SOS ART Cincinnati **sosartcincinnati.com**

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RACE AND THE CITY

ART

SAAD GHOSN, *Editor*

RACE AND THE CITY

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*Poems, visual art, and performances by Greater Cincinnati Artists in response to chapters of the book "Race and the City"**

* *"Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., Editor, 1993. Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press."*

A book of SOS (Save Our Souls) ART

organized and edited by

Saad Ghosn

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Special thanks and heartfelt gratitude to:

Melanie Moon who has been the promoter behind the sharing and diffusion of the *Race and the City* book and of its message; and to all the Poets, Visual Artists, and Performers who have generously contributed their time, their work, and their messages for this art project connected to the book

To all Individuals
who use their Voice and
their Actions to fight Racism
wherever it is, and to help
build a Better World

SOS ART is a 501c3 Organization whose Mission is to:

Encourage, promote and provide opportunities for the arts as dynamic vehicles for peace and justice

Encourage artists to use their art as their voice on issues of peace and justice that concern them, their community and the world

Facilitate the creation of a local community of artists who network and collaborate together using art as a means to impact issues of peace and justice in the community where they live

Use the arts to speak about, inform, educate and create a dialogue on issues of peace and justice and thus to bring about positive change

Use the arts to introduce basic values of peace and justice in the youth

SOS ART is very grateful to:

Gary Gaffney who generously supported the publication of this book

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TABLE OF **CONTENTS**

* All chapter summaries written by ***Melanie Moon***

PREFACE

This book is a documentation of the "Race and the City Art" project that SOS ART organized and led to completion early 2022. The project consisted of artistic responses by invited Greater Cincinnati artists (poets, visual artists, performers), each artist responding with their own poem, visual art, or performance to one of the eleven chapters of the book: *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970,* edited by Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., and published in 1993 by University of Illinois Press (Urbana and Chicago). The book represents a history of Black Cincinnati from 1820 to 1970 and compiles academic studies by twelve authors who address various aspects of Black life during that period, highlighting the racial situation prevailing at that time in employment, real estate, ghettos, segregation, leadership, etc. The book was put together and edited by Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., at the occasion of Cincinnati's bicentennial anniversary in 1988.

The SOS ART's art project documented here came as a response to an invitation by Melanie Moon, an African American retired librarian, who came across the *Race and the City* book fortuitously, and who then felt strongly that, due to its content, it needed to be shared and disseminated widely throughout Cincinnati. To that effect, Melanie organized, and still does, many presentations in various settings (public libraries, classrooms, private gatherings, etc.) discussing the book, revealing its content and connecting it to the current racial situation of Blacks in Cincinnati. Melanie also felt that the voices of Cincinnati artists needed to be added to it.

To my surprise, one day while working overseas, I received an e-mail message from Melanie sharing her concern and welcoming SOS ART's involvement in such an endeavor. I did not hesitate to acquiesce and jump into the project. After all, SOS ART's mission is precisely to promote and provide opportunities to the arts and artists to use their art at the service of peace and justice, and what's more appropriate than tackling, through the arts, the history of racism in our city.

The strength of the "Race and the City Art" project, however, as you can seen in all the artists' responses, did not limit itself only to addressing racism as it was between 1820 and 1970 but also to explain how racism still resonates with us currently in the 21st century. Each artist, through their work, brought the message of racism to their own life and to the life of our current society, using the chapters of the book as a connection to the present, to what is and to what still needs to be changed.

Fourteen poets, forty visual artists, including sixteen students from Oak Hills High School and eight students from Xavier University, and two performance groups responded to the invitation to participate in the project and contributed their responsive art expressions to both a celebratory exhibit and event that was held at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati on May 14, 2022 (a video of the event can be seen at *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7zRQXFGZX4)* and to this book. Their eloquent voices fill the pages of this book and invite us to join them in propagating their messages and adding to them our own in the fight against individual and institutional racism, and for a better world. Their voices through this book will also be added to complement and enrich the initial *Race and the City* book whenever it is presented. We hope to see a continuation of this book with another that covers Cincinnati from 1970 to the present.

My sincere thanks go first to Melanie Moon, the engine behind the diffusion of the *Race and the City* book and of its message throughout Cincinnati, who introduced me to it, and whose idea was the initiator of this art project; to the editor Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and all the authors of the book who put us in touch with the real history of racism in our city; to all the poets, visual artists and performers who responded with their art and their soul to the content and message of the book and who enriched it with their own; and last but not least, to all those across Cincinnati and the world who daily fight racism, whatever it is, in their life and in their society and who, by this doing, contribute to peace and justice and to a better world.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Saad Ghosn
Founder and President, SOS ART

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Race and the City, 1820-1970

-- by ***Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.***

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the entire book making references to various chapters within the text. This book is a history of Black Cincinnati from 1820-1970.

Section headings are as follows:

The Antebellum Preindustrial Commercial City - In the antebellum period, Blacks were integrated into the entire city. Blacks did not live in homogeneous, racially segregated neighborhoods at this time. There was no place for anyone to go. Business, industry, transportation and residential space were jammed into six square miles making Cincinnati second only to New York City in congestion. Blacks and whites worked and lived together near the Ohio River. There, Blacks faced proscription, segregation and the constant threat of violence yet with pride and determination they built churches, schools, benevolent organizations, orphanages, homes for widows, secret societies and stations on the Underground Railroad.

Race, Class, and the Rise of the Industrial Metropolis - The author explains that race and class played a major role in determining where Blacks lived in the city. Although slavery had been abolished, obstacles to their full participation in American society remained in force. The city expanded its territorial boundaries from six to more than fifty-two square miles. The city's transition from a compact settlement with an economy centered on the waterfront and steamboat traffic to a sprawling industrial city with diverse manufacturing base brought havoc into the lives of many workers. Blacks did not fare well in this environment. Whites moved up to the new "good" jobs while the jobs whites no longer wanted were left for Blacks. Racism and Negrophobia left the color-caste occupational system intact.

The Postindustrial City: Urban Change and Protest - This section explores Black population growth, slum clearance, superhighway construction, and the rise of the metropolis leading to the formation of a second ghetto. Most blacks remained confined to the bottom of the job market, lived in dilapidated houses and rundown neighborhoods leading to the riot of 1967.

SUMMARY

The second World War triggered a second wave of Blacks who left the South for the North in the Great Migration more than doubling Cincinnati's Black population. In 1940s and 1950s the demolition of housing units, for slum clearance and the superhighway, created a housing shortage and displaced African Americans in particular. As whites left their used central city housing for new suburban housing, Blacks moved in. The primary destination of these displaced Blacks was the Walnut Hills-Avondale section of the city. Although open housing and integrating neighborhoods became a new tactic for combating the consequences of living in a ghetto-slum, income still played the principal role in determining where most Blacks lived.

Chapter 10 covers attempts at quelching racial unrest by the creation of the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC) while Chapter 11 outlines the Urban League's efforts to offset protests from the Black community in the struggle to integrate Coney Island.

The author concludes the introduction with these prophetic words: "In retrospect, the riot (Cincinnati 1967) was both an epilogue and prologue of the black experience in Cincinnati. It summarized decades of having dreams deferred, of living in a world where things seemed immutable, fixed in time and space; and it introduced the dawning of a new era when unemployment and underemployment, declining participation in the labor force, poverty, the rise of an underclass, and catastrophic social problems would replace civil rights as the dominant issues on the black agenda for advancement."

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.

At the time of publication of the book, Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. was an associate professor of American Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo and founder and director of the Center for Applied Public Affairs Studies. Currently he is professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning, coordinator of the Neighborhood Planning and Community Development Specialization, U.B. School of Architecture and Planning and founding director of the U.B. Center for Urban Studies.

GARY GAFFNEY

So Here's the Lesson

A river is a boundary that laps both sides
Blindly, unless it flows between
Abolition and Negrophobia
Pushing pigmentation to one side
Or the other, carrying the oppressor
Forward, the slave is drowning

The law is a boundary, Black Laws
Walling out black voices
Yet walls surround white suburbia
And keep in fear and privilege
Negroes may have the tenements
As their place to scavenge for hope

The highway is a boundary, pushing aside
Where folks dwell and build community
White roads shatter neighborhoods
Where black human beings make life
Then black folks scattering, them gone
Is all that really counts

The mind finds boundaries to wall in
All the delusions that make racism
Invisible in every visible way, racism
Wearing every mask racism can invent
How is black skin so impenetrable
Couldn't they see that humans were inside

Whites stood on the shoulders of blacks
To crush black dreams, believing wealth was worth it
The factory floor was a boundary
Only a few blacks could ever cross
White prosperity arrived on backs of blacks
But none for blacks, their arms and legs
Were saved for menial servitude

Black spirit--human spirit—resisted
Any boundaries, any walls, never was crushed

Always a spark or fire, always burning
With its own songs and dances, and churches
In defiance, personal courage and reform
In community, schooling one another
Holding together fast to dignity, despite

"*Growing up in New Orleans, LA in mid-twentieth century, I was a creature of a segregated society. Yet, I knew black people, and my model of honesty was a black man I worked with cleaning apartments in my great-grandmother's rooming house. But the city practiced a status-quo kind of racism that soon was exploded by defiance, protest and law.*
On my way to finally settling in Cincinnati, I encountered racism in every place I lived. The racism was the same and different in each place - irrational, mean, subtle, fear-based, law-based, unchristian. Cincinnati was no different, and yet different. Racism was sometimes hidden, sometimes overt. But noticeable progress, through hard work, seemed to happen over the more than 40 years I have lived here. Even with my own Cincinnati experience to build on, Chapter I was a revelation. The numbers, the details, the life experiences, the struggles, the advances against the odds, the courage, the culture of black people in Cincinnati are laid out so directly and honestly.
It was a powerful read and a genuine inspiration for the poem that emerged. I valued this opportunity."

Gary Gaffney

Gary Gaffney is a native of New Orleans, LA. He is Professor Emeritus, Art Academy of Cincinnati and has worked in a range of visual media. His current focus is on writing.

MICHAEL ROMANOS

Where Do We Go Now?; acrylic on canvas; 24x36”

“My painting was inspired by the introductory chapter of the book ‘Race and the City,’ which offers an overview of the city’s urban history and the dynamics that affected the city’s development plans and programs and their implementation. By design and negligence, these development plans affected – no, disrupted – the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the city.
I focused the painting on the neighborhood demolitions that began in the 1950s and continued for years under the pretext of urban renewal, urban revitalization, and the opening of transportation corridors. The painting depicts a black neighborhood being destroyed. Two decent looking abodes are being crashed by two threatening, powerful demolition cranes. The colors of the homes are pale and subdued, those of the cranes are shown in powerful, if dirty, yellow orange, dominating the image. Under a dark sky, Black residents are shown watching defeated, stretching their arms, standing resigned. At the center, a resident in a red shirt is pulling his hair in despair. His outcries give the painting its title: ‘Where do we go now?’ Demolished beams, roof poles and broken gutters are directionally aiming at this solitary man, like arrows attacking him, as he stands surrounded by demolition debris. The spotlight comes in the form of a shaft of light entering the scene from behind the monstrous crane on the right, throwing a long dark shadow on the lower right corner of the image – the shadow of the trespassing, destroying crane.”

Michael Romanos

Michael Romanos, a native of Crete, Greece, is an architect, city planner and economist with a PhD in Regional Economics from Cornell University. A university professor for forty years, he retired from the University of Cincinnati a few years ago. In addition to his teaching, research, and academic publishing, he has served as an advisor for local and national governments in the USA, Asia, Europe, and South America. Now a UC professor emeritus, he still conducts research on issues of poverty, community development, and the adverse impacts of governmental decisions. Since retirement he has gone back to his first love of drawing and painting and is learning more about the visual arts and how to become a more decent painter. He mostly works with graphite, charcoal, and ink pens, but recently he has been devoting more time to painting, experimenting with many media, acrylics, pastels, oils, and watercolors.

CHAPTER 2

John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841

-- by ***William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek***

John Mercer Langston (12/14/1829-11/15/1897) was in the vanguard of the nineteenth-century African American struggle. Educated at Oberlin College he gained admittance to the previously all-white Ohio bar in 1854. He was elected as clerk of Brownhelm, near Oberlin, making him the first African American elected to public office in the United States. During his subsequent fifteen-year residence in Oberlin, he solidified his reputation as an able public executive and adroit defense attorney. Throughout the 1850s Langston played a major role in both the strong Black civil rights movement in Ohio and radical anti-slavery politics. He directed recruitment efforts in the Midwest for the pioneering 54th and 55th Massachusetts regiments. He was named president of the newly formed National Equal Rights League at the National Black Convention in 1864. He played a leading role in Reconstruction as an inspector for the Freedman's Bureau and an organizer for the Republican party in the South. He was the first law dean at Howard University. He was the first and, for at least a century afterward, the only African American elected to Congress from Virginia.

Born free on a Virginia plantation, he was the son of Ralph Quarles, a wealthy slaveholder and Lucy Jane Langston, a part-Native American, part-Black emancipated slave. Both parents died in 1834 leaving the four-year-old Johnny and his older brothers, Gideon Q. and Charles H. Langston financially secure but unprotected by Virginia law. Gideon and Charles moved to Ohio while little Johnny lived as part of the family of Willian Gooch, a white friend of his father, on a farm in Chillicothe. Treated like a son, the light-skinned boy attended the whites-only public school until in 1839 a court decree abruptly parted him from the Gooches. He returned to the farm to board with its new white owners. Eleven-year-old Johnny moved to Cincinnati in 1840 to live with his brother Gideon. With no experience in being Black, he embarked on life in the Black community of the most race-conscious city in the sate of Ohio.

By the time John came to Cincinnati, twenty-two men, including his brother Gideon, had emerged as leaders in church and society as

SUMMARY

well as educational, moral, and abolitionist enterprises. John found himself in the company of some of Cincinnati's most elite and highly respected influencers in the city. This made little difference, however, when armed white men came into the Black community full of jealousy, hatred and rage. No consideration was given to the status or intelligence of the victim. John found that he and others in his neighborhood were unprotected by Cincinnati authorities and fair game for the mob.

In this chapter you will read what it was like to be raised white and find yourself uprooted and planted in one of the most racists cities in the region on the eve of the Cincinnati riot of 1841. The details of his experience are so vivid you will feel the pounding of his heart as he raced through the streets of Cincinnati in search of his brother.

William Cheek & Aimee Lee Cheek

At the time of publication of the book 'Race and the City,' ***William Cheek*** *and* ***Aimee Lee Cheek*** *were the authors of 'John Mercer Langston and the Fight for Black Freedom, 1829-67' (1989), which won the first Elliott Rudwick Award and which, in 1990, was named an Outstanding Book on the subject of human rights by the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in the United States.*
William Cheek *was teaching American civilization and biography at San Diego State University, where he had been a member of the history faculty since 1968. He was also the author of 'Black Resistance before the Civil War' (1970).*
Aimee Lee Cheek*, a private historian in San Diego, was coauthor of 'John Mercer Langston: Principles and Politics,' in 'Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century' (1988), edited by Leon Litwack and August Meier.*
The Cheeks were collaborating on a second volume of Langston's biography, which explored the years 1865 to his death in 1897.

The Unknown First

John Mercer Langston,
another name hidden from history lessons.
Being born free doesn't mean you are protected.
You still live in a land that birthed
the atrocities of your oppression.
Century-long attempts to be the first elected,
fighting for equal voice instead of being muted and disrespected.
Will "We the people" ever include me?
His struggle foreshadowed what the present would be.

In John Mercer Langston's day,
there were only-white or only-black schools you could attend.
Now schools whitewash their curriculums,
as we live with encrypted messages like,
"Make America Great Again."
It was only great for the slaveholders.
Then it was great for Caucasian men.
But for women, the Irish, Jewish, and African American people,
our great was held captive back then.

John Mercer Langston saw people running for freedom,
through the Underground Railroad.
Like bloodhounds, Fugitive Slaves Law
brought them back to their hometowns,
those that assisted them were punished
for helping them get across.
Slaveholders wanted cash crops for profit,
they couldn't afford to take a labor loss.

John Mercer Langston saw how African Americans were treated
during the Great Depression and through voter suppression.
It made him forget,
the brief economic boom where black businesses bloomed.
The truth is we are labors and builders of the house,
but unable to come into the room.

John Mercer Langston was a symbol of hope,
just as the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom
universally known from sea to sea.
Systemic racism is a hidden statute,
we don't fight hard enough to take down,
we bow, instead of take a knee.
Systemic racism is a prison that has no borders
you can cross over to be free.
Still today, there's no free states, or free countries
when oppression becomes the universal law.
There's no freedom,
when racism and discrimination
have made the world a free-for-all.

John Mercer Langston was a huge figure
in the Black Civil Rights Movement.
Protests and riots have roots as deep as religious tenets.
He fought for black recruitment,
bearing arms to secure the future of his descendants.
He was the first African American lawyer in Ohio, who fought
a system that needed to be reconstructed and revamped.
He was a legendary forerunner.
If it doesn't sound amazing
when talked about in the present,
don't forget, he lived from 1829 to 1897!

John Mercer Langston had ties all over Ohio
from Oberlin, to Cincinnati, to Chillicothe.
His parents were slaves,
but he was born free.
From the "Bottoms,"
he had a bird's-eye view of gentrification-
taking neighborhoods, redistributing poverty.
Today's gentrification,
moves people from the suburbs to the inner city.
How can you beautify to make it yours,
but red-line and price hike to exclude me?
That's progression and oppression
both equally working simultaneously.

John Mercer Langston was there when African Americans
started to have their own schools and churches,
but as more buildings were erected,
some were burned to the ground.

It is the same boomerang,
an eerie similarity,
that burned Black Wall Street down.

We look to the past,
to figure out our current situation,
before our future is in jeopardy next.
Race in the city has been a race,
where justice and injustice
have always run neck and neck.

POEM

"I am a passionate spoken word artist, who has a heart for unity, equality, and social justice. It is hard to study the history of John Mercer Langston, because history has a stark resemblance to the present and leaves you to question the future. As you read my poem, 'The Unknown First,' prepare your heart and mind to be taken up and down the timeline of the common lived experiences for countless African Americans. That journey begins with John Mercer Langston, but a journey must pick up the pace, in order, to be a race. The race for many races has been slow moving. Therefore, when you look at Race in the City of Cincinnati, you should ask yourself how every race is embraced, protected, and supported. Ask are we included in the race or left to trail behind."

MoPoetry Phillips

MoPoetry Phillips is the co-founder of Regal Rhythms Poetry Slam and Feature Event, founder of Hit the Mic Cincy open mic, and one of the Organizational Officers for the Regal Collective which also includes BeyonDaMic local artist interview segment, and the Back to Love Movement podcast. Phillips is a contracted poetry and workshop facilitator, and event curator. Her most recent accomplishments include being an Artist-in-Residence for Woodford Academy; recruiting, curating, and hosting the Juneteenth "Voices of Freedom Project" for Lydia Morgan and Kennedy Heights Arts Center; and performing at various corporate events through Artswave.

ANONYMOUS

Duality; color pencil on black paper; 4.5x10.75”

“John Langston’s life was wrought with duality. He was born free in Virginia to a wealthy slaveholder and emancipated slave but then orphaned at age four when both parents died. He and his brothers should have been financially secure but lacked the protections of Virginia law. His father’s white friends kindly gave the four-year old a home on their farm in Chillicothe, Ohio and treated him as a son until they moved to the slave state of Missouri seven years later and John was ‘orphaned’ again. John’s older brother Gideon sent for him but that meant moving to Cincinnati and quickly learning what it meant to be black in 1839, surviving riots and unprovoked attacks by whites. Reading this chapter made me very aware of Langston’s eyes and the traumatic images his young mind had to process. It left me feeling as if little has changed in almost 200 years. Most people like to think situations improve over time but that’s another duality--- not all wounds ‘heal.’ Some fester and lead to sepsis, gangrene, death. Racism didn’t decrease, whites just learned to bury it in the law and within the structures of institutions. They’ve hidden it under white hoods, MAGA hats, and thin blue lines. Today’s children are just as orphaned as Langston, if not literally then figuratively. Some kids lose their parents to long work hours and addiction while others lose them to cell phones and TV.
Duality. Believing that ‘little has changed’ also means there are more survivors and change-makers like Langston, they are being born every day. We can only hope that our numbers will eventually shift the momentum toward a more just and humane society.”

