Black and White: Race, Culture, and Urban Renewal

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study using ethnographic methods to collect data and critical autoethnography to reflect on my personal history in the light of what I learned about others (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Ellis, 2009; Erickson, 2011; Manning & Adams, 2015; Rennel, 2015). My research focuses on race and culture in relation to perceptions in relationships, community, and education before and after urban renewal.

I present my work in two-manuscripts: *Growing Up White: I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know* and *Gainsboro: It's Just the Way Things Were*. The first portion of the study looks at growing up in a White neighborhood in Roanoke, Virginia, during the early years of integration and the Civil Rights Movement, while being unaware of the existence of another world beyond my own. The second manuscript presents findings from interviews in the corresponding Black community and archival research interrogating systemic issues associated with urban renewal.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the effects of urban renewal on race and culture in a mid-sized southern city. My work focuses on individual perceptions about relationships, community, and education. The first portion of the study looks at growing up in a white neighborhood during the early years of integration and the Civil Rights Movement, while being unaware of the existence of another world beyond this one. The following section presents findings from interviews with residents in the corresponding Black community and research on issues associated with urban renewal.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Tracing the Process

Beginnings

I began my Ph.D. program with the idea that everyone was the same. I thought I lived in a color-blind world where everyone in the United States had the same advantages and opportunities (Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Wildman, 2005). I was certainly aware that I had a comfortable life, but I did not realize the overarching circumstances that helped create this lifestyle (McIntosh, 2015; Noah, 2016). I lived in an upper middle-class neighborhood and attended schools, both public and private, that were largely homogenous.

Although I grew up in the 1960s and 70s, my experiences in a mid-size Southern city were similar to those experienced decades earlier in the segregated South. White privilege was everywhere when I learned to recognize it. The Civil Rights movement had brought integration in some ways, but Black domestic workers and lawn care workers were common in my neighborhood. My Black caregiver came five days a week and both she and her husband helped serve and prepare holiday dinners.

After graduation from college, I was successful teaching in a predominantly Black elementary school in a public housing neighborhood. Many years later, I transitioned to a middle school position in Richmond, Virginia. The middle school student body came from five public housing areas, and all of the students, with the exception of one girl, were Black. I was excited about the opportunity to teach there, and I had a false sense of confidence that I would be successful. I was not, even though I did develop a relationship with a small group of students. During class, students yelled at me and each other, flipped over furniture, got into fights, routinely left the room, and either

ignored me altogether or made disparaging comments. This situation caused me to consider perceptions and culture in relation to attitudes and expectations. I became aware that race was a factor in my experience. As a White woman, I was an outsider in their world.

As I continued reading and taking classes, I became more conscious of White privilege and the effects of culture and experience. I became more aware of systemic racism, dominant culture, and the effects of poverty. In essence, I realized that the privilege I experienced is not always shared by others.

I took an anthropology class where a group of guest panelists talked about urban renewal and growing up in a historic Black neighborhood in my hometown called Gainsboro. As I thought about the information they shared, I realized that a Roanoke existed beyond the White upper middle-class world that had shaped my growing up during segregation. To find that unknown city, I started looking for as much information as I could find about Gainsboro before and after urban renewal. As my research progressed, I became aware that Gainsboro was devastated by urban renewal. My dissertation focuses on the effects of urban renewal on the Gainsboro neighborhood population with regard to education, life experiences, expectations, and attitudes (Anderson & Glass-Coffin; Manning & Adams, 2015).

Methods

To examine these issues, I use a combination of critical autoethnography and critical ethnography. Using my own experience as a reflective lens, I analyze and deconstruct the lived-experiences shared by participants in the study. As we exchange information, this process produces a collaboration where the facets of personal stories

combine to produce meaning and become a tool for future interpretation. During my research, the interviews become conversation and dialogue (Ellis, 2009; Madison, 2018). I use these personal stories, to investigate the role of power and privilege. While using a critical lens to examine my own lived-experience, I become aware of other's stories and the possible conflicts with mine (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Manning & Adams, 2015; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018).

Overarching Objective

I present my study in a two-manuscript format. In manuscript one, *Growing Up White: I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know*, I use critical autoethnography to examine my normalization of White privilege and reflect on my growing understanding about the contrasts between my background and others'. I began to realize that although I consider myself average, my *self* is a combination of inherited culture, distinct experiences, and events that have shaped me (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). I existed as the embodiment of White innocence, in a world that normalized White privilege and systemic racism. I did not realize that my innocence, in a sense, nullified my personal beliefs and made me complicit (DiAngelo, 2018; Dyson, 2017). Although I had a Black caregiver during my childhood, I did not have a clear picture of her life when she went home. I did not understand inequality and the difference in her circumstances and my own in relation to Whiteness. This recognition is the beginning step toward interruption and the process of change. *In Growing Up White: I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know*, I interrogate and deconstruct power and privilege as I compare my life growing up in a

White upper middle-class neighborhood with life in the Gainsboro neighborhood I recently discovered.

In manuscript two, *Gainsboro: It's Just the Way Things Were*, I combine critical autoethnography with critical ethnography to continue my exploration of the intricacies of race. Critical ethnography acknowledges the effects of culture, locality, and life-experience. It stresses subjective interpretation, reflectivity, and value-laden inquiry (Madison, 2018). There is a collaboration between the researcher and the participant (Ellis, 2009; Madison, 2018). Using ethnographic methods, I engage in interviews with participants who have a personal connection to the Gainsboro area of Roanoke. I investigate the lived- experiences, expectations, and attitudes related to the urban renewal project in Gainsboro through the voices of those who lived there and personally experienced urban renewal at some level.

In reporting the findings of my research, participants tell me about positive and negative aspects of life in Gainsboro. They each share an acceptance of circumstances and events as they explain to me, "It's just the way things were." Using critical autoethnography to reflect deeply, I problematize social justice in relation to my own experience in conjunction with the experiences of participants in the Black community (Levitt, 2015). A combination of these methods allows me to politicize and deconstruct the information I gain from dialogue with participants. It enables me to problematize differing views, my own and those of others who lived in the neighborhood, regarding changes in the community population as well as the physical and structural changes (Levitt, 2015; Yarker, 2018).

Complexity

As is evident, race relations in the South have always been complex and hard to understand. Perspectives continue to have a personal and fluid component (Freire, 1970; Tilley-Lubbs, 2018). Growing up Black in the historic Gainsboro neighborhood of Roanoke was very different from my experience growing up White in South Roanoke.

I explore many features of participants' perspectives about the revitalization project using ethnographic methods while realizing there are no absolute answers. My findings are fluid and I continue to generate new questions (Madison, 2018). This work compares and contrasts my view with others' and introduces what I see as new perspectives. Although it is not possible for me to have an authentic understanding of what others remember and share in conversation with me, I have attempted to tell their stories and my own in a critically reflexive way.

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Chapter 2: Growing Up White: I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know

The first revolution is when you change your mind about how you look at things and see that there might be another way to look at it that you have not been shown.

Gilbert Scott-Heron

Figure 1. Gilbert Scott-Heron. (Public access on the internet)

Abstract

This study focuses on my experience growing up White in Roanoke, Virginia, a mid-size Southern city, in an upper middle class, all-White neighborhood. I was not aware that a Black neighborhood, in a sense a separate world, existed beyond my own in during segregation and the early days of integration. In creating this document, I use critical autoethnography to examine and reflect on liminal moments that have shaped my sense of cultural awareness. I problematize and deconstruct my personal history and my reactions to others through a critical lens.

Keywords: Whiteness, race, education, culture

In the United States today, whiteness is the dominant culture (Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Rennel, 2015; Wildman, 2005). Culture is evidenced by socioeconomic status, education, material consumption, and activities (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Lensmire, 2017; McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017). Modern interpretations of culture see its development as a collective process, a gathering of experience and interpretational mindsets (Rud & Garrison, 2012; Withers, 2017). "Culture is a "tool kit" of sorts that offers symbols, stories, rituals, and world views which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems" (Withers, 2017, p. 3). In terms of discourse and ideology, "ideas, norms, narratives, and values" are instrumental in maintaining the systemic dominance of whites (Withers, 2017, p. 4). These culturally shared outlooks and beliefs represent common experience and foundational framework. Culture justifies racial advantage and inequality (Withers, 2017). Attitudes and beliefs about others develop according to what has been normalized in our lives. White culture promotes and maintains the existence of systemic racism. My personal beliefs do not support racism and inequality. White innocence prompts me to deny responsibility and exhibit defense posturing. I have not personally done anything to harm others, but I have also not done anything to interrupt the system (DiAngelo, 2018; Dyson, 2017).

We determine our identity and associate with cultures through family stories and childhood experiences. We create a Self that is constructed on the understanding and interpretation of our experience (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). This paper examines my own experience growing up in the culture of Southern whiteness and my heightened awareness of cultures, in what I previously thought was a post-racial environment. Increasing exposure to others and differing circumstances has prompted me to reevaluate my own feelings. In this paper, I am deconstructing the way race was normalized for me. I present vignettes that illustrate those growing-up years in a privileged

white environment, using each vignette as a liminal moment in my racially aware growth. Since race permeates our world, I will use popular culture in books and film to interpret my life experiences alongside the arsenal of scholarly literature (Manning & Adams, 2015).

Life Through a Viewfinder

There is a children's toy called a viewfinder. You look into it and see a series of slides embedded into a cardboard wheel. The wheels have many different stories and themes. Culture is like this; an individual life is like this. The view you see, i.e. your individual choices, goals, and perceived possibilities is constructed under the cloak of race and culture. Interpretations are specific to your individual experiences and collective background (Smith, 2017; Souza, 2013). I believe that my own worldview "has been constructed by all the experiences I have had, the books I have read, the places I have visited, the family that has loved me, the friends who have spent time with me …. Depending on which way I turn the prism, and how the light enters, I am the embodiment of all that went before on the path that has become my life …" (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, p. 16).

Beliefs and ideologies form with exposure to lived experiences. Culture is a response to daily occurrences and evolves during our lives as it acquires organization and meaning. Events are verbalized and passed down in families and communities. Children reflect the ideas and behaviors of cultural norms at an early age and having this cultural knowledge, or paradigm, helps to structure and define their daily existence (Smith, 2017; Souza, 2013; Vance, 2016). In other words, this knowledge creates a cultural Self (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018).

Growing up as a White child in a mid-sized Southern city, I never questioned the perks and privileges of my existence (McIntosh, 2015; Noah, 2016). I routinely checked the box for

“Caucasian” or “White” on school forms without really thinking about it (Bauman, 2011). I grew up with a colorblind mentality thinking that I lived in a post-racial environment (Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Wildman, 2005). I thought I treated everyone the same. I was previously unaware of the effects of "color” and I did not realize that race affects almost everything (Banks, 2008; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1889).

In my childhood world, I lived in the “invisible norm, the unraced center of a racialized world” (Rennel, 2015; Wray & Newitz, 1997, p. 3). In comparison to this situation, all other racializations are deviant (Stanley, 2013). I was not conscious of race and the concept that White culture provides the systemic dominance that categorizes all racial constructs (Dyer, 2005; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Stanley, 2013; Tilley-Lubbs, 2018; Wildman, 2005). According to Wray and Newitz (1997), whiteness is the benchmark that defines others. Against this standard, all nonwhites are judged as unworthy. My cultivation and upbringing within the conclave of whiteness made me practically unaware that whiteness is a racial distinction. Since I was a part of this invisible standard, I did not know it existed. The very fact that White privilege routinely goes unnoticed, increases its power and makes it uncomfortable to talk about (Dyer, 2005).

Transformative Education

Being a doctoral student, following my curriculum has been transformative (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). In retrospect, I must have known that everyone was not exactly like me, but I was not conscious of others’ less equitable circumstances (Gyasi, 2016; Kozol, 2012). My program of study has led me to read more about critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), borderlands, and hybridity, (Anzaldúa, 2012), and the aftermath of colonialism and assimilated cultures (Giroux, 1992; Withers, 2017). As I took more classes and read more literature, I developed a heightened

awareness and a more discerning eye. My awareness of dominance and oppression is and has always been a fluid commodity (Freire, 1970; Tilley-Lubbs, 2018). I learned the meanings of hegemony and dominant culture (McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Wildman, 2005), and I began to realize that others do not share my sense of confidence and affirmation in life skills and social interactions. In short, I discovered racism and otherness in America that have always existed. I began to develop critical consciousness (Freire, 1970; McIntosh, 1889, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2018) of my own Whiteness and privilege. My continuing education forced me to see things from a different view. Black and White expanded to include other groups and populations I was not aware of. Evidence of privilege and hegemony (McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Wildman, 2005) were common when I began to recognize them.

We all have a *single story* (Adichie, 2009), written by our own lived experience. My story reflects my experience growing up White. The challenge is to look beyond this story and find a more inclusive point of view. Small bits of additional information greatly influence perspective (Adichie, 2009). The ability to be open to new discoveries can transform previous interpretations.

Finding My Lens

My White skin insures I am welcomed into stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues. I am generally regarded as trustworthy (Dyer, 2005; McIntosh, 1989; Wray & Newitz, 1997). Experience, common ideology, and material consumption are all components of racial constructs. I have come to believe that economic status, as well as skin color, contributes to the social construct of race (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Thornhill, 2017; Withers, 2017). I am approaching my study from a reflexive point of view using critical autoethnography (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017) and I fully acknowledge that I have grown up with a

background of White privilege. I now realize that others have been marginalized and did not experience life, in American society, in the same way I did. I am increasingly aware of my words, actions, and responses to racial situations. In addition, I am aware that life in my locality, in Virginia, produces a different set of experiences from that of childhood in other parts of the United States such as the north, the mid-west, the far west, or a large urban area such as New York City or Chicago (Madison, 2018; Steinberg, 2012).

When I began my program of study, I thought I knew about culture and American society. I thought all Americans shared a common history and culture, that everyone had equal opportunities and the same access to education and success. I discovered that what I knew was White history. I had not considered the idea that there were other histories, histories of other cultures and ethnicities that were unknown to me (Dyson, 2017). As I continued to read and take classes in my program, I learned more about what I did not know: that America's culture is not a single entity, but a combination of diverse circumstances. These cultures are a blend of family background and lived experience, of social constructs created and reimagined within our society. Culture can be blatantly observable as well as invisible, something socially prominent or hidden away in the layers of the mind. Your culture, your essence of Self, is the same when you are an adolescent as it is when you become an adult (Montgomery, 2016). Your perception and understanding may, or may not, change with exposure to new people and new experiences (Dillard, 2016; Ellis & Rawicki, 2019).

Seeing a Different View

The undergraduate college I attended was a historic, mostly white girls' school in a bucolic setting. Students here enjoyed both privilege and abundance. They did not appear oppressed. In fact, for many years this school formed the minds, social standards, dress code, and expectations of generations of southern women. It was very important to fit in and to find

approval at both this women's school and at neighboring single sex male schools. Failure to comply with accepted standards produced social consequences similar to shunning. For me, having friends and being a part of the group, were paramount to my feelings of success and wellbeing (Ellis, 2009).

When I began my first semester, I received a school pamphlet suggesting appropriate clothing choices and where to buy them. These items included gumshoes, L. L. Bean moccasins, Fair lsle and monogrammed crewneck sweaters, wide wale corduroy pants and skirts, and L. L. Bean wraparound skirts, the kind with the buttons.

It was important to wear the right clothing, have the right jewelry, drive the right car, and go to all of the right places and parties. Having anything monogrammed made it more desirable and added a level of panache. All of the clothing items my classmates and I wore, and many social behaviors were later mentioned in the book, *The Preppy Handbook* by Lisa Birnbach. Amazon describes the book as, "A facetious guide to emulating the look, speech patterns, thinking, and lifestyle of those who attend prep schools and are a part of high society." My friends and I all had a copy of this book and even the poster associated with it. The book is written in a humorous style. We laughed when we read it, but there was truth in the stereotypes and we wanted to make sure we were doing what was expected and living within the margins of the upper class of society. We thought of ourselves as *normal* people, but in fact, we had enormous privilege. Like most people in our situation, we lived our "lives, on upper levels, not stopping to peer underneath" (Gyasi, 2016, p. 298).There were sections in the book about my school as well as other private women's colleges and men's schools in Virginia.

One of the annual traditions at my college was a party where students dressed as their roommate's "secret desire." Costumes depicted what, or who, you thought your roommate

wanted to be. My roommate dressed up as Jackie Kennedy. One of the Black students dressed as a white girl. When I first saw her, I wondered why she was wearing what I considered regular clothes: wide whale pink corduroy pants, a monogrammed crew neck sweater, and Pappagallo shoes. I overheard that she had dressed as a White girl. At the time, I dismissed it as odd. Now, in reflection, I see how it must have been to be part of a small population on campus (Gyasi, 2016; Mbue, 2017). I wonder if she chose the White girl costume to ridicule White girls, or if she was implying that her roommate wanted to be White. There is no way to be sure.

