: *Wm. H. ...*

13. DATE: *1937*

Figure 4C.

Example of HOLC subarea report for Cuyahoga County neighborhoods.

This is a fairly new section; majority of homes are located south of Millard Dr.; homes along Laurel and Riverwood are a little more expensive than in rest of area. The area's eastern boundary adjoins the Metropolitan Park system. Free from any detrimental influences; local transportation is poor but this inadequacy is not considered detrimental inasmuch as all residents own automobiles. It is a fine quiet and clean community with pride of ownership very much in evidence. No hastily constructed structures. This area is accorded a good first grade rating in view of its rapid growth and present new construction activity.

1. POPULATION: a. Increasing _____ Decreasing _____ Static X
 b. Class and Occupation Laborers
 c. Foreign Families % Nationalities _____ d. Negro 100%
 e. Shifting or Infiltration none

8. DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA: This small totally colored community was result of an independent movement and development surrounding the construction of their church in this area some 25 yrs. ago. No streets are paved and lack of maintenance through the years has given this area its name of "Shantytown". Presence of this community has had a very detrimental effect on surrounding area property values, particularly to the immediate south. Utilities are available to area. This section is now about 75-80% built up and, apparently, is solidly entrenched, in fact this area, prior to Miles Heights annexation to Cleveland in 1936, was able to elect a Negro as Mayor of Miles Heights. Area will remain static but may spread into Garfield Heights (S.W.) if the purchasing power of the colored residents increases enough to buy this property, (primarily to S.W.) now in the \$1800-\$3500 bracket which has virtually no market for white due to proximity to this colored neighborhood.

9. LOCATION Cleveland (East Side) SECURITY GRADE 4th AREA NO D-10 DATE 9/9/39
"Shantytown" (formerly part of Miles Heights)

Figure 5A.

Examples of language describing the racial, ethnic and class conditions in Cuyahoga County neighborhoods which were rated by HOLC maps in the 1930s.

Figure 5B.

Examples of language describing the racial, ethnic and class conditions in Cuyahoga County neighborhoods which were rated by HOLC maps in the 1930s.

HOLC Neighborhood Assessments

1. POPULATION: a. Increasing _____ Decreasing _____ Static

b. Class and Occupation Labourers - WPA Workers - Relief Clients

c. Foreign Families 25% (including second generation) Nationalities Rumanian-Hungarian Italian-Steinway German d. Negro few

e. ~~Shifting or~~ Infiltration Cosmopolitan

8. DESCRIPTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AREA: This area, situated in the extreme north-east corner of Cleveland's west side, is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods. Originally settled by Germans and Irish, it slowly bowed to Cleveland's expansion and infiltration of other foreign peoples. Rumanians, Hungarians and Italians migrated here about 30 yrs. ago and now comprise the predominating population elements. The Rumanians settled around W. 48th St. district -- the Hungarian and Italian people located between W. 54th & W. 73rd Sts., (largely north of Detroit Ave.) several old German families are still found along the eastern and central part of the area.

The earliest development in this area was along W. 28th and W. 29th Sts. and here many of the homes are 75 to 80 yrs. old; now fully developed, the area was built up with large 2 sty. single dwellings, many of which were converted into 2-3 family units and rooming houses; (there are a few 1½ sty. homes on each street interspersed with the large converted type).

The houses along W. 56th St. and west thereof are in better repair condition -- are more modern -- have full basements and average 25-30 yrs. Franklin Ave. was once the fashionable district of the west side; two family homes (with round basements) on this street sell for around \$2500-\$3500 singles and doubles without basements or round cellars range from \$1500-\$3000.

The main business section of west-side Cleveland is located here; Retail business shops run solidly along Lorain, Detroit, Fulton and W. 26th St. There was a cash

9. LOCATION Cleveland (West Side) SECURITY GRADE 4-B AREA NO. D-5 DATE 7/7/39

The defeat of the Clark Freeway remains a celebrated event in Cleveland and a testament to the power of grassroots organizing in the Heights in combination with municipal leadership in Cleveland. This essay focuses on the particular contributions of the Carl Stokes administration in this struggle.

Carl Stokes and the Freeway Fights

Brad Masi

Larchmere Boulevard on Cleveland's East Side is a dynamic space. It lies at the confluence of the political boundaries of Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights, and the City of Cleveland. It transitions from the eclectic shops and antiques along Larchmere Boulevard to the Shaker Lakes Parklands. It moves from densely clustered, moderate-income homes into the shaded Tudor, Georgian, or Cotswold architecture of Shaker Heights. Larchmere Boulevard features a literal face-off between Shaker Heights and Cleveland with a municipal line carving its grassy, tree-lined median in half. But a walk along its cavernous canopy of oak, sycamore, and maple trees does not give the impression of separate jurisdictions.

In this transitional space at the very edge of Cleveland, Carl Stokes resided during his tenure as Cleveland's mayor. Here, every morning, he began the descent from the bedrock shelf that forms the Heights into the flat lake plains of Cleveland and city hall. Perhaps the vantage point of the downtown skyline from the intersection of Martin Luther King and Larchmere boulevards solidified Stokes' vision for Cleveland as an encompassing metropolitan region, not a city confined by artificially drawn and, often, racially constructed boundaries.

Stokes holds the distinction of being elected in 1967 as the first African-American mayor to serve a large U.S. city. The year before his election, 1966, proved to be a tumultuous year for Cleveland, his house on Larchmere straddling two culminating events. Three miles to the east, community conditions reached a boiling-point with the Hough riots. Meanwhile, a mile to the west, citizens founded the Shaker Lakes

Regional Nature Center as a legal bulwark to protect this unique natural area from a planned highway interchange. Although seemingly unrelated, these two events shared a common connection—the displacement and destruction caused by urban renewal and highway development projects in the metropolitan area.

Daniel Kerr's book, *Derelict Paradise*, recounts the impact that the Interstate Highway Act of 1956 had on spurring population and business migration out of the city. Mayor Anthony Celebrezze used federal funds in the 1950s to acquire "properties in a two-block wide line, circumscribing downtown and severing the black residential areas of Cedar-Central from the business district." As a result, from 1950–1970, the Central neighborhood lost about 42,000 residents. Given discriminatory practices and racially-segregated neighborhoods, many of these residents moved into Hough from Cedar-Central as Hough flipped from 95 percent white in 1950 to 88 percent African-American by 1965.

The Hough riots did not rise in a vacuum. Poverty, displacement, service cuts, and city policies all served as the dry tinder that sparked the riots. These events also fueled Carl Stokes' successful election in 1967 with the expectation that he would have the political capacity to mend the city's racial divides. Stokes assumed the mayorship, as recounted in the book *Where the River Burned* by brothers David and Richard Stradling, at a time of "crisis in the urban environment." Not only was Cleveland struggling with the continuing downward spiral of declining investment, outmigration, and housing deterioration, but a burning river, dying lake, and choking air pollution also indicated signs of urban decay. Stokes recognized the interconnection among these social and ecological issues. The Clark Freeway, a planned route to connect I-490 to I-271, became one of the earliest tests for Stokes' vision for a more equitable and less polluted city.

A tour of the Clark Freeway's planned route reveals how utterly destructive this project would have been to Cleveland's East Side. Begin with the removal of Carl Stokes's home and the surrounding residential and retail corridor along Larchmere. Next, imagine a hard barrier that

eliminates circulation between Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights (much like Ohio City and Tremont were separated by I-90). Moving east, remove the historic homes along South Park Boulevard, transform Lower Shaker Lake into a concrete storm drainage collection basin before reaching a cloverleaf at the Nature Center of Shaker Lakes. Here, the interchange connects to the north-running Lee Freeway, which slices Cleveland Heights in half and runs along the Cedar Lee district and the Lee Road corridor. East of the Nature Center, the Clark Freeway continues up the wooded corridor along upper Doan Brook, obliterates Horseshoe Lake, and continues through the 5-mile green corridor along Shaker Boulevard before flowing into I-271.

Moving west from Stokes's house toward the city, reveals the highway's impact on Cleveland's near East Side, where it threatened to displace 875 homes and 110 businesses in the mostly working-class, African-American neighborhoods of Central, Kinsman, and Fairfax. Stokes became the first Cleveland mayor to challenge highway development as a symbol of progress. Addressing an audience at UCLA in California, Stokes singled out the freeway as emblematic of the accelerating outmigration from Cleveland:

With the move out of the cities came the great need for those who moved out to get back in because in most cases their jobs were still in the central city and their great offices were still in the city and their employees still had to come in and out. So then we went about building these things called freeways... these things that California stands out for and have shown that you are really going to have to find another answer. It has not helped to move people better. They have taken all of these taxable structures off of the tax duplicate and created great problems by way of congestion in our cities, the great parking problems and in fact the contribution to the pollution of the air and the environment in which we live.

Stokes's election brought an increased level of scrutiny to the disproportionate impact of these projects on the city's African-American residents, who, at the time of his election, comprised 37 percent of the city's

population. These challenges demanded creative solutions and Stokes opened the door of city government to a wave of innovative, progressive young professionals, including his planning director, Norman Krumholz. Witnessing firsthand the negative impacts of urban renewal on Pittsburgh neighborhoods, Krumholz moved to Cleveland to join the administration with ideas for how city planning could more effectively address social equity and racial issues. Krumholz, together with other young planning professionals hired into the city, developed a framework for "equity planning," which he described as "giving priority to the goal of promoting a wider range of choices for those Cleveland residents who have fewest." Equity planning also provided a framework for assessing the impacts of urban development projects that often affected the city's working class neighborhoods the most.

One of the first projects to land on Krumholz's desk was the Clark Freeway. Stokes appointed Krumholz to represent the city on the newly formed Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA), organized as a federal requirement for area-wide review of federal grants and highway funds. Krumholz went to his first meeting to represent the city's position to delay a decision on the freeway until further study of its impacts could be conducted. The motion failed by a 23 to 10 vote. Immediately following, Cuyahoga County Engineer Albert Porter introduced a motion to approve the Clark Freeway outright and it passed 27 to 5. Krumholz felt blindsided by this rapid approval, recalling, "I was stunned! Here I was proudly representing the mayor of the central city that would bear most of the costs of dislocation and other burdens of highway construction, being almost casually overwhelmed by a regional group, some of whose members boasted that they had no idea where the route was."

Digging his position further, Stokes decided to push NOACA to completely rescind their support of the freeway. An early test for equity planning, the city adopted a position that a highway would be supported by the city under three conditions: the state or federal agency would absorb the entire project cost (the city would have been required to commit matching funds), all lost housing would be rebuilt on a unit-

for-unit basis, and the city would receive compensation for the loss of property and income tax revenue resulting from the land taken out of commission for the freeway.

From the outset, this seemed a futile position. In his autobiography, *Promises and Power*, Stokes noted that NOACA mostly favored suburban and rural interests and were largely antagonistic and “determined that the city would not be equitably represented.” Although Cleveland contained 25 percent of the regional population, the city had only 6 percent of the seats on the board. Stokes urged NOACA to rescind its freeway vote, but given the city’s slim representation, this demand gained no traction. Besides, City Council had already approved the regional highway system many years before and they had approved every highway study since 1944. To top it off, \$100 million in federal funding was already allocated for the construction of the freeway. The hopes of defeating the highway seemed intractable.

While a fierce grassroots opposition gained steam in the Heights, Stokes took his battle straight to the federal government. He gained an audience with Samuel Jackson, a HUD assistant secretary and the highest ranking African American serving in the Nixon administration. Jackson ultimately sided with Stokes, noting that Cleveland’s demands for more representation on NOACA resulted from the board’s choice of freeway location through African-American neighborhoods.

With HUD placing more scrutiny on the project, Cleveland issued a lawsuit against NOACA for the lack of proportional representation and refused to pay its annual dues, undermining NOACA’s budget. NOACA came back with a reorganization plan to grant Cleveland 8 out of 52 members on the board and insisted that Albert Porter, the highway’s biggest advocate, would maintain a seat and a lead role in determining the direction of the agency. Cleveland refused the board’s offer. In retaliation, the NOACA board voted to completely deprive Cleveland of any voting rights. As a result, HUD decertified the agency in 1970, an act that nullified its capacity to operate.

Stokes’s position on the freeway had its share of critics. *Where the River Burned*, recounts when Wilson Hirschfeld, the managing editor

for the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, lambasted Stokes and his “anti-highway manifesto,” which demanded that the federal government compensate the city for the costs of highway building, something that would “bring to an end the building of highways within the city, “an invitation loud and clear, for more factories and office buildings to move away.”

Stokes fired right back to the Hirschfeld attack, asking why he thought the “citizens of Cleveland, through their taxes and displacement, should be delighted to subsidize the destruction of their own community for the convenience of regional highway interests.”

The impasse with NOACA followed Stokes throughout the remainder of his tenure, but the decertification by HUD and the civic opposition in the Heights delayed further actions on the highway. Ralph Perk replaced Stokes as mayor in 1971, promising to end the stalemate with NOACA. Ultimately, he maintained the same stipulations that Stokes had demanded. In 1972, HUD became recertified after the board moved to increase Cleveland’s representation and rescinded the resolution that approved the Clark Freeway.

Despite the fact that the decision was rescinded, the Clark Freeway remained on the books. Eventually, Governor James Rhodes, who was locked in a tight primary fight for a seat in the U.S. Senate, succumbed to grassroots political pressure, particularly from the Heights, taking a position that he would not force a highway on a community that did not want it and he officially took the highway off of the state’s list of projects.

Fifty years later, many of the urban assets that contribute to the quality of life on Cleveland’s East Side and inner-ring suburbs remain intact. However, many of the near-eastside neighborhoods (Fairfax, Buckeye, Central, Slavic Village) continue to confront ongoing challenges with poverty, disinvestment, and vacancy. Ironically, this high level of vacancy has eased the development of the Opportunity Corridor today. As a boulevard, the corridor has a much less invasive footprint than the Clark

Freeway. But the corridor contains an ongoing tension between reducing travel time into University Circle, mostly from outlying suburbs, and the need for job and economic development for the neighborhoods through which the corridor passes. Ironically, the \$330 million price tag comes at the same time that the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) is announcing \$7 million in additional cuts to its service routes and timetables due to reductions in state funding. The skewed preference for automobiles over transit that drove highway development 50 years ago remains intact today. As a state, Ohio chronically undervalues public transit as the means by which many urban residents access jobs and social and economic activity.

Echoing HUD's concerns during Stokes's tenure, Harriet Tregoning, HUD's director of economic resilience, during a talk at the City Club, urged that equity concerns be a top concern in the corridor development. She noted that, "the corridor travels through some of the most distressed neighborhoods in Ohio and links need to be made to make sure that those most in need of opportunity receive access to it." Community organizing and political pressure from the city has required the Ohio Department of Transportation to hire a minimum of 20 percent of city residents for the corridor construction. In April of 2016, the city withheld \$3.1 million in funding for the project based on ODOT's failure to commit to hiring city residents. Community organizing also led to the inclusion of protected bike lanes for the project, recognizing the increasing demand for safe bicycle pathways often used by residents who do not own cars.

Highways and road projects are among many urban development patterns that reinforce stark inequities and racial exclusion. In February of 2015, Jason Reece, director of research from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, presented to the City Club of Cleveland the results of a study titled "History Matters." The study addresses the layers of policy, action, investment strat-

egies, highway and road projects, urban renewal programs, and public spending that have established and maintained an environment of racial exclusion. Neighborhoods facing difficult challenges of poverty, vacancy, and crime did not become this way naturally, as suggested by Republican Speaker Paul Ryan's unfortunate comment in 2014 about the "tailspin of culture in our inner cities." These conditions resulted from policies of racial and, in many cases, class exclusion. These were foundational elements of development policy in the 20th century, designed to keep people separate from each other and designed to benefit some neighborhoods at the expense of others.