Anonymous Artist

John Mercer Langston: Two Years in Cincinnati (1840-1842); 2 screenshots of video, paintings by Sherman Parnell; video, 7 min 17 sec

To view **Video**: https://vimeo.com/705534670 (passcode: MCRC_JML)

"Joan Ferrante, founder and director of the 'Morning the Creation of Racial Categories Project (MCRC)', collaborated with a team of visual, performing, and creative artists to tell the story of 'John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati riots of 1841'"by William Cheek and Aimee Lee Cheek. In the first eleven years of his life Langston was raised as White. Then he spent two years' time in Cincinnati, during which he acquired an unwavering Black identity. These two years were life-altering, shaping the rest of what would become an admired and celebrated life. The artists who directly contributed to the project include Darnell Pierre Benjamin (actor), Sherman Parnell (visual artist) and Parrish Wright (composer). The story writers are Joan Ferrante, Ben Lloyd and Onyinye Miriam Uwolloh."

MCRC (Morning the Creation of Racial Categories Project)

The MCRC Project, founded in 2016, brings a unique lens to the national dialogue and conversation surrounding race. Since its founding, the MCRC project has brought together more than 100 creative, performing and visual artists to tell the stories of how people in the United States were, and still are, broken apart into unequally valued racial categories.

CHAPTER 3

Black Leadership in Antebellum Cincinnati

-- by ***James Oliver Horton and Stacy Flaherty***

The authors provide a list of Cincinnati African American Leaders identified by this study on page 72 (Table 3.1) of the *'Race and the City'* book. Those on this list must have headed a group or been delegated for an organizational office or position. The authors found the names of these Black leaders through the federal censuses of 1850 and 1860, Cincinnati probate records, city directories, local and national newspapers, a list of officials elected to the city's African American school board, the records of Ohio state colored conventions, and the records of the national colored conventions. Extensive records compiled by the Black Abolitionist Papers project were also used to track the activities of Cincinnati Black leaders.
The chapter discusses the topics of importance to Blacks at that time such as the underground railroad, the anti-slavery movement, the fight for Black education, colonization, and abolition.
Because the leadership list was assembled from public documents and from formal organizational records, it is heavily biased in favor of men. Although few are on the list, the authors mention female leaders and organizations that contributed greatly to the city.
Elizabeth Coleman and Sarah Ernest were examples of southern-born women who led groups in Cincinnati dedicated to assisting fugitive slaves. They led the Anti-Slavery Sewing Society, which produced clothing for runaways.
Mary Gibson and Jane J. Jackson headed a committee that put on a fair in 1858 for the benefit of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society. They were also delegates to the Ohio Black convention during the late 1850s, as were both their husbands.
Community leaders coordinated and facilitated activities to help untold numbers of runaway slaves from the south such as providing food, clothing, shelter and a variety of other services. They sometimes called upon the assistance of white reformers with whom they had influence.
The African American leaders of Cincinnati were a literate group. Almost all were able to read and write. Literacy was one of the most important areas of difference between Black leaders and non-leaders in the city.
The literature is replete with evidence that light-skinned African Americans often held favored positions within the general society and sometimes formed a special elite within the Black community.

SUMMARY

Because masters were most willing to free their mulatto offspring and were sometimes willing to allow them to learn trades, many mulatto slaves had skills that they could use to generate funds to purchase their own freedom. Moreover, the financing of the education of mixed-race Blacks from the South in northern schools was not unusual. In 1850 mulattoes accounted for 54% of adult African Americans in Cincinnati. It is therefore not surprising that the African American leadership was disproportionately light. The position and status of mulattoes in Cincinnati confirmed a regional pattern of mulatto privilege.

Although Black leaders lived disproportionately in wards 1 and 9 (the city's poorest sections), substantial numbers of them resided in every ward in which there were Black people. This residential intermingling of leader and non-leader households encouraged and facilitated regular contact between the community leadership and its constituency. The residential integration of leaders with other Blacks occurred despite their occupational dissimilarity because racial discrimination limited the areas of the city that were open to Blacks enforcing residential clustering.

Stacy Flaherty & James Oliver Horton

At the time of publication: ***Stacy Flaherty****, historian and coordinator at the Center for Advertising History at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, received a MA in American studies from George Washington University. Her essay 'Boycott in Butte: Organized Labor and the Chinese Community, 1896-1987,' won the Merrill C. Burlingame – K. Ross Toole Award from the Montana Historical Society.*
James Oliver Horton*, professor of history and American Studies at George Washington University, was also the director of the Afro-American Communities Project at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. He coauthored 'Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in an Antebellum City' (1979) with Lois E. Horton and was the pilot series coeditor of 'City of Magnificent Intentions', a social history textbook of Washington, D.C. His most recent book was 'Free People of Color: Essays inside the African American Community' (1993).*
Horton died February 20, 2017.

Mildred Bascoe: True Leadership

I had been hanging wash and teaching my boys
to scribble letters into words on the writing slates
their Daddy'd made for them – though he couldn't read –
when John Liverpool, the mulatto barber, knocked.
He'd traveled with us from Virginia and made a name
for himself in the Bucktown bottoms where we colored
shared our tiny plots with Irish and German laborers.

John stood at the door, shoulders hunched, hat in his hand.
Behind him three colored men carried my Thomas,
limp and lifeless. "It must've been his heart," John spoke,
then ushered the others in. I sprung into action, told them
to lay his body on our cot, closed his dark eyes, crossed
one muscled hand on the other, backed out, closed the door,
gathered my boys and hugged them close to me.

Later I buried my Thomas, our three sons standing tall
at his graveside, while the preacher praised
his life as a boatman on the Ohio, the very river we'd
paddled up after leaving Virginia seeking freedom
from a life as former slaves. Thomas built our bungalow –
a shanty, some might say – two blocks from the river,
where he hauled everything from pigs to cotton
to tobacco and nails, sunup to sundown.

The barber and his wife Frances (who opposed
the whites' campaign to ship colored folks to Africa),
acted like leaders for black folks in our city, starting
a fund for colored widows and orphans, the thing
I never expected I'd be. Nor did I expect to find
a stack of debts I couldn't pay – for everything from
lumber to lamp oil. John knew I risked losing everything,
knocked again at my door, this time handing me
a bond of surety for all the debts on our modest estate.

"That's what a leader does," he humbly told me, when
I fell on him, sobbing in gratitude. No one had elected
John Liverpool, still, a leader he became. Soon after,
I learned that the bond, a godsend, wasn't enough
to prevent me from having to take in the washing
of white folks up the hills, just to feed and clothe
my growing boys, just to make ends meet.

Victoria Ball: We the Ladies

I read our resolution loud and clear:

Whereas… we the ladies, as wives and mothers,
have been invited to attend and support
this Ohio State Convention of Free Blacks, in
the city of Columbus, in the year of our Lord
eighteen-hundred-fifty-eight, and Whereas…
we have been deprived of a voice, which we,
the ladies, deem wrong and shameful…
Therefore, Be It Resolved, that we the ladies
will attend no more conventions after tonight,
unless the privilege of an equal voice is granted.

Be it known to all, that I, Victoria Ball, Chair
of the Colored Ladies' Anti-slavery Sewing Circle
of Cincinnati, who has also served this Convention
on countless committees, do hereby request
this Resolution be entered into official record.

I lead the women, straight-backed, out of the hall,
the bang of the gavel echoing in our ears,
as we huddle in the hallway, excited we've spoken,
stood up for ourselves, wait breathless to hear
how our husbands will react, how they'll likely consider
they'll have to prepare the meeting rooms themselves,
set the tables, fold the programs, press the lemons
into lemonade, bake the pies, and stand over sinks
scrubbing the dishes and silver into the night,
if their wives walk away from their husbands' refusal
to give us the voice and recognition we've earned.

We wait less than fifteen minutes before the door
swings open, as Mr. Ball, my husband, approaches,
a sheepish grin on his bearded face, eager to say
our resolution demanding women's participation
was brought to the floor with speed. Only two

of the free colored men delegates opposed,
but the rest of our men were favorably disposed
to pass our Resolution, inviting the ladies
to equally share in the doings of this Convention.
We congratulate our husbands with an embrace,
then seek out the names of those two dissenters
who will rue the day they ever voted *Nay*.

Jane Jackson: The Anti-Slavery Fair

Mary Gibson and I had it in our heads
to raise more than money for the benefit
of the Anti-Slavery Society. We stitched together
a plan to hold a fair in the two patches of yard
that connected us. Mary spent a handful
of afternoons convincing Eveline Cooper
and her sister Emma, along with Victoria Ball
and Amelia Williams to join our committee.
In our part of Bucktown bordering the River,
the packed-tight section we coloreds
called home, the news circulated fast,
so Sarah Ernst and Elizabeth Coleman
soon signed on, and since they led the
Sewing Circle assisting fugitive slaves,
that became the fair's crusade,
gathering clothing and shoes for runaways,
winter jackets and scarves, since these
brothers and sisters were fleeing
from warmer weather and might
be traveling clear into Canada.

You would have loved our Sunday afternoon
Anti-Slavery Fair. We lured the men
with lemonade and custard pies,
emptied their pockets of coins, kept the children
busy with games and taffy. We filled up
burlap sacks with shoes and shirts, packed
knapsacks with nourishing seeds, nuts
and dried fruits, and when the sun set
that evening, we fell into our beds
knowing that we, the ladies, were
leaders in our own right, whether we
ever saw our names on a plaque or not.

POEMS

"Chapter 3 of 'Race and the City', edited by James Oliver Horton and Stacy Flaherty, features Black leadership in Antebellum Cincinnati. These Black leaders were elected to serve local, state and national organizations, as well as non-elected community leaders in a variety of pivotal roles – for example, free Black owners of barber shops, or those involved in Black education.
These leaders focused on two major issues: 1) the abolition of slavery; and 2) opposing the American Colonization Society's plan to remove free Blacks and transplant them to West Africa.
Since the list of Black leaders was drawn from public documents and organizational records between 1830 and 1860, the editors explain that it is 'heavily biased in favor of men.' Eighty-two Cincinnati Black leaders were identified, but only eleven of those were women.
No surprise, as women lead through committee rather than from the top-down. I searched out the names of women, wherever I could find them in Chapter 3. My poems tell the stories of all those women named in the chapter; the poems are spoken in the voices of three of the women, as I imagined them."

Kathy Wade

Kathy Wade has enjoyed a long career teaching English, creative writing, drama and speech in the Cincinnati area. Her poems have appeared in many anthologies, including several years in the Cincinnati *Poets Laureate Anthology*. A full-length novel, *Perfection*, was published in 2018. She served for ten years as Executive Director of Women Writing for (a) Change, a writing community in Cincinnati. Most recently she was Director of a leadership-development program for women religious. An anthology of her poetry will be published by Finishing Line Press in the Spring of 2023. Wade and her husband reside in Cincinnati.

JAMIE SCHORSCH

Virginia Coffey; colored pencil on paper; 9.5x13”
Sarah Mayrant Fossett; colored pencil on paper; 9x11.5”

Virginia Coffey

“The hardest thing in this world to do is like people for what they are – regardless of the artificial barriers of color and worship.” –Virginia Coffey

“Virginia Coffey was an American social reformer and civil rights activist who worked for improved race relations in and around Cincinnati, OH. She arrived in Cincinnati in 1924 to teach at an all-black school, one of the few opportunities for African American teachers. Instead of finding a progressive northern city, she found a segregated city. She fought to integrate areas of the city, including Coney Island where she coordinated an event protesting the segregation at the gates of the park. In addition to the multiple committees and organizations that she partnered with throughout her life, Coffey formed the first Girl Scouts troop for African American girls and became the first woman, and first African American, Executive Director of the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission in 1968. Throughout her life she worked to achieve her goal of getting people to listen to each other, getting to know each other, and treating each other as human beings.

The portrait created as a representation of Virginia Coffey’s impact includes symbolism related to the Coney Island protest and her role as a leader for the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission in bridging the gaps of a divided community. The divisions of the landscape become united by color. Gladiolus, a symbol of faithfulness, sincerity, and integrity, frame her image, calling emphasis to her strength of character and perseverance. Symbolic association with the Girl Scouts emerges from behind the gladiolus as a sign of her fostering and growing similar characteristics amongst young women. Canaries, representing the power of voice, illustrate a connection with freedom and inspiration of her message being carried through generations.”

Sarah Mayrant Fossett

“*Sarah Fossett was an early American social reformer and advocate for African American rights in 19th century Cincinnati, OH. Born in 1826 in Charleston, South Carolina, she moved to Cincinnati in 1954 after marrying Peter Fossett, a former slave of President Thomas Jefferson. Together, they actively assisted runaway Blacks on the Underground Railroad and founded a church along with various orphanages in the area. Fossett is prominently known for her integral part in the desegregation of the Cincinnati streetcar. A white conductor refused to let her board in 1860, resulting in her filing suit*

against the company and ultimately led to the desegregation of the streetcars, but only for African American women.
The portrait created as a representation of Sarah Mayrant Fossett's impact includes symbolism related to the early streetcar operations and her part in the creation of a divergent trajectory of the systems of segregation in place at the time in Cincinnati. The coloring of the landscape emphasizes the struggle between segregation and desegregation through the use of contrasting color. The overall primary color palette used in the creation of the piece alludes to her role as a foundation for early American social reform. Echinacea, a symbol of strength, resilience, and healing, stand opposite her image, setting up a dialogue between the literal Sarah Fossett and the ideals she embodied. The singular canary represents her role as an early voice emerging in opposition to segregation and oppression that would later impact generations of social reformers."

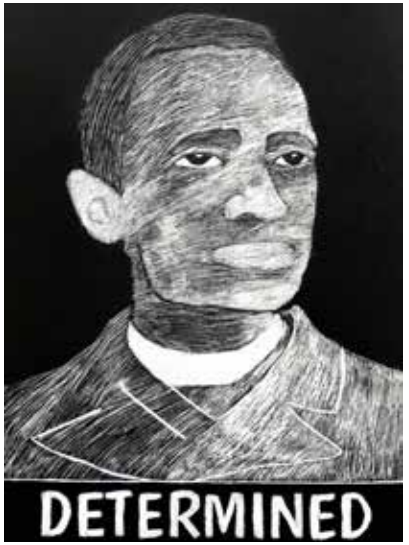
Jamie Schorsch

Engaging local and global communities through art is the foundation of Jamie Schorsch's personal philosophy and approach toward education. Schorsch holds a BFA and a MA in Art Education from the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning and a MEd in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment with Certification in Teacher Leadership from the University of Cincinnati's College of Education, Criminal Justice, and Human Services. She carries a 5 Year Senior Professional Educator Multi-Age License (P-12) in Visual Art.
Over the past 18 years, Schorsch has taught students ages 5-adult with the Art Academy of Cincinnati, The Fitton Center for Creative Arts, ArtWorks, StreetSpark, Cincinnati Public Schools, and is presently employed by Oak Hills Local School District at Oak Hills High School, where she serves as the Art and Design Department Coordinator. Schorsch teaches Art Foundations; Drawing and Printmaking; Painting and Public Art; Art History AP; and Studio Art AP: Drawing and 2D Design at the high school and advises the National Art Honor Society. She holds memberships in the Ohio Education Association, Oak Hills Education Association, Ohio Art Education Association, National Education Association, National Art Education Association and serves on the SOS ART Board. She serves on numerous committees that focus on the promotion and advancement of the arts and education.
Schorsch is an award-winning artist who has participated in over 60 exhibitions regionally and nationally and is included in multiple publications. During the summer, she designs and paints murals throughout the Greater Cincinnati area.

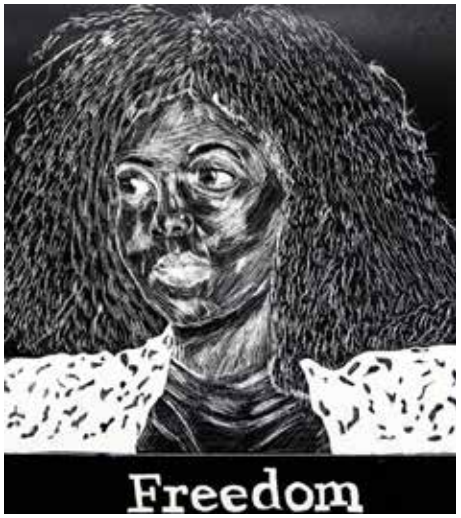
OAK HILLS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Anna ACKMAN -- Virginia Coffey: Determined
Molly AUDRETCH -- Marian Spencer: Resolute
Carly BUTTS -- Jennie D. Porter: Determined
Anna CAITO -- Virginia Coffey: Courageous

VISUAL ART



Anna CAMPBELL -- Daniel A. Rudd: Determined
William DENNISON -- Marie Selika Williams: Groundbreaking
Jada KIDD -- Sarah Fossett: Brave
Ashlynn KLEIER -- Marie Selika Williams: Passionate



Abigail LINENKUGEL -- Charles Satchell: Inspiring
Ella LOUDERMILK -- Jennie D. Porter: Brilliant
Rain MAGRUM -- Ray Ball: Freedom
Abigail MILEY -- Marie Selika Williams: Admirable

Avril PREDMORE -- Marie Selika Williams: Talented
Anne RILEY -- Marie Selika Williams: Trailblazer
Elizabeth SCHREIBEIS -- Robert S. Duncanson: Imaginative
Jamie TURNER -- Rita Dove: Genuine

Icons of Influence; scratchboard; 16 pieces, size variable 9x8" to 11x8"

"*Sixteen students from Oak Hills High School reviewed information from Chapter 3 of 'Race and the City' and the accompanying virtual book discussion posted online. They then each researched either an individual discussed in Chapter 3 or other historic or contemporary African Americans who influenced in a positive way or impacted the advancement of this marginalized group of individuals in Cincinnati. To create the image they used a scratchboard stylus to capture carefully observed details, textures, highlights, and shadows. They also each selected a term as a descriptor of the selected icon that was included in the work to summarize the individual's life or characteristics."*

OAK HILLS HIGH SCHOOL students

Anna Ackman is a junior at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Molly Audretch is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Carly Butts is a senior at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Anna Caito is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Anna Campbell is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

William Dennison is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking. He greatly enjoyed learning about the history of people from the diverse city of Cincinnati.

Jada Kidd is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Ashlynn Kleier is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Abigail Linenkugel is a junior at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Ella Loudermilk is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Rain Magrum is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Abigail Miley is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Avril Predmore is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Anne Riley is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Jamie Turner is a sophomore at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

Elizabeth Schriebeis is a freshman at Oak Hills High School enrolled in Drawing and Printmaking.

CHAPTER 4

The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation in Antebellum Cincinnati

-- by ***Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula***

In antebellum Cincinnati, African Americans were scattered throughout the white-dominated residential environment. Although concentrated in the eastern portion of the city, Blacks were still dispersed across Cincinnati's face. Along with the lack of territorial domination, this scattering created barriers to community formation. Blacks were divided in significant ways. Slavery differed from region to region and state to state creating various experiences they brought to the city. Some Blacks were manumitted, some escaped and some were born free. Occupation determined where in the city one lived.

The chapter looks at several variables that might create barriers to community formation such as family, household type, and age structure. Skin color was a source of tension within the Black community. Much attention is given to the large mulatto population, 63% of the sample compared to 36% Blacks.

African Americans formed small residential clusters sandwiched in among the larger white population. Blacks clustered for safety, mutual aid, to be near family and friends and other members of the race. Clusters were always bracketed by groups of whites with one or two white families residing within the cluster.

Although Blacks were scattered throughout the then six-mile square city, they established institutions in one or two sections of the city forming a "commons" where social interaction took place. In these shared institutions, a diverse people confronted similar problems and developed similar experiences which reinforced shared values and united the population.

Most Blacks were concentrated in the East End Factory district and along the Central Waterfront district. Black institutions were located in the two locales of "Bucktown" and "Little Africa". On map 4.2 you will find the home of Levi Coffin the abolitionist, the Black-owned Dumas Hotel, the Colored Children's Orphanage, many churches and schools for Black children.

Much attention in this chapter is given to shade of color. It was thought to be a source of tension for African Americans during the antebellum period.

SUMMARY

Preferential treatment was given to light-skinned Blacks on the plantation. They were more than likely the offspring of the plantation owner. Often the light-skinned Blacks or mulattoes were still considered slaves but they were "house" slaves given less intense work than the "field" slaves. The plantation owner's offspring were often taught a trade which enabled them to earn enough money to buy their freedom. They were also sent north to be educated.

The preferential treatment of mulattoes was evident in the large number of mulattoes found amongst freed Blacks in the North.