There were no Black students in my classes and the small number of Black students on campus stayed in a group of their own. They did not live in the dorms, but chose housing where they could stay together in a smaller school owned property. They did not come to the fraternity parties I went to and I was not aware of them in the dining hall. I did not know anything about them until the night of the dress-up party. Their world was invisible to me and other White students. (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Looking back, I acknowledge what I have come to know as White fragility and invisible racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018; Dyson, 2017). It is another facet of dominant culture that, at the time, I was not aware of. I lived my collegiate life in a White bubble, unaware of students different from myself (Gyasi, 2016; Mbue, 2017).

The View of Graduate School

A Black American classmate, Susan, in my school cohort often refers to "my people" during our class discussions. When she uses this term, it is racialized. She is referring to Black people in an all-inclusive way. When I talk about my people, I am referring to either my immediate family or to all Americans. Susan and I have grown up in the southern region of the United States, have teaching backgrounds in public schools, and are Ph. D. students at the same university. Both of us continue to live in the south. She has told me that her father is a medical

doctor. My father did not attend graduate school. Even though we share similarities, we have different cultural norms and different societal expectations. She feels that "rich White people" want to hold down black people and keep them in poverty, and that this mode of thought is a systemic reality in America. Clearly, in educational pursuits and in a socioeconomic sense, her family beat the system. However, her attitude about success, opportunities, and potential for all Americans does not reflect this achievement. I believe this is because of lived-experience and familial expectations based on past personal history (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017).

Susan told me that her grandmother had very light skin and that her great-grandmother tried to discourage her from marrying her grandfather, a man with much darker skin. However, they married and have been together for many years. She acknowledges that her great-grandmother was trying to help construct the best life possible for her daughter, Susan's grandmother, but it also makes her angry. In the past, and in some families today, this situation might be mirrored in a White family if a daughter wanted to marry outside of racial or religious boundaries.

Susan also told me about a family experience that involves racial profiling. Her father bought an expensive European car when his medical career became successful. Once he was stopped and detained by the police, because they thought he had stolen the car. In the mind of these policemen, a young Black man would not be able to buy this type of luxury item. Her father was not physically harmed, but memories of this incident have left her with residual anger. More recently when she was visiting family, who live in a mostly White neighborhood, she was giving out candy for Halloween. She said the White children in the neighborhood were hesitant to come to their house and she went out in the yard trying to persuade them to take candy from her. She has a feeling of otherness and a lack of acceptance in the community, much like the

Black students at my college, because of these experiences. She does not seem to feel the sense of inclusion and Americanism that I do. White fragility causes me to be surprised at her experience and exposes racism in what I thought was a colorblind world (DiAngelo, 2018).

The Outsider View

I have sometimes felt like an outsider because of age and race. When I taught middle school in Richmond, Virginia, I worked in a school populated by five public housing communities. All of the students, except one, and most of the teachers were Black. Some teachers were older, but most were young and recent college graduates. I had been very successful as a third grade teacher, in a similar setting, and I was confident that I could do well here. I was wrong. My classroom was like a revolving door. I taught approximately 125 students a day and large class sizes prevented me from developing a personal relationship with most, but not all, of the students. Some of the other teachers were friendly and supportive; others were not. Students and colleagues saw me as White, old, and a definite outsider. This was the first time that race became a negative factor for me.

This school was re-constituted by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) because of failing test scores and 70% of the faculty had been replaced. The building was only two years old, but it did not look clean and the furniture and equipment were damaged by student vandalism. Socialization and social constructs make students willing to accept traditional ideas about schooling, i.e. rules, methods, and testing (Horton, 1998). Did the background knowledge of these students support the traditional education process? One third of the students in the school were special education students and had an Individualized Education Program (IEP). I knew this when I accepted the job. I was told that I would have a special education teacher as a co-teacher in my classes, and that students who qualified would have individual aides and

specialized equipment. In fact, this was not true. Rules and regulations governing the process of special education were blatantly ignored. I was surprised by the disregard for special education laws and I kept a journal to document what was going on. During the time I taught at the school, I had a certified special education co-teacher in class with me seven times. The curriculum was not modified, IEPs were not consulted, and testing modifications were ignored. On a regular day, I had classes with as many as thirty students and no co-teacher or instructional aide. This is categorically illegal according to the VDOE and federal laws. Would this situation have occurred in a school with a higher socioeconomic status and a predominantly White student population? Would more educated parents have been more concerned about classroom norms?

One of my students was expelled from school for snorting peppermint Altoids, a brand of breath mints. He crushed the mints into a white powder and snorted them up his nose. There was no explanation made to staff, but the rational was that his behavior mimicked drug use. Apparently, the year before, students had done something similar with powdered Kool-Aid mix they carried in Ziploc bags. This behavior in a White, upper-class neighborhood school would probably have resulted in a class or individual session with the guidance counselor, not expulsion.

Despite behavior problems, I did my best to be a good teacher, according to what I had learned in my teacher education classes and my prior experience as an elementary teacher (Hurd, 2012). I tried to connect knowledge and theory (Horton & Freire, 1990). I kept trying to tweak my lesson plans to make them more engaging, collaborative, and entertaining (Arums et al, 2013; Gladwell, 2006, 2008). I was convinced then, and now, that the situation would improve with smaller classes, individual attention, and multi-modal activities (Fleming & Mills, 1992; VARK). I talked with some parents and grandmothers and saw some small improvements; small

steps toward a larger goal. In a quixotic way, I continue to interrogate the situation and problematize better ways of making my lesson plans. I read that minority students prefer teachers who share information about their own lives and I tried to do that (Chávez, 2015; Chávez et al, 2012). Was there something different I could have done? Was there something I could have done better? Was it just because I was White or older?

The Art Connection

During my time in Richmond, I often went to exhibits at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA). The museum was near my house and I enjoyed the walk, as well as the art. One of these exhibits featured Kehinde Wiley, a Black portrait painter, who had been recently commissioned to paint a portrait of President Obama. Most of Wiley's work depicts Black people he met on the streets, many from Harlem, but he has also painted some Black celebrities. He says that he wants to give dignity and respect to those who often do not have it. Many of Wiley's paintings have taken inspiration from Renaissance and Baroque works. In this exhibit, there was a painting of Michael Jackson, riding a white horse, mirroring what was originally a portrait of Napoleon. Wiley retains the original composition of classic paintings, but changes the portraiture to modern Black subjects, often adding colorful, detailed backgrounds. Commenting on his work, Wiley says, "It's about pointing to empire and control and domination and misogyny and all those social ills in the work, but it's not necessarily taking a position (Beam, 2012, p.3). Is it really not taking a position when he includes violent racial images in his work? One of the subjects he portrays is *Judith Beheading Holofernes,* modeled on the Caravaggio and Gentileschi paintings from the late 1500s. I was familiar with this subject because of art history classes and a paper I had written on Gentileschi. In the traditional story, Judith, a Hebrew widow, seduces Holofernes, the enemy Syrian king, and cuts off his head when he comes to her tent. In

Wiley's two versions, a Black *Judith* has beheaded a White woman. I initially found this interpretation offensive. I am sure, if the roles in the painting were reversed, there would have been controversy and media attention. I was offended because I saw the painting as racially threatening. Initially, I suspected that my reaction to these paintings was similar to what Black people feel when they see a Confederate flag or someone dressed in a Klu Klux Clan uniform. In reflection, I see that my defensive response was actually an example of White fragility (Dyson, 2017). My defensive White posture to a single exposure of what I saw as a racial threat trivializes generations of racial violence endured by Black Americans (DiAngelo, 2018).

As Wiley said, his art exposes social ills. At the time, I saw this interpretation as a direct affront, an attempt to antagonize and alienate, as opposed to using the Arts to promote unity and bring people together. I have read that the painting is a symbolic enactment of banishing White supremacy. According to Wiley, "It's sort of a play on the "kill Whitey' thing" (Beam, 2012, p.1). His comment refers to a video clip made by comedian Chris Farley. In this context, "Whitey" is synonymous with White dominance and the "establishment." Is Wiley's work really not expressing an opinion?

Although there are many Renaissance or Baroque paintings that portray historic battles and violent themes, I am not aware of any that specifically show physical mistreatment of Black slaves. The institution of slavery in Europe has a prolonged history but most slaves were White. European slaves were often freed, after a period of service, and allowed to open businesses (Cotter, 2012). Dark-skinned Moors were enslaved, as a result of being captured in battles, from approximately 1480-1610. During this period, decorative objects such as lamps and door pulls were fashioned as African heads. This makes me think of the Aunt Jemima syrup bottle, cookie jars, and yard ornaments representing Black people. How does this make Black people feel?

Renaissance paintings routinely portrayed dark-skinned figures as servants or slaves, but some showed Black people as aristocrats and kings (Cotter, 2012; Hue, 2013). How does Wiley see these paintings? I have also seen several folk art paintings showing different scenarios of slavery. Would a Black person, seeing these pieces have a reaction comparable to mine when I saw Wiley's painting? Would someone whose family had experienced racial violence better understand Wiley's composition?

My History

In my background, I was not exposed to a mindset of violence and hate. These were not normal topics in my world. I was instructed to want the best for everyone and my initial outlook, even now, is that others do too. Direct knowledge, especially familial association, with racial hate, injustice, and resentment could prohibit this expectation.

My discussions with my classmate, the VMFA exhibit, and my experience teaching at a Black secondary school helped to make me aware that only White people think race is not a constant factor (Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Wildman, 2005). *Whiteness* is, and always has been, the systemic dominant culture (Dyer, 2005; Withers, 2017; Wray & Newitz, 1997). An undefined "man" is a White man, as opposed to a "Black man" or "Asian man" (Dyer, 2005). Whiteness is pervasive and in that way defines what is unnamed (Dyer, 2005; Tilley-Lubbs, 2018; Withers, 2017; Wray & Newitz, 1997).

Often, I am surprised and a little hurt when I encounter otherness and racially offensive behavior. In my mind, I have not personally done anything to create hardship for others (Hughey, 2012), but in reality, my existence in White culture has unintentionally caused oppression. Experiences of othering, profiling, and a lack of acceptance in White dominant culture are common in the

lives of those who do not have white skin. This is manifested in college acceptances, job applications, and social invitations, to name a few (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017). My classmate's great-grandmother recognized this many years ago when she advised her daughter to marry a man with lighter skin.

I grew up in a homogeneous world with the exception of the Black family that worked at our house. These circumstances formed my lens and my attitudes (Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017; Wildman, 2005). My babysitter carried pictures of her own children and of me in her wallet. There were six Black faces and then my White face. Before she came to stay with me, her mother came to our house when we lived on a farm. I always looked forward to seeing her. I helped her dust the legs of the furniture so that we had time to go on walks and play games together. I was not aware that I was doing her job, but rather that I could help her to finish early so we could go outside. My positive experiences at home caused me to expect acceptance and amiability between both Black and White people (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017). It was my single story; I had no comparative exposure (Adichie, 2009).

Figure 2. Me on Easter Sunday.

(family photo)

Figure 3. My Caregiver, Queenie.

(family photo)

When I attended high school, a small White private school, there were two Black men who took care of maintenance at the school. They also did yardwork, served lunch and bar-b-qued a pig for our annual "Fun Day," a fundraising celebration. I liked these men, they were friendly and kind to students, but in retrospect, even though they were adults they held a lower status than the White teachers and administrators. From my perspective, they did not command the same power and respect as the White faculty and staff. Were they naturally good natured or did they exhibit this demeanor in order to retain their jobs? Was this a way to combat sexual stereotypes about Black men? I was aware of hierarchy and socioeconomic status at the time, but not in the way that I am now (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Hughey, 2012). Now as I question the power dynamic, the existence of these kinds of jobs, with no chance of advancement, becomes an extension of White privilege. I think undercurrents of racism, a lack of formal education, and a combination of cultural factors produced this situation.

Later, as an adult, I remember two Black men who regularly worked as bartenders for cocktail parties in my neighborhood. They had business cards and set their own pay rate. Like the men at my school, they acted with a cheerful demeanor (Hughey, 2012). Maybe they were simply good-natured, or maybe they acted this way to get more work. Probably friendly banter with party guests brought in higher tips, a way to maximize opportunity. One of the men prevented a fire at my house when he noticed that a chafing dish on the dining room table was flaming. He knew and I did not, that burning lighting fluid, instead of denatured alcohol, would cause this kind of fire. He reacted quickly and prevented damage to my house.

Recently at a country club event, I noticed that the majority of the serving staff was Black. Now Black people are welcomed as members, but when I was growing up they were not. In the past, neither were my friends who were Greek and Jewish allowed to join the country club. Now, my Greek friends' father, a retired dentist, plays golf there almost every day. I wasn't aware of it in the past, but I think growing up in the South with continued exposure to Black people in service related positions has caused me to view this as normal. Now I see that this is an example of subjugation and racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Hughey, 2015; Withers, 2017). Even so, service industry jobs, for both Black and White people with little education, are common and possibly could be called the norm. What is familiar becomes normal through continued exposure. Common experiences, everyday events, and liminal moments combine to form the filter for what we see as potential goals, and how we make sense of the world around us (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; McIntosh, 1993; Rennel, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017).

Figure 4. Wedding Reception at Roanoke Country Club. (family photo)

The View of Experience

In terms of lived-experience, you cannot erase a frightening, threatening incident or its effects on your outlook and expectations. In this way experiences become defining moments and cultural modifiers (Rud & Garrison, 2012). This is evidenced by my classmate's racially motivated family stories, and for me, by a defining moment during my teen-age years. When I was growing up, my parents were often renovating and adding on to our house. One contractor, a heavyset 50 something White man, completed most of these projects. He was in our household, as a paid employee, almost constantly for a period of five to ten years and I was used to seeing him around the house. In my experience, he had been polite and I knew my parents liked him and thought he did good work. One day when I was a teenager, a day like any other, but not, this man

cornered me in the kitchen. He started saying things with a sexual undertone and as I instinctively backed away, he walked forward until I was pressed against the kitchen cabinets. He continued to talk and I, having difficulty even processing the reality of what was happening, tried to think of a way I could escape. There was nowhere for me to go because I was backed into a corner. He stepped forward again reaching his hand toward me and we both heard the sound of the front door opening. My mother was home. She called out to tell me she was home, and he ran quickly down the basement steps and out the door. He never came back again and never collected a paycheck for this particular project. I believe he thought I would tell my mother about his behavior and that he was worried about the consequences. For me, the experience had a surreal quality. The idea that this man who had been a presence in our house for years would say and do what he did was unfathomable. I told my mother what had happened and she decided to take the rest of the day off from work. She said, "Let's go shopping," and we did not speak of the incident again. Denial was the default method of operation in my childhood world (Smith, 2017). We always acted "as if", in other words we acted as if everything was just right even when it was not. If I could actually keep something out of my mind, denial worked. If I did not think about it or talk about it, it is like it never happened. When something was so upsetting I could not stop thinking about it, denial was not the best method.

My father encountered the man not long afterward at the hardware store. When he saw Daddy, he ran again. This time, down the steps and out the back door of the store. My father told my mother, "There must have been something to what Ann was saying. When he saw me he took off in a hurry." After seeing this man at the hardware store, my story became believable. Since the man ran away, it confirmed that I was not mistaken about his intent. If this man had been Black, would the situation have unfolded differently? Would sexual stereotypes about Black men

and White women have affected the attitude of disbelief reflected by my parents and others? I do not think so, but it remains an unknown. During that time and in my neighborhood, Black men were hired for catering, yardwork, and odd jobs, but not as builders and contractors.

In a sense, in everyone else's mind the episode I experienced never happened, but in my mind, it created a sense of fear and distrust. My viewpoint was permanently altered. I questioned what, if anything, I might have done to cause this and I had an irrational fear that this man would come back. I gained the knowledge that I was vulnerable even in my own home and I was afraid. It was like nothing and everything happened. My fear and lived experience altered and created a different set of perceptions, reactions, and expectations. In a similar way, the racially motivated events in my classmate's background influenced her thoughts.

My White innocence, my lack of awareness, of the type of events she experienced is like the denial I encountered. It functions as a tool, an extension of privilege, capable of dismissing troubling events (DiAngelo, 2018; Dyson, 2017). In reality, threatening experience, a feeling of danger, stories of racial violence or potential violence influence current and future expectations. The interpretation of situational circumstances, the processing of the meaning, and the intent of vocabulary are founded on culture and prior experience (Rud & Garrison, 2012; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017).