A history of some of these problems included:

- covenants common to early developments in the first suburbs that restricted deed transfer to Jewish and African-American buyers;
- redlining and the process of excluding geographic areas from mortgage lending;
- lending and federal infrastructure spending, mostly through highways, that supported the growth of the suburbs;
- dismantling of streetcar system and successive reductions in public transit routes and infrastructure;
- large-scale movement of not just people, but also businesses to the suburbs along with the tax and employment benefits generated; and
- displacement of populations as a result of highway or other large-scale "urban renewal" projects in the 1950s and 1960s.

A series of map overlays reveal the cumulative impact of these historical policies. There is a direct historical correlation between where African-American residents are concentrated in the city, neighborhoods that were redlined, residents displaced by highway construction, toxic release concentrations, rates of infant mortality, diabetes rates, foreclosure filings, and predatory lending.

Where the River Burned describes "the headwinds into which Stokes sailed as a progressive African-American politician and as a city leader in the age of suburbia." While the actions of Stokes and the grassroots

organizing action in the Heights combined to erase one expanse of the metropolitan highway system from the maps, it ultimately did not stem the outward flow of population into the sprawling suburbs around Cleveland nor did it change the underlying structures of racial exclusion.

Ultimately, Stokes had a vision for a Cleveland that functioned as a cohesive metropolitan region. Stokes recognized that the fate of the city was ultimately tied to the fate of the surrounding cities and suburbs. However, his tenure as mayor occurred at the apex of demographic and economic trends that shifted people, businesses, and tax base out of the central city. Racial attitudes, while not as overt as the covenants that restricted deed transfers not the basis of race, nevertheless led to a process of ongoing segregation as the freeways hastened the departure of mostly white residents into the growing suburbs beyond the central city and its inner-ring suburbs. Any efforts to change direction need to first acknowledge the historical roots of these patterns and revisiting Stokes's understanding that Cleveland will not grow without acknowledging that we—central city, first suburbs, and exurbs—are all in this together. The defeat of the Clark Freeway represented one of those moments of common cause between the city and its surrounding communities.

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The Unfinished Business of Race

Excerpts from a City Club forum December 12, 2014

**Rev. Otis Moss II, in conversation
with Rev. Joan Brown Campbell**

I take the first cue from something that James Russell Lowell said back in 1845 when he was writing against slavery. Many of us remember a portion of that writing.

“Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to decide, in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side.” Dr. King often cited or recited that, but there’s something in that writing the present crisis that we seldom visit.

One line says, “it’s prosperous to be just,” and this is a part of the unfinished business of dealing with race in our community in our nation and in the world. We have to teach, we have to learn, we have to practice, the profitability of justice.

Now we understand the profits that grow out of injustice. All you have to do is look around or just take a brief paragraph from history, we know that slavery was an economic enterprise protected by a political structure covered by a religious phenomenon of theology and then taught by the systems of education.

We have not yet gotten across the message that justice is profitable. It’s not only morally right, it’s not only right from a humanitarian perspective, but it’s good economics. Atlanta today is a world-class city, because Atlanta was willing to come to grips with race and race relations. It’s incomplete, it’s unfinished, but building on that principle has made Atlanta a world-class city whereas other cities in the South and South East and in other parts are dying because they have not come to grips with this.

There’s another lesson we must learn and W. E. B. DuBois lifted this up in his biography of John Brown, and he said “The cost of injustice is greater than the price of freedom.” Injustice is expensive, humanly expensive, it kills individuals. It lynches individuals, it kills children, and

we must teach that lesson, that justice is profitable. Oppression is expensive. DuBois went on to say that injustice has an ascending cost. Justice has a descending cost.

We can compare that with healthcare, with education, it's more expensive to have a community of uneducated, miseducated, half-educated individuals than it is to have a community of prepared, well-trained equipped individuals. These are lessons that we must teach in this unfinished business.

We have unfinished business in healthcare, in immigration. When I look at the Statue of Liberty and everyone learned from early grade school those famous words of Emma Lazarus: "Give me your tired, your poor, your hungry, your huddled masses, yearning to be free." Now what would happen if we set up that statue on the southern border near Mexico? What would happen if we set it up in Florida and pointed it toward Haiti? When Emma Lazarus made those statements and we built the Statue of Liberty and carried that poem of this young poet from the 19th Century, did the statue mean Europeans only? Or did it mean all people? Your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, your hungry; let them bring their lamp beside the golden door. That is unfinished in America, not only that but we have unfinished business, and I'll stop here, with reference to the Constitution.

When I hear people talk about original intent, I get nervous, because every time I read the Constitution and I carry my Bible and a copy of the Constitution in my briefcase all the time. But when I read the Constitution I know that the first 12 amendments did not include me and didn't include Joan. Well, the folks who wrote the Constitution did not believe that their mothers, their sisters, their daughters, their wives had sense enough to cast a ballot. They were, in theory, according to the Founding Brothers, the Constitution is an unfinished document, so we have to add the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments in the latter half of the 19th century, and we had to have some more amendments to give women the right to vote, and to give 18, 19 and 20 year olds the right to vote, so we have added 27 amendments because the Constitution is great, but imperfect, made by imperfect men, and now imperfect women

and men, and an imperfect nation. I said in a speech to my alma mater, Morehouse College, some years ago that this school is an unfinished cathedral of excellence.

America is an unfinished cathedral of democracy and every generation must make its contribution.

Every generation must see what Rabbi Herschel said regarding the presence of evil, "Few are guilty, but all are responsible." Few are guilty for the death of Tamir Rice, but we are all responsible. We didn't kill Michael Brown, but we are all responsible for the consequences, we are responsible for the atmosphere, the policy, the training and the activities and behaviors, I will stop there, my notes are still not exhausted.

Campbell: If you're sitting there wondering what he is going to say after that, I know this man pretty well and I'm not surprised, Otis, that you would give us the challenge that we need to hear. I want to take up just a couple comments on what our young women from the YWCA had to say in part because it was my initial lesson in race.

My mother was the president of the YWCA in Youngstown, Ohio, many years ago. At that time there was a white YWCA and a black YWCA, it was under her leadership that there became one YWCA, so it started quite a long time ago.

But what I really want to say the phrase, "it's time to talk." I believe that's correct, but I want to add to it. It is time to be honest, because short of honesty talking is not going to get us there, and I do think that in my own life experience it's when the black community has been tough on me, not when they've been easy on me, not when we've had conversations that don't really say anything.

We're very polite, but to move beyond politeness is what I know is going to change people's lives, and we have to not be afraid of it, and we have to not be so polite that you can't say to me, Joan, why is it that you cannot understand this, what you know very well, the way I learned to be what I am was not for black people being nice to me, it was for them honoring me enough to challenge me and say, why don't you understand what we're trying to say to you? I'm going to give a very short little story

and then we'll have our talk.

And it's the story about how when Bill Clinton was president, he decided it was important again to take up the issue of race, and I almost brought you a picture that I have hanging on my wall, and it was a picture in the White House of the people that were there to converse with President Clinton about how to go about this. One of the key people was John Hope Franklin, famous professor at Howard and then finally at the University of Chicago, died at the age of 90, gave us enormous wisdom in his time. Well, I'm not going to forget John Hope Franklin. I went to a dinner with him, and at that point someone said to him, could you please tell me, and at that point there was a lot of discussion about whether or not reparations for slavery was appropriate, and so someone said "Dr. Franklin, how do you feel about reparations for slavery?"

And he looked at the crowd, very distinguished professor, he said, "How do I feel about it? I don't feel about it," he said "I think if we are to make a difference, I speak to my white brothers and sisters, what I really want to say to you tonight is that what we need with one another is honesty and we need for white people to understand the meaning of white privilege," and what he said was, he said in his own professorial way, "only when white people can look in the mirror in the morning and know that they can walk out of their house, most people in most places, and they are not going to be suspect by virtue of how they look. They may be by what they do, but not by how they look," and he said, "so I invite a conversation with the white people who are here to talk about the meaning, what it would mean for people to really understand the privilege simply by virtue of the color of your skin."

I've never forgotten it, I thought it was a profound statement, it was a call to action for the white people, and it was a call to everybody, not simply to a few people.

The word itself has become a little passé and kind of not taken as seriously, but the way he looked at it was, to say that when we look at the police and when we look at the black person on the street, I couldn't help but think of his words, about the person who can walk out of their house and not be suspect. And one of the surprises you gave me, was in

an honest conversation, was to say that Otis Moss also walks out knowing that the color of your skin can make a difference in how your day will go. Even though you're Otis Moss in a town that loves you.

Moss: Joan, these remarks bring me to something in your career and your life, tell us about your experience in your church and the disinvitation to Martin Luther King Jr., in Cleveland, that what happened? How did he get there and what happened when he got there?

Campbell: Some of you know the story, so for those who do talk to your neighbor, but it was for me, it was a life-changing experience in my life, and I was 32 years old. It was a couple years ago actually, and Carl Stokes was running for mayor of Cleveland, and Martin Luther King was here to help with that election, and he invited the churches to participate. I was the representative for my congregation in these meetings. Dr. King had a wonderful sense of humor, which most people would take him very seriously, and once you're in history you get taken very seriously and the real person gets lost.

One night he said casually, "I've been to all the black churches I want to go to for the rest of my life. I need to be invited to a white church here in Cleveland, and I've never been invited to a single one." Well, miss naïve said you know, God put you there because you're naïve, "Well you can come to our church, our minister has been out in the street, he's been calling for racial justice, he preaches on it, he gives the Communion in the name of this, why don't you come to my church?"

This was Heights Christian Church in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Needless to say, the congregation was not universally excited about his presence. One of the most disappointing parts of it was that some of the major givers to the congregation decided that it would be too threatening to their particular profession that time to have Dr. King publicly there, so they rejected his presence.

Fortunately more people wanted him than were worried about it, and so that group of people got together and it's like the movements are always made up of people who don't have the dollars and that don't have

the stature, but they can risk, and so they said no way, they said we'll have him outside the church and for reasons I've never understood from that day to this, the powers that didn't want him agreed to that.

Now of course the problem ended up, that we had two thousand people all across the tracks in Shaker Heights and far more people heard Dr. King than could possibly have heard him inside the church. It was a very, very painful victory, it was an ultimate victory when the history of the congregation is written, it will be the noble history of that congregation, it will change the history of that congregation, but for me personally it was life-changing. I had no idea how mean people could be, I really didn't, I just had no clue that there was that much hatred, that much worry, that much fear, Dr. King had already won the Nobel Peace Prize, and for those of us who stood with him, we became unwelcome people in certain parts of the lives of the people in the congregation.

I guess if I want to say one thing to this crowd, if you decide to be deeply involved in the issue of racial justice, it will cost and it will pay you back, Otis, with rewards beyond believing.

Moss and Campbell also took questions from the audience

Audience member: Good afternoon, thank you for sharing your wisdom with us today. My question is centered around morality, race and justice. During the civil rights movement, we were searching for the perfect victim, we know that Rosa Parks wasn't the first person that refused to give up her seat on the bus, and here we are today dealing with issues of police brutality, but we don't have the perfect victim, and so the media chooses to vilify true victims, when we look at the case with Tamir Rice, and his mother and his father, the media chose to vilify them, instead of looking at them as true victims.

How do we as a society, as an imperfect society, and a man that is an imperfect man standing in a room full of imperfect people begin to reconcile this issue of race and morality and address issues of injustice in a fair way?

Moss: One of the great unjust demands against an oppressed people is to pretend that you want them to be better than everybody else in order to get one-half as much.

All of your subjects and verbs must agree, your ethical and moral record must be perfect, you must be a candidate for sainthood, and we cannot allow that to divert us from dealing with the question of justice and injustice.

Saint Joan was burned at the stake, before she became Saint Joan, it was George Bernard Shaw who wrote that famous play in later years and imagined Joan of Arc being called back to be congratulated on her sainthood, and she says to all the priests and bishops and all of those who are members of the congratulatory team, "Can you unburn me?" 30 minutes to burn her, 400 years to declare her a saint, we have to be willing to meet those forces of injustice where imperfect people demand perfection of you, that cannot intimidate you and we could just go all through history, name some perfect folk.

I talked about the Constitution as being imperfect, and all of those who wrote it were imperfect, but is this a question of justice and injustice, we must never allow ourselves to get pulled into a diverted, into a personality debate, and that's what happened in Ferguson, the dead person was put on trial and not the living police person. The living police man was defended by the prosecutor, and the dead person was voiceless, and defenseless in the grand jury, but we cannot allow that to stop us, we must not become so intimidated that we refuse to speak or so filled with bitterness that our actions are so illogical that no one will take us seriously.

Audience member: Thank you so much for this provocative conversation. My name is Dr. Rhonda Williams, founder and director of the Social Justice Institute at Case Western Reserve University. Anybody who knows me knows that I can get off task, so I wrote my question down. How do you suggest that we begin to expose, unearth, converse about and dismantle white privilege?

Moss: My wife Edwina of 40 years can tell the story better than I can. We had a scientific process for preparing protests, movements and initiatives.

First, information and research, after information, education then mobilization then presentation of our findings, then negotiation and if negotiations fail or are blocked, demonstration. The demonstration is not an end in itself, but a means toward something higher, the demonstration is designed to bring negotiation, and the negotiations are designed to bring resolution and after that, reconciliation.

Now I can say that whenever we followed that formula, we won. When we didn't follow it, we often lost. The formula I think still stands, but we have to teach the formula. We have to practice the formula and then experiment with it, and I think we will win every time.

Campbell: Can we have just one more minute? I want to say that I think what I talked about from John Hope Franklin is one of the keys to this, because for black people to decide to get white people to know that they are privileged is not going to work.

I mean it might work, but it's not exactly the way I think is the best way to go at it, even though it's true, but what John Hope Franklin, the reason I thought he had a lot of courage in what he said was, he was saying to white people, you will have to own up to the fact that when you look in the mirror in the morning, you have a privilege, however limited it might be, it is still a privilege that does not belong to people in the black community, you can walk out of your door and you are not immediately a suspect human being.

You're not immediately at risk, and I've never seen anybody wanting to particularly take up Dr. Franklin's charge because I felt, as a white person, that what he had done had really said the right thing, which is I think for many people, they don't wake up thinking they're people of privilege, because the word privilege, if I could think of another one it would be good.

People will wake up and say, "Well I don't have a lot of money, I don't have a lot of resources, I'm not privileged," but what privilege means and

how we can get people to understand, it's the right to walk outside of your own place and not be immediately a suspect, that doesn't require being rich to have to know that.

Tomorrow

You do not get to tell any victim of any atrocity or any injustice, “enough now.”

—*Marlon James*

Life & Literature of Marlon James

An excerpt from Anisfield-Wolf Award Winner

Marlon James at The City Club of Cleveland

September 11, 2015.

What I want to talk about is why I write—to not write. That I actually write in the service of not writing again; which sounds weird. One of the things that Jean Rhys says, she writes to write over and write off. I remember that because things I realize in hindsight, because I do not think I am a writer on a mission and I'm suspicious of writers on missions. I can only speak to the Jamaican experience, a lot of the times those writers become very didactic, patronizing, and a lot of times not very good.