In their quest to understand community formation among African Americans in the pre-ghetto era, the researchers asked, "Did mulattoes separate themselves from Blacks in the residential environment in Cincinnati?" They concluded that shade of color did not erect insurmountable barriers to community formation. "James E. Blackwell suggests that shared life experiences can create communal bonds even when great differences exist within a group." In other words, racism in Cincinnati did not concern itself with shade of color. Mulattoes as well as Blacks were subject to discrimination and terrorism.

Research indicated that although most Blacks and mulattoes lived in separate households, they nevertheless shared the same dwelling unit making it reasonable to believe that given the high levels of racial hostility in antebellum Cincinnati, this proximity reinforced communal bonds and facilitated the community formation process. Thus, in Cincinnati, shade of color did not create a barrier to community formation.

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.

please refer to page 11

Vicky Dula

In 1993, at the time of publication of 'Race and the City': Vicky Dula was the director of research at the Center for Applied Public Affairs Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo and a PhD candidate in U.S. history at Ohio State University. She was completing a project on the National Urban League, the NAACP, Black workers, and the fight for a "true" Fair Labor Standards Act.

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Communion Prayer

In those days we were all very separated
So much so, that a *we* almost never existed

Trapped in the burrows of our own lives.
Occupation, Shade, Family Structure
and all the other words I looked up in the thesaurus,
ways for them to define and separate us
like cuts of meat,
incarnate in the names which I'd placed so much worth in.

We were not afforded the intimacy of proximity,
nor the milieu of access to each other that must
be necessary for building this tower
that so many people called community.

My father said we'd been scattered like chicken feed,
renamed like strangers at the Tower of Babel,
by some invisible white god so high up,
that my neck hurt when I tried to talk to him.

But when we all came together,
I looked to my left and right and stood
and sat, and dropped to my knees
like everyone else around me.

I didn't know if it was for my parents or the holy spirit,
but when I closed my eyes to pray,
all I knew was that I couldn't see the color
of my own hands in front of my face,

And when I was standing and sitting and kneeling
like everyone else,
I felt very much that we weren't scattered as far
as I knew we must be.

Inside my head, I prayed my own communion prayer
for a community I was sure I could call my own.
And with my voice,
I prayed like everyone else,
Our eyes facing the same direction,
and our lips forming the same words.

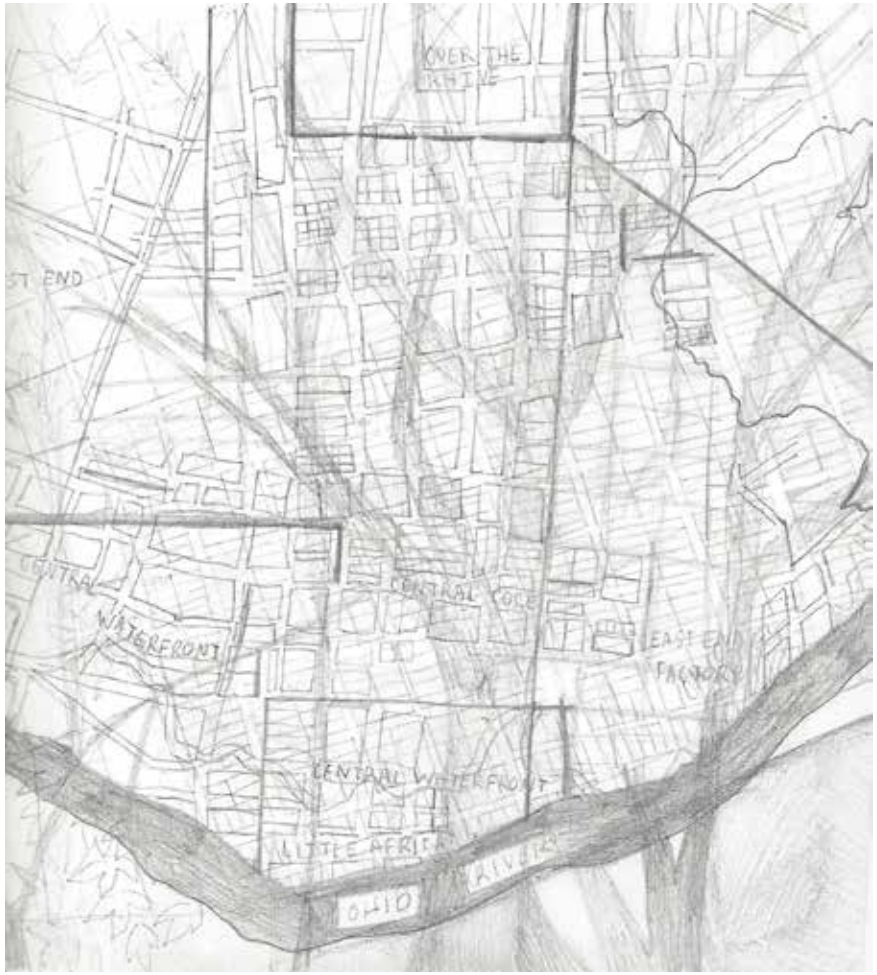
But no one said jinx.
This wasn't a trick.
And I kept my eyes forward,
As we said our communion prayer.

"My poem 'Communion Prayer' speaks to the importance of shared spaces as a catalyst for community building. Chapter 4 gives an idea of how spread out African American communities were in pre-antebellum Cincinnati, which must have resulted in isolation and inability to create culture or power structures in larger groups. My poem references these points, but juxtaposes them with the calming agent of moving in unison with those who have common experiences and values with you."

Michael Thompson

Michael Thompson is a Multimedia Artist, Poet, Designer, and Educator who actively works to create a living ecosystem around his art by making community relationships and education intimate parts of his work and process. He is currently Artist-in-Residence at both the Cincinnati Art Museum and Contemporary Arts Center and is 2022 TEDx Mainstage Speaker. Thompson's current work, "Sanctuaries" finds him exploring and interviewing BIPOC creatives on their sacred spaces as part of a multidisciplinary book in his efforts to give an authentic and nuanced view of black and brown art in America.

SARAH RODRIGUEZ



The Black Residential Experience and Community Formation; graphite on paper; 9.5x8.5”

“In response to Chapter 4 of the ‘Race and the City’ book, I layered together imagery that reflected the Cincinnati landscape at three different time periods. The first layer is an invented composition using native trees as the subject. This layer represents the native landscape and peoples who inhabited the place we now call Cincinnati. For the second layer I drew from one of the first maps of Losantiville (Cincinnati) created in 1802 by Robert Clarke. Clark’s map more specifically shows a record of the distribution and sale of lots. For the final layer I used map 4.1 from the ‘Race and the City’ book. It is from 1850 and outlines the blooming neighborhoods. Chapter 4 shares the reality of our diverse city. It discusses how people of all races and cultural backgrounds lived all throughout Cincinnati at one time. However, this shifted because of various factors in community formation, one being the limitation on community institutions. This, among other factors, played a role in creating divisions. As we move forward with this knowledge we can redefine what community means now and in the future.”

Sarah Rodriguez

Sarah Rodriguez, born and raised in Ohio, currently lives and works as an artist and art educator in Cincinnati, OH. She has a BFA in studio art from Wright State University (2014) and an MFA in painting from Miami University (2017). She first became interested in art education as a Dorothy and Bill Yeck Fellow with the Dayton Art Institute, teaching and assisting high school students develop their skills and build their portfolios for college admission. In 2014 she was an Artist-In-Residence at the Chautauqua Institute, School of Art in Chautauqua, NY and began that same year teaching printmaking at Stivers School for Fine and Performing Arts in Dayton, OH. In winter 2019-2020, she was the Artist-in-Residence at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, OH. Rodriguez has also worked in arts education at The Carnegie Arts Center in Covington, KY and at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati. Through her many experiences Rodriguez has found that there is no greater gift than being a part of a supportive community. Her goal is to help communities flourish though arts education. She is currently the Director of Arts Education at Kennedy Heights Arts Center in Cincinnati.

DANIEL & PATRICIA CLARK ROPER

Daniel CLARK ROPER -- Home; acrylic on canvas; 20x24”

Patricia CLARK ROPER -- Cincinnati – Family – History; acrylic on canvas; 30x24”

"Patricia and Daniel Clark Roper formed a mother-and-son collaboration to create their visual presentation of history presented in Chapter 4 and its link to their family."

Patricia Clark Roper: *"My painting is multi-layered. The background depicts buildings jammed into the extremely compact space of antebellum Cincinnati. Superimposed on these buildings are lighter, incandescent images depicting the postbellum future: members of our family who migrated from the south to enter those spaces. Linking the people, their spirits, and their living spaces is a network of tiny letters which repeat the names of our first family migrants to Cincinnati as well as those of their descendants. Outsized cotton plants – the bane of the existence of our ancestors who migrated from Alabama and Georgia – and dandelions – considered weeds by many – represent the overarching power and influence of persistent societal attitudes and norms that continue to foster discrimination and violence against people of color; while butterflies evoke the enduring hope which guides and inspires us to be better. Among the huge plants, tiny ones - representing the histories of people whose lives and stories are often devalued or repressed - have also been created from our family names. These cannot be seen without close inspection and intentional effort."*

One of those stories is depicted in…

Daniel Clark Roper: *"My painting was inspired by a tattered newspaper clipping announcing my 'Negro' grandparents' move from inner-city Cincinnati to a home in Finneytown – with the consequence that my father became the first Black student to attend Finneytown schools from kindergarten through high school graduation."*

Daniel Clark Roper & Patricia Clark Roper

Daniel Clark Roper (a third-generation Cincinnatian) followed in the footsteps of his father, Emmett C. Roper, Jr. (a first-generation college graduate), earning his diploma from The Ohio State University College of Medicine 29 years after him. Danny is currently a resident physician in pediatrics at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

His mother, **Patricia Clark Roper**, a native of Paulding, Ohio is a retired teacher who learned and drew from her elementary, high school, university, and adult students in Ohio; Bogotá, Colombia; and Madrid and Barcelona, Spain.

CHAPTER 5

Structural Economic Change and Occupational Decline Among Black Workers in Nineteenth-Century Cincinnati

-- by ***Nancy Bertaux***

Dr. Daniel Drake, in his account of Cincinnati in 1815, wrote that the city's small number of Blacks were "disciplined to laborious occupations" and "prone to the performance of light and menial drudgery." Cincinnati editor Timothy Flint wrote "…the evils of slavery are not confined to the parts of the country where involuntary labour exists, but the neighborhood is infected. Certain kinds of labour are despised as being the work of slaves."

A Black traveler to Cincinnati in 1827 reported: "I thought upon coming to a free state like Ohio I would find every door thrown open to receive me, but from the treatment I received, I found it little better than in Virginia….I found every door closed against the colored man in a free state excepting the jails and penitentiaries." Indeed, even the poorhouse was closed to Blacks. One of the provisions of the Black Laws was that destitute, unemployed Blacks were ineligible for poor relief. White employers who were willing to hire Blacks in skilled jobs often faced extreme censure from those white workers who saw themselves in direct competition with African American Labor. Trade associations, dominated by German and, to a lesser extent, Irish immigrants, not only forbade Black membership but also pressured white businesses not to take on Black workers in any but "appropriate" – that is, low-level and unskilled – employment. In 1830 one leader of a local trade group was tried by his organization for the "crime" of assisting a young Black man in learning a trade.

Sometimes white abolitionists hired Black skilled workers. One local newspaper called upon all friends of the colored people to "encourage their industry" as a part of the "great duty of abolitionists." Yet "few abolitionists ever called upon them (Black artisans) to do other than menial work." One Black Cincinnatian complained, "We have among us carpenters, plasterers, masons, etc., whose skill as workmen is confessed – and yet they find no encouragement – not ever among (white) friends."

The dramatic surge in German and Irish immigrants who settled in Cincinnati in the 1830s and 1840s had a significant impact on the local labor market. These immigrants willing to do menial labor, greatly restricted job opportunities for Black men: "Since the Negroes could not follow ordinary menial occupations there was nothing left

SUMMARY

them but the lowest form of 'drudgery,' for which employers often preferred colored women. It was therefore, necessary in some cases for the mother to earn the living for the family because the father could get nothing to do. Inside and outside trade unions, the city's white workers were known to protest against working with Blacks, especially when Blacks were not in a subordinate position.

The Black school system was gradually absorbed into the white system following school desegregation legislation in the late 1800s at the state level. In the process, most Black teachers (as well as male principals) were phased out, and the influence of those who remained waned. The primary reason for the reduction in Black teachers was that white parents and school officials would not allow them to teach classes that included white pupils. Black principals were not permitted to supervise white teachers.

1860-1890 census data show that Black families' low earnings were especially sobering when their high labor force participation rates were considered; in effect, they worked harder to earn less. Much of the reason for this phenomenon lies in the very restricted nature of the occupations in which Blacks were generally employed. Moreover, as the city's economy developed, Blacks did not attain much upward mobility in the occupational arena.

"The nineteenth-century experience of Cincinnati Blacks suggests that the United States' current structural economic changes cannot be relied upon to produce economic opportunities that benefit Blacks, even when combined with a decline in formalized racial barriers. Continuing informal barriers based on race, as well as the cumulative effects of past discrimination, mean that conscious analysis and concerted action will be required to truly upgrade the occupational status of the Black community as a whole." Nancy Bertaux.

Nancy Bertaux

Nancy Bertaux is Professor of Economics at Xavier University, holds a PhD and MA in Economics from the University of Michigan, and BA in Economics from Colgate University. As an undergraduate, she participated in an academic program on economic development in Jamaica. She has worked at the Urban Institute, the Inter-American Foundation, and the Department of Navy in Washington D.C., and at General Electric Co. in Cincinnati. She has consulted on legal and diversity matters, and has published over 30 articles in scholarly journals and a book on issues of international economic development, workforce diversity, economic thought, and economic history.

KEMONTE FIGGS

Nothing but Love

My people died for a long time because we were taught to be NOTHING.
Standing in the face of judgement, this system has always looked down on us like we were NOTHING….
Ever since the first ghettos, people of no color have expected us to be ignorant and to know NOTHING….
Jealousy of our true identities. They robbed us of our culture and took everything from us. As a result, it left us with NOTHING…
In the hood they closed our recreations. Dead bodies on a hoop-less basketball court. They said our youth shall shoot at NOTHING.
Born with nothing but the color of our skin and branded with our slave's masters names.
When it comes to who we are, my people still know NOTHING.
Destroying our families. It's not our fault that we are so used to having NOTHING.
Let's us expose the chapter, "Structural Economic Change and Occupational Decline Among Black Workers in Nineteenth Century Cincinnati". Its only purpose was for us to have NOTHING.
To this very day our women provide for our men and children even though we cannot reciprocate.
Our queens do everything to give us Nothing but Love. So how come they receive NOTHING back but hate?
It is because this Chapter was designed, for NOTHING but heart ache and NOTHING but Mistakes. Nothing but division, and nothing but conquering the black race.
As a black man, why should I punch a clock for pocket change till I'm old and withered away like the last second of the day.
Just so a black man can go slave every day and get paid little to NOTHING? Just so a black man can give up on his dreams like his dreams mean NOTHING.
No matter how many times GOD tries to communicate, he can't get a call through because most of us hear NOTHING.
It's a reminder of the hundreds of years we served them. Our currency was water and breadcrumbs because they wanted the stomachs of our children to be filled up with NOTHING….
No justice, No Peace, No Equality, and No respirations. NOTHING but fear. Nothing but tears.
Paper genocide erased our names like we were NOTHING.
Why do I have to explain that it's wrong to call another grown man boy. Trying to see what you can get away with just so you can make him feel like he's NOTHING?

After reading your wrongs in this poem I bet you feel like you're NOTHING.
It's impossible to change the world when you look in the mirror and find that you see NOTHING.
My people just want the freedom to survive after all this time. For hundreds of years, we've been killed off like nothing.
I've seen myself die so many times, it's unimaginable to feel NOTHING.
It's a miracle that we still have our voices because, when they treated us like nothing, we were told to say NOTHING.
After all the pain and all the suffering, somehow, we showed up and showed out to be more than NOTHING.
I guess it was the love of GOD that kept us from being NOTHING.

"I responded to Chapter 5 of the 'Race and the City' book with both a poem and a painting. The content of the chapter reflected very much on my life as it validated how our system was built against people of color like me. It reminded me of how people of color to this day are never given a fair opportunity to excel in a land that our ancestors built before the European man colonized it after stealing it in blood. More and more evidence is being revealed on how my people was wrongfully stripped from our identity and our heritage.
I felt connected to this chapter the moment I began to read it because I am still experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in my life. All I can think about is the generational impact that was scarred upon us after all these generations living in Cincinnati. When I look around, I see the same exact issues and in multiple ways racism and discrimination are still holding back people of color. I know countless Black men today who hate working a job, including me, because we know that it won't be enough. We would rather come up with our own way. Black men feel as if we are being treated like children (on the job force, in the court room, by the police, and by educators) because white men who have been given better opportunities automatically assume they are superior. This chapter has provided evidence to show that Black men working alongside white men and making equal pay is preposterous.
This chapter is proof that I've always been right, and no one can tell me I'm wrong. It makes me angry how rich men are making millions or even billions off our backs while we get paid the breadcrumbs out from the basket of economic wealth. We struggle feeding our children. Any opportunity that can put us higher on our feet is not

accepted. It's rare for a man of color to become wealthy in this country. In the city where they never make it, our women are breaking their backs to this day, wiping defecation out of the cracks of old white men and women. I only know Black women who are nursing assistants, restaurant workers, babysitters, and customer service attendants.
It is obvious that the system that was built long ago is the same one we currently know today. Its only purpose and vision are to keep the Black man serving the white man when it should be the other way around. They owe us their service because we are the ones who've been destroyed by lies and manipulations. The lie and manipulation of us being nothing more than slaves, when all we ever wanted was nothing but love."

KéMonté Figgs

KéMonté Figgs is a self-taught Cincinnati native who loves to depict the emotional experiences of his people through black art. Bringing an impact to the youth in his community and positively influencing children to discover their true potential by tapping into their hidden talents is what he hopes to accomplish. Whether it's painting, writing poetry, singing, dancing, videography, music production, he believes there are so many different pathways our black youth can turn to rather than the streets. Art has always been a part of him. As a kid, he found it easier to express himself by drawing and coloring. Rather than talking about his problems with being bullied by other children, he drew about them. Growing up, he was nurtured by those who saw his potential and developed him into the artist he is today. Inspired by his art teacher Angela Mulcahy at North College Hill High School, he dreamed of attending Columbus College of Art and Design to be a cartoon animator. While Figgs pursued a different path, eventually God "trampled' on his course, reminding him of whom he was created to be. Before he knew it, he picked up a paint brush and began expressing himself with a voice that was heard like never before. In 2020, he became one out of 16 artists to paint the "Cincinnati Black Lives Matter! Street Mural" located downtown Cincinnati in front of City Hall. As the creator of the Black Statue of Liberty that was painted inside the letter "S" in "LIVES", Figgs' theme for the project was to shed light on "Justice, Equality, and Peace". Shortly after the success of the mural, he became a co-founder of the nonprofit organization, "Black Art Speaks".

Nothing but Love; acrylic on canvas; 28x22"

JERRY JUDGE

POEM

Dear Cincinnati,

I.

It's easy to lie.
As a kid, I believed you.
Although a borderland city,
I thought we were a free city from a free state!
Damn, I had such reason to be proud,
to smirk down my nose at bordering Kentucky
from which we saved slaves in the Underground Railroad.
O' Lord, I yearn to be free,
and we helped free people by hundreds, if not thousands.

In my childhood dream, I was a friendly whale
swimming across the Ohio to liberate slaves.
I would carry them across to freedom in Ohio.

II.

How did you define free?
The 1803 Ohio Constitution abolished slavery,
but black men were denied voting rights
(as well as all women, white or black).
Like a possessed evil despot,
Ohio then created the Ohio Black Laws.
Cincinnati didn't teach me a damn thing
about those laws in school.
As a little white boy drone, I recited
The Pledge of Allegiance with full belief born in ignorance.

III.

After statehood, Ohio distained and didn't want blacks
in Cincinnati or any other Ohio town
so Black Laws were established – blacks had to post
bond of $500 to guarantee *good behavior*,
they couldn't serve in public office or militia,
nor receive public education or aid from
institutions for physical ailments or mental infirmity.
They were also barred from jury duty and absolutely no
testimony against whites allowed.

It has been said the Devil was the last legislator
voting yes for the Black Laws.

IV.

Despite Black Laws, many brave blacks did settle in our town
due to opportunities from the steamboats.
Even without basic rights, blacks paid taxes.
Rising sentiment against black settlement accelerated
until 1829 when a proclamation was issued
that blacks would be kicked out of town
unless they paid $500 within thirty days.