Cultural Salience

My parents talked to me a lot about school and education. They expected me to follow rules and do well in school. My father checked my math homework to make sure I had completed everything correctly. My mother often voiced unnamed threats that I had better do well. She would always say, "Do your best."

When I was in seventh grade, the city built a new middle school. I now know that this middle school replaced, and combined populations from, older schools. At the time, I was not aware in the way that I am now. From a White middle class perspective, I only heard and read statements from white voices (Adichie, 2009). The schools that were closed in the 1970s were situated in low-income areas and had a higher percentage of Black students. Closing and repurposing these schools made other schools more integrated, which I believe was intentional, and provided space for new public buildings like the Civic Center and the Poff building, which housed government offices. I had not gone to school with Black children before, because elementary schools were smaller neighborhood schools and no Black families lived in my neighborhood. The new school opened in the middle of the year, after winter break, and there was some confusion and disorganization with the change. My parents did not object to having Black students at my school, but I they were concerned that negative race relations would affect the atmosphere and quality of the school. I was not involved, but in fact there were fights and schools would sometimes close for several days.

At the end of the first reporting period, my mother went for a conference with my algebra teacher. She did not understand why there was no math homework. She worked as an accountant, before the era of computers, and she thought it was not possible be learn math without practice. The teacher said, “We can’t give homework, no one would do it.” He went on to say that there was no way to enforce rules if students did not do their assignments because most students rode buses and could not stay after school. After the conference, my parents decided to send me to a local day school the next year. I knew that they made some personal sacrifices to pay my tuition because they thought school was so important.

When I first begin attending private school, I became aware that other students had a more affluent lifestyle. They had a higher salience of status (Rennel, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017): vacation houses, status cars, and high-priced brands of clothing and material processions. They traveled often to Europe and faraway places. I too had nice things, but not in the abundance that they enjoyed. I felt "less than," and I wanted to be like them (Ellis, 2009). I knew that I had privilege, but I wanted more I was a newcomer and I wanted to do the things I saw others doing. I wanted the material items they had. Rather than being angry that they had more privilege, I wanted to emulate them and become like they were. Reflecting on these feelings now, I must have thought this was possible, and possibly that feeling of potential and opportunity prevented anger.

There was a large group of Jewish students and one Black student at the school. Jewish students were in classes throughout the school and the Black student was in the lower school, or the elementary grades. Her father was a popular caterer. I had no contact with her, because she was so much younger. There were no rules prohibiting students of any ethnicity, but I do not know what she experienced. Did she feel excluded and ignored like the Black students at my college? Was she included in birthday parties? Did her family go on vacations like other students? Now, the school is much more diverse, both racially and in religious preferences, but still the student body comes from a privileged background. Does this mean the students are more integrated socially? Does similar socioeconomic status help diverse students to be accepted socially?

Self-Reflection

I continue to interrogate my own perspectives on race and the cultural markers present in me. I prided myself on being colorblind (Flagg, 1993; McIntosh, 1989; Wildman, 2005). In fact,

race and its accompanying culture are ever-present and powerful forces (Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Only those like me who are entrenched in dominant culture are colorblind (Flagg, 1993). My feelings and notions of acceptance, freedom to move and prosper in society, personal goals and expectations, and the development of self-esteem are all connected to race and culture (McIntosh, 1989; Souza, 2013). Previously, when I saw young Black men on television stopped and harassed by police, I thought this was a fictional creation. I did not understand the anger and violent reactions I saw. Now I understand that this racial profiling, like what happened to my classmate's father, is common and that fictional television programs about Black culture are based on common occurrences.

My previous ideas about race and my comfort level in an interracial environment are directly related to growing up with Black people who worked in my household. I existed in a sheltered world, and it was normal for me to see "help" in my house and when I went to visit friends. In the movie *The Help*, Skeeter, the protagonist, writes a book to improve the lives of Black domestic help. This echoes the White savior theme, implying that Black people need an idealized White defender to correct their problems (Hughey, 2012). In my world, like in the movie, most employees were paid a daily wage and they came and went in the morning and late afternoon. Some actually lived in the basement and were always present. Sometimes extra help came for parties, holiday dinners, and special occasions. Sometimes Black men came routinely to do yardwork. This is not a common occurrence now, but still exists in some cases. Now, domestic help and landscape workers are often white and Latino. When I was growing up, they were almost always black.

Figure 5. Baby with Caregiver.

(family photo)

Figure 6. Domestic Worker in the Kitchen.

(family photo)

Final Thoughts

I see ethnography and autoethnography as a story, my own and others'. It may be an individual story, a collaborative story, or a community experience. As a method, critical autoethnography permits me to tell my story and how it is relevant to social and political issues (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). I am able to use myself as a lens to explain a broader culture, by reflecting on liminal moments, and to understand myself through the lens of others (Ellis et al, 2011; Ernst & Vallack, 2015). My culture is rooted in western democratic ideology and the tradition of individual freedom. Knowledge has been passed down to me from family, extended family, and personal experience (Rud & Garrison, 2012; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). I understand that no experience or observation is solely objective and that both subjective and objective reactions form in connection with experience (Ellis et al, 2011; Gonzalez, 2000). However, I feel free to choose and alter my perspectives and opinions. This likely comes from my background in dominant culture and possibly because of my age. My beliefs and epistemology are capable of reformation through critical reflection on the lived-experience of others and myself (Gonzalez, 2000; Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017).

I continue to question and problematize my feelings in an effort to redefine a cultural or experiential basis (Madison, 2018). Why do I think certain thoughts about others and their intent? Why was I offended by Wiley's interpretation of *Judith and Holofernes*? Was it my own reaction, or was it a result of something a friend, family member, or teacher, had once told me? Does familiarity create understanding and acceptance? Using a critical lens and a prismatic view, I want to "consider my own history in terms of social /cultural/economic capital to find a clearer understanding" (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, p. 70).

I began this paper with the realization that I belong to the dominant culture. In some ways, I have always known that I had advantages, but I was not really aware of how White innocence and the power and privilege that comes from being White affect others (Dyson, 2017; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017). As I continue to integrate the literature with my own experiences, I understand in new and different ways how past events and liminal moments have influenced my understanding and expectations (Ellis & Adams, 2014). When I consider and deconstruct what was normalized for me, my process generates more questions and multifaceted views (Madison, 2018). I realize my own White fragility causes me to make comparisons of false equivalency and creates a defensive White posture (DiAngelo, 2018; Dyson, 2017). What I have is only a beginning knowledge that underscores how much more I need to read and learn.

Figure 7. Grandmother with Roxie. (personal photo)

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Chapter 3: Gainsboro: “It’s Just the Way Things Were”

Abstract

In this study I combine critical autoethnography and critical ethnography to continue my exploration of the complexities of race. Using a critical lens, I interrogate systemic circumstances that shaped the path of urban renewal in a mid-sized southern city. I present findings from interviews with participants who share familial and cultural connections as well as archival research. From a Black perspective, urban renewal created destruction and devastation, but the White community viewed these developments as civic progress.

My research stresses subjective interpretation and acknowledges the effects of culture, locality, and lived-experience. In reporting the findings, participants tell me about positive and negative aspects of life in the Black community both before and after urban renewal. Using critical autoethnography to reflect deeply, I problematize social justice in relation to my own experience in conjunction with the experiences of participants in the Black community (Levitt, 2015).

Keywords: Whiteness, race, education, culture, segregation, integration, critical autoethnography

It was a late fall day. The leaves were gone and the trees were bare. I was looking through a seventh floor plate glass window. Despite the smudges on the window, the view was memorable. St Andrew's Catholic Church, modeled after European cathedrals, a scattering of houses and other buildings, and empty lots. Members of our graduate level anthropology class were attending a special off-campus session in the Higher Education Center in downtown Roanoke, Virginia. As the graduate teaching assistant of the professor, I had set up a guest panel of three people to discuss the impact of urban renewal on the Black community in what is now called Historic Gainsboro. All of the panel participants filled significant roles in the community. Mary Bishop, a White journalist retired from the local newspaper, *The Roanoke Times*, had done extensive research in the 1990s about Gainsboro. Richard Chub, a retired Black educator and former school principal, grew up in Gainsboro. He is a neighborhood activist, angry about the results of urban renewal. The third panelist, Jordan Bell, is a younger Black man, who is in the process of constructing a documentary film about Gainsboro. Like Mr. Chub, Jordan has family history in the Gainsboro area. He knows the stories of those who lived in Gainsboro before the changes. I grew up in Roanoke, in an all-White area, and I had known nothing about Gainsboro until that afternoon.

Jordan took advantage of the seventh floor window, overlooking the Gainsboro neighborhood, to point out changes that had occurred during urban renewal. He talked about the Claytor family and their 23-room house that once stood on one of the vacant lots. He mentioned the First Baptist Church situated on the corner, across from the house. Both properties had burned down. He talked about Black business owners whose stores, restaurants, and offices were gone. Richard Chub brought up Black schools, closed and

demolished, or repurposed, and families who had lost their homes. My interest was piqued and I began to imagine a different view of Gainsboro – as a community with open restaurants and businesses, people moving on the streets, inhabited houses, children playing outside, I wanted to know more about the people who had lived there, what happened, and the way things used to be.

Figure 8. Claytor Family Portrait, 1927-28. (Gainsboro Public Library)

Following Up

As I thought about all I had heard from the panelists, and what I had seen through the seventh floor window, I developed an overarching objective. I realized that a Roanoke existed beyond the White upper middle class world that had shaped my growing up. To find that city that has previously been unknown to me, I started looking for as much information as I could find about Gainsboro before and after urban renewal. I searched for information detailing property changes in the Virginia Room and at the Gainsboro branch of the Roanoke Public Library in order to better understand this period in Roanoke. I examined city records and maps and reviewed newspaper articles on the subject (Denzin, 2009, 2013; Douglas & Carless, 2013; Madison, 2018). I found tangible proof that verified the information from my class. There were 900 homes, 12 churches, and 165 businesses in the Gainsboro area in 1950 (Bishop, 1995). In 1995, 190 older houses remained and many were vacant. Redeveloped lots held 79 newer ranch houses, some duplexes, and one office building (Bishop, 1995). In addition, there were acres of unkempt weedy areas (Bishop, 1995). Currently, over half of the land in Gainsboro is vacant (www.roanokecity.gov). Urban renewal, a result of the Housing Act of 1949, initially promised improved circumstances for those living in “squalor” (Horton & Freire, 1990; Park, 2018). In 1955, Roanoke City classified Gainsboro as “blighted” and declared eminent domain over the entire area (Park, 2018). During revitalization, community landmarks and businesses were destroyed, either by demolition, or by the fact that the community members who supported them had moved away. The city directory listed families both by name and by profession. It was a time when, generally speaking, the professional jobholders and business owners were men, but the numbers

of families with wage earners were high. The small Black community, on paper, appeared to be thriving.

Using these documents as a guide, I engaged in a self-guided walking tour through areas of the Gainsboro neighborhood (Horton & Freire, 1990). I read historic markers and looked at the remaining buildings, always aware that my own subjectivity and my place within White privilege colors my understanding and interpretation (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Madison, 2018; Manning & Adams, 2015; Steinberg & Cannella, 2012; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). I wanted to reflect on my own ontology and epistemology in relation to that of Gainsboro's Black residents. I wanted to investigate the ideas and experiences of those accustomed to a different habitus as well as to deconstruct and problematize my own racial lived-experiences (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). I found a plethora of contrasts and conflicting information.

Figure 9. 125 Gilmer St., NW (constructed pre-1880) in Gainsboro.

(personal photo)

Comparing Cultures

I grew up in a White upper middle class neighborhood called South Roanoke. There was a mix of older and newer homes on tree-lined streets with sidewalks. Front porches, terraces, and later flagstone patios were common. Most families had several children and a pet. Children rode bicycles and roller-skated on the streets and sidewalks. Many garages were detached and had basketball hoops over the doors. My neighborhood was specific to Roanoke, Virginia, but variations of it existed throughout the south. South Roanoke exemplified White privilege.

Most parents had advanced education and divorce was not common. Fathers were doctors, lawyers, bankers, and successful business people. Most mothers did not have jobs outside the home, but many were involved in women's organizations such as the Junior League, Roanoke Symphony Auxiliary, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), Garden Club, neighborhood book clubs, and religious groups called *Circles* associated with area churches. Women with school-aged children held school fundraisers, volunteered as scout leaders, and worked in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Black women worked in South Roanoke homes. They did house cleaning, childcare, and cooking. They acted as surrogate mothers to the children. Black men did yardwork and sometimes worked as caterers and bartenders at parties.

On my side of town, urban renewal meant innovation and progress (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018; Dyer, 2005; Hughey, 2012; Lensmire, 2017). We got an interstate, a mini version of the beltway in Washington, DC. The new road had four lanes, two in each direction, with a grassy median in-between. There were various exit

ramps to major local roads. The whole idea, from my perspective, was modernization and an attempt to make our small city less provincial.

Although I remember the revitalization project as a sign of progress, many living in the Gainsboro neighborhood saw it from a different perspective (Adichie, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Hughey, 2012; Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). What appeared as progress to me created annihilation to the community life they knew. Growing up in my White neighborhood~~,~~ had given me a different lens from that of those who grew up in Black neighborhoods in the same city (Hughey, 2012; Rud & Garrison, 2012; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017; Withers, 2017). We developed a different perspective and lived in a different reality (Adichie, 2009; Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; Hughey, 2012; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017; Wildman, 2005; Withers, 2017).

According to information from the panel for my anthropology class, Gainsboro was a Black neighborhood with older houses, large and small, that had been multigenerational homes. There were small family-owned businesses, including neighborhood grocery stores and restaurants, community churches, and schools. It was a thriving Black city adjacent to Roanoke.

Before revitalization, Gainsboro was a place where residents without cars could shop for the things they needed, attend area churches, and socialize in local restaurants. It was a self-reliant, self-contained community.

This was startling to me, because in my neighborhood, family cars provide transportation. Men and women drive to work. Children have carpools to dance lessons, soccer games, and recreational activities. Although several churches and restaurants, a pharmacy, and a small family owned grocery store are neighborhood landmarks, the

community is not centered around them. Before the days of internet access, my family shopped at a local mall, or a large grocery store. The church we attended was nearby, but we did not walk there on Sundays, and we rarely went to church during the week. There were, and still are options. We can walk to a neighborhood church or business, or drive to a designated area. There was a choice. In a liminal moment, I realized that my life had not prepared me to even be aware of another perspective (Freire, 1970).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the revitalization project in the Gainsboro neighborhood in Roanoke, Virginia, using a critical lens~~,~~ to determine the effects of urban renewal on the Gainsboro neighborhood population with regard to education, life experiences, expectations, and attitudes (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Manning & Adams, 2015).

My theoretical framework includes using critical autoethnography to investigate the role of power and privilege. Using this approach, I analyze my own experience with a critically reflective lens, to become aware of other's stories and the possible conflicts with mine (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Manning & Adams, 2015; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). As a component of this research process, I also engage in participation, observation, and interviews to create dialogue (Ellis & Rawaki, 2013; Horton, 1998; Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018).

Materials and Methods

This is a qualitative study that uses ethnographic methods to collect data and critical autoethnography to reflect on my personal history, in the light of what I learned about others (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Ellis, 2009; Erickson, 2011; Manning &

Adams, 2015; Rennel, 2015). My research goal was to use a form of autoethnography involving collaboration between the participants and myself, where interviews could become conversations and dialogue, an exchange of information from lived-experiences that could produce meaning. (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Adams, 2014; Ellis & Rawaki, 2013; Madison, 2018; Manning & Adams, 2015). How did urban renewal affect the lives of Gainsboro residents on a personal and community level? How does it continue to affect their circumstances? How is their perspective, outside of White Privilege, different from mine?

I chose qualitative research, with no assertions of absolute answers, due to the nature of my studies (Denzin, 2009, 2013; Madison, 2018). I collected information through participant interviews, neighborhood observations, and document research. I wanted to know participants' stories: memories, family narratives, and histories inherited into their consciousness (Rennel, 2015; Rud & Garrison, 2012; Vance, 2016; Withers, 2017). Both the stories and the physical neighborhood space undergo change with time and experience; they do not deal in absolute "truths" (Denzin, 2009, 2013; Freire, 1970; Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017).

Context

Gainsboro is the oldest area in Roanoke City. It was chartered in 1835 as Big Lick and later called Gainsboro (Campagna, 2016). From 1850 to 1880, it developed as a predominantly Black community (Campagna, 2016). Before urban renewal, many families had lived on the same street, often in the same house, for several generations. This multi-generational history made them debt-free. They could walk to work and buy goods in community-owned corner stores (Park, 2018). When I visited the local library, I

saw a before-and-after map of the area and a past city directory that listed all the neighborhood families and their occupations at various points in time. There were also archived newspaper articles about the revitalization project (Horton & Freire, 1990). Those from a White perspective reported the change as positive and others, from a Black point of view, had a negative perspective (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Hughey, 2012; Manning & Adams, 2015; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018; Vance, 2017; Withers, 2017). The map below shows the current Gainsboro neighborhood in pink. The adjacent White area shows the part of the historic area that was demolished to create the interstate and civic center, now called the Berglund Center.