It was a discovery to me that I am a writer of issues. There are things I want to get off my chest. Nothing is easy in fiction and it should not be; especially if you are looking for easy answers. I do not think fiction serves that purpose and I realized as a writer my job for the most part is to ask better questions. I render questions. One of the biggest questions I ask is, Why are we asking the same questions? Still dealing with the same things? I am saddened to ask those questions and to still be in a situation where I am asking those questions.

There is a great album that U2 came out with in 1982 called *War*. Almost before the first chorus, Bono sings “How long must I sing this song?” It is in the song “Sunday, Bloody Sunday” and the thing about *War*, what was radical and profound about it, is that here's a band singing songs wishing for a day they would not have to sing those songs again. That was the great thing about the album, a protest album longing for the day when they will never have to sing that.

I realized that one of the things I do as a writer, if there is a mission, one of the missions I have is to write towards my own irrelevance. I try to write to the point where you do not have to write these things anymore. Bono is not happy when he says his album is still relevant.

Pete Seeger was never happy to hear that his songs were still current.

I was listening to this album from Public Enemy called *Fear of a Black Planet* and the people said that those issues are still relevant, which makes nobody happy. We write towards our own irrelevance, we sing the songs to hope to never have to sing them again or send them from nostalgia, remember those days. These things are still with us. I do not think I have ever written with a conscious idea that these are the things in my head that I'm wrestling with; other writers try to make sense of the world. I find in trying to make sense of the world those things sort of come out at you. I think if you're going to be a writer, you are troubled by what is going on.

If as a writer your job is to make sense. That is one of the things I tried to do. I am not a peaceful writer; in fact, I have been called a violent writer. Some people go "yes!" My characters are troubled and troubling. Sometimes they cause violence and sometimes they have to live with it and sometimes they have to get past it. Sometimes they have to endure it. But I do think quite a few of them long for peace and as a writer I long for it as well. I have never considered it a mission.

[LAUGHTER]

My second novel, *The Book of Night Women* is set between 1785 and 1801, about women who plan an all female slave revolt. I wrote this because I thought it was a great story. Because I wanted to give slave women some guns to cause trouble. A lot of it was based on stuff I came across in a reading in research. Richard Dunn is good to look at if you are studying the history of the Caribbean. It is one of those things to create the germ of an idea in my head.

I realized in writing this novel that one of the things I was speaking to is what I like to call "the atrocity timetable." It works like this: when people who did not experience an atrocity and are not living in the consequences of it, or the legacy of it, still feel the need to tell you when it is done—when it is time to stop talking about it.

That was one of the things I sort of responded against. To use another example: I do not think you get to tell a rape victim when to stop

talking about her rape. You do not get to tell any victim of any atrocity or any injustice, “enough now.” Especially about slavery.

Slavery is the great over-discussed, under-discussed topic.

We have not discussed it yet. We have not. We have not had that discussion.

I was asked by a black Jamaican, why dwell on it? Why dwell on the past? There are reasons, but what struck me was this insistence on telling people who ended up on the bad side of atrocities to get over it, while people who lived on the benefits of atrocity were still enjoying them. My friend Johnny could be talking to me about “Why you are writing a slavery book”; and I say “Johnny, we are talking on the veranda of your plantation. We are looking over at your cane field.” This is a good friend of mine, but we knew each other’s legacies. We are looking at a cane field. “You are not about to sell it, I am not telling you to sell it.” What I am saying is, there is that history and I do not think we can ignore it.

The thing about messing with the past, it is not gone, it is not passed.

The third book I wrote, the reason why I am here, it is called *A Brief History of Seven Killings*, the Library of Congress description, and this is not the Library of Congress description, what happened to the men who tried to kill Bob Marley. It was me trying to do some sort of literary detective work. It was one of these issues that we in Jamaica do not talk about. It is this roughly five minutes, maybe 5.5 minutes in Jamaican history that changed everything and nobody talks about it. Even in a recent documentary on Bob Marley that some of you may have seen, something that is almost a postscript. Lots of reasons why we do not talk about it, people are worried about my health because I talked about it. The reason why we do not talk about it is that it is almost a stitch. If you pull it you will disrupt the whole fabric. Nobody wants to pull; nobody was to grasp at any thread. They do not know what will be pulled and what ripples it will cause in that fabric. As a writer, that is almost cocaine. You do not want to talk about it. My favorite parts of the discussion are when they trail off. When they are about to say something and did not say it.

Two days ago, at Jericho Brown’s reading, somebody asked a question

about what else has he done. Has he been a part of marches? Has he been a part of any sort of civil action? Jericho was being gracious with the answer, whereas I was not being gracious in my head. They were pushing for what sort of activism has he done. I thought that he has done the work by writing the poem, by giving the text that can become a tool of the world, he has done his work. The truth is, a writer, a person who is speaking truth to power has already done the work. When Picasso painted "Guernica", he already did the work. He does not have to write a manifesto about the painting, he did the work. When Toni Morrison wrote *Beloved*, she did the work.

I think, as a writer, by illuminating issues, not trying to solve them, that I have done the work. One of the things I wanted to throw out is a question. A question I ask people who usually ask me if I have done the work. I ask, "Have you done yours?" I have been thinking about racism quite a bit; especially in light of this award. Racism and injustice are a response to it.

A friend of mine had—she had a Facebook post talking about one of the problems with racism in this country is that we look at them as moral failings. That racism is a moral failing. The problem with looking at racism or injustice as moral failure is that all of you have to be is not immoral. All you just have to be is not racist. The problem with that is non-racism and anti-racism are totally different things. Non-racism, what you are doing is elevating passivity to a moral value. We respond to a lot of injustices that way. Say we substitute racism for child abuse. A non-child-abuse world, "I do not do it." "I did not vote for somebody who did it." "I do not buy books about it." "I am not an abuser." Go back to racism, "I did not vote for a racist." "I did not own slaves." "I am not from the South." "I am not burning any crosses." We have come to a point where our whole series of non-actions have become legitimate. We have legitimized the act of doing nothing.

There is a difference between non-racism and anti-racism. An entire immoral stance and an entire way of living the world and defining yourself about what you are not doing. There has to be more to it than that. I am a writer, I like to think the thing I am doing is writing. When I am

asked, what are you doing beyond that, I say “what are you doing now?” It’s something I like to do because it is a forum and I like to start fights. Is your whole response to the injustices of the world simply the sort of self—“at least I am not doing it?” And, “I am not encouraging it and not voting for it.”

These “not”, “not” not’s and don’t, don’t “don’t’s” instead of, “what are you doing?” My answer to that is “I just write.” That is the one thing I know how to do. If you want to ask me, if you were not interested in this, what would you be doing? I am still stumped. I have no answer.

As a writer, the more I write, the older I get, the wider my eyes are open and the more stuff that is out there I cannot turn away from. That is why I do it.

Amy Hanauer is well known to many Clevelanders, especially policy wonks. The statewide, nonprofit think tank she founded in 2000, Policy Matters Ohio, is a sought-after partner for studying equity, inclusion, economic growth and sustainability. Hanauer asked to recognize friends who provided helpful comments on this essay: Tamara Draut, Colin Gordon, Bakari Kitwana, Michael Mitchell, Zach Schiller, Kalitha Williams and Tracy Williams.

The History in Our Wallets

Amy Hanauer

The twentieth century brought a host of American triumphs: social security, universal free public education, state university systems, the GI Bill, the minimum wage and the right to join a union chief among them. These path-breaking changes reduced poverty, created opportunity, grew a middle class. They helped families, communities and the broader economy alike.

But here's a devastating truth: these policies, so crucial to our economic mobility, all failed to fully include African Americans. At best, these innovations refused to tackle segregation and discrimination head on. At worst, they widened gaps—amounting to a sort of affirmative action for whites.

Good policy transforms lives. But a legacy of our racist past is that America's best domestic policies were far less inclusive than they should have been. This meant that people of color did not benefit as they should have, and that ultimately these policies had less of a constituency and were more vulnerable as a result. In 2016, it's time to fix that.

Economic justice is fundamental to racial justice. Until people of color can consistently earn a living wage, enjoy job security and build wealth, America's promise will remain unfulfilled. Anti-worker and anti-integrationist forces have successfully divided us, convincing white voters to support policies that cut education, college aid, safety nets and wages. The result has been declining security and well-being for many

Americans of all races. Partly as a result, immense profits now go primarily to those already drowning in excessive wealth.

America's racially polarized approach to employment is rooted in history and perpetuated today. This piece explores that history and its contemporary implications, particularly for African Americans. Many Latino, Native, Asian and poor white workers face similar challenges but the history is different and the Ohio numbers sometimes too small to measure accurately. Separate explorations of how others struggle economically are essential future projects.

Racism's Deep Roots

The anti-slavery, labor rights and civil rights movements, combined with modernization and industrial advances that required huge pools of workers, meant enormous progress for black and white American workers between 1935 and 1979. Poverty declined precipitously, basic household amenities like water and electricity became nearly universal, workplace fatalities dropped and standards of living increased astronomically: the result of social movements, government standards and technological advances coming together. But progress toward equality stalled just as the civil rights movement turned its attention from political to economic struggles.

Today, more than 150 years after slavery, 80 years after the United States granted the right to join a union, 75 years after we established a minimum wage, 70 years after sharecropping ended, and 50 years after the Civil Rights Act was signed, the labor market in the U.S., Ohio and Cleveland remains racially segregated. Why?

Let's start with the most basic standards and rights. The 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which established the minimum wage and overtime, exempted many jobs, including the agricultural and domestic jobs that most black workers held. This was no accident. Without those exemptions, Congress, controlled by racist Southern Democrats, would never have agreed to the law. So minimum wage and overtime protec-

tions went to many white workers, but not most black workers. Eventually, more jobs were incorporated, but agricultural and domestic workers remained excluded, with some farmworkers, now largely Latino, still omitted.

The GI Bill—an extraordinary stride for upward mobility—gave returning World War II veterans access to low-cost home loans, free college, unemployment compensation and business loans. The often racist state and local governments who administered it, however, excluded black veterans from the benefits that did so much to raise America's college attainment. The low-interest home loans in the bill helped spark the home-ownership boom that enabled stability, wealth-building and inheritance. But this benefit went almost exclusively to white families—less than 0.1 percent of the home mortgages extended through the act went to veterans of color.

During the 1950s, '60s and '70s, America's post-war manufacturing boom meant sharply rising living standards for low and middle-income workers, but black families were often excluded by blatantly discriminatory hiring and compensation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made that discrimination illegal, and until about 1980 strong enforcement led to remarkable gains for black men and for women of all races. But Ronald Reagan brought a halt to all that, attacking affirmative action in hiring, elevating racially antagonistic rhetoric (remember the “Chicago Welfare Queen”?), slashing the oversight budget, ordering a near stoppage in enforcing anti-discrimination law, and putting a hostile leader (Clarence Thomas) in charge of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as Tamara Draut details in her phenomenal book *Sleeping Giant, How the New Working Class Will Transform America*.

In addition to impotent civil rights enforcement, economic decisions took a hammer to career ladders just as African Americans ascended the lower rungs. A mere decade and a half after equal employment laws allowed blacks to begin joining the middle class, manufacturing jobs that offered a solid income to high school graduates started disappearing. Cleveland was no exception—between 1985 and 2005 the city lost 40 percent of its manufacturing jobs, some 87,000 positions. The last few

decades have been marked by plunging average wages for anyone with less than a BA.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 created grants and loans to make college affordable for non-veterans, generating increased attendance for students from low-income families. But since then, we've been disinvesting in public higher education. States including Ohio began raising in-state tuition, just as black and Latino students started attending in higher numbers. Today the educational attainment gap between kids from rich and poor families is widening at an alarming rate.

Current Consequences

These policies still take a toll. As Heather McGhee, director of the New York-based think tank Demos, says, "History shows up in our wallets." Excluding African Americans from thriving neighborhoods, wealth-building opportunities, labor law protection, higher education and good jobs, meant gross disparities set in, endured and sometimes even grew.

Today in the United States, on average each year, white women earn \$11,800 more than black woman working full time. White men average \$21,800 more than black men, leaving black children three times more likely to grow up in poverty. The median white household has more than fifteen—fifteen!—times as much wealth as the median black household (\$111,146 vs \$7,113), in large part because of different access to home ownership and home values.

Poorly-paid jobs are disproportionately held by people of color. Domestic workers, over 60 percent black, Latina or Asian, face abysmal pay, little mobility, and low financial security. More than one in five domestic workers surveyed by the National Domestic Workers Alliance in 2012 actually earned below minimum wage and almost none got social security paid on their behalf.

Stores sort black and Latina retail workers into lower-paid positions. Black workers make up 11 percent of retail labor, but just 6 percent of

managers. Instead, they are overrepresented as cashiers, the lowest-paid role in a store. Even in the same job, employers pay black and Latino full-time salesclerks just 75 percent of the wages of their white peers, costing them up to \$7,500 each year.

Workers of color also are more likely to be employed part-time involuntarily and more often subjected to unstable, unpredictable schedules that make it hard to raise children or get a second job to augment hours.

In The Land

Cleveland's racial history includes points of pride and struggle. It was the site of early civil rights battles: the Future Outlook League, an organization devoted to improving the economic lives of black Clevelanders, started pushing as early as 1935 for companies to hire and for unions to incorporate black workers, with some notable successes. In 1967, Clevelanders elected the nation's first big-city black mayor, Carl Stokes. Oberlin, 40 minutes from Cleveland, was the nation's first co-ed, integrated college (African-American students began attending in 1835). And a generation or so ago (say, 1979), black men could find higher wages in Cleveland and other Ohio industrial centers than in much of the rest of the country—wages that were within ten percentage points of white wages.

Today, though, African Americans earn substantially less at the median than white Ohioans: just 76 percent, down from 90 percent in 1979. Last year, the median black Ohio worker earned just \$13.26 an hour, a more than \$2.60 inflation-adjusted pay cut since the peak, despite much greater educational attainment. At every educational level, white workers earn more than black workers—for college graduates there's more than a 30 percent differential in wages alone. Black workers are also much more likely to be unemployed: In the first quarter of 2016, unemployment was more than 2.2 times as high for African-American Ohioans than for white Ohioans.

Race-unfriendly policies are still being advanced. In Ohio, Governor Kasich just signed a law eliminating Cleveland's ability to ensure that city residents (who are largely black) are included in the hiring when public construction dollars are spent. The governor has also repeatedly requested waivers of time limits on federal food aid only for almost entirely white rural areas, even though urban areas where people of color are concentrated are also eligible. African-American workers are far less likely to qualify for unemployment compensation when they lose their jobs. And of course black Ohioans are far more likely to be arrested, incarcerated, and even shot by police.

It's not just policy, but also practice. Recent studies have found that employers are less likely to interview identical applicants if their names "sound" black (Lakisha, Jamal); that hiring managers were more likely to talk to white men with felonies than black men without a record; that university faculty members were more likely to discuss research opportunities with students with white-sounding names; and that both black and white customers tip black drivers and servers less.

What To Do?

Systemic, century-long policy and practice has left black workers out of many opportunities. Nonetheless, good public policy is a prime force preventing discrimination, raising job quality, and ensuring inclusivity.

It's true that the minimum wage omitted many jobs held by African Americans. It's also true that each time we raise it, all workers are helped but of-color workers are helped to a larger degree.

It's true that unions and their members have excluded or not welcomed workers of color. It's also true that unions have fought for and won the compensation that brings any worker out of poverty and the transparent contracts that attack favoritism and promote more equal treatment. In 2014, black Ohio union workers earned a whopping 35 percent more than black Ohioans who were not in a union, about triple the benefit that white workers got for their union card. And of course all

union workers have much more pension coverage, health coverage, and other benefits.