In August the Riots of 1829 began. Mobs of ethnic whites attacked
blacks and their property. Blacks fought back and blood flowed.
Close to half of the black residents moved out of Cincinnati.
Blacks who remained and black migrants were attacked again
by white rioters in 1836 and 1841. Once again, history was muzzled,

V.

Black Americans John Malvin and James C. Brown said, *their desire to exercise their civil rights and live free from the trammels of social and unequal laws was their chief inspiration for moving to Canada after the riots*. Cincinnati lost hundreds moving to Canada.

VI.

After the Civil War there was a big decline
in formalized racism due to legal decisions plus reform.
This didn't help blacks in Cincinnati one damn bit!
Great job opportunities never happened – a sinister and informal
system of discrimination and racism smoothly rolled into place.
The South made Jim Crow laws. We in the North pretended
enlightenment.

VII

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested.
Everyone knows that.
In May of 1859, Sarah Fossett in Cincinnati boarded a streetcar –
the conductor refused to allow her to ride, and she was tossed off.

Sarah Fossett sued the streetcar company and won!
From then on, black women were permitted to ride the streetcar.
How many people even in Cincinnati know about Sarah Fossett?
Lying can be omission as well as commission.

POEM

"I was very struck and dismayed reading about the Black Laws and the motivation behind them in Chapter 5. I believe these Black Laws and the motivation behind them were the main reason Black workers could find such limited employment opportunities in Cincinnati. That was the primary motivation behind my poem, 'Dear Cincinnati,' plus my belief and anger at being lied to as a citizen of Cincinnati for years regarding race."

Jerry Judge

Jerry Judge's eighth poetry collection, *The Cold Moon* (Seven Kitchens Press) was published in 2021. Judge lives in the Cincinnati suburb of Finneytown with two royal felines and an earnest canine who tries to walk him twice daily.

PONES

Chapter 5; 2 screenshots of video; video, 5 min 47 sec

To view **Video:** https://vimeo.com/704950019/5e3aab6c8b

"Chapter 5 pertains to the occupational decline among Black workers in 19th century Cincinnati. We (Pones) mined the rich potential of our medium to show the 'physicality' and 'drain' of working ten times harder with 1/10th of the gain. In this chapter we learn that Black folx began to work younger, worked longer (without retirement options), and laws passed between 1820-1860 under the guise of 'helping Black people,' in fact, helped white counterparts by barring labor unions. Through this piece we hope to tap into the exhaustion, resilience, and humanity of this experience, all set in the beautifully foreboding setting of an abandoned factory."

Pones

Pones provides artistic opportunities for community growth by creating engaging new ways for audiences to experience dance. Founded in 2008, Pones has collaborated with over 200 artists and 80 arts and service organizations. The company creates site-specific performances through a fusion of movement and dance with other art forms. Pones' accessible and participatory performances have been seen in over 90 Greater Cincinnati locations, as well as Indianapolis, and Chicago. Ongoing programs are available year round for artists and art groups, schools, and businesses. Pones performers use their bodies to speak their minds. The collective uses its signature 'pedestrian-inspired' movement to spark collaboration, connection, and community. Pones believes that art creates powerful change.
Mission Video:
https://vimeo.com/390752442?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=4772119
Website: www.pones.org

CHAPTER 6

City Building, Public Policy, the Rise of the Industrial City, and Black Ghetto-Slum Formation in Cincinnati, 1850-1940

-- by ***Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.***

Historians argue that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Black population growth, the institutional development of the Black community, the activities of the real estate industry and the widespread urban change combined with a national rise in racist ideology produced the Black ghetto-slum. Racial hostility was the driving force behind this change process.

This chapter seeks to explain how the rise of the industrial city, the emergence of mass homeownership, zoning laws, building codes, city planning, and subdivision regulations led to the formation of the Black ghetto slum in Cincinnati.

Cincinnati was selected as a model city because it experienced the spatial changes characteristic of the evolving industrial city (growing differentiation by function, decentralization, and residential segregation based on class and race) and because Cincinnati in the teens and twenties became a national leader in the city planning and housing reform movements. Led by the Better Housing League, a citizens group founded in 1916, the city gained a national reputation for planning and housing reform. In 1925 Cincinnati became the first large American city to adopt an official city plan. This plan codified and gave birth to neighborhoods segregated on the basis of race and class. Together within the context of racial hostility, the plan gave rise to the twentieth-century ghetto.

The territorial expansion that took place, along with the rise of industrial Cincinnati, gave birth to new neighborhoods located outside the basin. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, residential land use began to lose its competitive struggle for space as industrial and commercial expansion slowly transformed the basin into a land use conversion zone. In the basin, new factories, buildings, alterations, renovations, and expanding railroad lines engulfed dwelling units. At the same time, electrically powered streetcars and incline planes were making it possible for people to move out of the basin into new neighborhoods developing in other parts of Cincinnati.

SUMMARY

From 1870 on, elite, middle-class, and higher-paid workers gradually moved out of the basin into Mt. Auburn, Mt. Hope, Mt. Harrison, Fairmont, Camp Washington, Cumminsville, Clifton, Corryville, Avondale, Walnut Hills, Mt. Adams, Mt. Lookout, Mt. Healthy, Hyde Park, Pleasant Ridge, Oakley. Between 1870 and 1940 the number of people living in the basin fell from 141,323 to 83,086. The majority of those moving out were white. From 1910 to 1940, 86,659 whites left the basin. Those who remained were low-income workers and small businessmen. From 1870 to 1940 the Black basin population increased by 704%.

Cincinnati developers used a combination of deed restrictions and subdivision design to create neighborhoods segregated by housing type and cost.

By 1930 Cincinnati's neighborhoods had been divided into three distinct types of residential districts: low, moderate, and high-rent. The Better Housing League suggested that no new housing should be built in the basin. Rather, new dwelling units should be constructed in the valley and hilltop neighborhoods, and as people moved out of the basin, their "old" housing could "trickle down" to lower-income groups.

The zoning law creating three different types of residential areas (A, B, and C) codified the city's emerging class-stratified residential environment and legally reinforced the economic walls separating the various residential districts. Public policies, combined with the practices of the real estate industry and white homeowners, kept most Blacks out of the new, white neighborhoods and relegated them to the basin area.

Blacks and whites began to live in two very different types of neighborhoods. Most whites lived in neighborhoods dominated by single-family owner-occupied dwellings characterized by open space and amenities. Blacks lived in the tenement-dominated low-rent district, where they shared residential space with factories, buildings, and railroads. The city-building process did indeed play a prominent role in ghetto-slum formation.

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.

please refer to page 11

ALISON TAYLOR/SHANNON QUAY

A Collection of Lines

History caked in every crease of her skin, her neck.
For a while she had enough air in her lungs to breathe
in for 4, and then hold for 7, out for 8.

A hip bone with no ball joint. An arm without a hinge;
swung open to everyone when everyone meant everyone.

A body is still glory without being glorified.

Her body shook out- mushroomed
far beyond her bones-
a film built up on her skin,
Blurred by scratches not caused by her own fingers,
a circus of organs, commotion built alongside calm;

Even her heartbeat was hard to find.

Her division disguised as her progress.
Her brokenness disguised as her reformation.
She was a collection of lines disguised as a city.

But she is not her broken body.
She is not a broken body.

"Chapter 6 discusses city building, public policy and the rise of the industrial city. As we read and considered the chapter we wondered what a personified Cincinnati may have felt about the restructuring taking place. Cincinnati was the first city to adopt an official city plan but within that plan the neighborhoods would become segregated. Our response depicts how the city may have felt about these changes by telling the experience through her eyes."

Alison Taylor & Shannon Quay

Alison Covey Taylor is a writing professor at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. She is the managing editor of This is WAAC and her work has been seen in Business Insider and other independent literary magazines. She is currently working on a collection of short stories. Taylor lives in Cincinnati with her husband and two daughters and is passionate about bringing people together around words.

Shannon Quay is a writer and teacher from Cincinnati, Ohio. Her writing has appeared in various independent literary magazines. She is a poet who is working on her first novel. Quay lives with her husband, three sons, and her old man dog.

LARRY JONES

Typical Sub-standard Housing; color photograph; 8x7.5”

“Commercial Cincinnati formed in a six-square-mile basin surrounded by sharply rising hills with the Mill Creek Valley on the west and the Deer Creek Valley on the east. This topography inhibited outward expansion, forcing most people to live in the basin area. The population had no choice but to mix. Blacks did not live in racially segregated enclaves. Most blacks held low paying menial jobs and a disproportionate number lived in alleys, apartments above stores, dilapidated wooden structures, and rickety tenements, but still had white neighbors.”

United American Cemetery; color photograph; 7.5x10.5”

“Formed in 1844, this is the oldest African American Cemetery in Ohio. Located on Duck Creek Road in Madisonville, it is poorly maintained due to lack of funding. During the Commercial City period prior to the Civil War, Cincinnati was a racist city where blacks were subjected to tight social and occupational restrictions. There were bloody race riots in 1829, 1836, 1841, and 1862. Blacks were prohibited by law from sitting on juries, testifying against whites in court, serving in the militia, attending public school, securing relief, and being admitted to the poor house. They had to sit in segregated church pews and were buried in segregated graves in a potter’s field.”

The City Barn; color photo-graph; 7x10.5”

“Rise of the Industrial City - Civil War to the end of World War I: During this period, Cincinnati’s commercial city was transformed into the spatially differentiated industrial city. In the 1880s and 1890s a system of interurban transportation was developed based on electric streetcars and inclines which made outward expansion possible. This city barn was constructed in1896 to house horses that pulled early streetcars when the system was extended to Avondale and Clifton. It later became a storage and maintenance shed for electric streetcars that replaced horses in the early 20th century. Today it is decorated with murals inspired by animals at the nearby Cincinnati Zoo.”

Conflict Between Econo-mic & Residen-tial Deve-lopment; color photo-graph; 7x10.5”

“By 1900 the conflict between economic and residential development in the basin was making the area an undesirable place to live.”

Cheap Housing Located in Hartwell; color photograph; 4.25x10.5”

“By the 1920s an informal housing market existed that catered to low income workers. This consisted of real estate speculators, building material companies, banks, savings and loan companies, and an army of carpenters. This allowed low income blacks to acquire cheap housing in the valley and hilltop regions or in the suburbs. By 1930 blacks had developed residential areas in the suburbs of College Hill (the Steele subdivision), Kennedy Heights, Wyoming, Lockland, Woodlawn, and Hazelwood.”

The Black Ghetto Slum; color photograph; 7.5x10”

“From about 1870 onward elite, middle class, and higher paid workers gradually moved out of the basin area into outlying areas. The majority of those moving out were white. The new neighborhoods were characterized by owner occupied single-family dwelling units. Zoning laws, building codes, city planning, and subdivision regulations served to protect the new predominately white neighborhoods. Between 1900 and 1940 the black population of the city grew from 15,000 to 36,000 due to the migration of southern blacks. The greatest rate of growth occurred during the 1920’s when about 18,000 blacks moved to the city. Most blacks labored at the bottom of Cincinnati’s occupational ladder and were forced to seek the cheapest rental housing available. This led to the formation of the black ghetto-slum. The first black ghetto slum was bounded by Court Street and the Ohio River and falling between Central Avenue and Freeman Avenue. Today nothing remains of this slum as the area consists of freeway, industrial development, or has been gentrified.”

VISUAL ART

“As a photographer, I have used current images to illustrate some of the main developments covered in Chapter 6 of the ‘Race and the City’ book. The formation of the first black ghetto-slum was in an area of the West End that now consists of freeway, industry, or has been gentrified. I illustrate current slum housing perhaps similar to that found in that first slum. The development of the street car which allowed for outward expansion played a role in the formation of the black-ghetto slum. The original City Barn constructed in Avondale in 1856 to house horses that pulled early streetcars remains and is shown in a recent photograph. Additional images illustrate the competition between industrial and residential development similar to what occurred in the basin area, a segregated black cemetery, cheap housing similar to that built for blacks in outlying areas, and substandard housing inhabited by blacks living in clusters within white-dominated residential areas prior to the Civil War.”

Larry Jones

Larry Jones was born in Cincinnati and graduated from the University of Cincinnati. He was employed by Hamilton County Job and Family Services and is now retired from that agency.
Jones’ first artistic endeavors were sculptural constructions using purchased and found objects. Later he created ceramic pieces which he incorporated into the constructions. For the last approximately twenty years his artistic interest has been devoted to photography. Jones likes street photography with a special interest in street art including murals, graffiti, stencils and pasteups.

BILL OLSEN

Relics; metal point (gold 22k, silver, & palladium) on panel prepared with tempera grounds (RubLev); 12x12”

“Relics is a response to Henry Taylor’s discussion of how Cincinnati’s industrialization solidified the city class and racial divide. During the transformative period, decisions between tenement housing, factories, warehouses, and railyards were made that separated the classes and races. Today the relics of the early land-use policies remain as effective barriers continuing to mark out “undesirable” places of Cincinnati.”

Bill Olsen

Artist Bill Olsen lives in Kentucky, works in Cincinnati, and doodles at Jessamine Street Studios in Camp Washington.

CHAPTER 7

Cincinnati Blacks and the Irony of Low-Income Housing Reform, 1900-1950

-- by ***Robert B. Fairbanks***

Cincinnati Blacks suffered from inadequate housing long before the so-called “Negro housing crisis” appeared during and after World War I. “Local Blacks ‘occupied the worst land and housing’ in the city” in 1913. City health officer, J.H. Landis lamented, “In Cincinnati it is almost impossible for a colored man to secure decent quarters for his family.”

Thomas Philpott suggested that the “color line” limited both economic and residential mobility for Blacks.

Tenement reform emerged to promote a new tenement code in May 1909 but enforcement of the regulations negatively affected Blacks inasmuch as it depleted the city’s already-limited housing stock by eliminating the city’s worst housing but doing little to promote new housing. The city’s dilapidated tenements came under the most careful scrutiny for regulators who ordered expensive repairs which were sometimes passed on to the tenants in higher rents. Public health official Dr. Haven Emerson said of the West End in 1923, “You could not produce a prize hog to show at the fair under conditions that you allow Negroes to live in this city. Pigs and chickens would die in them for lack of light, cleanliness and air.”

The “Business Creed” of housing developers touted that “Housing was a commodity for private enterprise to provide a profit”. If model tenements were to succeed, they would have to return a profit of no less than 5 percent to their investors. This handicapped any efforts directed at building “model tenements” for the poor.

Completely philanthropic endeavors were never considered by Cincinnati reformers. They viewed such housing as detrimental to both the marketplace and the tenant.

Jacob G. Schmidlapp, a wealthy Cincinnati businessman and philanthropist, constructed 6 units of housing for both whites and Blacks outside of the congested basin between 1911-1914.

Only 12 of the first 56 units completed were for Blacks. Angry neighborhood whites forced him to exclude Blacks from the completed dwellings on Fredonia and Whittier.

The congestion in the basin attracted greedy speculators who bought West End tenements, raised rents, and then sold them for artificially high prices. Between 1918 and 1922 rents tripled for some buildings.

SUMMARY

In 1923 the Better Housing League found a three-room flat at 1131 Hopkins Street occupied by 20 Blacks.

Local tax appraiser in 1926 more than doubled the assessment of Model Homes Company properties which negatively affected the rents.

Model Homes Company was going to build a large-scale project for Blacks outside the basin but it failed to find a vacant land site acceptable to Cincinnati whites.

The Great Depression, focused on the redevelopment of the urban core, led the way to slum clearance and public housing in the basin.

The worst slum area, the lower West End (census tract 5) and 95% Black, was not included. Reformers viewed this area as irredeemable because of the enormous poverty and hardened attitudes of its residents.

Housing reformers believed that many tenants in the city’s slums were “deserving poor”. Urban newcomers or folks who were down on their luck. Continued residency in the slums with long-term contact with permanent slum dwellers might adversely affect the “deserving poor”.

CMHA passed over the nearly all Black and desperately poor area in the lower West End for the Laurel Homes Project. The first public housing projects in Cincinnati built under the Housing Act of 1937, Winton Terrace and English Woods admitted whites only.

The clearance of the Lincoln Court site dislocated 1,030 Black families, many of whom were ineligible for public housing because of inadequate income. Neither were these families able to find relocation housing easily. Landlords agreed to turn out their white tenants and rent to Blacks when reminded they could charge higher rents to Blacks.

The policy of the 1950s and 1960s saw urban redevelopment and highway construction destroy the city’s poorest neighborhoods.

Bulldozers razed the city’s most dilapidated slum areas worsening the housing shortage which led to overcrowding and slum formation in other parts of the city.

Robert B. Fairbanks

At the time of publication of the book ‘Race and the City’ in 1993, Robert B. Fairbanks was an associate professor of History at the University of Texas at Arlington, the author of ‘Making Better Citizens: Housing Reform and the Community Development Strategy in Cincinnati 1890-1960’ (1988) and coeditor and contributor to ‘Essays on Sunbelt Cities and Recent Urban America’ (1990). He was working on a book about business leadership in Dallas between 1930 and 1965.

MICHAEL BURNHAM

POEM

THE RACIST'S LAMENT

PROLOGUE:
Who is to provide the new tenement? Here is an opportunity for the real philanthropist—not to give, for alms are not desirable, but to build for investment. This may yield but a small per cent, but it will surely be safe and substantial. This is not giving to the poor; it is simply lending them money at a low rate of interest.

~Clark W. Davis,
Cincinnati Health Officer, 1903

Tell me how your law will work
and maybe what's in it for me.
~Michael R. Burnham, aka me,
the white man who's mumbling
up here in the front of the room

1
I'm guessing the first time I heard the term Basin,
I was in the high upper bleachers of Powell Crosley's Field
when my dad he trundled me to the edge to look south
and he pointed.
"That's The Basin," he said,
"and The Basin's a slum,
so whatever you do don't walk that way."
Me?
I thought a basin was where you washed up,
not a corner to make Black folk go stand in.

2
Now to understand The Basin
it helps to know blight from slum.
Blight
is physical and economic,
it's run down and poor.
Slum
is sociopathic,
home to a cultural death and decay
of the kind that can dwarf your soul.
Is it crowded? You bet.
Like, say, a three room flat housing twenty people
or a twelve room house that's home to ninety four?
Now multiply by quite a few thousand
and then squeeze in some more.
Oh, and do it all without indoor plumbing and do it all without sewers.

3
So how'd we get slummy enough
that we were dwarfing the dark people's souls?
It's easy, says the white man at the front of the room,
back yourself up a hundred years or so
to William P. Devou, Jr.:

He owned The Basin
or most of it.
You want a piece you deal with him.
Now his family's house was in Covington,
but he didn't live in that house,
in that big ol' Kentucky home.
Nope,
he lived
north of the river
and aways downtown,
deep in the tenderloin.

Turns out
that what he owned
were tenements
and a bunch of whorehouses, too.
The brothels were fancy, thanks to their madams,
but the tenements?
Well,
they were soul-dwarfing slums
with sewerless sewage
puddling outside
in the yard.

Look,
I'm sure he'd have fixed those two hundred forty tenements up
if there was any way
a man like him could afford to.

And even if he'd done it,
which some said he could've,
it wouldn't have done any good.
It's the Business Creed, y'know?
I mean
by the time he'd have passed those costs on to his tenants,
which everyone knows is how the Business Creed works,
his tenants could not have afforded to live there,
and where else is a black man to go
with a wife and some kids in tow!
See it now?
He was doing those poor folk a favor.

And when that kindly man died
he took his fortune and willed it south
out of The Basin and across the river
to Covington
so his brother could stay in the family home
until the day he passed
when the land would become a park.
Yep,
the man used his money
to give his hometown
some flowers and trees
and a good long view forever.

Which reminds me of a dad joke,
a bad joke,
ok?
Here 'tis:
She says, "Where you wanna go picnic, hon?"
And he says, "I don't care, sweetie. Devou?"

4
A house divided cannot stand
but if you try
you can make you some big bucks on it.

The recipe is simple:
Sell it to a speculator who
will leave the outside whole
and split the inside into… well…
just like it says in that nursery rhyme,
remember?

"Speculator, speculator,
please carve up my home.
Put a whole different family in every room
so no one has to live all alone."

5
I turned the page to one that was marred
in the way library books sometimes are.
The printed page said this:
"Model Homes… company officials decided that any new housing it built at this time would be erected for whites, since most blacks could not afford the high rents brought on by inflated construction costs. Building for whites might still benefit blacks, according to Model Homes officials, by drawing whites out of the basin and opening up more opportunities there for blacks."