Figure 10. Map of Roanoke. (City of Roanoke)

Also for my anthropology class, I attended a presentation at the Harrison Museum of African American Culture. The museum has exhibits based on local history, including pictures and artifacts from Gainsboro, the neighborhood that was demolished in order to build the new interstate I remember. The museum director who gave the

presentation explained that houses, businesses, churches, schools, a cemetery, and a sense of community were destroyed in the making of this road. He said people were displaced. There was diaspora, and the loss of camaraderie, school spirit, choral groups, sporting events, and familiarity of place (Adams, 2008; Levitt, 2015; Yarker, 2018). He spoke about generational memories and common experiences as well as awards, competitions, and a sense of belonging that existed before (Adams, 2008; Levitt, 2015; Yarker, 2018). He said many who lived in the community remain sad over the loss of the spaces that provided the backdrop for their shared memories; others continue to miss the fellowship and familiarity of the old neighborhood. He expressed feelings of nostalgia for the Black high school and associated activities. He told me the redevelopment project and the subsequent destruction and relocation of the Black community had scattered the population and produced a “disconnect” for youth and teenagers. He is sorry that local Black high school students, including his children, are being directed toward large integrated colleges such as the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and James Madison University as opposed to historically Black colleges such as Hampton University, Virginia State University, and Virginia Union University (museum director, personal communication, November, 2018).

Some questions came to my mind. Do others share these views? Are historically Black colleges invited to participate in College Night at area high schools? When Black schools were closed and students were sent to predominantly White schools, they could not walk to school or school events. They did not have transportation to participate in after-school activities and they could not take part in choral groups, band and orchestra ensembles, and sports activities. The shared experience, pride of place, and

multigenerational commonality in the Black population was erased. Black students felt displaced, like outsiders, in their new schools and this feeling contributed heavily to lack of academic progress, lower expectations, and high dropout rates (Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018; Withers, 2017). This explanation provided background knowledge for behaviors and outcomes I had experienced when I taught in predominantly Black schools in public housing areas.

I wondered if new places and unfamiliar surroundings produced anxiety similar to that of driving on the new interstate. Is there always an element of fear in the unknown? What did the Black community want? Would Gainsboro residents have preferred to stay in their neighborhood schools? Did they want to attend integrated schools? How many others shared these views? Would they have preferred increased funding to renovate Gainsboro schools rather than attending White schools?

Homeowners displaced by the revitalization project were financially compensated for their property. However, the assessed value of their houses, an average of $3,000, was often not enough to purchase a home in another neighborhood (Park, 2018). Formerly debt-free Gainsboro residents had to acquire mortgages and those lacking the income to qualify for loans became the initial residents of Roanoke's public housing (Park, 2018).

When I questioned a past Director of Development for the city, he told me, "It was a slum! They are much better off in new houses." The community may have looked unattractive to outsiders, but it was "home" to those who lived there, especially to families who had been living on the same street for multiple generations (Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018; Withers, 2017). Their memories, expectations, and shared-experiences, all

components of their culture, were annihilated by the effects of urban renewal on their community (Adams, 2008; Levitt, 2015; Yarker, 2018).

Purchasing fees paid to property owners combined with construction fees made this the most expensive section of highway in the state of Virginia (Roanoke City Director of Development, personal conversation, September, 2019). Both the Director of Development in Roanoke City, who thought people who lived in Gainsboro "were better off" in a new home, and others, without a personal connection, thought the redevelopment process represented positive progress for all. Their perceptions and assessment of the Black community were based on outsiders' opinions, vastly different from the mindset of those who were a part of the neighborhood. Neighborhood residents did not consider their homes a slum and did not want to move (Park, 2018). Residents were uprooted and often could not afford replacement housing. As I read and talked with people, I became aware of many things that were incongruous with what I grew up believing.

Beginnings

When I decided to conduct a research project based on what I had been learning, I wanted to recruit participants, identified as former residents of the Gainsboro area, or relatives of former residents, based on suggestions from both Mr. Bell. I planned to contact these people by phone~~,~~ or email~~,~~ to ask if they were willing to be involved in the study. I had decided that all participants would be adults recruited and selected because of their own background as ~~a~~ residents, or because of their connection to a family member in the Gainsboro area. I wanted to talk with three participants~~,~~ who had a personal connection to the Gainsboro neighborhood to learn

about what happened to the people who lived here, from their perspective. I wanted these talks to be more like a dialogue than a classic interview (Ellis & Rawaki, 2013; Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). I was especially interested in what influence urban renewal had on their educational experiences.

To establish a knowledge base, I met with Mary Bishop, one of the panelists in my class. As reporter for *The Roanoke Times*, she had completed extensive research on urban renewal in Gainsboro. Her research, compiled in three boxes, is currently housed in the Virginia Room at the Roanoke Public Library. Her article, *Street by Street, Block by Block: How Urban Renewal Uprooted Black Roanoke* (1995), documents the transformation of the Gainsboro area beginning with the Commonwealth Project in 1955 (Roanoke Public Library) taking over housing in the area of the Roanoke Post Office. Mary and I talked over coffee at a small café and I explained my interest. I was looking for someone connected to the Gainsboro neighborhood who would be willing to talk with me about his/her lived-experience. Mary suggested Richard Ross, who grew up in the area and had generational history there. At the time, I did not have any other information about him, but since she recommended him, I wanted to meet him. He was one of the people she interviewed for her newspaper article about Gainsboro. She contacted him to see if he would be willing to talk with me and he agreed. I was excited, because I felt like my project had begun. He does not use email, so I called him to set up a meeting.

I emailed Jordan Bell, another panelist from my class, who also has multigenerational connections to the Gainsboro area. Jordan is a teaching assistant in a working class White elementary school. He is also a counselor at the Boys and Girls

Club, an afterschool program for disadvantaged youth, and the director of the summer camp at Apple Ridge Farm, an organization established to benefit children in poverty. As a hobby, he does research on Roanoke history, in particular, the history of urban renewal and Gainsboro. He is currently working on a related documentary. As a filmmaker, he has studied the urban renewal project and its effects on the community (Ellis & Adams, 2014; Horton & Freire, 1990; Manning & Adams, 2015; Vance, 2016). I thought his input and local knowledge would be beneficial to my project and was pleased that he agreed to meet with me. He also accompanied me on another walking tour of the neighborhood and provided a deeper history of place and inhabitants.

The third participant in my study agreed to talk with me, but he would like to remain anonymous. To honor his wishes, I will call him Sam, and I will make every effort to withhold his true identity. He has extensive personal and family history in the Gainsboro area. I value his knowledge and opinions, and I feel very fortunate that he consented to talk with me. All three participants agreed to taped interviews and two of the three chose to be identified by their names.

Data Collection

I collected data in interviews with each participant. Questions for the interviews, based on lived experiences, related to the revitalization project in the Gainsboro neighborhood (Horton, 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990; Vance, 2017; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018). My interview questions cover three subject areas: resident life, community life, and the effects of revitalization. I prepared an interview guide (Appendix A), but I hoped the dialogue would progress organically, and not in a prescriptive format. . I designed these questions to promote dialogue and collaborative conversation (Ellis, 2009; Ellis &

Adams, 2013; Ellis & Rawaki, 2013; Freire, 1970; Madison, 2018; Lawrence-Light-foot, 1999; Manning & Adams, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017, 2018).

In the area of resident life, I asked participants to describe their memories of life as a Gainsboro resident. I asked them to describe their experiences, or their family's experiences, concerning education, lived-experience, expectations, and attitude. In the category of community life, I asked for descriptions of their relationships with individuals and families in the neighborhood. I also asked them to describe memories of area businesses, schools, churches, and community landmarks. Concerning the effects of revitalization, I asked for a description of any ways urban renewal has affected them as individuals and ways it has affected their families and the community as a whole. In the final interview with each participant, I asked them to explain any benefits and any negative results they see as a result of the revitalization project. I asked them to explain whether they have seen their relationships with those in the community altered by urban renewal, and if so how.

The first interview provided basic information. Analyzing this information led to additional questions based on the analysis. The second and third interviews provided an opportunity to ask questions that arose from previous analysis (Ellis, 2009; Ellis & Rawaki, 2013; Horton, 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990; Vance, 2017). I recorded interviews on an audio device and stored them electronically. I transcribed the recorded interviews to review and better understand the conversations. I kept the transcriptions and recordings separately in secured locations. I collected additional informational from articles on the Gainsboro revitalization project in *The Roanoke Times, The Roanoke*

Tribune, and *The Roanoke Star*, as well as through documentaries and my own physical observations.

I coded the transcriptions of the interviews and collapsed the codes into categories: Growing Up in Gainsboro, Schooling, and Segregation/Integration. I report my findings in the corresponding meetings with participants and analyze the results using autoethnographic reflections in conjunction with the observed physical changes in the area.

I have protected the identity of one participant by using a pseudonym. The other participants expressed willingness to be named in my work. I have tried to respect the wishes of each participant regarding anonymity. However, it is possible that some Gainsboro residents may be able to identify the anonymous participant because of some responses.

During the interview process, I endeavored to be conscious of my own positionality as a White woman who is an outsider to the community in every way (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Ellis et al, 2011; Lensmire, 2017; McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017; Vance, 2016). I attempted to insert myself critically into the research and I fully realize that the customs and social codes of my own "habitus" color the lens of my perception (Banks, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Ellis et al, 2011; Madison, 2018; Manning & Adams, 2015; Rud & Garrison, 2012). I cannot *know* in a truly authentic way how those who lived in the neighborhood actually perceive the physical and emotional impact of their experiences. Did any of them want to move? Do they prefer a newer brick house? Are they living in a more modern structure? I attempted to facilitate a

horizontal dialogue with the realization that memories and truth remain fluid, changed by time, experience, and exposure (Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2917, 2018).

Jordan Bell

Meeting One

I got up early on Saturday morning for my first meeting with Jordan Bell. We had agreed to talk at the Gainsboro branch of the Roanoke Public Library and I emailed a reminder the day before. He replied, “See you then.” The first time, I was worried that he might forget. I was anxious, I wanted to get my research underway and know more about Gainsboro. I hoped my project would progress smoothly.

It was a cold sunny day in February and I arrived at the library before it opened. When the doors were unlocked, I went inside and sat at the bay window in the window seat. There was a brown cushion on the wooden seat and an old school desk nearby. The furniture and equipment appeared clean but used. I scanned the room for a good place to sit and talk. I was watching for Jordan, worried that I might not recognize him. There was a handful of other people in the small space: A man reading the paper, two older women and a young child. A librarian offered to help me and I asked about a meeting room. I found a room, in the back of the library, with a vintage dining room table that provided the perfect setting for this interview and all of those to come. I had been doing schoolwork at the dining room table as long as I could remember and this seemed a perfect fit. I returned to the window seat to continue to watch for Jordan. A tall, young black man in exercise clothes and a stocking cap entered the library. When he looked in my direction and smiled, I recognized him right away as Jordan Bell. We moved on to the meeting room.

I had a list of talking points to guide our conversation for each meeting, but I hoped the dialogue would flow organically. Jordan has family history in Gainsboro. Like me, he enjoys hearing and sharing the stories and the history of Roanoke. I was interested in hearing the stories Jordan had heard from his family. I thought these stories would give me a mental picture of the way things were, a sense of what life was like for the residents of Gainsboro.

Initially, I shared some of my personal history and my interest in the project, but I consciously tried not to talk too much, I wanted to allow Jordan to speak. I found that we shared a common interest in the history of Gainsboro and the Black community there. This commonality facilitated a quick rapport and our dialogue flowed smoothly. I felt like I was actually living the kind of interviews I had read about in my classes. He talked about people, music, churches, families, and events long past. In a sense, he made Gainsboro come alive as a place I began to understand it in a different way.

Family Connection. Jordan's third-great-grandmother was a slave in Floyd County, a rural area in southwest Virginia. She and her family came to Roanoke, first chartered as Big Lick and later Gainsboro, after Virginia sanctioned the Emancipation Act in 1865. They moved into the Gainsboro neighborhood, near the current site of the main Roanoke post office. This area was the first section of Gainsboro destroyed by urban renewal.

Jordan's great-great-grandmother had a daughter who also had a daughter, Jordan's grandmother, Robbie Boyd. Both women were born in the area near the post office. When Robbie Boyd married, she and her entire family including four brothers, her grandmother, and her mother, bought a home on 7th Avenue, now called Rutherford

Avenue, still located in Gainsboro. That home is no longer standing. The family continued to live together, and Jordan's grandmother, great-aunt, and great-uncle were born there.

After World War II, Jordan's grandmother moved to California because she thought she would have more opportunities. She met his grandfather there. His mother was born in California, but when her parents' divorced, she and her mother moved back to Roanoke. At eight years old, she felt the effects of both urban renewal and integration when her neighborhood school closed and she was bussed to a White elementary school. Jordan talks about the trauma associated with children being uprooted and bussed to a different neighborhood, but he also says there was a positive aspect in that his mother met her life-long best friend at the new school. As an adult, Jordan's mother went to California to visit her father. During this visit, she met and married Jordan's father. The family lived in California, but Jordan and his mother returned to the Roanoke area, in the aftermath of his parents' divorce when he was in the fourth grade. This echoes the move of his mother and grandmother after his grandparents' divorce.

Schools. Before integration, Black students went to Black schools. Neither Jordan nor I experienced Jim Crow laws mandating racial segregation, but we know the stories others tell. Jordan says that before Lucy Addison established a secondary school for African Americans, Black students had to leave town to pursue an education.

If families had the means, students could attend Black high schools located in other cities. This required travel as well as lodging and was only available to a small number of students who could afford it or who had families with whom they could live. Black schooling in Roanoke stopped after 7th grade. Jordan says many people never

got a high school education because there was no high school within walking distance and they could not afford the commute.

Meeting Two: The Walking Tour

My second meeting at the library with Jordan began in the same way. I was a little early, and I noticed some of the same people I had seen before: the man who had been reading the paper walked to the entrance while I waited in my car, and several older women were waiting by the entrance. It was an early spring day, rainy, but not cold. Somewhere in the middle of our discussion, as Jordan was pointing out a landmark through the library window, we realized the rain had stopped and we decided to go on a neighborhood walk. This was helpful, because I could put names and places together with an actual place.

Our first landmark was across the street from the library, on the sidewalk in front of concrete steps leading to a vacant lot. A tiled marker sat in front of the steps, saying *Doctor Claytor*, indicating that the vacant lot was the former site of the house of Dr. Claytor, a Black doctor who began his practice in Roanoke in 1907 (The Historical Marker Database). The Claytor home had 23 rooms connected by a back porch to the Claytor Medical Clinic. In the past, the property had a basketball court, a tennis court, and a swimming pool. At the site of Mrs. Claytor's garden, a concrete seat remains. Roanoke City exercised eminent domain to take over the Claytor property, and the space remained unused for 30 years. However, in the 1990s, Dr. Walter Claytor, a son of the original Dr. Claytor filed a lawsuit against the city and won. He received a cash settlement and the return of the property.

Figure 11. First Baptist Church Steps.

(personal photo)

Figure 12. Sidewalk Marker.

(personal photo)

Around the corner are more steps that once led to the First Baptist Church. This church was a segregated Black church. A White First Baptist Church exists in another part of town. Jordan's grandmother and aunt were baptized in a creek near the church. His grandmother had pointed out the creek to him when he asked about it. Both the church and the Claytor family home burned down during the period of urban renewal. Arson was suspected, but not confirmed. Next to the church lot is a large home that was moved one block over from Wells Avenue to Gilmer Avenue.

The Hotel Roanoke, also on Wells Avenue, was built by the Norfolk Southern Railway in the late 1890s to serve travelers and company executives. Roanoke City relocated the houses on this street to open up space near the hotel. It is hard to imagine moving these large properties. Concrete steps and alleyways of these houses still

remain in the now empty spaces. What made City Council opt for relocation, in this case instead of simply eminent domain?