That's part of the reason why black workers are more likely to be in a union than white workers and it's why black workers stand to lose more from ongoing broadsides against labor. Further, it explains why if houses of worship are the most segregated rooms in America, union halls are some of the most integrated.

Finally, it's true that many public policies did less than they should have to help African-American workers. It's also true that the military, regulated industries, and public sector occupations offered more or better jobs to African Americans long before and to a greater degree than many private occupations. Further, assertive civil rights enforcement by the public sector forced much better private outcomes on racial equity, until Reagan abandoned that fight. That's one among several reasons that the violent assault against public sector employment will continue to disproportionately hurt black workers (while also hurting black—and white—communities by reducing services).

Moving Forward

So part of the answer must lie in recommitting to proven strategies that create good jobs and improve bad ones. But we must also fiercely defend stronger mechanisms to ensure that people of color share in the benefits of both. Happily, solving the jobs problem for Americans of color will also solve it for the many white Americans who are also, increasingly, left behind.

We can start by creating good jobs, as we've done in many previous periods in history, and by stopping the assault on existing public jobs. This would both put people to work and improve communities. Some targets: Invest federal dollars in a massive campaign to green communities. Starting in places like Cleveland, we could insulate buildings, install solar panels, erect wind turbines, and vastly increase mass transit. This would employ people now, reduce contributions to climate change, cut

pollution, and slash what we spend on fossil fuels, particularly for the low-income families whose homes and cars are often least efficient. Simultaneously, we could create universal, high-quality, early education for every American child, funded through a progressive federal income tax. This would prepare toddlers for kindergarten, help parents work, and employ a diverse group of young adults, providing a first rung toward a career. Once those are in place, our communities have other imperatives that could generate employment while reducing future costs: after-school and after-work exercise programs for all ages, high quality childcare for all with good wages for providers, home visits to support young parents, bike lanes, and blighted property restoration, to name a few.

Improving the quality of all jobs, public and private, is also essential. We've back-pedaled on job quality for African Americans, but also for many white workers. Ohio's 2015 median wage for all workers was just \$16.61, lower when adjusted for inflation than it was in 1979. Only one of Ohio's 12 most common occupations pays more than \$34,000 a year. We can fix jobs by allowing and encouraging more union organizing, as we have at past points in our history. Unions boost wages and benefits for all workers, but particularly for workers of color. We should raise the federal minimum wage and, given the racial inequity in tipping, get rid of the sub-minimum wage for workers who are supposed to be tipped.

We also need to enforce and modernize labor law. Once the social contract meant a career ladder, job security, and predictable schedules for most workers. Today workers are more likely to cycle between jobs with no upward mobility, be given less than full-time hours, work without the protection of a union, and have less clarity about who actually employs them (the rider or Uber, the home health client or the state). Creative campaigns need to address these new challenges and organizers must get much more inclusive and innovative, given court decisions and enforcement that have dramatically weakened worker power.

Black and Latino residents often feel locked out of the best or most important community jobs—including police officers, firefighters and skilled trades jobs, all of which rely on public funding. As we create

more jobs by greening our cities and educating our toddlers, it is imperative that we give applicants of color priority, regardless of legislative and court attempts to thwart that. This will ensure that investment leads to broadly shared prosperity, rather than the same old two-tiered approach.

In 1966, labor and civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph presented a Freedom Budget for All Americans that would provide guaranteed full employment, a higher minimum wage and a basic income, along with major new investments in education and health. A year before I was born, Randolph knew that a powerful economic agenda could help black and white working people alike.

We never fully implemented that agenda—certainly not for black Americans, but not for white Americans either. Our country has a frustrating habit of snatching opportunity from all of us just as it appears that black people might come close to fully sharing in it. As my friend Bakari Kitwana says, whites would almost rather miss out on things themselves than risk having blacks get them too.

It's time to consider a different vision: one that allows us to reinvest in a way that fully includes those who've been left out of our economy and our democracy. In the process, we'll all emerge better off.

We can go back to Randolph's thinking in 1966. Or we can reach to a more poetic and much earlier black American voice, Clevelander Langston Hughes, writing in 1935 in words that still get me every time, "O, let America be America again—The land that never has been yet—And yet must be." We never really tried to implement the promise of America. Maybe, just maybe, now is the time.

In 2015, the Cleveland YWCA began a new annual convening. Motivated by the YWCA's mission of eliminating racism, the "It's Time to Talk" event brought together several hundred leaders, mostly from across the corporate community, and asked them to focus their attention on how they can address structural inequities and biases in their own organizations. The keynote speaker was Dr. Akram Boutros, CEO of MetroHealth. Boutros is an Egyptian immigrant to the United States and lived in New York before moving to Cleveland in 2013. What follows is the text of his speech. What makes this piece remarkable is not just his personal story, but also the inclusion of specific tactics corporations can employ to tackle systemic biases.

I'm Guilty

Akram Boutros

I don't spit slurs or tell jokes or whisper belittling remarks behind people's backs.

But I know you don't have to pull the trigger to hurt somebody. Very often, doing nothing is worse.

And right now, I'm doing nothing. At this moment, I'm talking about abolishing racism, but I'm not doing a thing to wipe it out.

Instead, I'm standing here, giving a 20-minute speech in a warm, beautiful building with good food in front of me, counting on a little applause when I'm done. I'm giving a speech when I could be out in a neighborhood anywhere in Cleveland, anywhere in America, anywhere in the world, finding a kid or two or three whose success has been stifled because of the color of his or her skin. I could be listening to their dreams, telling them they can dream bigger, helping them learn what it takes to become respiratory therapists or nurses or to get into medical school.

We could all be doing that: helping a black, Latino, or Asian person succeed, or giving a kid whose family came here from Johannesburg or Havana, Bogotá or Saigon, Mumbai or Seoul the one lucky break she needs.

One lucky break. That's all it takes.

I know.

It's the reason I'm standing today, the reason I became a doctor, the reason I have the privilege of serving all of you and all of Cuyahoga County as the president and CEO of The MetroHealth System.

Before that break, I was headed down one heck of a doomed path.

When my family immigrated to the then-crumbling neighborhoods of Elmhurst and Jackson Heights in Queens, New York, in 1974, I was 12 ½ years old and I got picked on from Day One. I didn't know a word of English, didn't have friends, didn't know until nine months later, when I began to learn the language, that when the assistant principal in my new American school introduced me to my class for the first time, even he made fun of me. He called me A Crumb. A Crumb. The class burst into laughter, and I was set up for the daily insults that followed.

Kids picked on me because I couldn't speak English. They picked on me because when I did learn it, I got it wrong. They picked on me because of the way I looked and the food I ate. And being picked on didn't mean just insults, it meant getting beat up. I had to figure out how to make it stop. I had to figure out a way to belong.

Join a gang.

That's what I decided to do.

I hung out with those gang members, on the periphery at first, for about nine months, and as they got to know me, they thought I was ready for my initiation.

But two weeks before, while I was out on my bike delivering the *New York Daily News*, a moving van, doing 40 or 50 miles an hour, ran a stop sign, slammed into me and threw me so high into the air the truck drove under me before I landed in the middle of the street. The noise from the impact had construction workers running to the scene from a block away.

I spent the next four weeks in the hospital in casts up to my hips then went home where I began rehab and was tutored in between surgeries—seven during the next six months. And during all that, the guys from the gang didn't come to visit. They forgot about me. And being forgotten

was the greatest gift they could've ever given me.

Here's the other gift I got in that hospital: there were no beds left on the pediatric floor, so I ended up in a room next to an older man who began talking to me about how we get to choose what happens to us in life. We all have the ability to decide if we want to be a good person or a bad person, he said. And a little while later, he died, right in front of me.

It was then that I found my purpose in life. Then that I knew I was meant to help other people.

So I had luck on my side, but I had something else, too, something even better.

I had options.

My parents made sure of that. They made it clear that they believed my two brothers and I could each be exceptional, that mediocrity was not acceptable, that not trying was out of the question.

That may not seem like much.

But the limitation of options is the crux of racial injustice. To think that you can't be anything in the world that you want to be, that you can't achieve your dreams, to think that your dreams are limited to what's right in front of you—these are the most confining shackles of all.

Ones I see—we all see—too often.

A few months ago, I met a Lincoln West High School African-American student during his visit to MetroHealth, a junior, and I asked him what he wanted to do when he finished high school.

With a face filled with hope and posture full of pride, he gave me his answer: "I want to work at McDonald's."

"Why McDonald's?" I asked him, trying not to judge.

"I can walk to work," he said. "And I get free food."

Was it the lack of transportation and an apparent need for food that had robbed him of options? Or the lack of guidance and exposure to bigger opportunities?

Either way, our job, if we truly want to fight racial injustice, it to give every person those options back. Or at least try like hell.

We know that if every door someone tries to open is locked, they stop pushing.

And if one—just one—buckles, there's hope.

And hope takes on a life of its own. It builds confidence. It creates energy. It feeds momentum. And momentum leads to success.

I know this, too.

Last year a group of us at MetroHealth made diversity in hiring a priority. We had buy-in from the beginning. Everyone knew it was the right thing to do, that patients are better off—staff, too—when doctors, nurses and other employees look like—and understand—the people they care for.

We started by asking ourselves what the barriers were. What issues are we up against? What problems do we need to solve?

And then we took five simple steps.

First, we decided no manager could hire unless 20 percent of the qualified candidates for the job were racially diverse. We've now upped that to 40 percent, by the way.

Second, managers couldn't decide who was qualified. Our Human Resources Department did that, with the objectivity that comes with distance.

Third, we hired a manager of diversity recruitment. That just made sense. African-American doctors know a lot of African-American doctors and white nurses know a lot of white nurses. We needed someone else, in this case a young biracial man, to go out and find qualified diverse candidates.

Fourth, we increased the options. We said experience would carry as much weight as education; that it doesn't matter if you have a degree if you have 25 years of experience doing the job we need you to do.

Fifth, all managers had an out. They could ask for an exemption, but only if they held the job open for three months. And no manager wants to hold a job open for three months. In fact, in 14 months, no one has taken the out.

The plan worked.

Of the leaders we hired in 2013—that's managers, directors, vice presidents, all the way up to CEO—14 percent were minorities.

Last year, 37 percent of them were.

If you just look at vice presidents, 25 percent of those we hired in 2013 were African American, Asian or Latino. Last year, every single one of them—100 percent—were.

And in that year, MetroHealth experienced amazing success. We launched a plan to transform our campus and health care in the community. We revamped our cancer center and hired six more cancer doctors and nurse practitioners. We were named a comprehensive stroke center. Our doctors, nurses and other caregivers handled more than one million outpatient visits and nearly 15,000 surgeries—7 percent more than the year before—while our infection rates fell to the lowest they've ever been.

In that year, our operating income rose by 86 percent—from \$18.9 million to \$35.2 million—pretty nice when you consider how many hospitals in America are losing money.

And in that year, we provided \$188 million in community benefit. That's care to patients who can't afford care. It's health services that we subsidize, things like putting doctors in Cleveland schools and providing health care to the county's foster children and training the doctors who will be taking care of you 20 years from now.

Diversity IS good for the bottom line. It's what makes us successful.

But to reach that success, we have to first admit that WE are part of the problem.

And that takes guts.

As Mellody Hobson, the chairman of the board of DreamWorks Animation says in her beautiful Ted Talk, one that's been viewed more than one million times, we can't just be color blind. That's not enough. We have to be color brave. Color brave. As Ms. Hobson says, "We have to be willing to have proactive conversations about race with honesty and understanding and courage."

Before we can ask anyone to be honest, I think we must do one more thing: we must agree that there will be no blame.

That is the key when it comes to candor. If someone believes they'll be punished—in any way—for saying what they truly believe, they won't be honest.

And without honesty, nothing gets better.

So the No. 1 rule is this:

No blame. Period.

Blame silences. It paralyzes. It dooms any chance of progress.

Instead, let's start with one simple statement:

We are all accomplices.

And then let's sit down, you and me, no matter what color our skin, and finally put an end to what the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called "a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue."

And as we work together, let's remember the stirring message he wrote from behind the bars of the Birmingham jail in 1963:

"Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear-drenched communities and in some not-too-distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty."

Those words are as relevant today as they were 50 years ago.

And relevance is the final thing I want to talk about this afternoon.

As you sat down today, you found cards at your table asking you to define that word.

My favorite definition is this: "Having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand."

"Having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand."

There is no more basic human need than to be relevant.

We work to be relevant.

We care for others to be relevant.

We love to be relevant.

So I ask you, will you help make today relevant? Will you help someone become relevant? Will you be relevant?

I hope you accept my challenge to make yourself relevant in the heroic climb toward racial justice.

And the best way to make yourself relevant—to have significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand—is to pick one other per-

son—someone whose options have been limited by the racism in our world—and make her relevant, too, give her that one lucky break she needs to build the hope that leads to success—success for her and for all of us. And, when you and I have done that, we can recruit others; we can repeat this one-on-one mission until the day when everyone has options, the day when every single person—no matter what they look like—is relevant.

A mother's perspective is an important one, especially when she recognizes the true hope that her children represent. Writer Sharon Holbrook pairs that hope with what feels like an intractable reality about the world we live in. Nevertheless, she holds out the possibility that hope just might win.

What Diversity Can't Do

Sharon Holbrook

My seven-year-old is perched at the kitchen table, painting a picture of a Christmas tree while quietly singing the “Dreidel Song” to herself. One slim strawberry blond braid hangs in front of her face, but she is too lost in her work to notice. Last weekend her aunt gave her that braid, and beaded it to match her African-American cousin’s dark head of braids.

It’d be easy for this white mom to be smug: My child is so open-minded, a real child of the world. And, in fact, she and her siblings are worldly kids compared to their parents. I grew up in a New Jersey subdivision, the homogeneity of the homes matched by that of the middle-class white residents. My husband’s childhood neighborhood met the exact same description, as long as you substitute “Lake County, Ohio” for “New Jersey.”

As adults, we made a conscious decision to do things differently. We chose Shaker Heights, a Cleveland suburb known for its beautiful historic homes and its racially, economically, religiously, and internationally diverse population and schools. Our church, straddling the urban-suburban border, is similarly diverse—except for religion, of course.

On a warm, front-yard kind of spring day, one of my kids chats with a neighbor, a white boy. They realize they might know some of the same people from school and swim team, and so they start comparing notes. “Do you know Henry?” my child asks. “He has white skin and brown hair.”

I marvel when I overhear this. Never in my life, even my adult life, have I heard one white person talking to another white person describe

a third person as “white.” When white people talk, white is the default. No one mentions skin color, except when it’s browner. Even then, there’s usually a strenuous, well-intentioned effort to describe that person in any and every way but by mentioning race, as if it’s shameful to have noticed skin color, but OK to notice shirt color or glasses. It was refreshing to hear my kid’s comfort discussing race as easily as hair color—and to know that Shaker Heights is a community varied enough that white skin warrants mention.

That’s the kind of story I want to tell, the kind of little anecdote that suggests maybe the world isn’t always so white-centric and that we can place some honest hope in diverse communities. But it’s not the only story.

It was summer, and our family headed to dinner in the Tremont neighborhood, with its mishmash of urban-tired and hipster-urbane. On the porch of a weathered up-and-down double, a “No Trespassing” sign is posted. “Why is that there?” one of the children asks. “Oh, I don’t know,” I answer lightly, joking, “Maybe it’s an elderly person who wants to scare away all the good-for-nothings!” “Yeah,” comes the answer from the back of the minivan, “like black kids.”