And in the margin some he, she, or they
had scrawled the words "Trickle Down".

You'd think I'd see Reagan or Thatcher
but my mind's eye saw Sandburg,
the folk singing poet Carl Sandburg.
"It's hard enough to be poor,"
he wrote,
"but to be poor and undeserving…"

And I found myself wondering
who deserves what.
And I'm still wond'rin' what fair is.
I mean, what's a fair rate of profit?
And exactly who is fair game?

6
So why am I here in the front of the room?
It's an accident of birth, I guess.
Ok, and yes,
it's an accident of whiteness
and the privilege that whiteness provides.
But that's ok, see?, 'cause I ain't a racist.
I mean just look at me, will ya?

I don't own nothin' to speak of,
I don't call nobody the n-word, at least not out loud,
and I always sit at the back of the bus.

So I
cannot
be racist.

Or can I?
Don't tell me, don't tell me… I know.

Oh, well,
as my ma would say,
"Live and learn, Mikey, live and learn."
And, oh, how I wish
she'd added the other half:
"Live longer and learn again."

EPILOGUE
In June 1944, when two black families moved to a house in Cincinnati's Mt. Adams neighborhood, a white mob pelted the house with rocks, destroying the doors and windows. A neighbor, Patsy Bennett of 983 Paradrome St., who publicly took the mob to task, was hanged.

But only in effigy.

I guess they could tell she was white.

Oh, shucks, I'm sorry. I gotta go home.
I think I left the irony on
and I do not wanna start a fire.

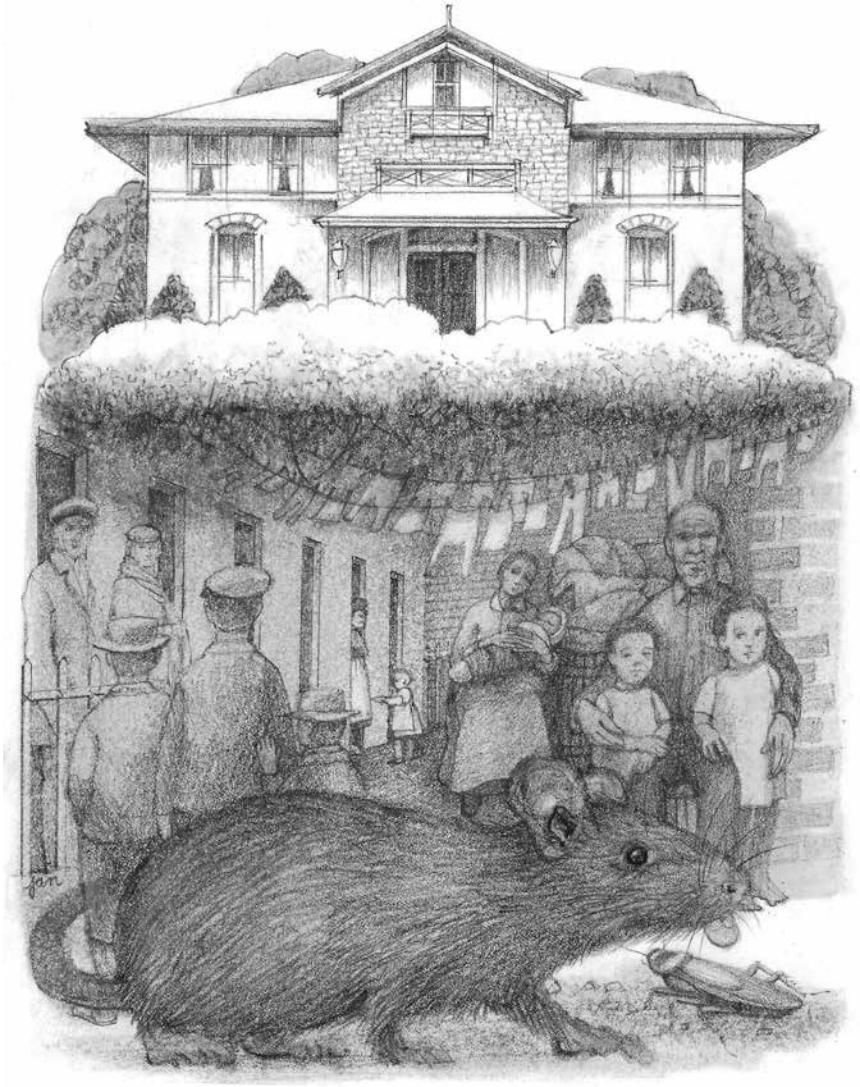
POEM

"Sometimes a little historical nonfiction can set you back on the path to seeing the truth after you've accidentally misplaced it. Robert B. Fairbanks' 'The Irony of Low-Income Housing Reform' did that for me. The operative word here is irony, aka 'the song of the prisoner who's come to love his cage.'
What follows is a bit about Jacob Schmidlapp and Barney Kroger, Sr. that I couldn't quite fit in. Schmidlapp and Kroger were rich white guys. In 1915 Kroger helped fund Schmidlapp's development of affordable housing for Blacks, including – in the northwest corner of Walnut Hills – Washington Terrace, which in addition to housing, provided playgrounds, space to garden, a community assembly room, a billiards room, a drugstore, a shoe store, and a co-op grocery that W.E.B. DuBois said was 'the only one of its kind to be found in a Negro community in this country' prompting Schmidlapp to say, '… we necessarily cannot buy as cheap as the chain stores, who now so largely control the grocery business,' aka his friend Barney Kroger.
In 2017, Kroger closed their store in Walnut Hills and now I live in a food desert where occasionally there's some talk of starting a coop. And the operative word is…? Well, maybe someday that'll be a poem, too. Or maybe not. Meanwhile – just so you know – we might be the nation's largest grocery conglomerate's hometown, but they ain't our local grocer anymore. Can you say 'Business Creed', aka 'The Racist's Lament'?"

Michael Burnham

76-year-old Michael Burnham has been hanging around Cincinnati since first grade and, after 40-odd years of cohabitation, is finally married to documentarist Barbara Wolf. He's been a storyteller, stage director, teacher, college professor, actor, is now and again a writer, and has worked here so long he's earned a Cincinnati Entertainment Association award for Sustained Achievement and has been ensconced in the CEA Hall of Fame and thinks both honors were just gifts he got for daring to direct the Know's beautifully acted gay messiah play Corpus Christi. Once, to protest the closure of public restrooms during Washington Park's "renovation", he read the book *Everyone Poops* while he sat on a toilet outside 3CDC's office. Some say he's the grandfather of our alternative-theatre scene but he knows better. Meanwhile, he's liable go to his grave proclaiming the only two totally unforgivable sins just might be greed and littering.

JAN BROWN CHECCO



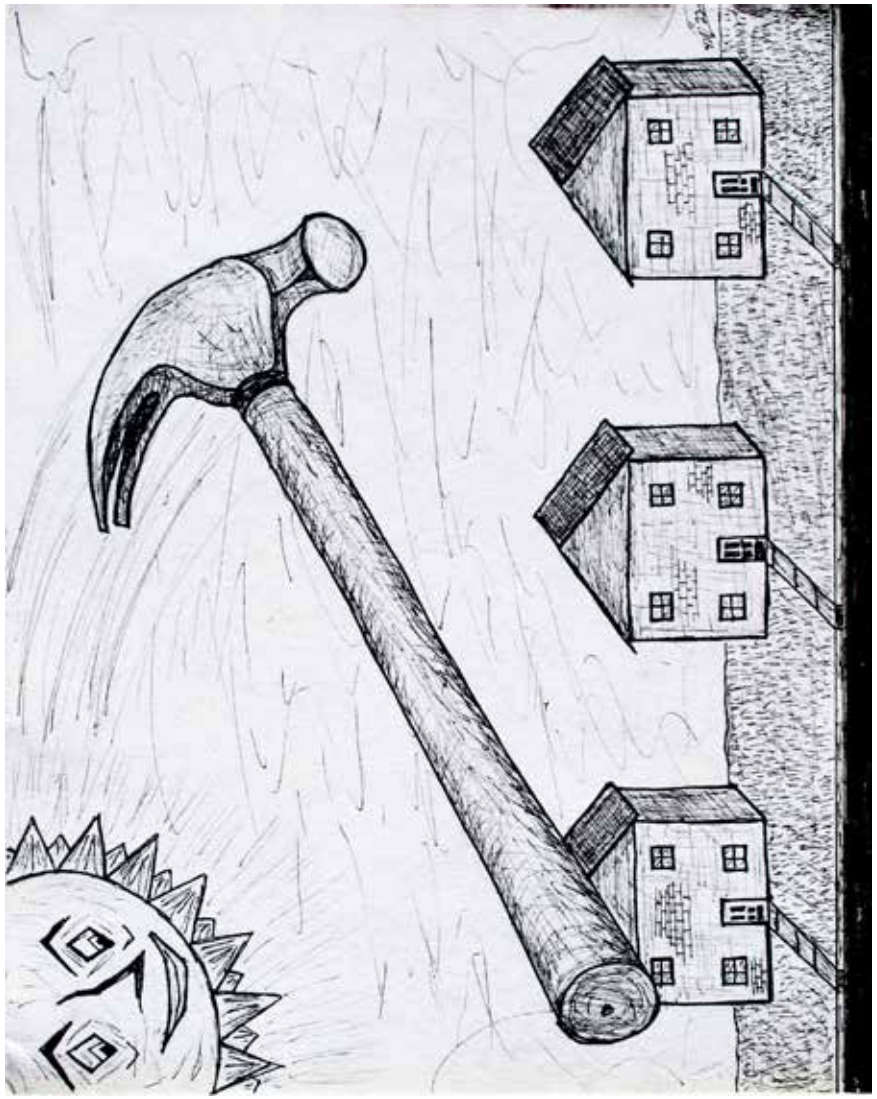
William P. Devou Jr.'s Property; graphite on paper; 11x8.5"

"Slumlord William P. Devou Jr. is a curious character. Well-educated son of a Northern Kentucky milliner who moved his family in 1860 to a hillside overlooking the Ohio River, William made his fortune by acquiring and hoarding properties in Cincinnati, especially in the West End/Eighth Ward. He himself lived in the decrepit neighborhood he cultivated, a red-light district and tenement cluster of 120 buildings along George Street. His operating principle was 'collect rent, spend it on land.' A frequent rag picker and junk collector who languidly made the rounds of his properties, Devou never hired anyone to repair anything in his 200+ buildings, instead occasionally doing the work himself. He slept on a cot at the back of his George Street office, cooked his own meals, and remained indifferent to the squalor in which his tenants were forced to live. When he died in 1937, his estate - valued at over a million dollars - was bequeathed to Covington to maintain his family-of-origin's property which became Devou Park."

Jan Brown Checco

Jan Brown Checco is a multimedia studio artist who also serves as an arts administrator and public art projects designer and director. Her international collaborations with master artists from Cincinnati's Sister Cities include drawing exchanges and architectural ceramic installations in two municipal parks in China and Germany. She lives and works in Cincinnati.

BILLY SIMMS



Swinging the Hammer; pen and ink on paper; 9.5x12”

“Although Cincinnati was at once a model for its progressive ideas towards urban renewal, these ideas often did not work out as planned. Swinging the hammer is easy, keeping the nail straight is the tough part.”

Billy Simms

Billy Simms is an artist, educator, and curator. He has a bachelor degree in theatre from University of Maryland Baltimore County, a masters in special education from The Johns Hopkins University, and an MFA in studio art from Miami University. Simms has won multiple awards for his artwork including the 2012 Drake University Writer’s Award in Graphic Narrative, The 2012 Dayton Works on Paper Award of Excellence, and 2nd Place in the 2013 Dayton Regional Sculpture Competition. He currently lives in Hamilton, OH with his wife and three cats.

CHAPTER 8

James Hathaway Robinson and the Origins of Professional Social Work in the Black Community

-- by ***Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh***

James Hathaway Robinson, the son of an ex-slave, was born in Eastern Kentucky's Bath County in 1887. He came to Cincinnati in 1915 to begin a career of service to Black migrants like himself. After graduate studies at Yale and Columbia Universities, he settled in Walnut Hills. Robinson was a founder and the first director of the Negro Civic Welfare Committee (NCWC) which received funding from the Council of Social Agencies (the forerunner of the United Way). The NCWC would become the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati in 1949.

One of Robinson's first actions as director of the Negro Civic Welfare Committee was to conduct a survey of Black migrants to Cincinnati which he completed in 1919. This undertaking was to investigate what was referred to as the "Negro Problem". The survey covered "the reasons new migrants gave for leaving the South, their religious and economic backgrounds, the housing conditions they found in the Queen City, and the programs of the social service agencies that tried to serve their needs. His pioneering research was the precursor for *The State of Black Cincinnati*, an ongoing series of reports published by the Greater Cincinnati Urban League.

In his survey he found that although Ohio had never been a slave state, "from the earliest days of its statehood there began to grow up a set of laws creating a separate status for the Negro."
Working conditions in Cincinnati limited Blacks to "common labor at common laborer's pay" which prevented the Black worker from developing or striving. He lacked incentive. "The same necessity that forces him to accept the least desirable jobs at the poorest pay also forces him to eat the poorest food and wear the shabbiest clothes; to live in the most unsanitary houses in the filthiest slums where he meets vice, poverty, disease, despair, death."
Robinson thought many students dropped out of school before graduating from high school because education did not seem to broaden the limited opportunities for employment. He stressed the causal role of discrimination when describing the social problems

SUMMARY

facing the Black citizen. "Not only do hotels, restaurants and soda fountains refuse to serve him, but movie picture houses and private parks refuse to admit him, teachers segregate and often embarrass him." With limited exceptions, no schools, hospitals, or clinics allowed African Americans to train or practice as nurses or doctors.

For newcomers, the most pressing problem was adequate housing. Only a few shabby houses in the most crowded districts of the city were available. Robinson reported an almost universal tendency to charge Black tenants higher rents forcing unrelated individuals to live together because of high rents, low wages and the scarcity of houses available to them.
The Black crime rate was 23 percent of the total rate, although the Black population was only 7% of the total population. Robinson suggested that "a noticeable factor in this rate is prejudice. The presumption is invariable against the Negro and he is often arrested and sentenced where others would be excused."
In a similar manner Robinson charged the press with giving "undue publicity to his weaknesses, foibles and crimes," while seldom mentioning Black accomplishments and virtues "'because they lack 'news value' to a misinformed public."
Perhaps the biggest problem was a lack of centralized leadership. There was no agency "at work with executive powers and a city-wide interest, viewpoint purpose or propaganda to make effective any remedial recommendations that are made."
Referring to the fugitive slave and freeman of yesterday and the migrant of the early 1900s in their quest of Utopia, Robinson said that to the Black, "Utopia was a place where a man is a man. A place that is seemingly a much sought after but ever fleeting if ever existing Land of Nowhere."

Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh

At the time of publication of 'Race and the City' in 1993, Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh was an associate professor of history at Raymond Walters College, University of Cincinnati, where she taught American Women's History. She is the author of 'Lighting the Way: The Women's City Club of Cincinnati, 1915-65' and articles that examine efforts at improving race relations and building civic community in the 1st half of the 20th century. She was working on a manuscript that chronicles the rise and fall of separate but equal social work in Cincinnati.

PAULETTA HANSEL

James Hathaway Robinson: A Conversation in Prose and Poetry, 1919-2022

> *James Hathaway Robinson, Sr. was born in Sharpsburg, Kentucky, the son of Nathaniel and Martha Robinson. He moved to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1915 to teach sixth grade at the Douglass School…. He was also author of a number of publications, including the 'Cincinnati Negro Survey' (later called 'The Negro in Cincinnati'), published by the National Conference of Social Work in 1919.* — Notable Kentucky African Americans Database

> *[After World War II, the economic] push and pull model of migration left millions of Appalachians displaced from their homes and created a new Urban Appalachian diaspora. As … migrants formed substantial communities in urban areas like Cincinnati, the existing neighborhoods they moved into responded negatively to their presumed deficits, terming their presence the 'SAM (southern Appalachian migrant) problem'.* — Urban Appalachian Community Coalition Website

***

When a white woman from Appalachia

> "Then came the influx or hordes from the South,
> white and colored, the one usually hostile...

chooses to write a poem about a black man from Appalachia

> and the other too often the less progressive type...

called up to Cincinnati to investigate "the Negro problem"
is she looking for herself?

> Conditions in the city went from bad to worse."
> James Hathaway Robinson, 1919

My people, his people...

> "The Negro lives by himself, works by himself" suffers
> sick "by himself in the colored ward...

Unlike me, Robinson had no illusions

> [And] when he dies, "he is buried by himself whether
> in a colored cemetery or the colored section of the
> Potter's Field."

that our people were one and the same.

> "The presumption is invariable against the Negro and
> he is often arrested and sentenced where others ….

I am the other.

> would be excused. [And the press gives] undue
> publicity to [black] weaknesses, foibles and crimes,
> while seldom mentioning black accomplishments and
> virtues…

We want to believe things are different now.

> "because they lack news value."

When I moved up to Cincinnati in 1979,
I didn't know there were neighborhoods
where I wasn't supposed to live.
I was proud of this.

> In addition, he reported the "almost universal"
> tendency…

Integration or gentrification?

> to charge black tenants higher rents.

My ignorance is inexcusable.

> [Robinson] outlined specific economic causes in
> the South [for the migration… of southern blacks to
> the North] —low wages, high prices, "the
> disadvantages of the crop-lien system," flood
> destruction, and the boll weevil.

While we may now add to the list,
boom-and-bust industry
and the automation of the coalmines,

> Out of 40 migrants, 27 said they had come North for better wages, 6 for "better privileges," 5 "to better condition," 2 because of "bad treatment" in the South, and 1 "just took a notion."

I will admit that the notion of my leaving Appalachia

> In his presentation Robinson characterized Cincinnati as "a northern city with a southern exposure, a gateway between North and South used alike by fugitive slave and freeman of yesterday and migrant of today in their quest of Utopia…"

is one I can't remember living without.

> To the black, he said, Utopia is a place "where a man is a man," a place that is "seemingly a much sought after but ever fleeting if ever existing Land of Nowhere."

Not then.
Not now.

> "'Not only do hotels, restaurants and soda fountains refuse to serve him, but moving picture houses and private parks refuse to admit him; theaters segregate and often embarrass him."

But God bless the child who's got his own.
Right?

> The black business community was not large, and, he found, it tended to be dominated by the small shops run by such entrepreneurs as undertakers, barbers, tailors, cobblers, beauticians, ,…

Until he doesn't.
May I remind you of the West End,

> druggists, insurance men, grocers, caterers, newspaper editors, real estate agents, printers....

a little after Robinson's time,
barely before my own?

> The professional class, on the other hand was "'of considerable numbers" and included doctors, dentists, lawyers, ministers. teachers, and social workers…"

In 1958, 25,737 people lived in the section of the West End
that is now called Queensgate,

> Even among this more successful group, however, Robinson pointed out that "various handicaps prevent the development of men of wide reputations."

about the same population of today's
Oakley, Hyde Park, and East Walnut Hills neighborhoods
combined.
Progress or displacement.
I won't honor that with a question mark.

> Robinson called for self-origination of group consciousness …

In 2006, over 25 years after I moved to Cincinnati,
my husband and I bought a house in Paddock Hills,

> among the city's black people….

Cincinnati's "best-kept secret,"
according to our community website.

> and for a campaign of education

Built in the 1920s, and settled first by Catholics and then by Jews,

> among white people.

the first black families moved to the area in 1966,

> Racial discrimination, Robinson thought, was based in white people's ignorance of black life, …

and, according to that website
"Paddock Hills was racially balanced by 1975

> [knowing] little of his "aspirations, handicaps, disappointments."

and has successfully maintained integration ever since."

> [In 1919] at the main entrance to the Douglass School, [the only remaining all-black public school left in Cincinnati from the nineteenth-century "Colored School" system],…"four huge placards confront the visitor."

In 2006, each corner of our yard
abutted yards where black people lived.

> These proclaimed the following slogans:
> "Self-Control; …

In the last ten years,

> Self-Reliance;…

by my informal and unscientific count

> Self-Respect;,,,

white has replaced Black in almost every real estate transaction.

> and Race Pride!"

Integration?

> [Robinson's] hope for … the African American people lay in organizing the institutions that served the community into a coherent whole, …

or disintegration?

> and organizing among individuals a sense of belonging to a community.