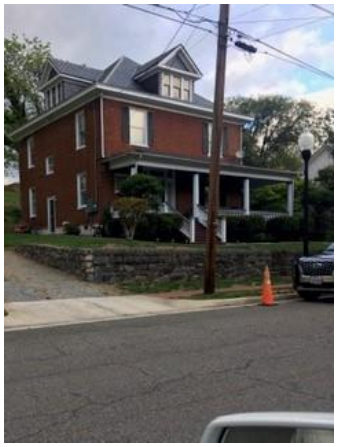

Figure 13. House Relocated to Gilmer Avenue. (personal photo)

As Jordan and I walked further down Gilmer Avenue, he explained that we had entered a historically designated area, meaning properties are protected in a way that prevents renovators from changing the original design of the structure. This designation occurred in 2005. Jordan sees this as a defense measure against eminent domain and demolition by the city. Jordan and I both admire the architecture of the older homes, including bay windows and large front porches. He especially likes the large front porches. We talk about the families that once lived there. Now, homes occupied by owners stand out from rental property, because of the care and maintenance of both the structures and yards. Walking past homes and spaces associated with names and pictures I had seen, being physically present, made the area come alive for me in a way that seeing it on paper could not. At that point, my research became vivid.

Figure 14. Claytor Memorial Clinic.

(personal photo)

Figure 15. Lawson Building.

(personal photo)

As we through Gainsboro, Jordan identifies the homes, or the sites of homes, once occupied by some of the notable figures in Black history in Roanoke. Continuing further down the block, we passed what was once the Claytor service station, now an empty lot, and an office building, still standing, but empty. I began to realize how much the Claytor family was ensconced in the community.

The office building, erected in the late 1940s – early 1950s, housed the law offices of Ruben Lawson, a Civil Rights Era attorney. Mr. Lawson worked on desegregation cases in Pulaski and Montgomery County. As we continued, Jordan commented on previous residents: Dr. Burrell, Lucy Addison, Dr. Maynard Law, Dr. Roberts, and funeral director, C.C. Williams.

Dr. Burrell, namesake of Burrell Memorial Hospital, the first Black hospital in Roanoke, traveled to Washington, DC on a train, because White hospitals in Roanoke refused to treat him for a gall bladder condition. He died there after surgery, possibly because of the time factor of traveling.

We walked past the homes of several more notable members of the Gainsboro community. Lucy Addison was born in Upperville, Virginia, about 200 miles away, and educated in Philadelphia. She came to Roanoke in the 1880s as a teacher and saw a need to start a secondary school for African Americans. She is credited with starting the first Black high school in Roanoke. Further down the street Mr Williams built a funeral parlor connected to his home. It is still operating as the Serenity Funeral Home. We moved on, passing the house of Desi Shlay, one of the first, if not the first, African American nurse whose picture I had seen in the Gainsboro Library along with the picture of Dr. Claytor.

Figure 16. Lucy Addison.

(Public access on Wells Avenue)

Figure 17. Addison High School.

(Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library)

Jordan considers the 400 block of Gilmer Avenue the most historic. There is a plaque at 401 Gilmer Avenue honoring Civil Rights Era attorney Oliver Hill. Oliver Hill, who was born in Richmond, moved back and forth to Roanoke from 1913-1923 during his childhood and the early years of his career. He stayed with family in Washington, DC to complete a high school education. His work contributed to the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education, (1954), a landmark legal foundation for integrating public schools.

Next door is the former residence of Dr. Edward Dudley, the first Black dentist in Roanoke. Edward R. Dudley, his son, was the first Black ambassador from the United States. His post was in Liberia. The next house is owned by the 96-year-old daughter of Dr. James Roberts, a Black physician. Oliver Hill, Edward Dudley, and the Roberts children, next-door neighbors, lived and played together on this block.

Figure 18. Dr. John B. Claytor.

(Public access on Wells Avenue)

Figure 19. Dr. Edward Dudley.

(Public access on Wells Avenue)

Figure 20. 400 Block of Gilmer Avenue.

(personal photo)

Figure 21. Home of Oliver Hill.

(personal photo)

The corner house is the home of railroad worker, Rufus Edwards. Mr. Edwards organized the Black laborers at the Norfolk Southern Railroad, resulting in a favorable Supreme Court decision against their White bosses. I learned from another participant in my study that Black people who worked for Norfolk Southern Railroad made good salaries. They had jobs in the shops building and repairing engines and train cars and as waiters, who received tips, on trains. Clearly, successful middle class people once lived in these homes. What happened to change that? There is a strong contrast between the economic success of these residents and the majority of those who currently live here, more evidence that Gainsboro once had been a prosperous area. What happened to these people and why are the circumstances of current residents so different? Why did the families leave? Was it only caused by urban renewal? Were segregation and desegregation a factor?

Meeting Three

On a Saturday morning in early February, Jordan and I met for the third time, and this time he arrived first. It was a comfortable situation, with Jordan at the head of the table and me to his left, setting up the recording device on my phone. I recognized all of the pictures in the room as past Gainsboro residents and I knew something about each of them. I also knew the corner bookshelf where there is a book about the Claytor family. This Saturday, Jordan showed me a website with oral histories of Gainsboro residents, interviews and transcripts I could access from my phone. Here voices document past lives, enriching my understanding by giving voice and meaning to places I have seen. I had several over-arching questions about integration and segregation as

well as outcomes from urban renewal based on our earlier discussions. I wanted to know his views.

Henry Street. Jordan says he developed an interest in the history of Gainsboro about three years ago while listening to his mother and grandmother talk about Henry Street and life in Gainsboro before urban renewal. His grandmother remarked that the Civic Center did not exist when she was younger and said that she went to parties and concerts on Henry Street. When she was growing up, Henry Street was the commercial center of Gainsboro.

> So I said what is Henry Street? And she explained to me what Henry Street was and then I asked, of course, but why isn't it there anymore and then a snowball effect is happening it's just thing after thing, business after business, name after name that they would just talk about and none of that is there anymore.

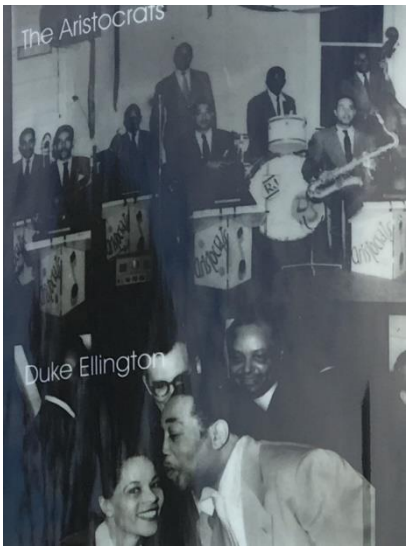

Figure 22. Social life on Henry Street. (Public access on Henry Street)

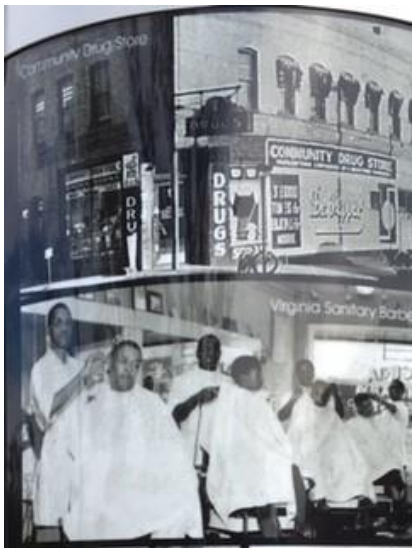

Figure 23. Businesses on Henry Street. (Public access on Henry Street)

Before the civic center was built, there were opportunities for Black people to attend concerts at the American Legion. African American entertainers like James Brown, Little Richard, Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Dizzy Gillespie preformed here. There were Black and White performance nights. On Black nights, Whites had to be in the balcony. Elvis was there in 1955 and tickets cost $1.00. During this period of segregation, Black performers could only stay in Black hotels. There were two, The Dumas and The Palace, both on Henry Street, in Gainsboro.

Black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux lived at the Dumas Hotel, in the early 1920s. He made as many as 6 films here, about 46 during his career, and had a group of local investors who funded these films. He was well known and his movies played in both Black and White theaters. Jordan likens this to having Spike Lee or Tyler Perry on Henry Street today. He says, “It wasn't just Black people on Henry Street. From what I’m told, everyone in Roanoke was on Henry Street.” There were grocery stores owned by immigrant families. Whites came for a good time and were accepted. It was a quick walk from downtown Roanoke to Henry Street, before street patterns were revised.

Figure 24. Filmmaker Oscar Micheaux. (Public access on the internet)

Figure 25. Henry Street During a More Vibrant Era. (Public access on Henry Street)

People who lived in the Henry Street era would say that they did not have to go to a big city for entertainment. Jordan remembers Mr. Chub saying he didn't have to go to New York to see neon lights because, “it was all right there on Henry Street.” Mr. Chub, his generation, and generations before his enjoyed a vibrant cultural center a few blocks away.

> Now my generation, you know, if we want to see things like that we have to go to places like in Charlotte or Atlanta or New York, but Mr. Chub and his generation and generations before his they didn't have to do that. It was all right here a few blocks away.

Jordan says people came for good music and good food. In the 1920s and 30s, Henry Street was the place, in Roanoke, to have a good time.

Many areas in downtown Roanoke have been renovated with updated apartments and condominiums, taking advantage of generous tax credits related to development in historic places. Gainsboro’s designation as a historic area, with its

architecture, storied past, and close proximity to downtown make it desirable for this kind of development. Yet, houses sit empty in disrepair and vacant lawns are overgrown. Why hasn't Gainsboro become a trendy urban area?

Following the development of his interest in Gainsboro, Jordan went to a meeting at a local church and learned about urban renewal. The speaker, Mr. Chub, had on a top hat and carried a book called *Root Shock* by Mindy Thompson Fullilove, M.D. (2004). Jordan talked about Mr. Chub's speech:

> The book is basically about, you know, shocking the roots of a neighborhood, shocking the roots of a people when you come in and you just totally wipe out homes and businesses and churches and schools you shock the root of a people and sometimes I think we still haven't recovered from that.

Segregation and Integration. In a brief conversation about local history, Jordan confirms that Gainsboro, initially Native American land, was the first part of Roanoke. Most of the buildings are over 100 years old. In the 1890s and early 1900s when the railroad came to Roanoke, it became an African American community. Jordan believes the Norfolk Southern Railroad was instrumental in the development of the community because many Black people came there for jobs. Black workers were hired as porters and dining car workers as well as staff at the Hotel Roanoke, owned and built by the railroad. Jordan speculates, that once travel became more frequent, Roanoke became a hotbed for growth. People came for jobs and then stayed to raise families.

In the 1960s, integration became the story of the south. Jordan remarks that once integration started Black people were naturally curious about stores, businesses, and restaurants that were previously off limits. What is in that store? What is special

about that restaurant or that pharmacy? He says once people were able to shop in the White areas, they never came back to Henry Street businesses.

> We're curious people. If you tell me I can't go in a building for 15 years and on the 15th year you say, Jordan, you can go in there now. I'm going to go and try to figure out why couldn't I go in there for 15 years.

I asked if he thought integration and racial changes were damaging to Henry Street and he said it dealt a huge economic blow. We talked about why integration did not work in reverse. Why did Black businesses suffer while White businesses were not damaged? The answer was that Whites were never barred from Black businesses. Jordan says people who worked during that time have told him they did not want to stop having Black businesses: they wanted the freedom to go other places. They did not want to be told, "We can't because we're Black." He notes that funding resources from Roanoke City were also affected by integration. If the city gave $50,000 to improve downtown, those in Gainsboro wanted, but did not receive, matching funds. His ideas about schools are similar. Jordan says Black people wanted to be able to go to White schools if they lived in a White area, but integration brought on bussing and Black schools closed. Many Black students who grew up expecting to attend Lucy Addison High School had to ride buses to White schools in another part of town. Urban renewal and eminent domain promoted redistricting and revised traffic patterns. Henry Street and the surrounding areas became nearly unrecognizable.

Jordan believes urban renewal in Roanoke, in terms of racism and related events, is no different from in any other Southern city. During the Civil Rights Era, everything that happened throughout the nation also happened in Roanoke. Jordan's

view is that the mayor and every leader currently on City Council are looking at how to best grow Roanoke, for now and for the next 20, 30, or 40 years. “Unfortunately, sometimes that means that property is being taken, people are being moved, but it's all about how can we benefit everyone.”

Figure 26. Interstate and Berglund Center After Urban Renewal. (personal photo)

Good and Bad. During our last conversation I asked Jordan if he could find any good that evolved from the destruction and urban renewal in Gainsboro. In hindsight, he says the interstate is a benefit to the city, even though it cuts through a former neighborhood. He also believes cities need interstates and convention centers, like the Berglund Center, formerly the Roanoke Civic Center. These things benefit the Roanoke community as a whole. Even so, he mourns the loss of Gainsboro, the independence and cohesiveness of the Black community. He does not think Henry Street will ever be the cultural mecca it once was, but he would like to see investors and small businesses

return to the area. He would like to see homeowners buy and renovate the vacant, run down properties. He hopes to see people moving back into the deserted neighborhood. He wants to see well maintained lawns, parks, and recreation areas rather than weedy overgrown spaces. Most importantly, he would like to see the community working together with a single-minded purpose, in other words a neighborhood renaissance.

Richard and Gloria Ross

Meeting One

I sat in my car in front of the Gainsboro library waiting to meet the second participant in my study, Richard Ross. Across the street, I noted the tile marker placed by Dr. Claytor and the remnants of the garage that belonged to his house. Further down the block I recognized the Lawson Building and the Claytor Memorial Clinic, both empty shells. Vacant lots surround these structures and the library. It was February, what I think of as late winter or early spring, but an abundance of rain and temperate weather had turned the grass a dark lush green. On previous visits I had only noticed the library itself, but now I looked for landmarks, places I knew, any changes that had taken place, or details my eye had missed. I was pleased that Richard Ross had agreed to meet with me, because he had grown up in Gainsboro during a different era. He had actually experienced some of the things I had read and talked about with Jordan Bell.

A white SUV parked across from me and a man and woman got out. There were no other cars and although I was not sure, I thought it might be Mr. and Mrs. Ross. The man wore a dark purple suit with a long jacket. He had a crochet skullcap on his head. The driver wore black pants and a cropped jacket. I learned that she had a part-time job at Roanoke City Schools. She jokingly says she works in her old middle school, Booker

T. Washington, which was repurposed as the administration building. After introductions, we proceeded into the large meeting room with the dining room table.

Richard sat at the head of the table, with Gloria and then me on his left. He had a gregarious, cheerful personality and I knew I would like talking to him right away. I talked about what I had learned about Gainsboro the previous semester, the information panel, conversations with Mr. Chub, Mary Bishop, and Jordan Bell, as well as my own memories of urban renewal. I explained how stories about the Claytor house and other buildings that had been erased made me curious about what Gainsboro used to be and the changes that had taken place. What happened to the people? I asked if Richard and Gloria had grown up in Gainsboro and both confirmed they had.

When I arranged the meeting, I had asked if Richard would talk to me about growing up in Gainsboro. He brought a newspaper article (Appendix B) about his mother, Kathleen Ross, a well-known Gainsboro resident. I knew something about her story, but did not realize he was her son. As our conversation continued, I learned more about his mother and early life.

Family Connection. Richard's mother, Kathleen Ross, refused to move out of her home while urban renewal built the Roanoke Civic Center, now the Berglund Center, around it. Kathleen Ross and her siblings were born in the house. Richard says all of his family was born there. It was a two-bedroom frame house and Richard laughs when he describes sitting inside and watching the curtains blow in the winter.

Although Ross was the primary resident, other family members lived in the house when they needed a place to stay. Richard says, "The whole house turned into a bedroom at night. There were people sleeping in the living room, dining room, all over

the house." Sometimes family came to visit from North Carolina. We talked about the childhood joys of sleeping on a pallet on the floor. Close proximity of family, while at times inconvenient, produced feelings of security and belonging.

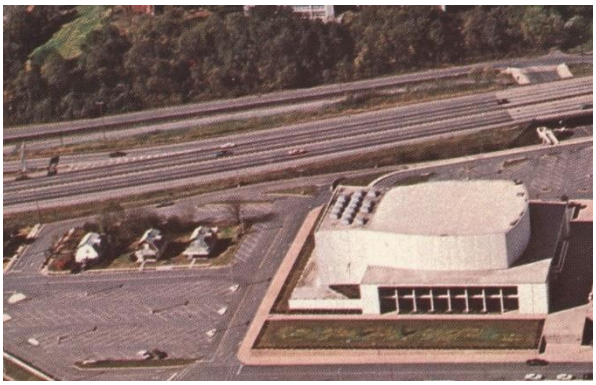

Figure 27. Ross' House.

(Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library)

Figure 28. Kathleen Ross.

(Roanoke Times)

When Roanoke City declared eminent domain over her property, Kathleen Ross insisted the city pay her enough money to buy another house in a safe location. During this period, crime rates, theft in particular, had escalated. Many in the neighborhood had relocated.

Roanoke City Council asked Noel Taylor, the city's first Black mayor to call on Ross and persuade her to sell.