This—this is not what we bargained for. We gasp, audibly. This is a child surrounded by diversity in the world, and at home by “enlightened” parents who’ve never once given cause to think this is what Mom might mean to say. But, still, this is a white kid trying to make sense of a confusing world. A world where the steps of our public library are often an after-school hangout for mouthy, cursing (and, invariably, black) teens. A world where we’ve seen multiple arrests from the safety of our passing car, and each time the handcuffed perpetrator has been African American. I’d explained that white people, and people of all races, do these things too, but we don’t see it in Shaker or on our side of Cleveland. And for a child, that’s apparently powerful. Powerful enough to draw nascent racist conclusions, even for a child with black teachers, black priests, black babysitters, black classmates, even black relatives.

We often hear the truism (among white people, at least) that racism must be taught—and therefore, if I do not actively teach my children to

be racist, nor model racism myself, then I will have done my part when it comes to parenting about race. Clearly, it's not. Kids see the world as it is, not just how we tell them it should be. The specter of perfect American equality papers over a foundation full of deep cracks, and in Cleveland, and in Shaker Heights, those cracks are too big and too close to ignore.

"Why does it seem like it's all black people living in these poor neighborhoods?" they now ask as we drive through the Buckeye neighborhood. "Why did the police shoot Tamir Rice?" they ask, too, with curious shock about a boy just a few years older than themselves and their own African-American cousins.

They ask and ask, and together we talk. I hesitate to say we "answer," because as much as I'd like to box it all up in some neat platitudes, I can't. It's messy. Diversity isn't enough. Good intentions aren't enough. Talking isn't enough, either, but we can't stop, because we can't pretend we are OK just by keeping our mouths shut.

Maybe I had it all wrong when I thought—subconsciously, I suppose—that "diversity" was supposed to feel good. Noble, enlightening, easy. Maybe it wasn't supposed to do that. Maybe it was supposed to remind me to stop pretending, to face our shared brokenness, and to develop the humility to acknowledge that we have far to go.

In richly layered prose, Andrew Higgins offers a reported essay, a profile of his Afro-Puerto Rican friend who serves as a lens through which we get one perspective on the economic transformation of Cleveland's West Side, and, through the lens Higgins provides we see that in context of a global economic, digital, data-driven transformation. Through both lenses, we see a neighborhood teetering on the edge of gentrification, with all the benefits and tradeoffs that come with that.

Where I End and Where You Begin

Andrew Higgins

There was a moment in 2014 that Andrew Perez remembers well: a green and white-checked Subaru with a phallic, omnidirectional camera mounted on its roof, gliding down West 52nd Street in the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood on Cleveland's West Side. Its passive eye was capturing panoramic vistas of what many dismiss as "the ghetto," another patch of urban decay best observed through ovular windows at 30,000 feet. With the precision that only NSA-scary data collection can offer, the HAL 9000-like camera sees everything, as Andrew reflects on the images now available on Google Street View—but only if you let it. The rub is that "everything" means different things to different people, and people—living, breathing human beings—are what's missing from its imagery.

In 2014 it was Google slowly making its way down his street, but Andrew also recalls another scene ten years before, one that was far less rare: an unambiguously pissed-off, middle-aged Dominican woman expectorating an s-devoid Caribbean Spanish—a rusty butcher's knife in hand—jogging northward down the center of the same street in pursuit of some cheating lover. By the subsequent lack of police sirens and cordons that was ho-hum weekend fanfare, the street's residents were relieved to assume he had either gone unbound or was hallucinatory. Andrew chuckles in recollection of the story, saying "That kind of stuff used to happen *all the time*." He has seen homeless shelter guests make

sortees into the street, seizing unwary pigeons before withdrawing from daylight's shame; men making discrete selections from the curbside recycling of the recently well-mortgaged; flagrant daytime narcotics deals and the occasional gang-related shooting. He tells me, "There was a corner store (back when there were corner stores) called Sam's, over on West 58th. I would go there all the time and have long conversations with the owner. He'd encourage me to stay in school, stay away from the drugs and gangs, things like that. A few years ago, I was watching the news and saw there was a robbery at a local corner store, and the owner was shot and killed. It was Sam." These recent realities call into question the advent of the Google Street View car, and should immediately arouse suspicion as to the intentions of their data's users.

Why his street? Why now? Who could possibly care what West 52nd Street looks like with the almost tactile quality of a 5-megapixel CMOS sensor fisheye lens? Is this frame-by-frame stitched-image world representative of something real? Or is it something else—just a next-gen consumer application where someone else's reality can be experienced from the personal safety of a MacBook, seated comfortably in an oversized plush chair in any of the hundreds of strip-mall end cap Starbucks? Can it account for the memories and histories of the human beings deleted after its incidental collection of their likenesses? If Andrew's neighborhood, as represented in Google Street View, has become interesting enough to be trafficked by...whomever, then, as a lifelong resident, he should be, at least, interesting enough to be likewise documented. But users of Google Street View likely see Andrew as a statistical component of similarly compiled data, a means to some other end in an age wherein mere, unexamined information stands in for both cultural capital and spectacle, a radical depersonalization of the communities these technologies document. Google Andrew (used here as a verb) and "he" will be lost in the results: a brown man in a mixed neighborhood whose median annual salary straddles the poverty line, where crime takes place in X, Y, and Z-like situations by X, Y, and Z-kinds of folks. All of whom, look like Andrew. There is an expectation when meeting him that he will conform to certain assumptions, but one

should check his gut and analyze the origins of these very assumptions. When I ask him about his own experience growing up here and dealing with outsiders, he himself says, “By all accounts, growing up here and looking the way I do, I should have turned out very differently. There were many ways I could have fallen into certain traps.”

Andrew is thirty-three years old, a vertiginously tall Afro-Puerto Rican man who has lived his entire life in the same Grand Victorian in the racially-heterogeneous Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood just west of Ohio City. As he tells me, “I have always been perceived as black, really, because I am. Whenever I start a new job and people hear my last name, they say, ‘but you don’t *look* Puerto Rican’. In school, people always assumed I was just black. To be honest, sometimes I would just go along with it, you know? It was easier than always trying to explain [myself], and it allowed me to fit in more easily, to not have to live up to each group’s expectations.”

He describes himself as the “product of forced desegregation,” having to move schools a dizzying eight times during his K–12 education, and the ordeal was corrosive to his developing sense of place and identity. “I had to learn how to adapt to new places, make new friends and explain every year about how I’m Puerto Rican and what a Puerto Rican is. Things like, ‘no, I don’t eat tacos all the time,’ ‘no, I don’t eat rice and beans every day.’ My parents chose to *not* teach us Spanish because they didn’t want my brother and me to be discriminated against by having the additional challenge of an accent. That’s the environment my parents grew up in. They didn’t want that for us.”

He is also husband to a white woman from neighboring West Park, father to two biracial sons who attend Cleveland City Schools, which has introduced its own sordid challenges relating to perception and what many seem to expect of him before he even has a chance to speak. “We get looks from time to time,” he tells me, about being in a biracial marriage. “Strangers offer comments on our kids’ hair that are totally

inappropriate. People often start speaking Spanish to Rachel simply because of her last name.” But, like a true Clevelander, one of many victims of half a century of decline of municipal prestige and opportunity, Andrew maintains an absurd, lovable, and urgently necessary glass-half-full optimism. He says, “There are aggravations, but overall, I’d say the experience isn’t all that bad, especially living in the city. I love Cleveland. My family is here. I had Cleveland pride before it was a thing. I know the city isn’t perfect, no city is. But I have chosen to make it my city.” When I ask Andrew his opinion on Cleveland hosting the 2016 GOP Convention, he shrugs affably and smiles, “I’m no Republican—for sure—but sure, why not? We have lots of things to share!”

But he and his equally brown twenty-six-year-old brother, Joshua, are *cultural* outliers firmly on the arc of the accurate *racial* bell curve; Andrew is a reputed sous chef for an upscale grocery store chain in the immaculately whiter suburb of Solon, and has an incontestable palate for Cleveland’s culinary landscape (anecdote: I have eaten until I hated myself by Andrew’s side at a minimum of five restaurants that I wouldn’t have known existed were it not for him). Joshua attended the Cleveland School of the Arts, earned a degree in music from DePauw, located in overwhelmingly white Greencastle, Indiana, and just returned home from a four-year enlistment in the Marines—specifically, as a French hornist in the prestigious Marine Corps Band. The brothers are now as likely to see Google Street View cars and urban decay-chic hipsters pedaling ironically-basketed-bicycles through their post-industrial wonderland as they were to see crack whores, open-air drug deals, or the occasional attempted homicide only a decade before.

As far Andrew is concerned, the neighborhood is just and always has been just “the Shoreway.” Yet, the process of gentrification is unignorable. He finds it curious that anyone has taken note of his neighborhood at all, which, after the recession, was ravaged by foreclosures and vacancy that came to characterize many primarily-mixed or minority West Side neighborhoods until, Andrew tells me, extremely recently. He says in a self-aware way that betrays an attempt to not be hyperbolic, “There’s been a whirlwind of change—just in this past year.” In the previous two

or three decades, the near West Side was avoided like the plague, more of an idea deep in the 19 Action News-covered netherworld off of the Denison and 65th Street exit, and cyclists were something seen only on TV, when the cable connection hadn't been boosted by entrepreneurial neighbors. But turning the clocks forward to today, young families are moving in by droves, doubtlessly, attracted to the incredibly affordable yet high-quality stock of housing in close proximity to All The Stuff We Want To Do. For his entire life, there was metaphysical clarity as to where cool neighborhoods like Ohio City ended and where his began. Now it's not so clear—in geographical terms or otherwise.

For Andrew, it's remarkable how much his neighborhood has changed, not just in melanin hue. In the past, there were many signs at the Lorain and Detroit junctions circumvallating his couple of residential blocks, indicating to weary car-borne travelers, all of the other places they should be: Gordon Square Arts District—THIS WAY; West Side Market—THAT WAY. Or: Cleveland Police Department—AHEAD. But now people are moving in and staying put, building or renovating old houses, and planting independent businesses along the Shoreway's main thoroughfares, resulting in an uncomfortably implied socio-economic metamorphosis whose latent function is cultural transformation. He says, "When I was growing up, there was a corner store on almost every corner. I could play outside for hours on end with the kids from the neighborhood, but there were hard boundaries. I'm not saying it was ideal, just very different. [For example], there has always been prostitution and drug dealing going on up and down the street. But, now there are a lot of [what seem to be] high-income white folks (he offers me a slightly apologetic look) building townhomes and opening shops. It's interesting to see the juxtaposition of poverty and new wealth and how everyone's rubbing elbows now."

Juxtaposition.

Present: an arts district that includes three theaters, an artisan mo-

torcycle factory—an EcoVillage.

Past: a brownfield and food desert and a zip code with one of the highest rates of HIV in Cuyahoga County.

Dual-purpose check-cashing/liquor stores, soul food dives, or gaping architectural wounds on street-level of most buildings have yielded to “haute” dog joints, the gentrification-mandatory cafe/bakery (which offers a “Sybaritic Line” of pastries), clothing boutiques whose interior décor are variations on any given mom-blogger’s Pinterest board for “Reclaimed,” and an upscale Mediterranean fusion restaurant that no one within ten square blocks could afford to eat at more than once annually. Andrew tells me about one of the more extreme cases of the past year wherein newcomer behavior shocked the lifers: “There was an ice cream place that opened up in the summer. It’s the kind of place that has like bacon mango sorbetto or whatever, things that are probably from Brooklyn. Several months ago they had a ‘movie night,’ and so they *bought* the house that was behind their property, knocked it down, and used the space for hosting the movie. It was at around 9 PM outside and already dark. In my neighborhood. And there were families there with kids, random neighborhood kids. After dark. There was a food truck. It was beautiful, but in the context of my childhood and adolescence in the same place, on the same streets, it was so surreal.”

For Andrew, the possessive pronoun “my neighborhood” should not be confused with territorialism or unneighborliness of any kind. He is not at odds with the newcomers on any terms, racially, socioeconomically, nor aesthetically—definitely not culinarily—rather, his experiences with them have been mostly positive. In fact, he tries not to think of them as a *them* so much as an *us*, a new *us*, a psychological product of having to make new friends every eighteen months when he changed schools as a kid. When considering the new businesses, for Andrew, they’re kind of ideal. “Yeah, this stuff is great. These are people who love Cleveland’s neighborhoods and want the city to be great again. A lot of them moved here from the suburbs. That really says something because ten years ago, that was really unthinkable.”

But Andrew nonetheless considers it useful to remember some of

the inconvenient truths circumscribing the neighborhood, truths whose contexts the newcomers weren't present for and so, couldn't possibly retain in collective memory as local history. Namely, that all of this co-exists within less than a square miles' distance of both the former location of the Ariel Castro house on Seymour Avenue in nearby Tremont where three kidnapped women were held prisoner for a decade, as well as the Cudell Commons Park where shortly after the people at Google passively surveyed his block with a mapping droid (many of whose employees are shuttled from the un-de-gentrifiable Mission District in San Francisco to Google in suburban Mountain View), twelve-year-old Tamir Rice was shot and killed by city police officers for being a black kid outside.

One wonders if the new cyclists commute more than that specific radius.

Here's what Googlemobiles don't see when his house is casually recorded and stored in Bay Area superservers, reviewed by potential gentrifiers as a morally-less-iffy alternative to apps like Sketch Factor: loving husband and father of two, die-hard Clevelander, savage cook, and Star Wars fan rivaling the pastiest of basement-dwelling pubescent grandchildren of folks who likely owned and occupied his house seventy years prior (and now rule the outer county in Pax Suburbiana). When data is sought—mere information bereft of the inconvenience of *context*—something vital is lost. Andrew is a statistical anomaly, proving that individual lives, whose infinite environment-nurturing variables are a testament to the existence of the will—the will to be who you are despite data-supported assumptions that you are a poor, state-dependent and part-time criminal minority—are not scientific. They cannot be reduced to algorithmic predictions within reasonable margins of error by distant and unconcerned tech analysts who earn six figures and eat lunch in slider lounges before a quick kombucha and yoga sesh.

I ask Andrew what he sees for the future, if he thinks the Shore-

way could go the way of other gentrified U.S. neighborhoods, which, in the most severe of cases, like the traditionally-Latino Mission District neighborhood in San Francisco, lifelong residents get priced out by the techies and the IT ziggurats who employ them. He first repeats a familiar, lovable Cleveland refrain: "It's not that bad." He then reconsiders, shaking his head with a small, resigned panic. "For now, anyway. The ball has already started rolling. There is probably no stopping it now."

The voice of teachers runs through this anthology, and it is no accident. It is a predominantly white teaching force that does the work of educating African Americans in our urban centers. In the essay that follows, English teacher Charles Ellenbogen reflects on encountering Cleveland as an outsider, and working with his students and members of the community to make sense of race relations here.

Learning Cleveland, Teaching Cleveland

Charles Ellenbogen

The police handcuffed him and asked if there was anyone he wanted to call before he left. He shrugged, and so they led him out. I saw the way he adjusted his walk and realized that he knew how to walk in handcuffs. “Enough,” I said to myself. I thought, “How can I teach students about the *Odyssey* or whatever else when they kept having their education interrupted by legal issues?” The question slowly evolved into, “Why should I teach students about the *Odyssey* or whatever else when they keep having their education interrupted by legal issues?”