Our Black Lives Matter signs staked in yards
where black children once played.
Pauletta Hansel, 2022

> But Robinson did not describe what had attracted him to the Queen City, a town with "a southern racial relationship."

NOTES:

After the headnotes, all indented passages are taken directly or closely paraphrased from *'James Hathaway Robinson and the Origins of Professional Social Work in the Black Community'* by Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh, in '*Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970,'* edited by Henry Louis Taylor. Jr. Quotation marks are used only when Kornbluh is quoting others. Many of Robinson's quotes come from the 'Cincinnati Negro Survey' (later called 'The Negro in Cincinnati'), published by the National Conference of Social Work in 1919
Additional external sources include *'God Bless the Child'* by Billie Holiday and Arthur Herzog; *'People Lived In Kenyon-Barr When The City Razed It to the Ground'* by Alyssa Konermann in Cincinnati Magazine; the Paddock Hills Community Website; Pauletta Hansel's essay on Union Terminal/Queensgate, first published in Belt Magazine's *Cincinnati Guidebook*, and Pauletta Hansel's poem, *'President's Day, 2021,'* first published in '*Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel, Vol. 25, Appalachia (Un) Masked.'*

"'James Hathaway Robinson: A conversation in prose and poetry, 1919-2022' is my own reflections as a white Appalachian woman who migrated to Cincinnati in 1979, woven together with quotes from Robinson, an African American man from Appalachia, about the Great Migration of southern Blacks at the beginning of that same century, as well as other text from Kornbluh's chapter, 'James Hathaway Robinson and the Origins of Professional Social Work in the Black Community' in 'Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970,' edited by Henry Louis Taylor. Jr. At heart, it is a condemnation of how little has changed. The piece is a hybrid form, not quite poetry, not quite theater, and is meant to be read by two voices."

Pauletta Hansel

Pauletta Hansel's newest poetry collection is *Heartbreak Tree,* an exploration of the intersection of gender and place in Appalachia. Her writing has been featured in *Oxford American, Rattle, American Life in Poetry, and Poetry Daily,* among others. Hansel was Cincinnati's first Poet Laureate and is 2022 Writer-in-Residence for The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

JONPAUL SMITH

James Hathaway Robinson; linocut print; 18x13”

VISUAL ART

“Chapter 8 discusses the life and achievements of James Hathaway Robinson. For my work I depicted the physical appearance of Mr. Robinson but also highlighted his remarkable achievements. I made his portrait the main focal point of the work. The background serves to pull the viewer into his gaze and pushes him off the paper. I represented many of his achievements by simple imagery depicted on his chest, like military medals hung off a serviceman’s jacket. The gothic steeple, crown, and letter Y represent his time at Columbia College, Fisk and Yale Universities. The geographic map is the communities of Cincinnati, OH with Walnut Hills, where Mr. Robinson lived, highlighted. The large school building on his shoulder is the Douglass School where he was an educator. The initials of NCWC represent his outstanding work with the Negro Civic Welfare Committee, which later became the Urban League of Greater Cincinnati, whose logo is the encircled equal sign in the image. 1887 is his birth year and has the outline of Bath County, KY where he was born. The two sets of interlocking hands are for his important work in understanding and improving race relations. The church depicts St. Francis de Sales Church, corner of Woodburn and Madison in Walnut Hills, symbolizing his belief that communities should organize with the help of their churches and religious organizations. The multiple silhouettes of people represent his belief in community organization as a way for social improvement. Leaves, a puzzle piece, and radiating light are to show growth – finding a missing piece in a larger puzzle (his research), and that from one bright light a path forward can be lit.”

Jonpaul Smith

Jonpaul Smith received his MFA and Graduate Certificate in Museum Studies from UC/DAAP and his BA from Hanover College in Indiana. He also studied fine arts at the University of Wollongong in Australia. He frequently conducts artist seminars, taught printmaking and photography at Hanover College, and completed a residency in Budapest-Hungary, Paducah-Kentucky, and Tiger Lily Press in Cincinnati, OH where he also served as a member on their board. Smith has exhibited widely in the USA and abroad. He was selected for ‘New American Paintings Juried Exhibition-in-Print,’ No. 65. Collections include among others Library of Congress; Cincinnati Art Museum; Kyoto International Woodprint Association; Universiti Sains Malaysia print archive; Hungarian Multicultural Center...

CHAPTER 9

Making the Second Ghetto in Cincinnati: Avondale, 1925-70

-- by ***Charles F. Casey-Leininger***

Between 1910 and 1940 the West End served as the primary residence of the city's African American population and absorbed most of the city's new Black population. The rapid increase in the Black population, slum clearance and superhighway construction decimating the city's Black West End ghetto, led to the formation of Cincinnati's second Black ghetto found in census tracts 34 and 65-69 or Avondale. Decrepit and deteriorating housing conditions made the West End the object of attack by housing reformers and city planners. Until such time that housing reformers and social workers could impart the skills necessary to live in a modern urban community, the most appropriate place for Blacks and poor whites to live was planned and supervised housing projects. The incorrigible poor were believed best isolated and left in the decaying neighborhoods tended to by charity, social workers, the police, and the courts.

After WWII the Walnut Hills-South Avondale Black community became a nucleus of the second Black ghetto in Cincinnati. Several factors contributed to the growth of the Avondale portion of this ghetto between WWII and 1970:

*Pre-war segregation

*The failure to eliminate the West End slums and provide adequate housing for its Black population

*A large influx of new Blacks - 22,600 between 1940 and 1950

Old patterns of residential segregation were replaced with new ones:

*White migration to areas away from the central city

*Increased prosperity among Blacks

*Easing of racial restrictions on real estate mortgages

*New willingness by a few real estate agents to sell and rent to Blacks in previously all-white areas.

By 1950 the Black ghetto had expanded into Evanston. White migration to the suburbs made the Black occupation of these new areas possible. Census data for 1950 suggested that those in better economic circumstances led the Black influx into Avondale.

Blacks moving into formerly all white sections of Avondale in the postwar period faced several difficulties.

- Many lenders still refused to provide financing to Blacks or would only provide it in areas already Black.
- A national code of real estate ethics placed a prohibition on introducing Blacks into white neighborhoods
- Blacks who managed to find homes outside the old ghettoes often faced hostility from the remaining whites.
- Tension resulted from the activities of unscrupulous real estate agents known as blockbusters. They used a variety of tactics to pressure whites in a targeted area to offer their homes for sale. The panic that resulted contributed to changing Avondale from white to Black.

Both the highway building program and the redevelopment of the basin involved the elimination of thousands of units of housing and the displacement and relocation of huge numbers of people. New housing in the suburbs would empty old housing near the basin for those who could afford to live in private-sector housing. Public housing built on vacant land on a small portion of the cleared land in the basin would house the poor. Housing operated as not-for-profit or for limited profit by organizations constructed with the help of government subsidies would serve those in between.

The proposed housing had not been built as the construction of the expressway through the West End and the start of the first slum clearance began. CMHA was pressured by whites not to build public housing near them. Private plans to provide low-cost subsidized housing failed due to high cost. Private builders produced single-family houses at prices well above the means of people living in the basin slums. Not enough older housing filtered down to Blacks to ease their housing shortage. As large numbers of poor whites and Blacks poured into housing vacated by the white middle class, many of these newcomers occupied their new apartments and houses at a higher density than previous residents, leading to the deterioration of those neighborhoods.

SUMMARY

Charles F. Casey-Leininger

Charles F. ("Fritz") Casey-Leininger has studied and written about race and neighborhoods in the Cincinnati area for nearly 40 years. He earned his MA (1989) and PhD (1993) at the University of Cincinnati and taught American History there until his retirement in 2017. His interest in Cincinnati neighborhoods began when he moved to the city in 1977 and wondered how Paddock Hills and Avondale, where he lived for several years, had become racially diverse neighborhoods.

TAMMY L. BROWN

Avondale 1967*

My eyes are fixed
on the image of a Black boy
he wears a short sleeved white button up
denim with highwater hem, white socks, sneakers
back to camera
thumbs in belt loops, walking
head down– watching his pace
wading through the wreckage

Strewn cardboard boxes
that once held Bazooka bubble gum
broken glass, everywhere
he takes great care
with each step
as he passes a broad unbroken window crowded with signs–
most in ALL CAPS: advertising cards for graduation
Father's Day, cigarettes, Ex-Lax & Coca-Cola

This is America, my people
precisely, my hometown
the Queen City

Was it a riot?
Was it an uprising?
Or shall we call it righteous unrest?

Sunday, June 11, 1967
police arrest a Black man
for exercising his freedom of speech
at the feet of a leering Lincoln cast in bronze
with Lady Liberty kneeling
to inscribe Honest Abe's second inaugural promise
on the statue's pedestal:
"With malice toward none"

Standing at the corner of Reading & Rockdale,
this Black man carries a sign like a cross,
that reads: "Laskey innocent, Cincinnati guilty,"
in support of his cousin,
a.k.a. the Cincinnati Strangler,
convicted by an all-white jury in May
for the murder of a white woman

Heat rises
& the mugginess is so thick
we pray for rain

Citizens gather
on the same block
& protest morphs into flames–
shattered windows Molotov cocktails bullets
blood billowing smoke

700 Ohio National Guardsmen descend on the city (or was it 900?)
1 dead
63 broken & bruised
404 arrested
$2.6 million in property damage.

Rioters, at the outset, strategic;
they target white businesses,
then a Black-owned grocery is looted too—
disheveled shelves overturned carts
canned goods thrown to the floor like hand grenades.

Avondale, 1967
in a little white house
on a hill
where my mother was raised–
Avondale, 1967
my mother says the neighborhood was never the same

My mother & the class of 1967 had plans
to strut across Hughes High's graduation
stage-
carefully coiffed hair cap & gown
& diploma in hand
until the city was set ablaze

Two decades later, at age eleven,
I wear a white skirt sky-blue blouse

pressed hair rising
in Cincinnati summer heat
The whole family, dressed in our Sunday's best,
we attend
my mother's twentieth class reunion–
the graduation ceremony that she never had

Was it a riot or revolution?
55 years later
I seek out the man with the Speed Graphic camera
for revelation

Avondale, 1967
C. Smith, photographer for *Ghetto Magazine*,
adorned in a dashiki,
keeps watch daily
on Reading at Rockdale & on Burnet–
shooting the flames & fury
in black & white

50 years later, the man with the third eye re-remembers,
"Avondale had everything back then."
And nearly all of *Ghetto Magazine's* advertisers
were Black businesses in Avondale & the West End.

I cannot count the number of times
my mom told me about the mom & pop's shops ransacked
in that melancholy recollection, my mother also reminisces
about the boundless wealth & beauty in the all-Black utopia of her youth.

A neighborhood of single-family homes & modest apartments
with well-manicured lawns
Avondale, where Black doctors, lawyers & famous baseball players– Frankie Robinson & Vada Pinson, lived side-by-side
with working-class families–
descendants of sharecroppers
from Miller's Ferry, like my own.

The way my mom talks about Avondale
calls to mind the Black beauty of Zora's Eatonville
before everything changed
on the hill where my mom was born & raised
Avondale, 1967
it was never the same

From the comfort of a divided distance, journalists cite:
no jobs poor housing & an inescapable ill-ease
But my family, the founders of this American hustle, testify
they kept jobs & baked & sewed & painted on the side
& laughed loud in summer, sipping soda pop on the tiny front porch to escape the inside heat
& grandma kept that little white house on the hill immaculately clean

So, maybe they were devout disciples of Fannie Lou—
sick & tired of being sick & tired,
they sought their own redemption
through fire

Were they renegades, righteous warriors, looters, rebels, straight shooters, nihilists, believers, ignitors, freedom fighters, agitators, demonstrators, the chosen, instigators, citizens, traitors?

Maybe Black Jesus told them to get their reparations
by any means necessary
Japanese survivors of internment got theirs
& the First Nations got their casinos *with* reservations.

Even the Good Book condones carnival in Babylon–
The first shall be last
& the last shall be first
Maybe Black Jesus said,
"Don't tarry for the by-and-by;
Get yours right now, right here, on earth."

They douse the Abraham Lincoln Statue in black paint
& hang a sign around its neck that reads:
“Better for 100 guilty to go free
than for 1 that is innocent to suffer.”

The Five-O arrive guns drawn on patrol ready to backup
the ones already armed with fire hoses

After “The Long, Hot Summer”
Avondale was never the same–
no A&P within an easy walk
slowly, some moved to the suburbs
still, many remained–
Black & proud.

And after my grandfather went on to glory,
my grandmother still kept the lawn
plush & well-cut–
her four-foot eleven-inch solid frame
pushing the lawnmower up the hill
for as long as she could
taking great care of the verdant welcome
to her small white house on a hill
purchased with every stowed dime
in given time

Avondale, 1967
one of 159 uncivil wars
across the nation:
from Cleveland to Detroit to Newark to L.A.—
with more to come in 1968
this is America, my people—
cookie-cutter homes & plush lawns
& rooftops ablaze

Today, in the comfort of my own home
on a mostly Black block in College Hill,
five miles from where my mother was raised,
I lose myself in a meditation on circles & ciphers
I think of how a quarter of a century later, that same photographer,
C Smith, photographed me on a pageant stage
in my own black & gold dashiki
as I recited “Black is Black” —
a praise poem I wrote at age thirteen,
inspired by my mother’s love for community
in this Queen City

& I return to the photograph of the Black boy
walking down the street
wading through the wreckage
The caption reads:
“A child walks past a store looted by rioters in June 1967 in
Cincinnati ”

I catch a glimpse of a white hand
white long shirt sleeve– buttoned at the wrist
billy club under armpit
at the right edge of the image

In the backdrop
just left of this whiteness
a slender teenager with ebony skin
back to camera lens
adorned in a sleeveless white Tee
relaxed fit shorts (or is that a skirt?)
& dingy soled sneakers (or are those socks?)
strolls through the wreckage–
looking absolutely unbothered

For a moment, the unbothered witness
calls to mind
Kendrick’s lyric: *“We gone be alright,”*
then, I pan out
& am left with a sense of unease
by the camera’s harsh flash
in the midst of night

May 2022

*Note: Parts of this poem follow the methodology of “found poetry,” based on the following sources: Tammy L. Brown, *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015); “1967 riots photos by C. Smith,” *Cincinnati.com,* June 9, 2017. Mark Curnutte, “Avondale Riots 50 Years Later,” *Cincinnati.com*, June 9, 2017; Carvell Wallace, “In 1967, the hunt for a Black serial killer in Cincinnati stoked racial unrest,” *Timeline.com*, June 11, 2017.

"I decided to write about the 1967 race riots in Cincinnati as I grew up listening to my mom tell countless stories about her neighborhood Avondale never being the same after the race riots in 1967."

Tammy L. Brown

Tammy L. Brown is associate professor of Global and Intercultural Studies and History at Miami University of Ohio. She earned her BA in international history, *magna cum laude*, from Harvard University and her PhD in American history and African diaspora studies from Princeton University. Brown's teaching, writing, and service to her community are connected through her interest in art, social justice, and biography as a methodological approach.

In her first book, *City of Islands: Caribbean Intellectuals in New York* (University Press of Mississippi, 2015), Brown uses the life stories of Caribbean intellectuals as "windows" into the dynamic history of immigration to New York and the long battle for racial equality in modern America. Her current book project, *Hear my Freedom*, is a biography of rock & roll virtuoso Jimi Hendrix centering on the spiritual dimensions of his music.

Brown's research on race, feminism, art, and politics has been featured in various media outlets including TEDx, the American Civil Liberty Union's blog, NPR, and Vox.com. Her selected awards include the Heanon Wilkins Faculty Fellowship and the Lavatus Powell Outstanding Faculty Diversity Award at Miami University, National Endowment for the Humanities' Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan grant, and a research grant from the Gilder Lehrman Institute.

TYRONE WILLIAMS

Avondale, 1959

Hawk means business tonight, cold
gusts cutting around these big ol' buildings,
cutting through my thin coat
as I wait in line to pay my taxes
for the schools my Georgia can't attend,
for the trolley splashing mud on my shoes
as it passes me by.
Do the best I can
by Georgia, learn her a little script,
memory her numbers before I head
out to walk to work.
Hope for more
than just this little freedom for my little girl
watching her father get up every morning,
free to look for work
long as he don't look too hard.
And the three of us free to live where we please
long as we don't stray too far from the black bottom.
We's lucky, the papers say,
livin' on the right side of this river.
Reckon so, though
sometimes it's hard to see
just how.

"In my poem 'Avondale, 1959' I tried to humanize, give voice to both the aspirations and frustrations of an ordinary Black Cincinnati resident living on the cusp of the Sixties. In the Preface to the Miller and Lewis book 'Race and the City' we learn that Black residents paid a number of poll taxes for city services from which they were excluded thanks to 'de facto'—not 'de jure'—discrimination and racism. In this context I tried to capture a Black resident's ambivalence re 'freedom,' knowing that just across the Ohio Blacks suffered even more the aftereffects of slavery yet, still, desiring something more than the 'meagre' freedoms Black Cincinnatians actually had."

Tyrone Williams

Tyrone Williams is the David Gray chair in the English Department at SUNY Buffalo. He is the author of several books and chapbooks of poetry.

SUZANNE CHOUTEAU

Loving Learning; woodcut print; 15x13”

VISUAL ART

CHAPTER 9

“I wanted my students and myself to participate in the ‘Race and the City Art’ project because every effort to educate people about discrimination, unjust social practices and oppression of African Americans in this city and the USA is necessary. I selected Chapter 9, ‘Making the Second Ghetto in Cincinnati: Avondale, 1925-70,’ because Xavier University, my students and I are neighbors and should know more about our neighborhood’s history. I am inspired by former librarian Melanie Moon’s leadership in this effort and my print employs the unique entranceway of the Avondale branch library to both honor her and libraries in general as incredibly important places of learning, gathering and becoming. The family sheltered in the doorway have various sunflowers that spring to life around them because they are the loving and learning foundational soil of Avondale.”

Suzanne Chouteau

Suzanne Chouteau is Professor of Art in the Department of Art at Xavier University where she teaches printmaking and art history. Her prints, drawings, paintings, and mixed-media combinations have been shown internationally and nationally in solo, invitational, and juried exhibitions.

XAVIER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Grace DEMPSEY -- Unsure; woodcut print; 9.5x10”
Shelby ERNST -- 2nd Ghetto; woodcut print; 10x10”
Keith FLUECK -- Sovereignty Through Faith; woodcut print; 9.75x9.75”
Jillian LIEURANCE -- Who Is America; woodcut print; 9.75x9.75”

VISUAL ART

Tyler NEIL-MATTHEWS -- Modern Segregation; woodcut print; 9x10”
Christian ORSE -- The People’s Center; woodcut print; 10x10”
Anna WOOD -- For Sale; woodcut print; 9.5x10”
Jenna WOOD -- 513; woodcut print; 10x10”

Grace Dempsey

"My woodblock print was created to illustrate the issues experienced by families of color specifically in Cincinnati during the early/mid-1900s. Something that stuck out to me was the stark contrast at the time between the homes and neighborhoods white people and people of color lived in. I wanted to illustrate the family struggle between the conditions people of color were forced into and the American Dream they wanted and deserved."

Grace Dempsey is a Psychology and Criminal Justice major at Xavier University. After graduation, she looks forward to making the criminal justice system more rehabilitation focused and using her applied skills in psychology to support her work. Dempsey has always loved art, and she is excited to have the printmaking medium under her belt for future use after stressful workdays.

Shelby Ernst

"My print depicts the injustices enacted by white lawmakers and citizens in Cincinnati, Ohio during the early to mid-1900s. The making of the second ghetto in Avondale was due to many racial and discriminatory factors inhibiting the lives of African Americans. Even though the citizens of Avondale faced oppression in many forms, they were able to break free from white prejudices and create a thriving community of their own."

Shelby Ernst is an emerging artist currently studying Graphic Design at Xavier University. Originally from Hamilton, Ohio, she is eager to explore the world and use these experiences to inspire her future work and broaden her perspective on all facets of life. Ernst hopes to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree this winter and begin working at a logo and branding design firm.

Keith Flueck

"My print was inspired by the Carmel Presbyterian church erected in Avondale. It has stood as a welcoming place of home for those who were evicted from their West End houses during the construction of the I-75 highway. The Carmel Presbyterian Church is known for its scripture-based faith and teachings that they impart to benefit the next generation."

Keith Flueck is pursuing a BA in Graphic Design at Xavier University with a focus on crafting and coding as a tech-based artist.