> She asked me to come in and hear it out. And it was really interesting to believe someone could think the way that he did. He told my mother, said well why do you have to live in another neighborhood so to speak? And I never will forget, she told him well you don't live over here. You know, how are you going to tell me what's going on? You live over where White people live and he tried to soften

her up, her up, but she wouldn't budge. She said, 'I got to get the right amount of money. That's all I got and I want to have a decent neighborhood to move into just like you.'

The destruction of Gainsboro, Roanoke's oldest Black neighborhood, began in the 1950s. Ross stayed in her home until 1981.

I had read in the newspaper article that Richard showed me, that his mother went to Bennett College, a historically Black college (HBCU), in North Carolina. When I asked about it, he told me his sister went there, but his mother graduated from a college in Washington, DC. I was disappointed that the *Roanoke Times* had published this article without confirming the information.

Richard could not recall the name of her school. He confirmed my idea that it was rare, in the 1930s, for Black women, for women in general, to graduate from college. Kathleen Ross worked in Washington, but returned to the house in Gainsboro because of difficulties resulting from her husband's alcoholism. Richard provided a form of comic relief when he said, "Because my father was being himself."

Growing Up in Gainsboro. Richard is nostalgic about the closeness and community support in the Gainsboro neighborhood, calling it a close community where people stuck together.

You know, you can send someone up the street and tell someone Mamma said to send her a couple of eggs this morning to feed the kids. Give them back to you on Thursday and that's the way the neighborhood operated …

It was usual to help friends and family. When I asked if there was enough food, Richard laughingly said,

Not all the time. Sometimes it wasn't anything in the house… It was not a joke. We would be disciplined severely if we told anybody we didn't have enough food… we didn't know we were poor …It's just the way things were.

When Richard and Gloria were growing up in Roanoke, Black residents had their own recreation. There were church activities, block parties, neighborhood sports games, baseball, football, etc. Richard says all Black people participated in some way. Gainsboro was like a separate town, a Black town, next to Roanoke. Richard says, "back then you had places that you could go and enjoy yourself. As opposed to going someplace you know you're not wanted." There were neighborhood places where Black people could go and feel safe and comfortable.

Houses in Gainsboro were rarely made of brick and people inside felt the changes in the weather. Still, they provided shelter and were a source of pride. Richard and Gloria say you could count the well-to-do families in Gainsboro on one hand. Most with money were professionals, including doctors, dentists, lawyers, and undertakers. There were also bootleggers, and one of the most successful was Richard's uncle. He called himself a *businessman*, but Richard says he was also a family man. He helped his brothers and sisters as well as his nieces and nephews. This uncle owned buildings, with businesses on Gainsboro Road: a night club, *The Satellite*; a barber shop that doubled as a *nip joint* (a place to buy illegal whiskey); and a fish market that sold fresh fish. His brothers and sisters would help him in the store.

Richard's uncle had a big convertible, a Star Chief Pontiac, purple with a white stripe down the side. The interior was purple and white leather. It was brand new in

1958 and he allowed Richard to drive it to the prom. He also bought clothes and paid for Richard's haircuts until he could take care of himself.

Black people in Gainsboro found jobs at the Norfolk Southern Railroad and in trades. Gloria's father was a plasterer. There were also jobs in White families' homes. Richard says only Black people who had jobs with White families were comfortable going to White neighborhoods.

Childhood Trauma. Anthony, Richard's younger brother died, he believes in part from inadequate health care. There was no money or health insurance. After that, his mother insisted that his father, who "wasn't any good," move out of the house. His father did not work, drank heavily, and did not do anything to help the family. When his brother died, there was no money to pay the funeral home and his mother arranged to pay the undertaker monthly until the bill was paid. Richard was eleven when his father left and he started working to earn money. He says he learned to take care of himself and not be dependent on others. I was curious about the work he could do and I asked. He washed cars and cleaned buildings. "I learned how to take care of myself, not to be dependent on people and so far I've kept it with me. That's what she [Kathleen Ross] wanted me to do."

Meeting Two

We met again at the Gainsboro library. This time there was light rain and we hurried to get inside. I had reserved the same room, so we checked in with the librarian and headed toward the table. After reviewing the recording from our first meeting, I had more questions. I wanted to know about Richard's military service, and his years

growing up during segregation. What were schools like? How did the military handle segregation? Did the Army treat Black recruits well?

Mothers and Children. Richard's, mother was authoritative and had strict rules. One was that he had to go to church on Sundays.

> We had to go to Sunday School every Sunday and if you didn't you couldn't go out of the house, not out the door. Either you go or you stay in …, people [would] be going up and down the street, to the movies, and stuff like that. Would be no need to ask cause if you didn't go to Sunday School, that was it. Yeah, you don't have to go but you can't go out of the house. She enforced it. I mean it was a rule and she had no trouble with us. I look back on it and uh and I can't see how she did it really.

His family went to First Baptist Church, now an empty lot on the corner. Gloria Ross adds, "It was right around the corner before it burnt down…That's where we met… I had to come with my mama and my father would bring us down in the car."

Another one of Kathleen Ross' rules required high school graduation. Both Richard and his sister graduated from Lucy Addison High School. Richard joined the army and stayed in for three years. The United States began to send troops to Viet Nam in 1965 shortly after his discharge. Richard's uncle offered to pay for him to go to college, but he says he wanted to make money and buy a car so he went into the military. He told me,

> When you're young … All you want then is a car and pretty clothes and to chase the girls but you don't think beyond. What am I going to do when I'm 35 or 40 and don't have anything? You know a car maybe but …"

Richard credits his mother with his own and his sister's success. "She was a great little lady. She stuck with us," because of that, he believes both he and his sister have "a pretty good life." Kathleen Ross got a job as the school secretary at Gilmer Elementary School and later with Southwest Virginia Community Development, a program associated with Total Action Against Poverty, now called Total Action for Progress (TAP). TAP is a nonprofit organization that provides social services and financial aid to local families. She continued to work at TAP until she fell and broke her ankle. Richard says she wanted to keep working, but she was told not to come back because she was a liability.

Schools. Richard talked about the importance of education. He believes education leads to a better life.

> Not everybody [could read], but it was easy to separate the two, cause other ones were so frustrated they were drunk all the time. You know, just didn't go anywhere. They didn't even try. Started drinking early …and you see 'em ten years later down on the market square where they would hang.

Both Richard and Gloria said they were proud of their high school, Lucy Addison, including its music programs, sports teams, and awards. Gloria played clarinet in the Lucy Addison band. She says there was a band trip, essentially a concert tour, for a week in May. Band members looked forward to this every year and parents saved money to make sure students could go. Her father's work kept him busy in the summer and they did not take a family vacation. She said the high school band trip was like a vacation. Travel broadened her mind and gave her, and others band members, exposure to other areas. Later, after integration, Gloria became aware that White

schools were also doing a concert tour. She says no one acknowledges that Lucy Addison did it first.

When I asked about the schools that closed during urban renewal, Richard said, “They had to close Gainsboro [Elementary School]. It was awful.” Gainsboro Elementary had outside bathrooms and pot-bellied stoves in the rooms. Richard said children were cold, the building was unsafe, and it should have been torn down. He thought Gilmer Elementary, which also closed was slightly better, but not like White schools. He reminds me that before 1960, even though the school facilities were sub-standard, segregation meant Black children had nowhere else to go. After urban renewal, there were better, more modern facilities, but children had to go to schools on another community.

Looking back, Richard says he is glad about walking to school, it was time spent outside with friends. It saddens him to remember those children who did not have money for lunch. He says alcoholic parents, a missing father, or parents with no job left children hungry. There were no free lunches and these students did without food. He says students were sometimes not dressed properly too. They did not have coats or warm clothes, and their feet were “hanging out [of] their shoes.”

Military Service. Richard joined the army after high school graduation. He was 18 years old and served for three years. I was curious about his decision to enlist as well as his experience in the service. When I asked, he told me he became a paratrooper. Both he and Gloria laughed when I expressed surprise that he chose this option. Skydiving, jumping out of airplanes, initially must have been frightening. He

chose the paratrooper position because that job paid $55 more a month. He thought the extra money would help him buy a car more quickly.

Initially Richard signed up to go to missal school in New York, but after basic training in South Carolina, he was stationed on bases in Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. When I questioned him about segregation, he says segregation in Roanoke did not seem so bad after visiting Alabama and Georgia. I also asked if he experienced segregation in the army and he said, “No, the army wasn’t segregated per se. Truth was people hung around people of their own race. I mean nothing wrong with that.”

Off base, in public places, he and Gloria remember more restrictive policies. For example, on the Greyhound Bus, during the 1960s, Black people had to sit in the back. When they got to bus terminals in Nashville, Louisville, anywhere, they were not allowed to eat inside the restaurants even though they were wearing a uniform. The uniform made no difference. Richard says, one person would get off the bus and order for everyone, and they all stood together outside to eat. Laughing, he says they could eat, but they could not get a chair. He laughs, but there is no humor.

When his service was completed, Richard returned to Roanoke. He says the military helped him, and the education he received in the early 1960s during his year at Johns Hopkins was important. He gained a broader perspective from experiencing different cities and the training he received qualified him for a job with benefits and an acceptable salary. He says, “We had a decent life after that.”

Richard worked at the Veterans’ Hospital for 34 years and is currently retired. He says, “I had a lot of kids and grandchildren and my mom was crazy about them all.” He told me he still does small, odd jobs and private duty, if he can help someone. I see his

kindness and his desire to help others. In the stories he tells, there is a strong sense of caring and community involvement.

Meeting Three

I went over information from previous meetings to prepare our third meeting. Again, I was grateful that Richard and Gloria were willing to talk with me and share their experiences. If possible, I wanted to deepen my understanding of their stories by continuing earlier conversations. I wanted to know more about Henry Street and I also wondered if Richard and Gloria thought anything good had resulted from urban renewal.

We arrived at the library on a weekday afternoon, exchanged greetings, and met in the usual room. We began by confirming that both Richard and Gloria gave permission for me to use their names in my paper. Richard jokingly said, “I don’t guess anybody is looking for me,” meaning he was not in danger of being identified or exposed. I wanted to be sure it was all right to use real names and I was relieved, knowing many would recognize Richard, because of the information about his mother. Today, he brought a hard copy of a recent Facebook post during Black History month honoring his mother, Kathleen Ross. I got up to make a copy, but he gave me his. Many people in the Black community had posted comments thanking Ross for her love of the Gainsboro neighborhood and her commitment to helping others.

Henry Street. What is The Yard that Richard keeps mentioning? Richard says “The Yard” is another name for Henry Street. When Richard and Gloria were growing up, Henry Street was booming. It was the only place Black people could go because of segregation and there was always something going on. He says people had a good time and violence was scarce. Police came to raid the *liquor joints*, but they did not stay

in the community in the way they do now. There were sometimes fistfights, but shootings were rare.

Figure 29. Crowds on Henry Street. (Public access on Henry Street)

Figure 30. Crowds on Henry Street. (Public access on Henry Street)

Now Black people can go anywhere, but Richard says they do not feel as comfortable as they did on Henry Street.

> Now you go down on the market and try to socialize and dance with the wrong woman, you get thrown through a plate glass window… Didn't have to deal with that … You know people drinking, gambling, doing that, but the community was thriving.

In the past, two Black police officers in a parked car, kept watch on Henry Street They called White officers if an arrest was necessary. The Black policemen took home anyone who drank too much and caused trouble. There was nowhere else to go. Black performers socialized with the neighborhood people and it was fun seeing the

celebrities up close. Richard says everyone went to enjoy himself, or herself, and had a good time. Alcohol was available from the bootleggers.

I thought bootleggers were only active in the 1920s during prohibition, but I was wrong. Richard laughingly tells me bootleggers flourished in the 1960s and that he supported their business. I know that even now, there are local people who sell illegal moonshine; it is sweet and full of fruit, apples, strawberries, etc. When I asked about this, Richard explained bootleggers sold whiskey, like the kind at a Virginia ABC store.

I wondered why people would buy this illegally when it was available legally at the store. Richard explained that in the 1960s, you could not buy liquor, only beer, in bars and restaurants. ABC stores closed at six p.m. and were not located in Gainsboro. *Nip joints* made whiskey available on demand. People on their way to work would stop in for a drink as early as six A.M.

Roanoke was a part of the performance route called *The Chittlin' Circuit,* a derogatory term referring to Black people who ate chitterlings, the small intestines of a hog. Richard and Gloria, remember James Brown, Lloyd Price, Jackie Wilson, and the Clovers among others. James Brown and his entourage came often. The bus parked on Henry Street and his name, written in large lettering, was visible on the side. Gloria remembers her friend's mother who wanted to marry James Brown. This woman dressed in her finest and always went out when he came to town. She told the girls, "I'm going to marry James Brown!" Her husband had been killed in a work-related accident when he was digging a hole and the dirt collapsed on him.

Figure 31. James Brown. (Public access on the internet)

Richard remembers a night when Jackie Wilson came to Henry Street. He had a white limousine with a light on the top and a chauffeur. Limousines were rare in Roanoke. When he got out of the car, he was wearing a tan leather suit and big gold rings. “He could have taken anybody’s woman in town … He was really a knockout.” Everyone gathered around him, wherever he went there was a crowd.

Figure 32. Jackie Wilson. (Public access on the internet)

After urban renewal, Henry Street was abandoned. So many other choices made it obsolete. Gloria said, “Somebody stuck a knife in Roanoke and killed it, you know just twisted it.” Richard adds, “Never seen anything like it …Roanoke used to be a fun place to live. I mean back in the day if you want to call it that, but now it’s dead. You know people don’t get together.”

Figure 33. Henry Street Today. (personal photo)

The Dump. I have been to the city dump to drop off large items, excess brush, and fallen tree limbs. It seems relatively clean and there are attendants who confirm that users are residents. A *trash train* carries garbage away. Before this new facility, the city dump was always on fire. Trash burned, cinders filled the air, and there were noxious smells. Initially, the dump was on the outskirts of the city, but as the city grew, it surrounded the dump. When Richard and Gloria were growing up, the dump was near Lucy Addison High School, the Royal Garden, and Washington Park. There was no air conditioning and if teachers opened the windows, cinders landed on their school desks and the smell was overwhelming. The Royal Garden was what Richard calls a central meeting place, a big barn-like building where high school kids had *socials*. There was a pool below and cinders floated on the surface of the water. Washington Park, near the high school, was also subject to the smells and ashes. Gloria's friend lived in a house in the park because her father was the caretaker. Today, the house is considered a

historic property because it was originally an inn for travelers on the way to North Carolina. The entire structure is under renovation, encased in a protective plastic.

Figure 34. Washington Park House. (personal photo)

To date, I am not aware of any studies on the toxicity of the dump. During urban renewal, it was covered with asphalt and today cars can drive over the former site. After getting directions from Richard and Gloria, I went to find the dump. As I drove through Washington Park, there was no trace, only the paved road and the swimming pool that are part of a public housing development.

Good and Bad. I wanted to know if urban renewal had produced any positive results. Richard said people lived in better houses. They moved from frame houses "where you could see through the walls" to brick homes. He said no one in Gainsboro had lived in a brick house before. Initially they were proud of their new circumstances. Looking back, he said, "It [Gainsboro] was like a shantytown." He also said better food is available and there is fresh produce. Integration means Black people are not restricted to one part of town and the eating situation is better; Black people can go inside restaurants and sit at tables, but Richard and Gloria say prejudice is still there.

Urban renewal brought educational improvements in some ways too. The dump has closed, cinders do not fly in the classroom windows, and all schools have inside bathroom facilities. Students have new books, school supplies, and furniture. In the past, school supplies, books and desks, were hand-me-downs from White schools that bought new teaching materials and furniture. Black people were treated like second-class citizens.

Now, there are more college scholarships awarded to Black students. Richard is proud of his granddaughter who is scheduled to be the recipient of a full scholarship to Virginia Tech. He is currently buying bonds to help with his grandchildren's education. Despite these changes, Richard says that looking back, the Black people "got along a whole lot better than we do now. It was a lot better" when people lived in a close-knit community. Gloria says if you do not know what you are missing, you accept what you have.

The negative of urban renewal is cultural. Circling back to an earlier conversation, Richard reiterated the community is scattered and gun violence has increased. He and Gloria think this behavior relates to a lack of parental discipline, lower church attendance, and a lack of community closeness. He says *spanking* made him behave, going to church taught him the right way to act, and neighbors reported bad behavior to his mother. He knew what to do and he knew others cared about him. Now, people are more isolated and neighbors who once looked out for each other are no longer there.

> I think we lost more than we gained in the thing. I know everybody wanted a decent safe place to live, but it destroyed the, I guess you'd call it the fiber.

People aren't as close …We lost it somewhere. I haven't been able to figure it out.