It was far from our first incident. A visit from an award-winning poet was interrupted by a visit from the gang unit. I watched an advisee get accosted by a large, bulletproof-vest-wearing officer who had driven onto the sidewalk to cut her off. After he let her go, I approached, tentatively, to find out what she’d done. “She was jaywalking,” the officer said. Another advisee arrived 11 weeks into the school year. I watched him take his vision test and then dig into a math assignment. Three days later, he was picked up by the police and my principal reported to me that the officer had asked if he should “parade” him around the school as an example. She, in no uncertain terms, declined.

We moved to Ohio in the summer of 2013, a time of great energy, both positive and otherwise. My Rust Belt stereotypes about the city were quickly shattered by my increasing awareness of all of the green space. We were dismayed to learn that the *Plain Dealer* was reducing its delivery to four days a week and excited to discover Brews and Prose

and the rest of the emerging literary scene. LeBron James had not yet returned and Johnny Manziel had not yet been selected. One hundred and thirty seven shots had already been fired, but Cudell Park was still the name of a Rec Center. Shaker Heights, our new home, seemed idyllic and Cleveland seemed quite troubled. Nothing, I was soon to learn, was quite that simple.

By the fall of 2014, I was fortunate to be connected with Peggy Schauer. She was starting a new public school—long a dream of mine—and planned to take ideas I'd only encountered in books and put them into action. I believe in education, and I very quickly believed in her vision for this new school. It felt like a leap into the unknown, but thanks to her, my understanding of the Cleveland Plan and the overall energy I felt (it was and remains a palpable feeling), I decided, as Peggy and I sat together in a coffee shop near the Trinity Cathedral, that it was a leap I wanted to take.

The freedom Ms. Schauer granted her teachers was both liberating and unnerving. As an English teacher, I was used to being anchored to things, to nouns, specifically to books. But our curriculum was designed to be less about nouns, and more, like the Montessori programs I've encountered and researched, about verbs. What the students needed to know was to be less important than what they needed to know how to do. A predetermined curriculum was not to be the driver. The teachers were not to be the driver. Instead, our foundation was to be our relationships with our students (100 percent students of color, some of whom were over-age and under-credited) and their voices. In order to get to know the students and begin to design the curriculum through which I would try to teach them literacy skills, I had to get to *know* them. In order to get to know them, I had to get them to talk. They were generally willing to talk and no matter where we started, the conversation invariably ended up on a topic very much on their minds and, not coincidentally (I thought), very much in the news—the police.

They quickly corrected an assumption I made. While they were attentive to the names and vocabulary that were quickly becoming part of the national conversation, it was for them the daily encounters, the

microaggressions, that they wanted to discuss. So I developed a seminar based on police-community relations. I found support from the Cleveland and Garfield Heights police who provided speakers. Terrell Pruitt, the Ward 1 Cleveland Councilman, helped me make connections. The ACLU made a presentation to help the students know their rights. The local activist group Puncture the Silence provided speakers and support. Mostly, the students told stories and mostly, I, a white person new to Ohio and living in Shaker, listened. What I didn't do, as Ms. Schauer pointed out, is have them do anything. An effort to have the students produce presentations based on a proposed solution was largely unsuccessful. I learned a great deal, but I am not sure what the students learned. And I had no rubric in place to evaluate what they may have learned.

Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner. Then, in November, Tamir Rice. And it was all on camera. In the meantime, some of our students continued to be entangled with the law. Students continued to share stories with me. They were clearly engaged by the topic. I needed to alter my approach from one focused primarily on engagement to one focused on learning.

In education, there is a concept known as “backwards design.” This excerpt from *Alice in Wonderland* explains it well:

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

“I don't much care where—”

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go.”

In education, it matters which way you go. As I kept researching and finding resources, I turned, as I so often do, to Ms. Schauer for guidance. Together, we looked at the competencies we wanted our students to demonstrate and discussed which ones best matched the content. We decided on Reading and Writing Informational Texts. The students needed to understand, for example, how to read and interpret information about rates of lead poisoning and abandoned houses in Cleveland, graphs of suspension rates in Ohio, and the websites of private prison

corporations. Serena Williams' success and the comments she received became the foundation for a conversation about stereotype threat. In order to understand such information and demonstrate their mastery of the skill of reading informational texts, the students needed to be able to create informational texts to explain what they learned to others. After all, what better proof is there of your mastery of a skill than your ability to demonstrate it as you teach it to someone else?

And I kept the speakers coming. It was important to both Ms. Schauer and myself that we not fall prey to what the author Chimimanda Adichie calls "the danger of a single story." We needed to include the perspective of the police, and the Cleveland police continued to be quite generous with their time. One officer even brought in a guide created by the police about how to handle yourself when stopped by the police.

Speaking of battles, President Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." I had done my planning, but this guide required me to throw out my plans. I retrieved copies of the guide that the ACLU had provided about how to manage yourself if you were stopped by the police and compared it with the one the police provided. The differences were both striking and telling. And that became our work. I gave each student a copy of both guides and together, in small groups, and individually, I asked them to identify the differences in word choices, graphics, order of information and to interpret them by creating their own informational texts explaining to their peers about how to handle themselves if they were stopped the police. ACLU's "What to Do if You're Stopped by the Police", 2015

As the Tamir Rice case lingered, things began to turn at school. Students began to show me their examples of how two different websites covered the same story. One young man would stop in each morning and together we would check *The Guardian's* website to learn if there had been any changes in the number of people killed by the police. One student began turning her attention to issues related to the police in her spoken word pieces. Another, having been stopped by the police, reported on the reaction he'd received from an officer after he'd asserted (correctly) that, since he was not under arrest that he did not have to sit

in the back of the police car. The students were finding their voices. They were learning to speak.

A relative of Tamir Rice agreed to meet our students. She was scheduled to visit with students for 40 minutes. She had them mesmerized for over two hours and agreed to return. The director of the FBI came to Cleveland, and our students were invited to attend. The Youth Forum at the City Club of Cleveland hosted a conversation on community-police relations and Ms. Schauer encouraged me to bring a group. One of our students asked a question that prompted an interview by our local NPR station. When one of the panelists asked the crowd of mostly students of color a question, and our two tables of students were the only ones who responded correctly, I knew Ms. Schauer was right. While the topic of the relationship between teens of color and the police is inexhaustible, our students clearly knew a great deal. It was time to do something more than read and write informational texts. But what?

A representative from Puncture the Silence, a member of the City Club's Youth Council and two Cleveland officers (including one, a female officer of color, who had attended the City Club forum) agreed to join us back at school after the forum to continue the conversation. I had sought a conversation, but it quickly turned, at least at first, into a question and answer session. Myths about the police were dispelled. Relationships began to thaw. Stories were shared, both by the police and by the students. Everyone agreed that the conversation should continue. When asked later about the officers, students were impressed by their forthright answers, their openness and their honesty.

But Ms. Schauer's challenge remained. It was time for the students to do more. How, I wondered, could they demonstrate their learning in an authentic way? Well, I am an English teacher. It was time for a book. Thanks, once again to Ms. Schauer and the flexible model she's created, I gathered those students who'd proven most engaged in the topic and (with me fighting my urge to be in control of every step of the way), we began to create a book. We're still putting it together. I'm trying to be just the final proofreader.

There's an epilogue now, or at least a new chapter. The prosecutor

in Ohio decided not to bring indictments against anyone involved in the death of Tamir Rice. There are many of us who disagree. Some, not in the numbers of Baltimore or Ferguson, have taken to the streets. Some want the prosecutor removed. Some want the grand jury process changed. So the book we write will be necessarily incomplete. There is no way we can cover all of the elements of both what happened to Tamir Rice and how it stands as one of many examples of what's going on in our country right now. That's been much of what I've learned as I've explored this issue on my own and with my students. There is nothing about this that is simple or linear. If you try to map this issue, it will look like Christmas lights that have been left in the box too long.

And even if we could cover every angle, the minute the book comes off the presses, it will be outdated. It has to be. The story continues to be written. The question is who is controlling the narrative. There is an African proverb that says, "Until the lion learns to speak, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." It is my job to teach my students how to speak—with their words, with their pens, and, most importantly, with their actions.

The final piece in this volume comes from P. Nasib Whitt, who works throughout the community as a facilitator, often with the City of Cleveland's Community Relations Board. In direct address to the reader, he reminds us that too often, we fail to recognize the depth and texture of one another's true humanity. This is often the case with black males. On a panel at the City Club recently, a black male artist told the audience among the most challenging things in his life is that people often expect him to be either a clown or a thug. With a nod to Richard Wright, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Michelle Alexander, Whitt directly confronts this societal failing.

See Me Fully

P. Nasib Whitt

Here am I. Over here. Can't you see me? I am right here. No. Right here! Look at me for who I am; appreciate me for what I offer. See me, don't fear. Don't be frightened by my strong posture, yours is equally strong. Don't judge me based on the media, your privilege and your blinded ego. Don't choose to see past me by saying you're color blind. Don't choose to overlook me because you see and fear my talent.

Do this: Wake up, see beyond your own sense of self, and stop playing possum until the doors close and your true bias is echoed in the chambers, the halls, the family dining room table. Remember me. Appreciate me, because I appreciate you. See me fully because I see you fully. Yes, we both have biased standards that have been instilled in us by a mirage called culture where generations have oppressed the true nature of being human; it's called being humane.

So be more humane, be a humanitarian and love beyond your oppression, but love your self first so that you can love others. You will not lose your power.

Where is your Mother Teresa, your moral compass? Your twisted history continues every day. In your walk, in your world, the media ensures you know, you never forget, that I am of color and you, of privilege. We see it everywhere—in newspaper photographs, movies, #OscarsSoWhite,

yet, you believe in rights, freedom and prosperity for all. You may not see it, but your political stance and moral compass point to the power that sustains your privilege. You don't know it, but you drank the Kool-Aid.

The drink builds on the blind eye of oppression rooted in historical policies—redlines through places that were neighborhoods and now aren't, federal public housing infrastructure that started with good intentions, the suburbs created by whiteness, for whiteness, the myth of integration.

There is no way up. There is no way out.

Yet once again, I ask the question: Do you see me? Do you see me as I am? Do you see the disproportionate numbers of people who look like me who are behind bars? Do you see the disproportionate numbers of people who look like me who won't finish high school? I stand for them. Do you see the Talented Tenth? I stand for them. Do you see W. E. B. DuBois? I stand for him. Do you see the indigenous people of this North American landscape, I stand for them. Do you see your white peer or any person of privilege who stands for me and see me fully, I stand for him and her. Together we stand for each other and together we can see each other fully.

Now! Do you see the endangered species that has been systematically stripped of pride, stripped of the ability to thrive, stripped, almost, of even the means to survive? Do you see the policies that keep them there? The same policies that keep you in your privilege? If not, then ask yourself why you still say and believe "If I can do it then so can you." Yet, walk into any room where people of color are so few, or seem to be the help and not the contributor. You simply assume that it is normal. Look at my history and yours. One country, our collective history and two paths in this great America.

Why am I so expendable to you? You do not see me, nor desire my rise or value my difference. Why can't we talk about our struggle together? Our great history is tragic, yet over time, hundreds of years, our collective triumph can change the world with courageous and trusting people like you and me. Why do we have to be concerned about dying for humanity? Why can't we collectively see the great and good and

not the difference and fear? Man, we are so brainwashed and driven by saving our own lives and our own wealth and for a too many of us, it's our lives that build your wealth.

And why is it that we and others should not live next door to a population that is dark once it hits that threshold around 30 percent, tipping what seems to be the quality of life. How did we get to this space? Better yet, why do you see me as the darkness that does not shine when all light shines from darkness? We both share and sustain the great pride of our country. But why does this pride stop us from following the model of South Africa's truth and reconciliation? Is it fear, that my gain threatens your privilege? It doesn't. Is it because the word *Africa* frightens you so much? It shouldn't. I hope it's not because of money. Without progress, our American tradition will implode, not only in the space of race, but also in the very thing that has driven us for centuries: economics and your complacent comfort.

This I say: Your fear of me taking my power back and doing you harm is only a projection of the current context into which you place me. Let's not perpetuate this any further.

Many Americans will be thankful for having a friend and neighbor who does not look like them, but draw a line if their daughters or sons want to date someone that different. It is not tradition, we say. I am different. Tell me something: Why do you get power over me, onto me and her and that little boy and girl over there? I see my potential; now do you see my potential and our opportunity together. Do see our shared love and opportunity serving both your current privilege and a new privilege, a privilege for all? That opportunity creates a better you, me, community, nation. That is the collective opportunity: All of us thriving, not just you, not just the individual ego that moves so many of us to neglect others. I know, it's easy to blame this on others, not knowing, a blind spot. I don't get to make that choice. Each day is defined by the complexion of my skin. I walk in difference surrounded by white space. My abstract color and fearless voice may lead to death. It is beyond where I am allowed to go, do, and say. Yet your work, your presence is honored and placed on a pedestal, while a collective mass of people like me in this country

and others continue to be systemically less than human and that place is sustained by the value of negligent opportunity that translates into poor schools, service jobs, and low end economic opportunity. Your disinvestment and mirage of generational intentions do not have humanity as its goal.

Did you read *The New Jim Crow*? Pause and reflect and ask yourself, what happens to all the newly constructed prisons if they delivered rehabilitation services? Why not build a more humane and equitable opportunity for human capital and social development?

You're willing to support me if I meet your standard of normal. A clean shaved face, a college degree, and your own affinity to who I represent based on a white male's image and life experience. It's funny! Now that hip hop is liked by all, I can pull in the parking garage without too many looks. I am and we are to be grateful for change. How do we change? I have read that polio was eradicated. It was a threat to all and swift action managed the issue quickly. Why don't we treat this racial oppression like polio and create a vaccine that leverages our schools, our government, all our community for the greater cause of creating a more humane America that will create a more humane global influence? Not one that is rooted in a mirror that reflects neighborhood privilege based on subjective taxes, but one that serves all and sees the value of all rooted in humanity and not simply economic privilege.

Once again, I am over here. Do you value me and see me whole, remember me? I like power, too. Yet, when we speak with the same vocal strength or see the same vision with the same sense of ownership, you get uncomfortable. Suddenly, we are painted as ungrateful, angry, strong black males who need to be checked or checked out.

I see and appreciate your difference, but not your displacement of power to keep me bound, to keep my neighbor bound, to keep my leadership bound, to keep my city bound, to keep my country bound to your power and privilege. I believe in me and I have to believe in you too. I see you, just be courageous and look beyond what you take for granted and have assumed about me for generations. See me.

Epilogue

Fire This Time
On Grief from a Poet Wanted Dead
RA Washington

*No, I don't feel death coming.
I feel death going;
having thrown up his hands,
for the moment.*

— James Baldwin
(taken from the poem *Amen*)

1.

IT begins with the image—

Tamir's sister in the back of a police cruiser, the same police cruiser that carried her brother's murderers.

Then another flash—

Lavish Reynolds and Philando Castile's young daughter sitting in the back of her parents car, just like any other day only this time a police officer stops the car, and murders her father. The blood crimsons Castile's summer white tee.

A flash—

Sterling's eldest son breaking down in horrific sobs at the press conference. Old enough at 15 to understand that there is a high possibility that he too can die like his father, murdered without cause.

I have made it home 14,965 days. I'm counting every single day I've been alive because the police do not discriminate the age of their black murders.

The Rage in my body is decades old. Feels like a second skin, grows tighter and tighter as this colonial construct get stronger and stronger—my life means nothing. Rage is becoming me.

The women who have loved me have always wanted me to know that I do indeed matter. Sometimes I have been able to hear them. The men that have instructed me are mostly books, their bodies line shelves and tables. Their skin is mostly white, they have helped me think of myself as safe, they have kept me hoping. There are the six exceptions—Audre Lourde, James Baldwin, Samuel R. Delany, Keith Gilyard, Amiri and Clarence Major. They tell me that words are weapons. They steady my hand, and make my blackness matter to me.