Jillian Lieurance

"My woodcut print depicts a group surrounding the Abraham Lincoln Memorial outside the South Avondale School. The inspiration for this piece came from a postcard image depicting the same scene. The sense of community in the image truly spoke for the community that Avondale possesses in a lighthearted way."

Jillian Lieurance is a first-year student from Lima, Ohio studying History at Xavier University. With further education, she hopes to go into curating or display design for museums. Having taken printmaking has helped her come to a better appreciation for art and all those who create.

Tyler Neil-Matthews

"My woodcut print depicts how institutions like a bank have the power to oppress people of color, not just financially, but through education and housing policies. I was inspired to do this because the hardships Avondale has faced over the years is a reality that many communities must live through every day. This is a form of modern segregation, a cycle that needs to be broken across America."

Tyler Neil-Matthews is majoring in Sociology with a minor in Business at Xavier University. He is from Evanston Illinois, a northern suburb of Chicago. This is his first art class at Xavier and he appreciates the time he gets to work on his craft as he typically spends his time working on other art forms that do not involve printmaking.

Christian Orsé

"My print celebrates the beautiful culture that is harbored inside of Avondale by using the dynamic 'A' sign of the Avondale Town Center. With notorious events such as the late 1960's riots that occurred in Avondale it may be hard to avoid thinking negative thoughts, however, I focused more on the positive of family and community being a big part of Avondale."

Christian Orsé is a student of Finance in the Williams College of Business at Xavier University. He also owns his own small resale company based in New Richmond, Ohio.

Anna Wood

"My print was intended to capture the discrimination of the Cincinnati housing system in the early/mid-1900s which confined most black families to certain areas in Avondale. The large white sign hung on the picket white fence symbolizes the inaccessibility for Blacks to move into a white neighborhood. The dark figures in the foreground display a young family being prevented from moving into this Avondale home and having to relocate to predominantly African American neighborhoods which in turn created the "second ghetto."

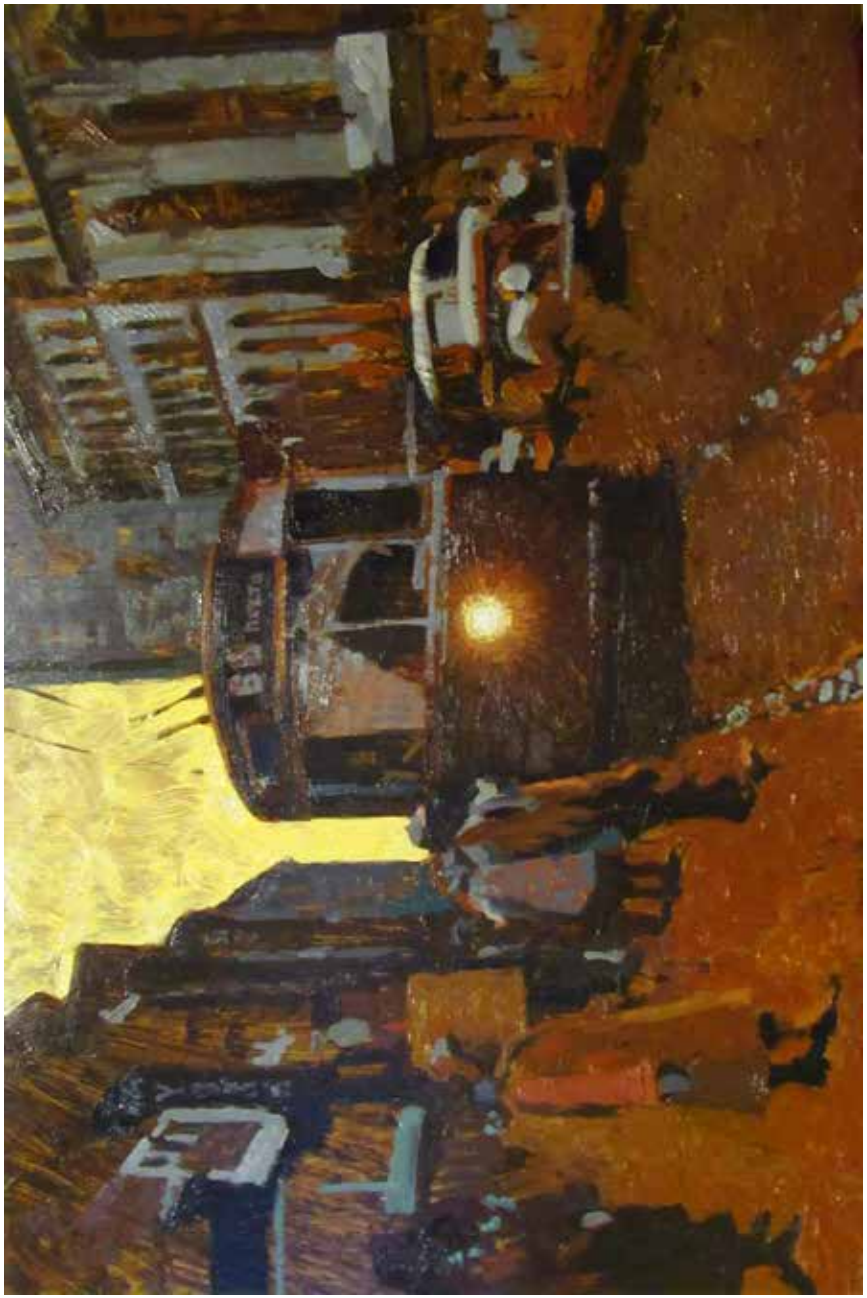
Anna Wood majored in Middle Childhood Education at Xavier University with concentrations in English Language Arts and Science. She loves educating young people as a newly hired 5th grade teacher at Sycamore. She is excited to incorporate different modes of art and printmaking into her classroom to enrich the curriculum.

Jenna Wood

"My print addresses how families in Cincinnati were adversely affected by the creation and construction of the I-75 highway—I depict the despair and concern of a man in the moment of finding out he and his family will have to restart their lives. In the mid-1950s thousands of African Americans were displaced from their West End homes to make space for the highway with little choice in the matter. Cincinnati's city planners put in place discriminatory housing policies in Avondale where a large number of the displaced African American community were relocating. Unjust practices such as blockbusting and others favored racial segregation and effectively made Avondale a "second ghetto" that reinforced historic social and economic inequities that continue to disproportionately burden African Americans today."

Jenna Wood is a student studying Fine Art at Xavier University with concentrations in Sculpture, Fibers, and Printmaking. She loves using her art to explore different social justice issues, often focusing on Climate Change and environmental issues. Through mixing mediums, she is trying to create meaningful and unique works that reflect her hopes and dreams. She will complete her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2024 and desires to work in the prop design or parade design industries.

BRAD DAVIS



Avondale, 1959; oil on masonite; 11x17”

“My painting is a response to Tyrone Williams’ poem ‘Avondale, 1959’ that he wrote in response to Chapter 9 of the ‘Race and the City’ book. When I read the poem, I was moved by its vivid imagery and the way that it transports the reader to a time in Cincinnati’s history that seems at once distant and present. I began the painting process by sourcing images from the Avondale area that were near that time period. One of the most impactful lines describes waiting on the trolley and I thought of how this in itself is a milestone in Cincinnati’s history. I chose to keep the piece monochromatic and gestural in its marks to reference the ephemeral quality of memory. Just as these images and their construction can relate to both past and present, so do the issues that the poem explores.”

Brad Davis

Brad Davis is a painter from Cincinnati, Ohio. He earned his BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati (AAC) in 2016, and his MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 2018. His paintings are typically centered around the urban environment and seek to transform its banality through careful and personal reconstruction. Davis is a resident instructor at Manifest Drawing Center, and an adjunct professor at UC/DAAP and the AAC. His work is currently being shown with Sugarlift Gallery (New York, NY), Abend Gallery (Denver, CO), and F.A.N. Gallery (Philadelphia, PA).

CHAPTER 10

The Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee: Cultural Pluralism and the Struggle for Black Advancement

-- by ***Robert A. Burnham***

A pluralistic vision yielded a broad intercultural movement between 1915 and 1954 that aimed to promote tolerance for cultural group diversity within American society. As part of that movement and in order to reduce interracial hostilities in the aftermath of the Detroit race riot of 1943, the Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC), later known as the Cincinnati Human Relations Commission, was formed in November 1943. It functioned, first and foremost, to minimize tension between groups that stemmed from racial, religious, and ethnic prejudice in hopes of preventing violent outbreaks. This goal required that the committee address the issues of prejudice and discrimination as the underlying causes of group conflict. The initiative for forming the MFRC came from the city's Black leaders, who believed that improving intergroup relations would benefit the members of their race, "…for the purpose of studying the problems connected with the promotion of harmony and tolerance and [for] working out community problems…. and [by] acting as an advisory committee for their solution."
167 people were appointed to the committee between 1943 and 1946; 49 women, 10 Blacks and at least 9 Jews. Social workers, educators, clergymen, doctors, lawyers and businessmen predominated.
One of the many concerns presented to the MFRC in this chapter was the stoning by 50 to 100 white men and boys of a house in Mt. Adams when Blacks moved in on June 5, 1944. Three days after the stoning, several hundred people staged a demonstration outside the Mt. Adams home of Mrs. Cortland Bennett, a white woman who had publicly criticized the participants in the house stoning. "…..The police did nothing to disperse the demonstrators who vented their anger by hanging an effigy of Mrs. Bennett. As an aftermath of that event, the MFRC oversaw in 1945 the formation of a Race Relations Detail within the Cincinnati Police Department to be called in to deal with race-related disturbances. On April 18, 1946 an MFRC board member suggested that policemen be provided with "training in minority problems" and in the "techniques needed to meet them".
March 1945, the Fair Employment Practices Committee held hearings on discrimination against many companies that defended their practices by claiming that white employees would walk off the job if

SUMMARY

forced to work with Blacks.
A Cincinnati jury deliberated a full "five minutes" before acquitting Happy Watson, a waitress employed by Graeter's Ice Cream Store, on charges that she refused service to several Blacks in July 1946.
August 19, 1946, four Black men stopped a young white couple who were driving through the West End, allegedly raped the woman while holding her escort at gunpoint. The MFRC issued a statement to the press asking Cincinnatians to refrain from blaming an "entire neighborhood or racial group" for "individual misdeeds," and urging citizens to look beyond the crime of rape and see the need to aid West End Blacks who lived under "deplorable conditions..."

Marshall Bragdon who was hired in 1945 to serve as executive secretary of MFRC, together with executive board member Judge Robert Gorman arranged a meeting in mid-September with publishers of the Cincinnati Enquirer and of the Cincinnati Times-Star. They concluded that the local press and radio heightened tensions by their "injudicious and even hysterical" reports of the rape.
August 1946, the NAACP declared war on police brutality. The Police Trial Board, a body within the police department that heard complaints against officers, rarely returned judgments of guilty.
November 1946, Nathan Wright, a Black ministerial student, was stopped for questioning by two white detectives. Wright accused the detectives of using "abusive and threatening" language toward him. A month later, the city manager, Wilbur N. Kellogg announced he found "no reason" to censure the two detectives involved in the case.
June 1947, Haney Bradley, a Black man was beaten by two policemen and charged with disorderly conduct. Judge William D. Alexander dismissed the disorderly conduct charge, asserting that "there was no cause for the officers to beat this defendant." But later, Safety Director Oris Hamilton announced that there was "no reason" to take "disciplinary action" against the officers who were cleared of brutality charges.

Robert A. Burnham

At the time of publication of the book 'Race and the City' in 1993, Robert A. Burham was an assistant professor of history at Macon College and author of 'The Cincinnati Charter Revolt of 1924,' in 'Ethnic Diversity and Civic Identity' (1992), edited by Henry D. Shapiro and Jonathan D. Sarna.

Where Is the Elephant in the Room?

The Mayor's Friendly Relations Committee in the years 1943-1949
(A history lesson in verse)

WHEREAS…
The war was not forgotten--
As segregated troops
Built democratic nations
When here, it wasn't true.

WHEREAS…
Detroit had just stopped burning—
Its embers floating 'round
When Cincinnatians said they had
To calm our city down.

WHEREAS they came together--
The Chamber of Commerce, the CIO,
B'nai B'rith and NAACP--
Catholic Charities and Negro Welfare League--
"We shall work in harmony."
WHERE IS this elephant in the room?

*****
Hopes were riding high that day
When black leaders met the mayor--
Teachers and the head of the Community Chest
Division of Negro Welfare.

Maybe Stewart thought one thing—
And the NAACP friends, another
When "Lessen the chance of trouble here"
Became "tolerate each other."

Still, they were assembled,
Lawyers, doctors, businessmen.
The resolution firmly held
That they could all be friends.

Nine of them were Jewish,
Ten were black or brown.
A hundred strong and counting —
From all around the town.

"We are cultural pluralists."
The message sounded clear.
But how can it all be rainbows
When BLOOD is in the air?

*****
But what happened in Mt. Adams—
To the families—the parents and children?
And Mrs. Bennett's effigy—
Cops wouldn't cut it down.

"Not welcome here if black,"
Said CCM and brick-men.
Coney Island wouldn't budge--
Nor would Mills Restaurant.

Forty-five saw hate strikes--
And glorified Homer Lunken--
The West End Civic League spoke up—
But the MFRC said "gradualism"

And –
THERE IS the elephant in the room!

*****
After a rape allegation
The Eastern Hills Lions took off—
Cincinnati vigilantes—
The MFRC should watch.

But they wouldn't take a side,
It wasn't their stake to claim.
In 1948, though,
They rode the "freedom train."

They called the student, Nathan
Wright, a public headache—
They said that editors Taft and Ferger
Were only fanning the flames

And--
WHAT elephant in the room?

*****
In 1947
The NAACP
Called for “war on police brutality”
In the face of the chief’s mockery.

The Friendly Relations Committee, though--
“Broad spectrum”--“Reduce tension”--
And the “Week of Friendly Relations” poster--
A black hand in a white one.

Cultural pluralism--
Separate but equal--
Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee--
Did it meet its basic goals?

Ah,
THERE IS a ghost here in the room.

Mrs. Bennett’s ghost says,
“I know you can’t come over.”
“I couldn’t keep you safe that day--
But can you still be my neighbor?”

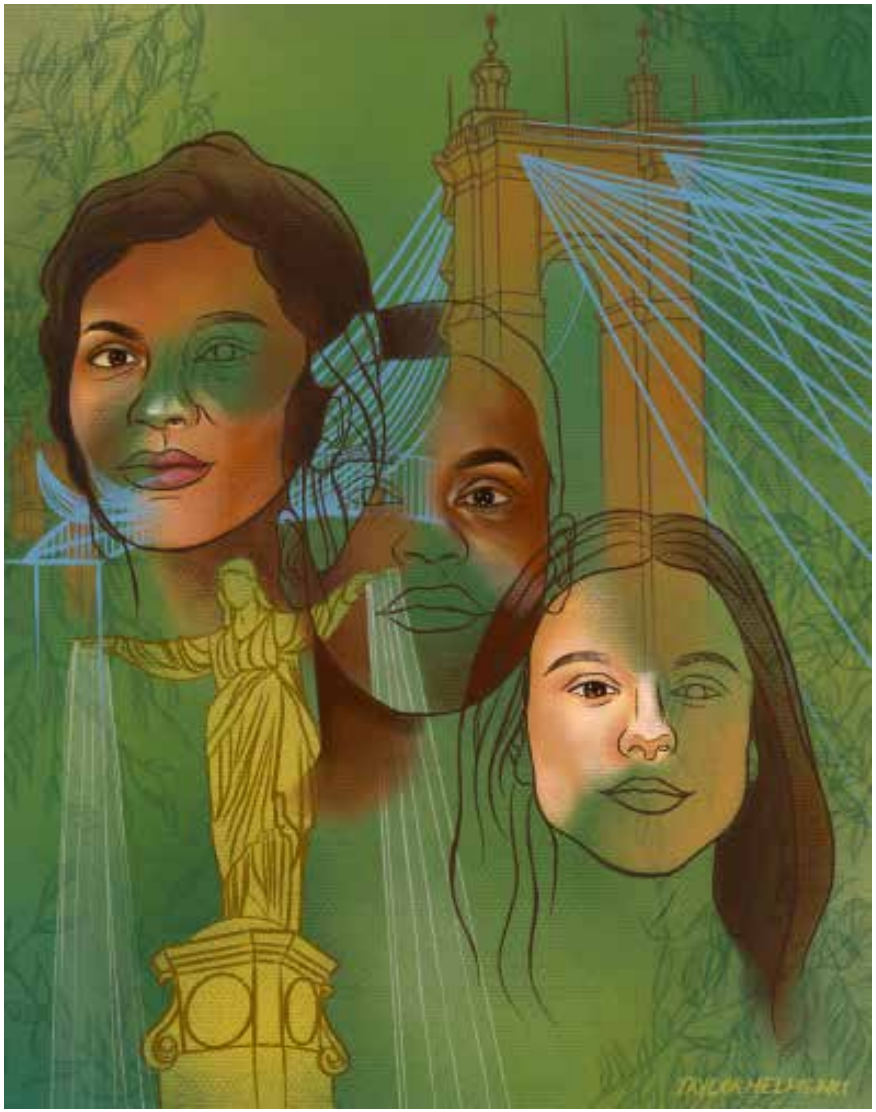
POEM

“‘Where is the Elephant in the Room’ responds to ‘The Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee,’ by Robert Burnham. The committee, formed when James Stewart was mayor, was comprised of over 100 members, approximately 10 of them African American. Harm to black citizens in housing, employment, and public spaces was treated in context of ‘tensions’ between racial and ethnic groups. Note that the scope of the Mayor’s Friendly Relations Committee (MFRC) was not yet establishment of civil rights, but only remediation of harm caused by prejudice and discrimination. As Burnham’s article explains, concerns were presented to the MFRC. My poem features ‘Mrs. Bennett’ and ‘Nathan Wright.’ Patsy Bennett was a white woman who criticized the 50+ whites who stoned the Mt. Adams home of two Black families who moved there in 1944; the mob then hung an effigy of her. Wright, an African American ministerial student, notified the MFRC after being detained by Cincinnati police, advising of threatening and abusive language. Some members of the MFRC called him a ‘headache.’
Not mentioned in the poem is Haney Bradley, beaten and charged with disorderly conduct. The poem mentions the NAACP’s call for a war on police brutality, one year after the formation of a race relations detail within the Cincinnati Police Department and in the same year as an allegation of the rape of a white woman. 1946 was also the same year of the speedy dismissal of charges against a white Graeter’s employee who refused to serve several Black customers.”

Cheli Reutter

Cheli Reutter was born and raised in Detroit and has lived in Germany, Santa Fe, Houston, and elsewhere, but has settled for over two decades in the Cincinnati area, where she has ancestral roots. She is associate professor of American literature at the University of Cincinnati and directs UC’s medical humanities certificate and its brand-new disability studies certificate. Reutter is also editor, with Jonathan S. Cullick, of *Mockingbird Grows Up: Reading Harper Lee since Watchman* (University of Tennessee, 2020). She writes on issues in American literature including race, mental health, and disability justice. Public service includes the Harriet Beecher Stowe House Board and program committee, outreach programs and guest lectures at local high schools and other public venues in Cincinnati, and double bass section membership in the Cincinnati Civic Orchestra. Reutter’s writings include an op-ed on Nathaniel P. Jones in Cincinnati.com as well as articles in academic venues.

TAYLOR HELMS



In Harmony; digital drawing; 22.5x17.5”

“From Chapter 10 of the ‘Race and the City’ book I took the phrases ‘we shall work together in harmony and without prejudice, hate or intolerance’ and ‘the essential roots of the community’ to create my piece. The faces are representative of people in the community and are all connected by their line work. The faces overlap and the green of the background peaks through, where there are also landmarks from the city as well as vines (from roots).”

Taylor Helms

Taylor Helms (@taylorhelmsart) is a multi-disciplinary artist from Cincinnati, OH. She graduated in 2021 from the University of Cincinnati’s DAAP program with a major in Fine Arts and a minor in Art History. She is best known for her colored pencil portraits, scenic art and murals around the city.

CHAPTER 11

Behind the Scenes: The Cincinnati Urban League, 1948-63

-- by ***Nina Mjagkij***

Chapter eleven examines the efforts of the Urban League to improve race relations in Cincinnati during the turbulent years of the civil rights movement. The Cincinnati Urban League (CUL) utilized a behind-the-scenes, or non-confrontational approach as a strategy for social change. Considering confrontation dysfunctional, the Urban League resorted to quiet negotiations at the office level rather than activism oriented toward maximizing the visibility of racial inequality. This chapter examines the use and effectiveness of the League's technique in the fields of employment, education, and recreation from 1948 to 1963.