Sam

Meeting One

My third participant wishes to remain anonymous. I am calling him Sam, as a pseudonym, and I will attempt to honor his wishes that he not be identifiable. We have been introduced several times in the past, but I am not sure he will remember me. He has significant knowledge of both the Gainsboro community and the urban renewal project and I very much appreciate his willingness to talk with me.

Sam graduated from an HBCU and has had a successful business career in the Roanoke Valley. He is softer spoken than the previous participants and he seems to measure his words carefully before he expresses an opinion. We met in his downtown office on a Saturday morning. It is early, and not many people are in the building.

Despite the formal atmosphere, both of us are in casual clothes. He wears a fleece pullover and jeans. I have on black exercise pants, a sweater, and tennis shoes. He sits behind the desk and I sit in a chair on the other side. I initially feel like the desk acts as a barrier between us.

Sam has a persistent cough and looks extremely thin. He mentions his doctor and takes medication while we are talking. I worry that he is not well and does not feel up this meeting. My assumption about his health reaffirms my gratitude that he has chosen to speak with me.

I start the dialogue, explaining my student status and my interest in Gainsboro. I say that I would like to know what happened during urban renewal, from his

perspective, and how it affected the people who lived there. What happened to all of the people and where did they go?

He remarks that the Gainsboro refers to geographical boundaries and I take out my map (Appendix C) to make sure it is in league with his thought. He says it is “more or less correct.” I am satisfied with this, because I think over the course of time boundaries may shift slightly. Sam talks about the railroad tracks, built by the railroad, that divide the city. He reminds me that Southwest Roanoke begins at the tracks and he calls it the most influential part of the city specifically because it is occupied by Whites. He says White folks live on the south side of the tracks and Black folks live on the north side. The White area starts with downtown, just over the tracks. He says Black people would go into the White area to be maids, cooks, and childcare workers like they do in the movie *The Help*. He speculates that if you wanted to have a job, “You had to play with what was given to you.”

Figure 35. The Tracks. (personal photo)

Growing Up in Gainsboro. Sam’s grandmother was the cook and housekeeper for a local family he says I would recognize. She would bring home leftover food and

sometimes purposely cook too much food so she would have something to take with her. Both his maternal and paternal grandparents lived in Gainsboro. One side of the family lived closer to Hotel Roanoke. Sam and his siblings would have to take a bath after playing outside at their house, to wash away the soot. Soot covered fruit on the trees too, but he says they did not know the difference and ate it anyway. Smoke and soot in the air was from the trains that came out of the railroad shops. He reiterates comments of other participants saying; “It was our way of enjoying ourselves ……we didn’t know any difference.”

Segregation caused all Black children to go to school in Gainsboro. Some were classmates from kindergarten through twelfth grade. They had aunts and uncles and extended family in Gainsboro. When urban renewal affected friends and family, others who did not live there still felt the effects. Some people lived in Gainsboro for many years and some were only there for a brief time. Sam says that if you lived there, it was home, a place where you tried to provide for your family. He had a cousin whose family lived in a part of his grandmother’s house. In this house, there were also guest rooms shared with uncles who needed a place to stay, and there was his grandfather’s room. He says he knew he wanted a different life.

Sam remembers what he calls special days when his parents would take him to the Mill Mountain Star, a local landmark and overlook, and Lakeside, the local amusement park. He says he knew not to go further than Campbell Avenue by himself, because as a Black child you would be picked on. Interestingly enough, we are meeting in an office on this street.

Sam says that Black owned businesses existed on Gainsboro Road, formerly Peach Street. There was a funeral home, a men's YMCA, a grocery store, and assorted other businesses he went to. It was like a Black town, complete and separate from the White areas of Roanoke.

Schools. Sam confirms the African American community values education. Growing up, he walked to school because his family did not have a car. He remembers schools were open sometimes even when it snowed. Sam thinks education, a privilege that was previously unavailable, opens doors to a better life. Everyone is expected to get an education. "There was no excuse why you didn't go to school unless you were sick, sick [in] that you had the measles or the chicken pox."

Sam, who graduated from high school in 1965, thinks segregation made teachers better and more dedicated then than they are today. As Black students, these teachers had experienced what it was like in White colleges and/or they knew what was happening in HBCUs, "But at the end of the day when they got their bachelor's degree, they were supposed to be able to go get a job. [The only] job they could get was in a Black school. You couldn't get one [a job] in the profession that they wanted to get." Sam's public school teachers had degrees, but prejudicial social restrictions made teaching the only profession open to them. Sam says that at that time, Black workers did not get jobs in traditional White companies and financial institutions. He says these teachers instilled confidence in their students and helped guide them. His teachers knew he was interested in building and construction. He liked to watch houses being built and he made wagons out of scrap materials. His teacher talked to him about architecture; he understood the concept before he had the vocabulary.

A football injury prevented Sam from pursuing an athletic scholarship to a large state university, but in hindsight, he is glad he went to an HBCU. He says that White universities were more prestigious, but traditionally Black schools offered more attention and targeted advice. In his college experience, Sam thinks that in all HBCUs, the *game* is a part of the educational program. Students participate in role-plays about potential business situations and there is instruction on dress and personal grooming. Professors teach students how to succeed within the segregated environment. For example, in a business interview, a goatee is acceptable, but having your hair in cornrows is not. He thinks it is important to know how to play *the game* in order to navigate the business world.

Sam points out that students most affected by bussing and school closings were Black. Students transitioned from Black schools like Lucy Addison High School or Gainsboro Elementary School and blended into White majority schools. He compares integration to "the breakup of different paint pots, of what was going on in the Black community." He asks me why people are still pursuing the things they asked for years ago. He freely admits he does not have the answer and neither do I. After integration, most teachers did not live in the community, did not know parents, and did not go to the same churches. Sam thinks the perceived lack of understanding and caring impacts Black students' success.

Henry Street. I had heard much about Henry Street, but I wanted to hear stories about it from Sam's perspective.

> Henry Street was two streets, it was a commercial street that served everybody in the daytime commercially and then it was the street that once people got off

> work, they could get dinner and maybe find a club that had music in it …Or maybe find a club that had a card game in it …

Sam says that harassment went on throughout integration and that made Henry Street even more valuable as a safe haven and a place to have a good time. Growing up, he was not allowed on Henry Street at night, but he and his friends went anyway. The two Black police officers were there and they chased the boys away.

> Me growing up I wasn't supposed to be over there and if we saw the police we would light out behind the buildings and then sometimes when we would light out behind the buildings there would be like a few things going on that were not supposed to be going on. From men and women and men trying to sell liquor. You know, you're trying to get out so the police don't see you but nine times out of ten they'd catch you the next day and say look if you come over there one more time, I will tell your parents.

The boys' curiosity and sense of adventure made this a reoccurring scenario.

Sam remembers performers staying in the hotels and sometimes paying to stay in residents' homes, like a bed and breakfast situation. Sometimes there were people with guns, running numbers as well as selling liquor and collecting for liquor sales. Shootings were rare, but happened sometimes. After urban renewal and integration things changed. "It changed to the point where you could see it not having the same reality as it used to do. You know when you had all the musicians and people come through."

Meeting Two

Before our second meeting, I went back to Gainsboro Road, formerly Peach Street. The older properties are gone, and it is not a commercial area today. Turning left, I explored McDowell Road a street with newer, more modern looking ranch and split-level houses. There is a sign saying Historic Gainsboro. The land is historic, but not the structures.

Figure 36. McDowell Road. (personal photo)

When I got to Sam's office, I talked about going there. He said these houses are replacement housing, a replacement for some taken by the city in Northeast Roanoke. Generally, he thinks it was not a fair exchange between the government and the people.

> So for urban renewal, people who got their funds rented homes like the ones we're talking about or moved further west were they could and still rented homes or either tried to relocate around Rugby Boulevard or Grayson Avenue, which is west of 10th Street.

These were newer, brick houses with one bath and one to two bedrooms, not like the older frame houses they replaced.

Good and Bad. I had heard the term redlining, but I was not sure of the meaning. Sam talks about redlining and the invisible red line in relation to property values and neighborhoods. He says a realtor only brings affluent White buyers to select areas. The invisible red line is a continuation and broadening of the previous redline. It acts as a racial and zoning boundary, affecting property values and aesthetics of a neighborhood. For example, on some streets, the rules about parking in the yard are enforced and it is not allowed. Other streets have two and sometimes three cars parked in the front yard.

Zoning limitations prevent multi-family housing, which can contribute to a decline in property values. When single-family residences become duplexes, there are more cars, it can be hard to find parking, and there may be a lower level of maintenance. Crowding and lack of care can bring down the quality of the neighborhood. Sam also thinks exposed telephone poles and lack of street maintenance contribute to lower property values. Owners are reluctant to invest, worried that homes will decline in value.

He says the African American community did not learn from this. They did not recognize their economic power. Segregation produced Black banks and credit unions, dentists and doctors, businesses, and places to secure loans for housing. His uncle owned a large parcel of land near the current post office and lost it all during the depression. Afterward, he became a school custodian. During urban renewal, the school was closed and bulldozed down. Sam remembers when this happened. He says,

when urban renewal began in Gainsboro, there were promises of better housing, better schools, and a safer environment. In the end, he says,

> So when it came to urban renewal, a lot of things were said and a lot of things were promised. Most of what was said and most of what was promised wasn't given to the fulfillment of what the people thought that they should have received.

The Black neighborhood had already been divided by the creation of Williamson Road, a heavily traveled business corridor. The new interstate roughly parallels this road.

Integration. Sam says, "When integration came a lot of things happened and most of it wasn't positive in the Black community." He is not the first to tell me this, but it is something I am always surprised to hear. I thought integration was something positive, something all African Americans wanted. I thought integration provided choices and opened new opportunities. When I told Sam this, he asked why I thought African American resources and financial development had not changed since the 1970s. I was not sure, but I thought because of education and job prospects. Some of my former students, in a predominately-Black school, were very motivated and they did well. Others did not and I wondered if a mentorship program and or a more involved parent would help them succeed. Sam agrees, he adds that economic funding is also to blame, as well as the community being separated, and churches being less influential than in the past. He says that relocation and separation of the community weakened the social network and the perceived level of caring. He said, "More so than anything else when we were in a segregated situation businesses that were there served the community, but they also helped the community. They [people] just, when integration came they just thought it was a better deal."

After integration, African Americans shopped in White-owned stores and the Black commercial district shut down. Sam talks about the cohesiveness of immigrant communities, such as the Latino and Asian groups in Roanoke. These minorities live in concentrated areas and support each other, shopping in small neighborhood stores and sharing homes and resources. Sam does not see this level of support among the Black community. He says, “Blacks did not understand how to perpetuate their own community and that is still going on today.”

Now there is a division among families originally from Gainsboro, or Northeast Roanoke. Relocation created this rift, a type of hierarchy that limits inclusion. Sam says, “What's going on now today is a direct relationship of what integration has done.” Before urban renewal, professionals in the community, doctors and lawyers, had money. Sam says other than that, everyone was the same. There was acceptance and inclusion. Why did the new neighborhoods alter status? If you lived in a part of Gainsboro, why don’t you still identify as a member of this group? Sam says people do not understand how important it is to work together. They do not realize the power and possibility in unity. I noticed that Sam had mainly focused on the economic aspects of urban renewal, the practical rather than cultural outcomes. It deepened my perspective and I realized that of course, economic conditions affect culture and education. Sam is a businessman, and his views reflect this.

Sam says that another result of urban renewal is suspicion and distrust of the city government. After eminent domain, his mother was afraid whenever she got a letter from the city. She worried that the city would take away her house. Sam says when he left for college in 1965, Roanoke City announced plans to improve 10th Street these

improvements did not begin until 2018. He says that improvements were more timely in other areas of the city.

Sam is very knowledgeable about the teachings of Martin Luther King. He says King was fighting for equality, but he settled for integration. Sam thinks King was a strong man. He speculates that settling was because of threats to his family and the reality of these threats. He also wonders if King was tired of fighting, or had doubts about the abilities of his staff.

Sam feels prejudice is ever-present and that African Americans do not get the same treatment as Whites. I remember what others have said about feeling like a "second class citizen." He says politicians talk about these issues in an effort to capture Black votes, but they do not offer specific solutions. There is much dialogue, but never an absolute answer. Politicians talk about improving education and increased funding, but the struggle continues and there is not a clear answer or solution.

Sam speculates that maybe Martin Luther King thought it was better to get something rather than nothing. He thinks a solution will come from people working together, forming a broad base of support. Sam says, "I think the Gainsboro neighborhood is going to have to realize what they're capable of doing and realize that, it's from the bottom up opposed [to] from the top back down." He tells me we need to stop, because he doesn't want to talk too long. As I walk along Campbell Avenue to my car, I remember his words about Black people facing harassment and I see downtown Roanoke through a different lens.

Discussion

Looking Back

In the beginning of my study, I realized that a Roanoke existed beyond the White upper middle class world that had shaped my growing up. I developed an overarching objective to find as much information as I could about that unknown city, Gainsboro, before and after urban renewal. My seventh floor view of Gainsboro has become multifaceted through knowledge of the lived-experiences and stories of neighborhood residents. Names, faces, and local landmarks have taken on new meaning. I have learned of celebrities such as Oliver Hill, Edward Dudley, and Oscar Michaeux. At first I was surprised that such accomplished people lived in Gainsboro. I knew nothing of their community and therefore nothing about these men. I have begun to wonder if there are Black men and women with notable achievements throughout the United States that I know nothing about. I am an outsider conducting research from a position of Whiteness (Flagg, 1993; McIntosh; 1989) and for much of my life I unwittingly lived in a parallel world (Adichie, 2009; Dyer, 2005; Flagg, 1993; Hughey, 2012; McIntosh, 1989; Rennel, 2015; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017; Wildman, 2005; Withers, 2017). Many events transpired beyond my knowledge.

Although White privilege formed a shield around me, human experience, common lived-experiences, made it possible for me to share dialogue and conversation with participants in my study. We developed a rapport rooted in mutual respect and even though I am an outsider and an observer, I can relate to their ethnographies and the stories they share (Ellis, 2009).

Overview

As I analyzed my findings from all of the sources, more specific themes developed. Personal observation and document research provided a physical representation and information from participants deepened my view. The overarching question was: What happened to the people and the community of Gainsboro as a result of urban renewal? In a pyramid-shaped structure, questions about certain areas emerged:

1) Resident Life

What are your (or your family's) memories of life as a Gainsboro resident?

Are there any effects of urban renewal in your (or your relative's) life regarding education, life-experience, and expectations?

2) Community Life

How would you describe relationships between residents?

How would you describe area businesses, schools, churches, and community landmarks?

3) Effects of Revitalization/Urban Renewal

How did urban renewal affect you, your family, and the community?

Are there any positive benefits of the revitalization project?

Are there any negative results of the revitalization project?

Have your relationships with others in the community been altered?

Data emerged into three major categories: Growing Up in Gainsboro, Schooling, and Segregation/Integration. I present my findings in a narrative format detailing the opinions and lived experience of participants and their families. When participants

speak about family, school, and growing up it reminds me of corresponding events in my personal history. Using critical autoethnography, I compare and contrast my own experience to theirs (Madison, 2018; Tilley-Lubbs, 2017) and my research on methodology becomes three-dimensional. The meaning I thought I understood transfers from written pages to reality. Although my background is encased in power and privilege, and my interpretation is inherently subjective, I realize that strands of familiarity, separation, and a form of nostalgia run throughout my findings. The effects of race, culture, locality, and lived-experience shape my views (Ellis & Adams, 2014; Madison, 2018). As I reflect more deeply on the stories and information participants have given me, I realize I cannot fully understand. Even so, there are feelings and experiences that provide commonality.

Growing Up in Gainsboro

When Richard and Gloria Ross and Sam were growing up, Gainsboro was a segregated Black community. There were Black schools, churches, markets, restaurants, and clubs. There was a Black swimming pool and a Black theater. Jordan Bell did not experience this. He grew up after integration occurred, but he has heard stories from his mother and grandmother.

I did not realize when I was growing up, but White schools, churches, stores, and restaurants were also segregated. Although I was not aware of any racial restrictions (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Ellis et al, 2011; Lensmire, 2017; McIntosh, 1989, 2015; Thornhill, 2015; Withers, 2017; Vance, 2016), I lived in a White colorblind world and racism was always present. Houses on my street were brick, stone, or frame. Owners performed regular maintenance on both houses and lawns.

Richard Ross and I share memories of a closeness and connection between extended family members. We remember neighbors and friends who shared food and a sense of comradery. Picnics and cookouts with neighbors for me and picnics, neighborhood events, and sports teams for Richard. Sam also remembers enjoying himself outside with family and friends. He spent time at his grandparents' house. These childhood relationships produced feelings of support, and real or imagined, an impression of security.