The men in my family are broken. This is the place, this Earth is where it occurred. I am supposed to be safe here. I realize that is a fool's assumption, it is a willing blindness much like faith. We grow up being told if we are a good productive citizen we will be safe, our lives will be full of the magic dust that is the American Dream. What know one says is that this dust is not magic, it is the body, the body breaks down to its parts—DUST. I am covered in the dust of the dead.

Free. Free.

No longer to be bought and sold, but the currency is still blood in regards to me, to us. We still are chattel, still are looked over on the selling block. It is why our men gravitate to corners, its genetic memory. We await the "good news" as watch each other get bought and sold. Being bought is a prison sentence, and being sold is a murdering. Whether by our own hand, or by the hand of the authorities. The ground remembers.

We are told that we can become whatever we dream of. Parents have to tell you this, it is what hope is. They cannot bring themselves to tell you that, NO. You are black and it will be extremely hard for you to stay alive, let alone make something of yourself here. Here I am though. I told

myself growing up that I would be fine as long as I avoided two things I saw destroy my family.

1. JAIL.

2. CHILDREN

In hindsight I think—“How hateful it is to have me believe that as long as I do not create more of me I will be fine.”

The truth is I will never be fine as long as WE are killed, our black bodies not valued. I have six nephews. Their bodies will be destroyed if the country stays its bloody course. I am not close to their fathers, mainly because it is near impossible to stay close and stay alive. I didn't try—at this moment I am ashamed that I made that choice, but their lives seem to make my choice a smart one.

So I am not close to their sons and my not being close weakens our opportunity to create movement. We become so afraid of the collective destruction that we cling to our individual lives like the sinking lifeboats they are, we never question this, we buy into the American Promise, and cringe when we are lump together even though that is what will keep us, US.

If I was in my nephews lives they would not be any safer. What will make them safe? When white people demand that white cops stop killing them. No marches, No posts on social media, No speeches—you have to confront it face to face. White people will have to put their bodies in between the murdering police and us. White people will have to put their bodies on the line anytime they see a black person being detained by police. This is the only deterrent. It is an ugly truth.

Semantics?

No. Rage. I am Rage. Rage is my skin.

From the beginning of this country—Insurrection, Genocide, Slavery.

The blood of the Native.

The blood of the Slave.

This bloody history awash with a belief in a God, This whitening of Jesus.

The killing of the land.

The killing waste of the animals.

The killing of the air.

The pillage of the sea.

Can there be any wonder that Killing is so present now?

Today a sadness washes over everything. We are weary of the brutality, we have witnessed too much. We chart the murders, we give statistics. We shake our head in disbelief when we watch the video. We say to ourselves—“ Not all Police.” We never ask ourselves why the other police won't stand up and stop it.

You can see the guilt in their faces, the shame of the blue. You can see who could give a fuck, and you can see who this strain of violence is killing.

2.

Today is sadness.

When Mike Brown was murdered it was a rage. We gathered in the street, we demanded an accounting, a justice. Then another was murdered, an another, an another an another an another.

Today, within 24 hours two black fathers were murdered. And the response is a sadness. Our stamina is being tested. We have never completely understood that our republic is Imperial. It is a colonizing force tilted by a system that benefit a tiny fraction of us. It is led by white men, and the white men who cannot stand this fact, cannot face this history drop out. They consider this power to be undeniable. They never mobilize and challenge their mirrors. They march with us, and cry with us and speak at us as if we cannot see who could end this. As if we never knew who was killing us.

These men have let it get to the point where it is not enough to just kill black and brown. They are now emboldened to kill the poor as well. No one is safe. It is an ugly, deplorable truth.

The Christian Tradition has this concept of Agape Love—which is defined:

Agape: is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible. This Greek word and variations of it are found throughout the New Testament. Agape perfectly describes the kind of love Jesus Christ has for his Father and for his followers:

Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them. (John 14:21, NIV)

Jesus lived out agape by sacrificing himself for the sins of the world.

Agape is one of the four types of love written in the bible, the others for reference are:

Eros: Eros love is the physical, sensual intimacy between a husband and wife. It expresses sexual, romantic attraction. Eros is also the name of the mythological Greek god of love, sexual desire, physical attraction, and physical love.

Love has many meanings in English, but the ancient Greeks had four words to describe different forms of love precisely. Although eros does not appear in the New Testament, this Greek term for erotic love is portrayed in the Old Testament book, The Song of Solomon.

Philia: Philia means close friendship or brotherly love in Greek. Philia conveys a strong feeling of attraction, with its antonym or opposite being phobia. It is the most general form of love in the Bible, encompassing love for fellow humans, care, respect, and compassion for people in need. The most common form of philia is friendship.

Philia and other forms of this Greek noun are found throughout the New Testament. Christians are frequently exhorted to love their fellow Christians.

Storge: Storge is family love, the bond among mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, sisters, and brothers.

The Enhanced Strong's Lexicon defines storge as "cherishing one's kindred, especially parents or children; the mutual love of parents and children and wives and husbands; loving affection; prone to love; loving tenderly; chiefly of the reciprocal tenderness of parents and children."

I have always understood that all religions have some aspect of it. My capacity for Agape is being tested, this strain affects my ability to love physically, to have fellowship and brotherly love. Ultimately it tears at my Storge—the bond amongst family. This is our legacy here, this is the calamity of oppression.

The Rage seeps.

When some random woman crosses the street when she see me the RAGE becomes sadness even though I understand that it is needed and just because this country kills women. I want to be in solidarity, I want to be considered an ally. The fact is—she does not know me and I have not done enough to stop the continual violence men inflict against her. In my silence and my participation with/in catcalling I have made the environment unsafe.

The Rage seeps.

When a white man cuts me in line, just not paying attention—on his phone—my Rage boils over, the skin breaks turns to TILL ash.

The Rage seeps.

When I am asked what I do for a living.

When I am watched in a store.

Or followed with eyes as I enter a public place, I turn on my Ellison Invisible and will my disappearing.

It begins with an acknowledgement-

“She (my mother) will never be alone again.”

This is how she justifies keeping us, as young as she is, it strikes her as a choice—a choosing to never be alone again, and it is the awesome singular emotion of alone that fuels her worry. So the instructions begin to take shape in the form of odes against fear, for the landscape kills, the people in it kill. These odes become song, they lilt in your head in her strong bass—

1. always be respectful, never give anyone a reason to talk to you about your behavior.
2. be mindful of your surroundings, day dream at home not out in the street.
3. the police are not your friend, but you must act as if they are because their feeling will get hurt and offended. if you offend them they will retaliate.
4. if someone hits you, you must hit them back.
5. when confronted by police always show your hands. if they think you have a weapon they will shoot you.
6. if I white man is staring at you in the eye, look away and slowly nod an acknowledgement .

It is family lore that my mother never liked being left alone, I guess it is safe to say no one does, though some of us adapt to it well.

In your mother's womb the fluids cushion you from the heart breaking sounds of being on Earth, the muting acts as an amplifier of the heart beat. It is the loudest sound you hear. Imagine the heart—

Love and Release.

Love and Release.

Now you are born, the sounds are harsher, stark. They come from all over, not just the inside. For me, the beginning should always be just the inside of a thudding heart.

Love and Release.

Love and Release.

So this is a setting out, and it is about her. My safety has always been her constant concern. So this is about her and it concerns me, and men. Namely my father, who for the most part existed as myth, ghost, boogie man and savior.

For a short time he was a fictional character, in fact sometimes when I am at my most vulnerable (a state that has been popping up of late) I make up lies, tales as if I am still a toddler or better yet, some sulky teen.

I would tell a complete stranger something totally untrue about my father, I would act as if he was in my life, living in my house the whole time, and I would do this just to relate, to seem normal.

I am aware that normal should not be the goal, but its exhausting to be this color, to be male. To be seen as the criminal, to be the body. Sometimes in my late, late sleep I imagine that I am none of those things.

My father was the second oldest, I say was as if he is dead, in some respects he is, but it is times like this where I am grateful that he is not. For to be alone in this would be too much. I like knowing that someone who has my blood, someone older has managed the precarious road of survival.

He was never a good man by most accounts, never seemed to be terrible either. In this way, we are a lot alike. I think this and at the same time wonder if it is true, I've heard it all my life. It is the constant blueprint of how I seem, the doubling of his mirror.

Now I shatter glass, and turn it to sand again.

And the young Sterling man, how does it feel to know your father and mourn him so. I cannot imagine tears if my father died. Even at the most violent of deaths I tend to not break down.

There is something about the inevitability of it all. Of course he was murdered is what I say to myself. Francois had a demon in him. The end was the end. It was written when we were children

3.

I search my feelings and realize that I cannot let my guard down just yet. The idea of collapsing from the actual weight of it all, the faces swim my eye. I can see Tamir, I knew him. I think of Eric Gardner, and how many times I have sat outside of a place of business selling books. That could have been me so many times.

“What the fuck you doing out here?”

Selling my book Officer.

“You can’t do that around here.”

I have permission from the owner, I don’t see the problem.

“You have a vendor license?”

No. But...

“Move along, OR i WILL MOVE YOU.

The choking begins. I signal that I cannot breathe by slapping at his arm against my Adam's Apple. I can see my mother's face, her eyes pleading with me to stay awake. Her mouth is moving but I cannot hear any words, my ears are ringing as if underwater.

The grey is warm, I can feel my heart slipping. Now I am floating. Against the current, against the amazing heat of history. I can see the faces, heroes greet me. Medgar, and Malcolm. Martin and Fred Hampton. Shirley Chisolm, and Maya Angelou. Biggie and Gil Scott. Tupac and Lil Bobby Hutton. Francois Fissi Bissi Okra Kongo and Gen. Robert E. Lee Washington, my grandfather. Gwen Brooks and Michael Jackson, his face put back by grace.

I leave you now. I almost made it. A decade longer and I would have been my grandfather's age when he passed.

I am not done, but there is nothing but relief as I fly the flotsam of souls.

BOYS want to be their fathers. They want to protect their mothers. Over time you learn that to be your father would not fall in step with the protection of your mother. Fathers do not protect anyone but themselves. Sure, there are exceptions, but that is work. Many of us, generation after generation are not willing to do self-work. And sure, through them protecting themselves, you—their children may find yourself protected, and yes by proxy of her womb, your mother will be too, but this is not because he has to. Its because he must always project to the world that the protection of his family is his only goal. It is his assumed function in the world, and society judges the ones cannot, and makes it nearly impossible to do. Society resents anytime the community by large must step in.

In order to continue the male domo narrative, propaganda is used. You

have seen this propaganda, it does not need to be highlighted for the sake of this, but you know it. It starts at birth, with the Western Tradition of cutting the cord. This is supposedly what a father does. The Father separates the child from the mother with a sharp instrument. The separation represents the hierarchy of the civil. This cut is the first instance of the propaganda, but what if your father is not present?

For children born without the father present this the beginning of the institution stepping in. This is the beginning of a life full of longing. This longing increases, goes from the fanciful ideal, down the slippery road of hate. The hate gets caked in your mouth, eyes, nose. Eventually all there is—HATE.

If you are born male, the very first thing you learn is to hate you, and the first instance of you in pain is institutional. The institution inflicts it. You are born in opposition. Defiance becomes essential. You make markers that depict that you are under attack. Your shirtless chest, your pants sag to an almost vulgar depth. You sing your songs loud and walk in the middle of the street daring eyes to see you.

You chose to threaten instead of showing fear. It is the warrior in your genetic memory. Calling sweet resistance. We worry for you, we try and get you to move quieter, but you have watched us become broken, and do not want that for yourself. At some point there is no more water, just the fire this time.

And what will that fire bring? For surely, the enemy (that is what it has come to) is armed, is designed to destroy you. It is the penultimate of Imperial might. Its police are designed to protect capital, the more you push, the more they are funded. Slowly the fighting take the shape of

wars in far flung places in the world. You ambush, they obliterate. You resist, they infiltrate. You speak out, and the media dismisses your voice, or worse distorts your words until they seem dangerously emotional, short sighted, ignorant of all this country has to offer.

You know that none of it is for you. That you will never be the few they cheer, and salute and worship. You also know that you are the raw material that fuels the culture churning.

It is you that stokes all the new, the influence you wield reaches out into their suburbs, reaching out to their children. And since the inheritance they have been privileged by right of skin is tainted, and stained with your blood these children reach out to you. Mimic you until you can no longer be you for the copy is dominating all these areas you hid.

It becomes a colluding before you even realize that there are sides.

4.

THE men in my mother's life spoke of my father as if he was some type of robber baron, as if they too didn't have kids they were running from, women they could not answer to. Thinking of them now reminds me of being at a downtown bar, the women spritzed, gathered together sipping something cheap and light, whispering.

The men gather in rounds, eyeing them down, gesturing with nods of the head. They are competing, but they are also at an auction so they are buying. The illusion is that they are being chosen. They are not, but they still try to present their best selves. For a woman with children they will insist that her situation, whatever it is, would have been different if it would have been them.

Some men refuse to participate, but do nothing to stave off our kind from doing this awful dance. The refusers are just as complicit in the

lie as the participants. Just as dangerous as the men openly competing. These “Straight” interactions are the time loop of patriarchy, the same patriarchy that has weaponized its institutions to kill black men. If you do not understand this, then you surely are to blame. The evidence is plain as day, for all you have to do is think back to when you were a child.

This patriarchy is the unflinching philosophy that has deemed the black body to be worth less. That constantly is legislating in favor of controlling a woman’s body. That dismisses and murders the trans body. That continues to hunt the native body. That demonizes the queer body.

Women give passes as if these men are their children, only to in turn ask their children to be men.

As soon as I am old enough to understand word I tell myself that I will never have children, and make sure through my behavior that the women I loved will judge me as too by to raise children with. Over time my women friends have children, I help them, I even marry a mother once only to resent the role of step parent. How strange will it be to die alone?

The only crime is silence.

Maybe you have heard this story before. The young child wakes up earlier than usual, early like a Christmas morning, and gets dressed in what he figures to be his best clothes. He then sits on the bed to wait. He will be spending the day with his father, the child has not seen his father since last year, A 30 min visit that ended abruptly because of his parent arguing. The child blames his mother, it will be some time before he understands that there is no one to blame, that the dynamics of family, of black love have been altered by the state, and its capital agenda. When you were once a possession it is hard to understand exactly how that alters how you relate.

The child is angry with his mother, but he is still too young to be able to show his anger, to truly make her feel it. Regardless, he is angry and

now instead of his time being interrupted by their constant bickering, it will be just him and his father. Just the two of them for the first time.

He is scared to ask the time for fear his impatience will make his father not show. Any outward angst with could be punished, sensed by his father, or so he tells himself. Finally he lets himself relax and falls back to sleep. Hours later he awakes in a panic thinking he missed his father.

“He didn’t show up yet baby. Maybe something came up.”

He is angry at his mother, it has to be her that keeps his father from showing up, that keeps his father away. It is always her. He vows to always show up when he gets older. Years later, while typing this he remembers when he found out what had happened to his father, that his father, driving with a busted taillight was pulled over, searched and detained. He knows that began a string of jail stints that goes all way into the eighties.

He knows that he has not shown up for a long time. He wants to ask himself why, but he knows that all he has ever done is wait. Wait for his father. Wait for his eventual murder. Waiting for a change that was promised but after 400 hundred plus years alludes and evades, as if justice was a sentient being. He is always waiting and this will not change from typing this.

finish.