"You can holler, protest, march, picket, demonstrate, but somebody must be able to sit in on the strategy conferences and plot a course. There must be the strategists, the researchers, and the professionals to carry out a program. That's our role," said Whitney M. Young, Jr., in 1964 as executive director of the National Urban League.

The CUL was founded on September 24, 1948. A major concern of the League during its initial years was the development of job opportunities for Cincinnati's steadily increasing Black population. In 1948 one-half of Cincinnati's companies with more than 1,500 employers did not hire African Americans, in part because unions excluded them from their ranks, while some companies employed African Americans exclusively in menial positions.

The bulk of the chapter focuses on the role the League played in the desegregation of Coney Island. This long ordeal began with picketing by members of the NAACP and CCHR (Cincinnati Commission of Human Rights) in January 1952. The chapter outlines in great detail the vacillating communications with Coney Island administrator, president Edward L. Schott and park manager, Ralph G. Wachs.

The involvement of other civil rights groups such as the Jewish Community Relations Committee (JCRC), the Civil Liberties Union, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) along with bad publicity and several court cases against Coney Island finally toppled the Coney

SUMMARY

Island fortress. After years of protests by other groups and negotiations on the part of the CUL, a meeting on May 27, 1961 took place and Coney officials decided to desegregate all facilities starting May 30th.

The Urban League became an important link between civil rights activists and the white establishment. The League's quiet diplomacy was effective only when the white decision-makers were willing to cooperate. Moreover, quiet negotiations were most successful when combined with either direct action or at least the threat of such. Without the use of economic and political pressure, the League's behind-the-scenes strategy lacked an important force. The League was afraid to exert pressure lest it lose its standing, but unless it pushed, it had little leverage.

The limitations of the League's approach became obvious during the late 1950s and early 1960s when African Americans no longer asked for concessions but publicly demanded social justice and democracy. Moreover, the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the establishment of an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission made the League's gradual behind-the-scenes role seem outmoded.

Nina Mjagkij

At the time of publication of the book 'Race and the City' in 1993, Nina Mjagkij was the director of the African American Studies Program and an assistant professor in the history department at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. Her forthcoming book at that time was 'Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946'.

MARY-JANE NEWBORN

Bemusement Park

When the company where my father worked
had an annual picnic at Coney Island,
it was an exciting time to go on rides,
to eat carnival foods and laugh in glee.
I did not know that there were children
who were not allowed this joy.
I did not know to ask.
Nobody told me.

Later, when I worked there at the Haunted House,
marveling at the shrieks and screams
of young Black women venturing inside,
I wondered why,
but did not know to ask.
Nobody told me that Coney Island
had been segregated, then integrated,
and these young women now had a safe place
to release a little of the terror
that had been haunting them.

On Orphans' Day I saw a boy with albinism,
who had pale hair and eyes and skin,
and pondered that he was Black,
and yet his color was like cream, a paradox.

Working elsewhere in a crew of women temps,
our Black supervisor wore overalls,
and his boss, who was Lebanese, wore a suit,
and would be considered white.
But both of them were the same color.

These puzzles remained unanswered.
Maybe teaching children what really happened
in this country, on this globe,
would not make them uncomfortable,
because they are curious and want to know reality.
Ignorance is painful and dangerous.

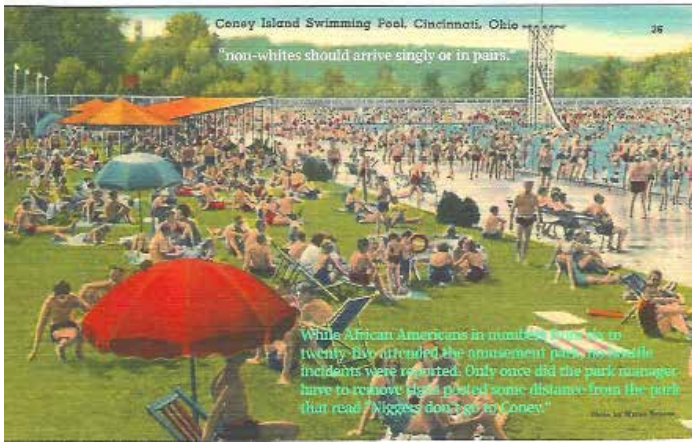
Our culture has been teaching
hypocritical race theory for 400 years,
and children continue to die.
If they cannot remember the past
because no one told them what really happened,
what choice will they have
but to repeat it?

"The chapter is about the desegregation of Coney Island, and my poem is about my experiences of that place. These are observations from a typically clueless white person only blurrily aware of the lifetime privileges afforded her by happenstance. They are probably relevant at best to other white people, possibly provoking some glimmers of cognition."

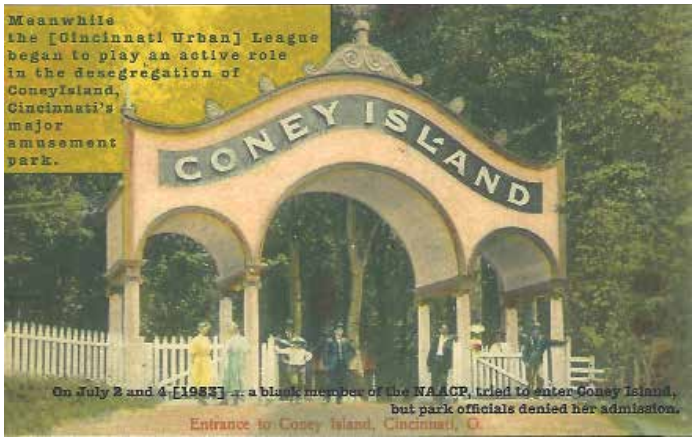
Mary-Jane Newborn

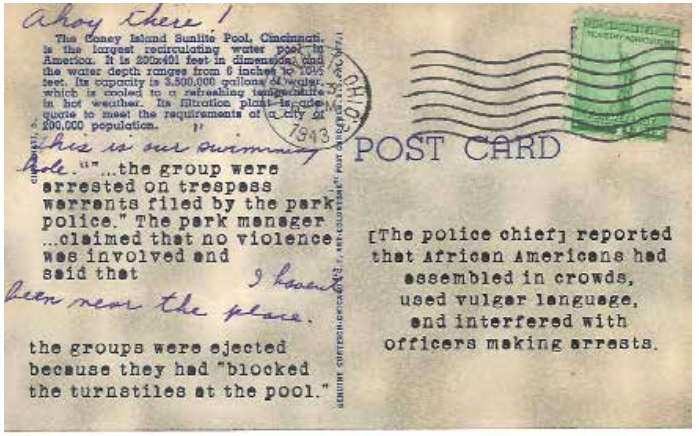
Mary-Jane Newborn is a native Cincinnatian who practices and promotes liberation veganism, volunteering for VeganEarth. Certified by Hamilton County Environmental Services as a Master Recycler, she also maintains a registered Little Free Library, practices extreme composting, and her yard is a National Wildlife Federation Certified Natural Wildlife Habitat. A Reiki Master, Newborn has also done stand up comedy, modeled for 26 years for art classes, and would like to buy natural gas produced exclusively by dedicated anaerobic digestion of currently wasted organic matter.

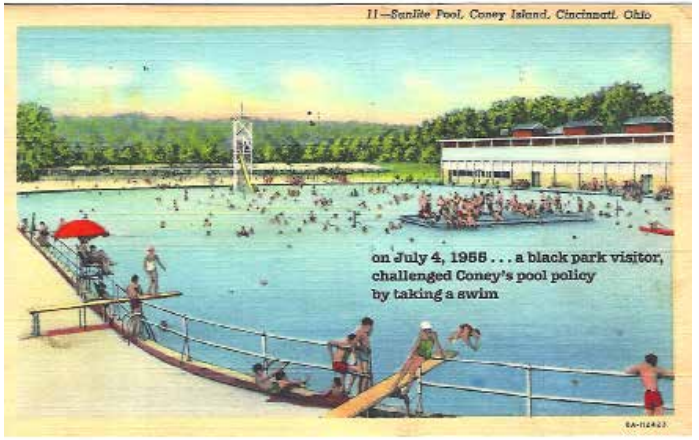

MOONLITE GARDENS
America's finest summertime Ballroom is a major attraction of CONEY ISLAND, CINCINNATI America's Finest Amusement Park.
Its architectural motif is French Colonial. In addition to its spacious dance floor, it has a seating capacity of 3,000 at tables. Its beauty is enhanced by a Dream Garden fronting on Lake Como. It features America's leading "name" bands.
Oh Boy - Plenty of them to - surely does my olde heart good -
denied admission to a rock and roll concert at Moonlite Gardens
POST CARD
[The president of Coney Island] did not oppose opening the park to African Americans except for the use of Moonlight Gardens, the park's ballroom [and] proposed a "step-by-step" procedure desegregating all facilities except the pool and Moonlight Gardens in 1955... because the pool and dance hall represented the "heart operations" of the park.

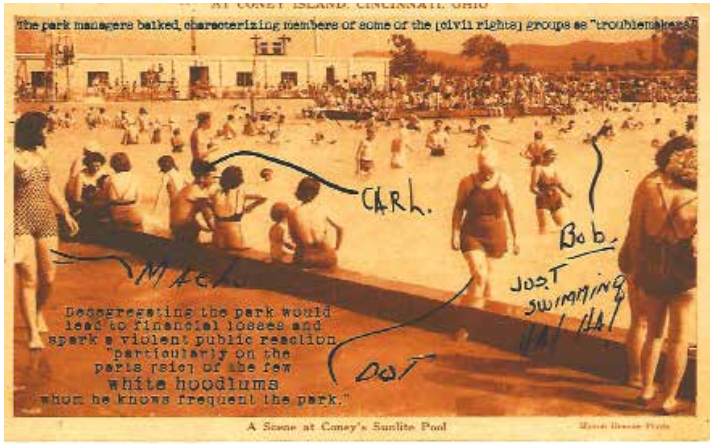

Coney Island Swimming Pool, Cincinnati, Ohio
"non-whites should arrive singly or in pairs."
While African Americans in numbers [up] to twenty-five attended the amusement park, no trouble incidents were reported. Only once did the park manager have to remove signs posted some distance from the park that read "Niggers don't go to Coney."

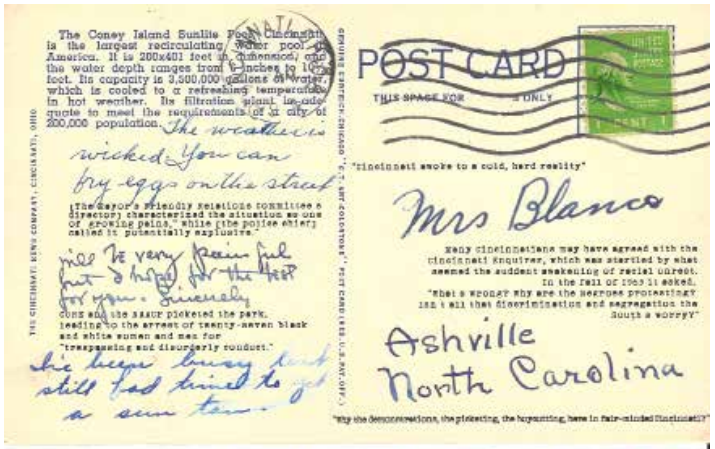

companies employed African Americans exclusively in menial positions.
SCENE AT CONEY ISLAND, CINCINNATI, O.


Meanwhile the [Cincinnati Urban] League began to play an active role in the desegregation of ConeyIsland, Cincinnati's major amusement park.
CONEY ISLAND
On July 2 and 4 [1955] ... a black member of the NAACP, tried to enter Coney Island, but park officials denied her admission.
Entrance to Coney Island, Cincinnati, O.


Ahoy there!
The Coney Island Sunlite Pool, Cincinnati, is the largest recirculating water pool in America. It is 320x401 feet in dimension, and the water depth ranges from 6 inches to 10½ feet. Its capacity is 3,500,000 gallons of water, which is cooled in a refreshing temperature in hot weather. Its filtration plant is adequate to meet the requirements of a city of 200,000 population.
this is our swimming hole."
...the group were arrested on trespass warrants filed by the park police." The park manager ...claimed that no violence was involved and said that I haven't been near the place.
the groups were ejected because they had "blocked the turnstiles at the pool."
POST CARD
[The police chief] reported that African Americans had assembled in crowds, used vulgar language, and interfered with officers making arrests.


11—Sunlite Pool, Coney Island, Cincinnati, Ohio
on July 4, 1955 . . . a black park visitor, challenged Coney's pool policy by taking a swim





Sunlite Pool Reflections; digital prints on paper; 9 panels, each 5x8”

VISUAL ART

CHAPTER 11

“In Chapter 11 of ‘Race and the City’, author Nina Mjagkij focuses on the efforts of the Urban League and other civil rights groups to desegregate Cincinnati department stores, the city’s school system and Coney Island amusement park and its Sunlite Pool.
After reading the chapter, I searched online for any images that might document the peaceful protests of the Urban League, NAACP, or other civil rights organizations and members such as activist Marion Spencer, and their struggle to integrate the riverside amusement park and pool. My search turned up a number of vintage Coney Island postcards on resale sites, many from the same period discussed in the essay, but none showing people of color. The idyllic postcard imagery with benign handwritten messages in contrast with the turmoil surrounding efforts to integrate the park recounted in the essay, struck me.
For my artwork I used selections from Mjagkij’s essay as captions for scenes of Coney Island depicted on the souvenir postcards and I paired passages of her text with messages from the backs of the cards. I digitally redacted, displaced and decontextualized these handwritten notes and excerpts from the essay to question separatism, illuminate irony, and reflect on issues of inclusion.
The found parallels of quoted material, juxtaposition of words and imagery, and obfuscation of text, invite the viewer to untangle the narrative and encourage reading of Mjagkij’s account of a transitional period in Cincinnati’s mid-20th century history.”

Kevin Harris

Kevin Harris teaches at Sinclair Community College where he has led courses in Drawing, Printmaking and Digital Media since the year 2000. Harris earned a BA from Hampton University and an MFA from the University of Cincinnati. He has also studied at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia and frequently attends printmaking workshops at Making Art Safely in New Mexico. Growing up, Harris was an avid postcard collector and he attributes that former passion to his decision to appropriate postcard imagery for his contribution to the “Race and the City Art” Project.

RACE AND THE CITY

Chapter 1:

Chapter Champion Laurie Roche: https://youtu.be/5uV8FgpvTuA
(Video provides summary of Chapter 1)

Wealth Inequality in America (2021):
https://youtu.be/PyOjfLz2I7Q

Holy Post – Race in America Part 1 (6/14/2020):
https://youtu.be/AGUwcs9qJXY

Holy Post – Race in America Part 2 (8/20/2020):
https://youtu.be/u-yun74BJEc

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service Twentieth-Century African American Civil Rights Movement in Ohio:
https://www.ohiohistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Civil_Rights_MPD.pdf
(Document provides an extensive historical overview of the settling of Cincinnati in 1788)

Chapter 2:

Chapter Champion Dale Bradford: https://youtu.be/73QVzxui4yo
(Video provides summary of Chapter 2)

Cincinnati Riot of 1841:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cincinnati_riots_of_1841

Mob Spirit in Cincinnati (by Levi Coffin):
http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/abolitn/abeslcat.html

Chapter 3:

Chapter Champion Sara Damewood:
https://youtu.be/NhwudvNtuVg
(Video provides summary of Chapter 3)

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Chapter Champion Melanie Moon: https://youtu.be/73QVzxui4yo
(Video provides summary of Chapter 3)

Voices from the Past: https://youtu.be/_eGBVMs6MWE
(Video provides reflections by prominent African American Cincinnatians on the status of Black Cincinnati in the 60s and before)

Six Great Black Americans On 1963 Primetime TV:
https://youtu.be/P4Eqb2fRon8
(Video provides reflections by six prominent African Americans on the status of Black America in 1963)

Cincinnati's Colored Citizens (by Wendell P. Dabney):
(This 1926 book provides a large amount of historical, sociological, statistical, and biographical information about Cincinnati's Black community at that time)

Chapter 4:

Chapter Champion Ron Moon Jr.: https://youtu.be/27mqjmpUaDc
(Video provides summary of Chapter 4)

Going Home: The Struggle for Fair Housing in Cincinnati 1900-2007 (by Charles F. Casey-Leininger and Students of the Public History Practicum Department of History, University of Cincinnati):
http://homecincy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Going-Home-2008.pdf

Chapter 5:

Author Nancy Bertaux talks about her work and Chapter 5:
https://youtu.be/tLuZtZH9skQ

Chapter Champion Les Tacy: https://youtu.be/EheH3XaRnKQ
(Video provides summary of Chapter 5)

The Economic State of Black America 2020 (Joint Economic Committee Congressman Don Beyer, Vice Chair):
https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/ccf4dbe2-810a-44f8-b3e7-14f7e5143ba6/economic-state-of-black-america-2020.pdf

Crowded Out? The Racial Composition of American Occupations (by William A. Darity Jr. and Darrick Hamilton): https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287484737_Crowded_out_The_racial_composition_of_American_occupations (Document provides information on employment discrimination in America prior to 2012)

The Heat's on Corporate America to Reveal Racial Diversity Data (by Ross Kerber, Simon Jessop, Reuters - July 2, 2020): https://www.reuters.com/article/us-minneapolis-police-corporatediversity/the-heats-on-corporate-america-to-reveal-racial-diversity-data-idUSKBN2431JY

Chapter 6:

Chapter Champion Marcus Hodges: https://youtu.be/p_dl2gfdHMg (Video provides summary of Chapter 6)

Mapping Prejudice: https://youtu.be/XWQfDbbQv9E (Video provides information about the history of racial discrimination in Minneapolis prior to 2019)

The Official City Plan of Cincinnati, Ohio 1925: https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/planning/assets/File/1925%20Official%20Plan%20of%20the%20City%20of%20Cincinnati.pdf (See page 50 regarding The Housing Problem in Cincinnati)

The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (by Robert A. Caro) (This 1974 book is a biography of Robert Moses, the New York urban planner during the mid-1900s, who was obsessed with one thing: power)

The Death and Life of Great American Cities (by Jane Jacobs) (This 1961 book is a critique of 1950s' urban planning policy, which Jacobs holds responsible for the decline of many city neighborhoods in the United States)

Chapter 7:

Chapter Champion Cassandra Freed: https://youtu.be/RKdSk8gcyx4 (Video provides summary of Chapter 7)

Chapter Champion Carol Wade: https://youtu.be/73QVzxui4yo (Video provides summary of Chapter 7)

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Chapter 8:

Chapter Champion Holly Mundon: https://youtu.be/73QVzxui4yo (Video provides summary of Chapter 8)

Chapter 9:

Author Charles (Fritz) Casey-Leininger talks about Chapter 9: https://youtu.be/NhwudvNtuVg

Chapter Champion Joseph Morton: https://youtu.be/F5YoiZxR260 (Video provides summary of Chapter 9)

Chapter Champion Tiffany Carter: https://youtu.be/73QVzxui4yo (Video provides summary of Chapter 9)

1982 Avondale-Corryville Renewal Plan: https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/sites/planning/assets/File/Corryville%20URP%201982.pdf

Avondale Community Vision 2005-2010: 1960 Avondale-Corryville General Neighborhood Renewal Plan (pages 12-13): https://www.uc.edu/cdc/urban_database/subregional/avondale_strategic_plan_04.pdf

Race and the City: Work Community and Protest in Cincinnati 1820-1970 (The Failure of the Avondale-Corryville Renewal Plan - page 244)

Chapter 10:

Chapter Champion Carol Carlin: https://youtu.be/_hx4plGE0wY (Video provides summary of Chapter 10)

Nathan Wright Jr., Black Power Advocate, Dies at 81: https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/24/obituaries/nathan-wright-jr-black-power-advocate-dies-at-81.html

Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry (August 1945): https://www.jstor.org/stable/1883298

Chapter 11:

Chapter Champion Maggie Shreve: https://youtu.be/zZikZmut4KM
(Video provides summary of Chapter 11)

State of Black Cincinnati 2015 Two Cities (by Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio)**:**
https://www.ulgso.org/_files/ugd/aeaa34_5dc65aaa1cdf4275894ca33b055277de.pdf

SOS ART's "Race and the City Art" event (5/14/2022):

Excerpted video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7zRQXFGZX4
Full length video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njotWsXjkeY

*Additional References provided by ***Melanie Moon***