We all remember walking to school and socializing. Richard and his friends spent time on Henry Street. Sam also went there. I knew nothing of Henry Street, but I spent time with school friends and went to parties at other venues. We all enjoyed the revelry and comradery. Our memories formed in a different time and place, but the feelings they evoke are similar.

Sam and I remember going on special outings with family to the Mill Mountain Star and Lakeside, a local amusement park. I often went to these places on my birthday. Family, neighbors, and friends would meet at these venues.

Schooling

The participants in my study believe education is a key to opportunity and a better life. Jordan works to help educate public school children and continues to research his interest in history. Richard Ross talked about his training at Johns Hopkins, which prepared him for his 34-year career as a drug and alcohol counselor at the Virginia Veterans Hospital. He thinks his mother was able to find a job in the community because she was educated. She organized an annual alumni event to celebrate the achievements of all graduates of Lucy Addison High School. Gloria Ross, who works in

the administration building of the local school system, talked about influential school field trips. Sam acknowledged the expertise and caring of his teachers, and the valuable lessons learned from college professors that advanced his career. He talked about learning to play “the game,” to look and act in a way that presented a positive image and resulted in acquiring a job. I think the two men who worked at my school and the bartenders I knew also did this. My daughter did this when she bought a black suit for job interviews on the advice of her advisor. I believe we all play “the game.”

My parents stressed the importance of education and made every effort to help me do well in school. My father checked my math homework and talked to me about jobs. My mother pushed me to get good grades. Most, but not all, of my relatives attended college. I could see a difference in the lifestyles of family who were less educated and it was motivational for me. I did not feel a sense of community support, but I had the support of immediate and extended family. Possibly, when participants talked about community support it was like the support of extended family. Caring and well-wishing took the place of the indifference of strangers.

The school facilities I grew accustomed to were mostly brick buildings. They were comfortable spaces with heating, air-conditioning, and indoor plumbing. Students had the option of bringing packed lunches or buying school lunches. Those who did not have money to buy lunch could complete applications for free lunches. No one was hungry. When Richard, Gloria, and Sam went to school, the buildings were cold and there was no indoor plumbing. Bathrooms were outside and no one had free lunches. There was a false equivalency between Black and White public schools.

Segregation/Integration

Segregation and integration had a large impact on economics in the Gainsboro community. I was told by each participant that integration did not make life better for the Black population and I was surprised. This was new information and not what I expected to hear. On reflection, I realize it comes from someone who lived through these changes. Sam and Richard and Gloria Ross experienced segregation and integration. Jordan Bell and I were not affected by the changes. Urban renewal is a component of integration because it contributes to relocation of residents in the Black community. Schools, businesses, neighborhoods, and churches are redefined.

During segregation, Black residents stayed in the Gainsboro neighborhood unless they had jobs in another location. Sam and Richard Ross said they were restricted to the Black area of town when they were growing up. There were no specific laws, but they said Gainsboro provided a haven of security and comfort. They felt safe there. All three participants talked about neighborhood businesses: banks, medical offices, pharmacies, markets, restaurants, etc. These businesses, owned and operated by Black residents, also provided jobs for others living in Gainsboro. Segregation made Gainsboro an isolated, self-sufficient community. . This reminds me of the small group of Black students who attended my college. I cannot know with certainty, but I wonder if they felt more comfortable, more secure staying together. Richard Ross mentions this when he talks about the military and being friends with people of the same race.

When I was growing up, I often saw Black people who worked in my community. They had jobs as domestic workers, baby-sitters, yard workers, and sometimes handymen. Some had rides or drove to work and some rode buses. Growing up White, I

never knew anything about where they lived and what it was like. I remember seeing Black women at a small neighborhood store near my house and I did not realize they were excluded from other restaurants and stores.

After integration, it was normalized for me that Black people wanted to attend White schools. An extension of power and privilege caused me to think these schools were better (Dyson, 2018). Participants told me they also wanted to shop in White commercial venues. Jordan and Sam talk about people wanting to have choices about where to shop and Richard says the food in White grocery stores was a better quality.

When participants talked about the negatives of integration, I was surprised. I had no idea about the economic effect of integration. If Black shoppers were supporting White businesses, it affected the success of Black businesses. I understood the economics, but I had not considered integration in terms of any negative impact. I didn't know that Black business owners had to close shops and that jobs in Black neighborhoods disappeared because of integration. When Sam talked about the negatives of integration, and the difference between integration and equality. He said that Martin Luther King wanted equality and he settled for integration. I had not considered this idea. When he talked about the scattering of the community and the developing expanse between residents, I began to see a new perspective. Integration in conjunction with urban renewal provided freedoms, but also took away choices. Black business owners lost income and there were fewer jobs in the Black community, but also expectations and relationships changed. Sam's family business closed because of related circumstances. He said the Black population has had the same goals for decades, and that integration did not serve economic or educational progress.

Richard Ross said, “I think that we lost more than we gained … People aren’t as close.” He said urban renewal and integration provided better, more substantial housing, but it destroyed *the fiber* of the community. Neighbors who shared food and watched out for each other moved away. Residents became isolated. Jordan Bell talks about the ingenuity and success of former Gainsboro residents. Black doctors, the first Black nurse, the first Black dentist, the first Black ambassador, Oliver Hill, Oscar Micheaux all lived together in Gainsboro. These “firsts” and other successful residents offered an example for others in the community. They provided a kind of mentorship and a view of what was possible. All participants said integration scattered the existing community of Gainsboro and abolished the closeness and comradery they enjoyed. I believe this sense of community identity, a common bond, promoted individual success. Certainly, these are complex issues and there is no exact answer.

Conclusion

Common Ground

Jordan Bell and I appreciate the historic homes and architecture of Gainsboro. We enjoy learning more about the neighborhood history and we imagine the good times and the music and revelry on Henry Street. The idea of Gainsboro as a Black cultural center is fascinating and we are captivated by stories of those who lived there and went on to find success and notoriety. Jordan and I see Gainsboro through an element of romanticism. We celebrate the achievements of the past. We see positives and potential for a bright future, like the proverbial rose-colored glasses. We envision a renaissance of sorts with renovated properties and large older homes reimagined as condominiums.

Richard Ross and I share memories of a closeness and connection between extended family members. We remember sleeping on the floor when relatives came to visit and good times spent with family. We remember neighbors and friends who shared food and a sense of comradery. These childhood relationships produced feelings of support, and real or imagined an impression of security.

Sam and I have a grandmother who cooked for our family. We remember spending time at relatives' homes. In the 1950s, Sam says knew he wanted a different life from the one his family shared. In a way, so did I. During the social and political turmoil of the 1970s, I felt caged and manipulated. Both he and I were looking for the freedom to make our own choices.

Different Spaces

I did not personally experience the demise of Gainsboro. I did not know segregation and urban renewal in the way that Richard Ross and Sam did. I was not denied service in restaurants and commercial centers. There were children in my elementary school who were not wealthy, but they were not hungry, and they had shoes. I was not aware of children who sat in houses where the wind blew through the walls and ate fruit covered with soot, or walked to school because their family did not have a car. When I went swimming, there were no ashes floating on the surface of the pool. Jordan's family, Richard and Gloria Ross, and Sam experienced both the positives and negatives of Gainsboro.

Final Thoughts

Urban renewal is complex with variations of both good and bad. When Sam talked about the negatives of integration, and the difference between integration and

equality, I was surprised. I understood the economic effects, but I had not considered integration in terms of any negative impact on education and culture. This was new information, not what I expected to hear. On reflection, I realize it comes from someone who has lived through these changes. Urban renewal becomes a component of integration because it scatters the residents of Black communities, schools, businesses, and churches.

The positive results of urban renewal are primarily physical, including better housing, better school facilities, the interstate, and the civic center. Asphalt covers the dump and the air is clear. The negative consequences are cultural and emotional. There is no sense of familiarity and comfort. People are scattered in different neighborhoods, children attend different schools, and neighborhood businesses have closed. Relationships are distant and bonds are broken. As Richard Ross said, urban renewal destroyed the *fiber* of the community. Depending on perspective, urban renewal can be both progress and devastation. It is not a single story, and according to participants the Black community did not benefit from urban renewal and integration. There was no equality and the goals of better education and better jobs have not been realized. In urban renewal race develops material consequences (Dyson, 2917). My White fragility causes discomfort when I examine the intricacies of race (Diangelo, 2018). I understand more than I did in the beginning, but I also have more questions and more to learn.

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...

Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.

Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW GUIDE: GAINSBORO REVITALIZATION

A. <u>Resident Life</u>

I would like to start by having you focus on your life as a resident of the Gainesboro community.

1) Please tell me about your memories of life as a Gainesboro resident.

2) Please describe for me the effects of the Gainesboro revitalization project on your life.

- education
- life experience
- expectations
- attitudes

3) Could you please describe your relationships with other residents?

B. <u>Community Life</u>

Now I would like to shift our focus to the Gainesboro community as a whole.

4) Please describe for me your relationship with other Gainesboro residents

5) Please describe for me area businesses, schools, churches, and community landmarks.

C. <u>Revitalization Effects</u>

At this point, I would like to focus on some effects of urban renewal and how you feel the process impacted you and your neighbors.

6) Please describe any ways that urban renewal has affected you as an individual, your family, and the community as a whole.

7) Please describe for me any benefits of the revitalization project.

8) Please tell me about any negative results of the revitalization project..

9) Please describe any ways that your relationship with those in the community has been altered.

***Questions may be omitted or revised according to the answers of the participants.

APPENDIX B:

COMMUNITY ACTIVIST KATHLEEN ROSS DIES

The Roanoke Times, Monday, December 3, 2001 C3

Community activist Kathleen Ross dies

She is well-known for refusing to leave her house while the Roanoke Civic Center was built around it.

By EMI KOJIMA
THE ROANOKE TIMES

Kathleen Vaughn Ross, who spent a lifetime working tirelessly to improve her community, has died.

Ross died Friday morning from kidney failure at the Northwest Roanoke home where she lived with her son, Richard "Dickey" Ross, and his wife, Cheryl. She was 78.

Kathleen Ross is perhaps best known for refusing to leave her house while the Roanoke Civic Center was built around it, insisting the city pay her what she thought it was worth.

In the 1960s, the city's oldest black neighborhoods were demolished to make way for urban renewal projects. She stayed in her home until 1981.

"She showed strength and stood up for what she believed," said her son, 60. "I viewed her as a hero. She was a gentle lady who loved people, worked hard. I never met anyone who didn't love her."

But Kathleen Ross didn't simply stand up for her herself. Her work founding and directing the annual Community Organization for Research and Development Summer Basketball Camp earned her the key to Roanoke in 1988. Many college and professional athletes graduated from the low-cost program, which she ran to help keep kids off the street.

"She was always trying to help somebody," said her friend, Olivee Tyree, 80, of Roanoke. Tyree knew Ross for about 30 years. "You looked up to her."

Ross also worked as secretary of Gilmer Elementary School for many years, as a member of the board of directors for the Northwest Child Development Center and as Community Coordinator for Southwest Virginia Community Development Fund.

Ross also was a charter member of the Lucy Addison Reunion Committee Inc. She served as president since it began in the 1970s until 1998.

Ross

"She set an example by being a responsible citizen," said Pastor Kenneth Wright of First Baptist Church Gainsboro, where Ross was a lifelong member.

Ross, also known as "Nana" and "Beanie" by family members, was born in Roanoke as one of nine children to the late Baxter and Florence Vaughn. She graduated from Lucy Addison High School in 1940 and attended Bennett College in North Carolina.

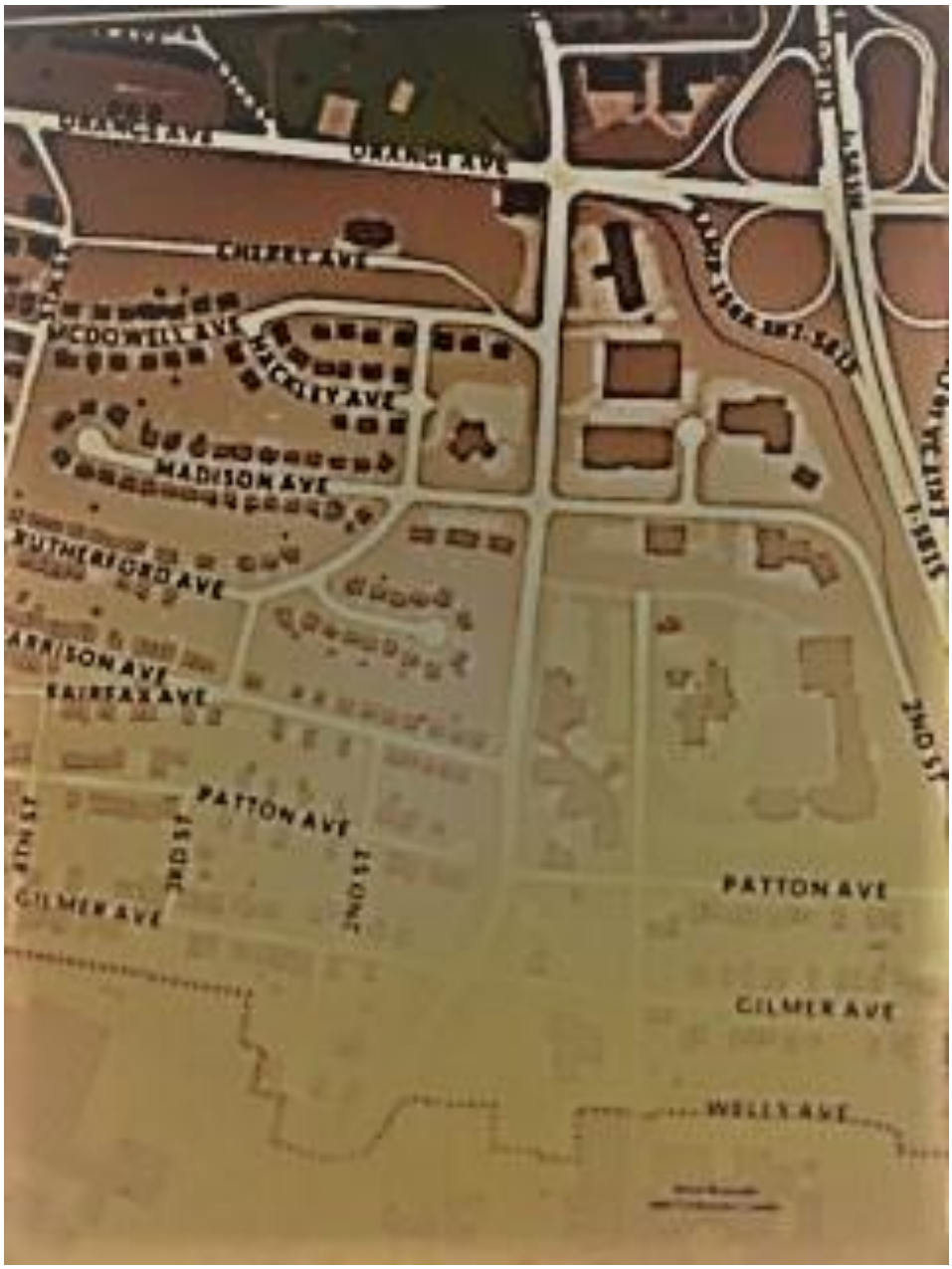
In addition to Richard and Cheryl Ross, she is survived by a daughter, Brenda Allen of Nashville, Tenn.; eight grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her son Anthony Ross.

Her funeral will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Hamlar-Curtis chapel. Friends and family will be received one hour before the service.

Emi Kojima can be reached at 981-3237 or emik@roanoke.com.

APPENDIX C:

Gainsboro Street Map (City of Roanoke)



APPENDIX: D:
IRB Exemption

VIRGINIA TECH

Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 15, 2019

TO: Gresilda/ Kris Tilley-Lubbs, Ann Brogan Shepherd

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Gainesboro Revitalization

IRB NUMBER: 19-166

Dear Investigator(s):

RE: Protocol Submission for WIRB Review

The Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) office screened this study and determined that it is ready for WIRB review.

Please download the "Instructions for the PI to Transfer the VT IRB Protocol to WIRB":

https://secure.research.vt.edu/external/irb/wirb-submission-instructions.pdf

Please go to https://connexus.wcgclinical.com to complete the protocol submission process to the WIRB.

ATTENTION:

* Gresilda/ Kris Tilley-Lubbs MUST BE LISTED AS THE PI ON THE WIRB SUBMISSION.

* All references to the VT IRB (including phone number and email address) MUST be removed from all study documents and replaced with Western IRB - (800) 562-4789, help@wirb.com.

*Special instructions, if any, are included on the top of the next page.