There is something I wish to tell you. I am not sure if you can deal with what I must say, for your feelings tend get hurt when you are not being praised for how different you are from the rest of us Americans. The fact is you have learnt the language of ally-ship, but speak from such a place of privilege, such a place of constant telling me what I should do that I am at a lost regarding what you are doing.

It seems that what you are doing is complaining, and pointing fingers. It seems that you never ask a question, and that somehow you know what my body feels like. You seem to know what it means to have a trans body, and woman's body, and a queer body. You seem to always claim some connection to a native body. Some parts of a part of a part.

When will you confront the mirror in my name. To discuss the brutality of other white people without being willing to place yourself, your body in the fray seems to be a step away from collusion. To not put your body on the line is tantamount to pulling the trigger. The harsh reality is that there has been no time in US History where our protests, which have been as constant as black excellence, has been heard. It will not be heard now. The only way we can change a system to its root is going to be force. This is a force question, a question that has never been concerned with the moral-ness of its subject.

This is not to say that within your heart, the truth and our cause are not firmly link. This is not about belief, this is about a value system that has proven to be a sliding scale—one is white, the other is not. And it will not be moved to stop by song, or by post, or by march. It will be a question of you saying to your American brother—This man is a human being, and if you are going to kill him because he is black, then you have to kill me too.

This woman is a human being, and if you are going to kill her, you will have to kill me.

This queer person is a human being, and if you are going to kill them, you will have to kill me.

This person is a latino, and if you are going to kill them, you will have to kill me.

Contributor Bios

Dana Aritonovich

Dana Aritonovich became fascinated with the story of Rev. Bruce Klunder while pursuing her MA in history at Cleveland State University. Though her thesis spotlighted the everyday rebellions of Cleveland area teenagers through the lens of rock and roll during the Second Great Migration, she included a few paragraphs about Rev. Klunder's death and knew eventually she would delve more deeply into his life. Aritonovich is a native Clevelander who has written about race, LGBT issues, and food for a variety of publications, and she focuses on the personal experience of music in her blog *What I Like Is Sounds* (<https://whatilikeissounds.wordpress.com/>).

Dianne Borsenik

Dianne Borsenik is active in the northern Ohio poetry scene and regional reading circuit. Her poems have appeared in *The Offbeat*, *Great Lakes Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Dirty Chai*, *Rosebud*, *Slipstream*, and many others. She won the Best Cleveland Poem Competition two years in a row. In 2011, Borsenik founded NightBallet Press, and in 2015, she produced *BeatStreet Cleveland* as part of the International Beat Poetry Festival. Find her at www.dianneborsenik.com.

Akram Boutros

Dr. Akram Boutros is an internist with a 25-year record of successful hospital leadership at academic medical centers, community hospitals and specialty hospitals. He cultivates personal relationships throughout the hospital system and the community and is committed to creating a diverse workplace. Since 2013, when he began his role as president and CEO of The MetroHealth System, Akram Boutros has piloted an unprecedented transformation of Cuyahoga County's public health system. Under his leadership, MetroHealth has expanded the number of locations from which it offers health care to 73. It has helped improve the economic health of the community by hiring more than 700 additional employees and completing an \$82 million expan-

sion of its Critical Care Pavilion.

In addition, revenues have increased from \$783 million to \$934 million while operating income has grown from \$10.3 million in 2012 to \$29.8 million in 2015.

Last year, 32 percent of the nurses hired at MetroHealth were from under-represented minorities and 69 percent of the managers and physicians hired were from under-represented minorities.

Milenko Budimir

Milenko (Miles) Budimir is a writer/editor and philosophy instructor in the Cleveland area. He was born and raised in the City of Cleveland, attending Union Elementary School on the city's south side. He hopes that collections such as this can further the much-needed conversation about the racial issues that continue to plague the city and region. Our future depends on it.

Lawrence Daniel Caswell

Lawrence Daniel Caswell is a husband, father of one (Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos), and a life long Northeast Ohioan. He is currently an associate producer for Civic Engagement, Web and Social Media for ideastream. His preferred form of human communication, however, is the lecture, followed closely by the digression. His most frequently given lecture is on the effect of the 1996 Telecommunications Act on local radio diversity and quality. For the most part, as it says on the tombstone of the great Cleveland inventor and entrepreneur Garrett Morgan, you will know him by his deeds.

Lee Chilcote Jr.

Lee Chilcote is a poet, journalist and essayist. His articles have been published in *Vanity Fair*, *Next City*, *Belt* and other publications. His poems and essays have been published in *Great Lakes Review*, *Oyez Review*, *Blue Bonnet Review* and others. He was awarded the Leonard Trawick Creative Writing Prize at Cleveland State University. He lives in the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood of Cleveland with his family.

Arthur Chu

Arthur Chu is a writer who's lived in Cleveland for the past four years and has written for *Salon*, *The Daily Beast* and other publications. He achieved brief notoriety with his record breaking run on the game show Jeopardy! in 2014, and has since been a frequent commentator on race, culture and the digital world.

Eric Coble

Eric Coble's plays have been produced on Broadway, Off-Broadway, internationally, and in all fifty states. Cleveland audiences have seen his work at Cleveland Play House (including *Fairfield*, a dangerous comedy about race relations in a suburban elementary school), Dobama Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, and Cleveland Public Theatre. *Just Do It* was originally part of the "Every 28 Hours Project"—a series of one-minute plays in response to the events in Ferguson, Missouri.

Charles Ellenbogen

Charles Ellenbogen is a high school English teacher in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. He has been a teacher for 24 years, the most recent 4 in Ohio. He recently completed the Neighborhood Leadership class offered by the Neighborhood Leadership Institute and is still learning about the city and its history. Charles particularly loves the Cleveland literary scene, including publications by Brews and Prose, *Belt Magazine*, and Literary Cleveland. He lives in Cleveland with his wife and two young children.

John G

John G is an illustrator, comics creator and head of Cleveland-based Shiner Comics, Inc. Since the late '90s he's been building a humble following with hundreds of ridiculous, vivid posters and illustration work for a variety of local and national clients, including restaurants, bands, and music venues. With Jake Kelly, he created and published *The Lake Erie Monster*, a Rust Belt-centered, horror anthology comic. He co-founded and continues to run Genghis Con, an award-winning

annual small press and underground comics convention in Cleveland. In 2015 TurnStyle Films debuted *Draw Hard*, a short documentary about John G and his work, which has since been selected for the 2016 Cleveland International Film Festival and took home the Jury Award for Best Ohio Short Film. In 2016, he was one of 40 artists awarded the Creative Workforce Fellowship grants by The Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC). See more at shinercomics.net

Ajah Hales

A former community organizer, Cleveland Heights resident, and Forest Hill Church member, Ajah Hales currently blogs about life's quirks, quandaries, and crossroads at MYStory: A Blog Outside the Box. She writes brutal truths packaged in palatable bytes on Twitter (@glcworldtalk), and on occasion, likes to knock on doors and march in the street.

Amy Hanauer

Amy Hanauer runs Policy Matters Ohio, a think tank that creates a more equitable, vibrant and inclusive Ohio through research, coalition building and policy advocacy. She has a master's of public administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.A. from Cornell University. Before starting Policy Matters in 2000, Amy did research and policy work in Wisconsin, Colorado, and Washington, D.C. She believes that economic justice is essential to racial justice and to democracy. Amy is vice chair of the board of directors of the national think tank Dēmos, and serves on governing bodies for the national Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN), and the national State Priorities Partnership. She also helps steer several economic vitality efforts in Cleveland. In America's most important swing state and in a city where racial equity still eludes us, Amy provides a passionate voice about how to make an economy that works for all.

Andrew Higgins

Andrew Higgins is an MFA candidate at the NYU Creative Writing Program. He grew up in Ferguson, Missouri, and moved to Cleveland's

Kamm's Corner neighborhood after graduating from high school. He left Cleveland for college and a six-year career in the Air Force, and returned to settle in Cleveland permanently in 2016. His writing has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *The Vehicle*, *Belt Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is working on a novel about a family caught in the middle of a gentrifying neighborhood on Cleveland's West Side for his NYU MFA thesis. He lives with his wife and sons in Lakewood, Ohio.

Sharon Holbrook

Sharon Holbrook's work appears in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Belt*, *Cleveland Magazine*, and many other national and local publications. Connect with her on Facebook, Twitter, and at www.sharonholbrook.com. She lives with her family in Shaker Heights.

Michael Houser

Michael grew up in Cleveland's Union neighborhood and is a proud graduate of the Cleveland public school system. Michael graduated with honors from Kent State University with a bachelor's degree in public communication, and is currently working on a master's degree in public administration degree from Cleveland State University, Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. Prior to joining the Budish administration, Michael worked as an educational specialist at the Boys and Girls Club, for United States Senator Sherrod Brown and on Capitol Hill for United States Congressman Tim Ryan. Michael currently serves as special assistant to Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish

Susan Kaeser

Susan Kaeser has lived in and advocated for Cleveland Heights for over 40 years. A parent of CH-UH school graduates, she directed Reaching Heights, a local public school advocacy organization, for 17 years. She is currently investigating how Cleveland Heights residents transformed their community during the civil rights era from a segregated suburb to a vibrant and enduring model of residential integration.

Melissa Kullman

Melissa Kullman is an organic farmer by day and a creative by night. After she was sexually assaulted in March 2015, Melissa began to heal through writing after many years of artistic hiatus. Her work is contemplative, analytical, and refreshingly candid. She lives in Cleveland with her black cat, Neal.

Jeanne Li

Jeanne Li was born in Cleveland, but was raised in the suburbs of Chicago. She returned to the city in 2007 to attend Case Western Reserve University, where she graduated with a degree in sociology. After a brief stint of graduate school in Atlanta, she returned to Cleveland, realizing that the city was her home. Jeanne hopes to become actively engaged in Cleveland, focusing on antiracism, gentrification, and police brutality issues. She aspires to become a freelance writer and help make Cleveland a better place for all of its residents.

Sarah Marcus

Sarah Marcus is the author of *BACKCOUNTRY* and *Every Bird, To You*. She holds an MFA in poetry from George Mason University and currently teaches and writes in Cleveland. Her poetry collection, *They Were Bears*, is forthcoming from Sundress Publications in 2017. Her other work can be found at NPR's *Prosody*, *The Huffington Post*, *McSweeney's*, *Cimarron Review*, *Spork*, *The Establishment*, *CosmoGirl*, and *Marie Claire*, among others. She is an editor at *Gazing Grain Press*, a spirited *VIDA: Women in Literary Arts* volunteer, and the series editor for *As Is Ought To Be's* High School Poetry Series: Gender, Identity, and Race.

Brad Masi

Brad Masi is a writer, filmmaker, and sustainability consultant who resides in Cleveland Heights. His essay topic echoes his current documentary film, which details the history of the 1960s freeway fight and its implications today. Masi loves meandering explorations of the East Side and shudders to think that many of the parklands, shops, and

neighborhoods that he frequents would have been eliminated had the Clark Freeway been built.

Ali McClain

Ali McClain has been writing and performing poetry for over 10 years. She has a B.A. in English and a M.A. in English, language and literature. Her educational and youth work includes teaching composition and African American literature at Chancellor University, volunteering at detention centers in both Toledo and Cleveland, teaching spoken word poetry at Playhouse Square, serving as a guest artist and judge for Cleveland Heights Library's poetry slam, and working with various organizations (The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum) on how to use poetry and the arts in the classroom and after-school programs. She is currently studying poetry as a graduate student at the NEOMFA and directs a successful after-school and summer program for girls (Sisterhood) at West Side Community House. Ali is also the co-founder of Acerbic, which is an arts collective whose vision is to create an environment and culture that develops and enriches the lives of artists and youth through arts education, mentorship, and cultural/social exchange and awareness.

Julia Murphy

Julia Murphy is 26 years old and has lived in Cleveland her whole life. She is an amateur writer, and this piece started as an entry in a series of writings called "Things I wouldn't actually say."

Diana Sette

Diana Sette is a passionate community cultivator, teacher, gardener, writer, designer, facilitator, and mother. She is the co-founder of Possibilitarian Garden and Possibilitarian Regenerative Community Homestead aka PORCH (www.buckeyeporch.org), and is particularly interested in the intersection of socio-ecological and environmental regeneration. She is a Contributing Writer for *Permaculture Design magazine*. More on Diana at dianasette.wordpress.com.

Shaker Heights High School Ensemble and

Student Group on Race Relations

Founded in 1980 by James Thornton, the Ensemble program at Shaker Heights High School is based in devised theatre and presents new works created in collaboration between students, staff, and guest artists. The Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR) is a SHHS organization of students that promotes positive social relations across all boundaries of difference. *What It's Like*, edited by guest artist Katie Daley, is an excerpt from *Stay Human*, a 2013 theater piece on integration directed by ensemble director Erik Johnson with department chair Christine McBurney. Halle Bauer assisted with all SGORR-Ensemble collaborations.

Kyle Swenson

Kyle Swenson is an award-winning freelance journalist based in Cleveland. A former staff writer at the *Cleveland Scene*, his work has also appeared in the *Village Voice*, *Miami New Times*, *Salon*, and *Reader's Digest*. His forthcoming book on race and wrongful conviction in Cleveland, *Good Kids, Bad City*, will be published by Picador USA in 2017.

Peg Weissbrod

Peg Weissbrod grew up in Cleveland Heights and is a Cleveland Heights High School alum. A former attorney, she is a freelance writer/editor currently directing the Outreach ministry at Forest Hill Church Presbyterian. She is passionate about racial and gender equality and the roles individuals can play in changing the world through personal relationships.

P. Nasib Whitt

P. Nasib Whitt is a native of Cleveland, Ohio, a father, an independent consultant, a photographer, and a long time martial arts practitioner. He is the Principal of Enlightenment Consultant Group, LLC, which serves as a catalyst for transformation for people, organizations and communities to build awareness, increase capacity and have a positive impact. His hope and vision is for everyone to thrive and experience a more humane life, regardless of circumstances.

Ali Znaidi

Ali Znaidi (b.1977) lives in Redeyef, Tunisia. He is the author of several chapbooks, including *Experimental Ruminations* (Fowlpox Press, 2012), *Moon's Cloth Embroidered with Poems* (Origami Poems Project, 2012), *Bye, Donna Summer!* (Fowlpox Press, 2014), *Taste of the Edge* (Kind of a Hurricane Press, 2014), and *Mathemaku x5* (Spacecraft Press, 2015). For more, visit aliznaidi.blogspot.com.

“...you can keep holding your forums every Friday, and sit here, until the City Club starts burning. It’s up to you. I’m not threatening you, but I am telling you that there’s work that needs to be done, and holding forums is not even a good start. Most of you here have the power and have the ability to do way more than what you are doing.”

—Baxter Hill, Congress on Racial Equality, Sep. 16, 1966.

Indeed.

And yet we offer this book as another contribution to the ongoing dialogue we have in our community and nation about race and relationships across racial differences. We do this even though holding forums and, presumably, continuing the dialogue is “not even a good start,” as Hill might see it. But we do it with hope and optimism that we are making progress and ultimately, if incrementally, improving the community.

“We’re having conversations. We’re just having all the wrong ones.”

—Ajah Hales

“Few are guilty for the death of Tamir Rice, but we are all responsible.”

—Reverend Otis Moss II.

“In retrospect, I had bricked together some optimism in defiance of historical precedent and gut. I forgot this was a Cleveland story.”

—Kyle Swenson

“...I realized that I had forgotten that I was the adult, because in that moment, all I could think of was my whiteness.”

—Sarah Marcus



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