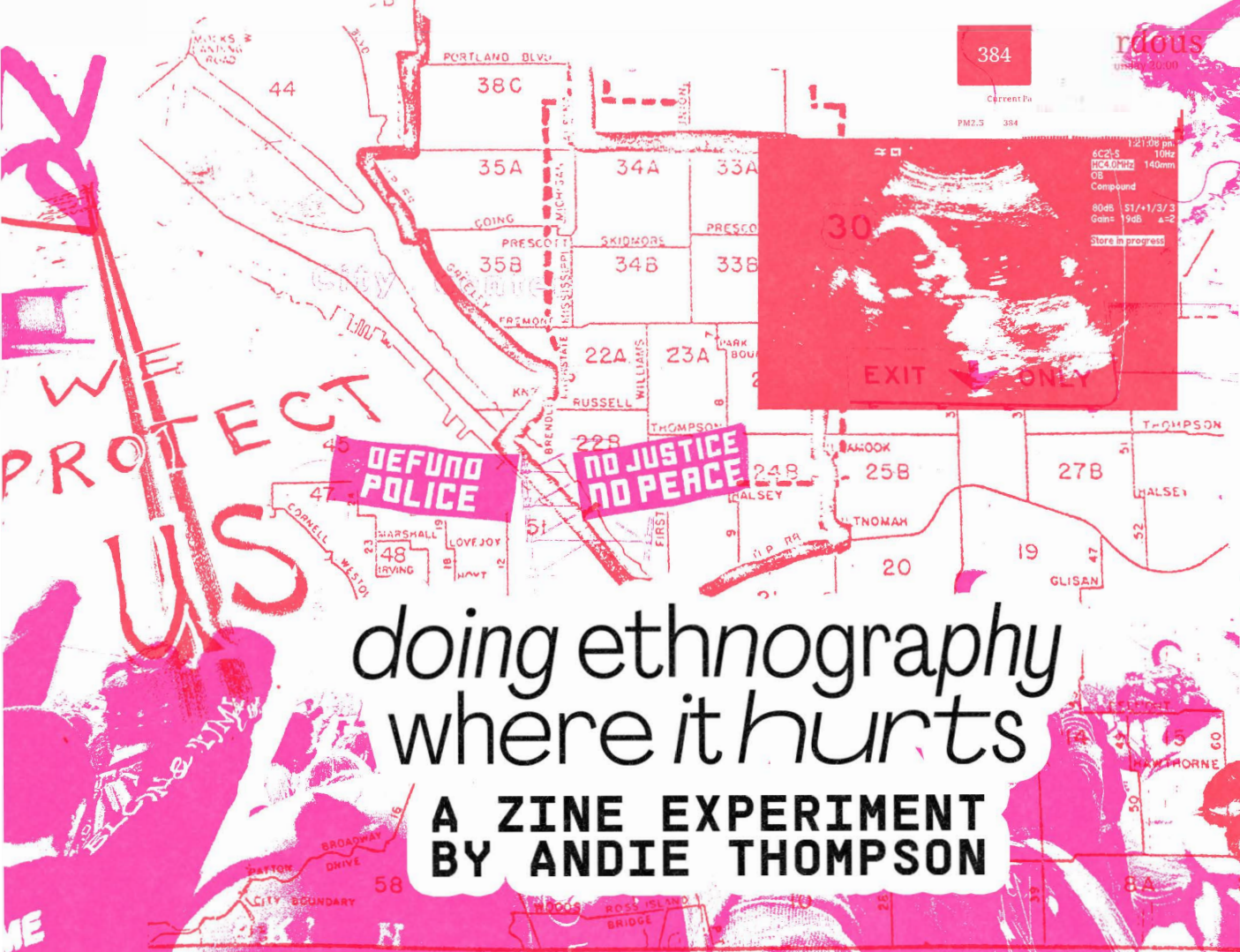


INFLAMMATORY STATES



doing ethnography
where it hurts

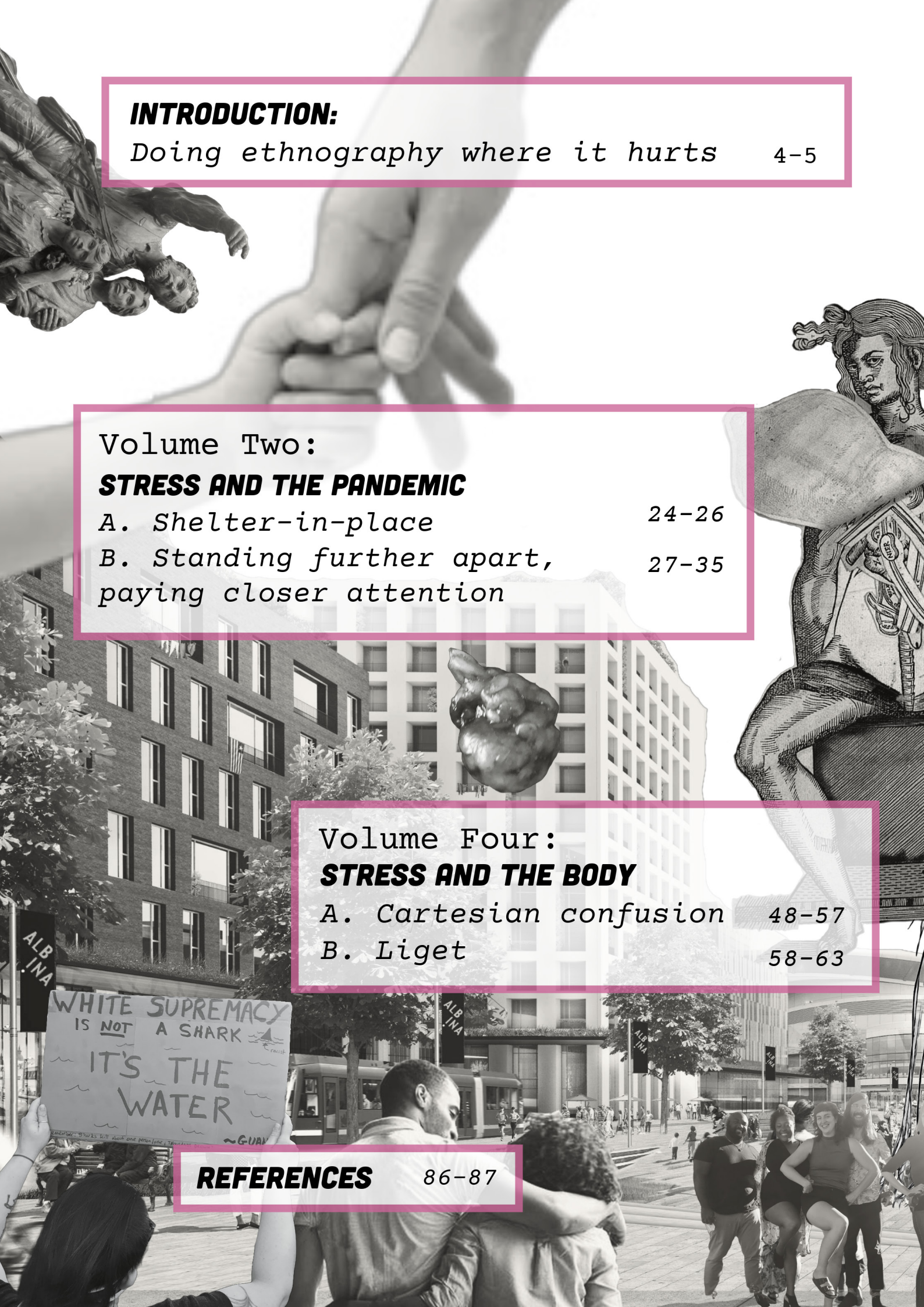
A ZINE EXPERIMENT
BY ANDIE THOMPSON

3 CENSUS TRACTS 
2 Model Cities Boundary 
MATERNAL & INFANT
CARE PROJECT 

MODEL CITIES

PORTLAND, OREGON





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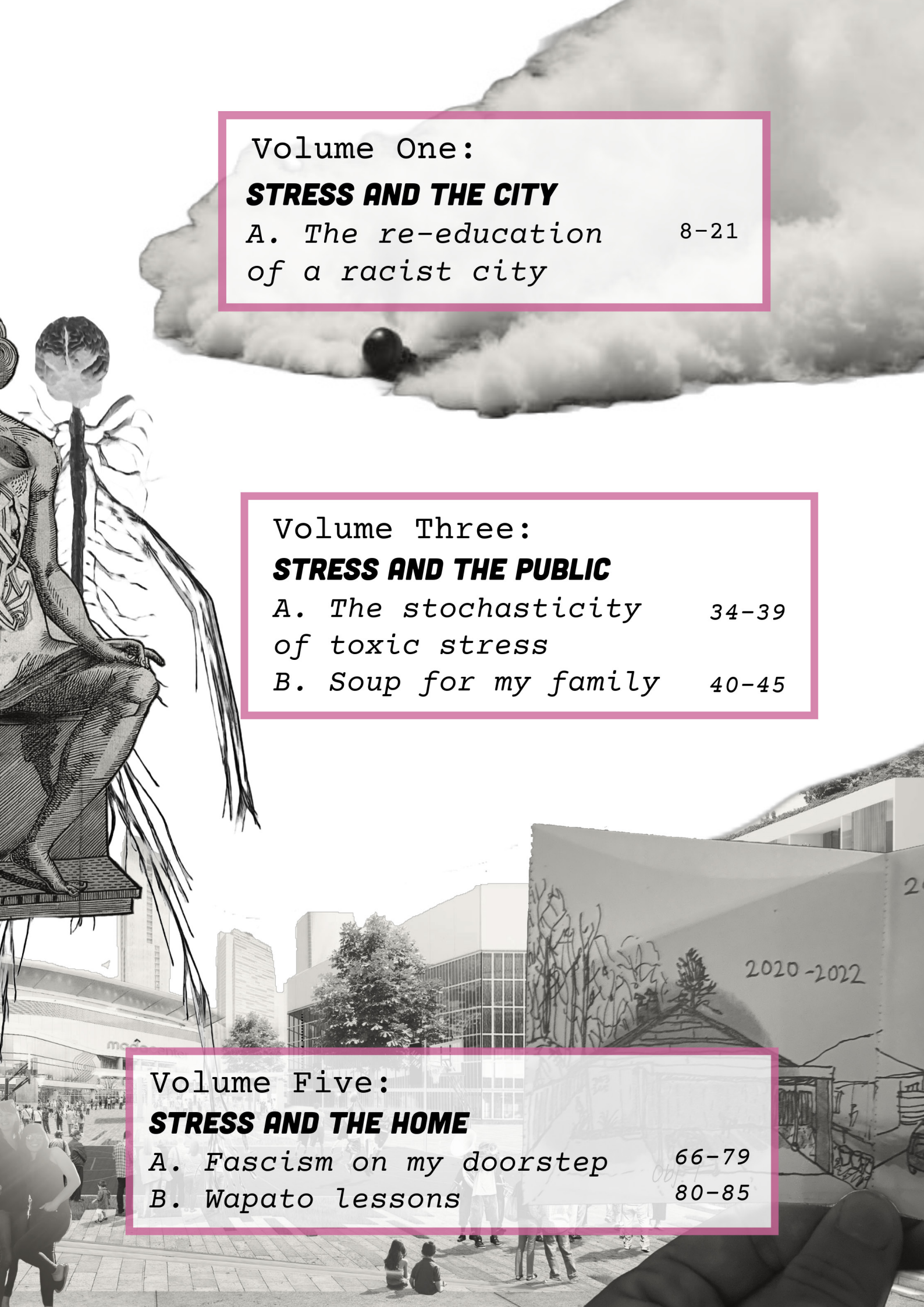
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ABOUT THIS ZINE

I've titled this zine "doing ethnography where it hurts" because that is what I have done, an ethnography of where it hurts. I am often asked what my current research is about. The stock reply I've trained myself to offer is a vague accounting of my overall project, "an ethnography of toxic stress in Portland, Oregon". But in breaking down this simplified one line description the words used speak volumes about what I've been up to.

Ethnography, as a act of scientific knowledge production, asserts that the world can be known through the careful study of social relations and it is the job of the ethnographer to embed within these relations and discern their stakes such that the culture of a specific society might become knowable to those on the outside. In this research, the world I am inquiring about is stress, how a body responds to pressure, pressures that because of their scope, become poisonous to life- toxic- capable of causing death or serious debilitation. And I've done this inquiry in Portland, Oregon, a place that is as familiar to me as my mother tongue and yet often leaves me reaching for better words to describe it.

Ethnographers are trained to sniff out tensions, locate discords, contradictions, and nuances that illuminate more than what we are told in mere words. To know our field not just as a witness but as a participant! We are told "to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar" in how we write stories from our fieldwork. How does one do this when your field is your home, the world you are describing inherently destructive to life, and the stakes of the social relations that hold it together are deeply personal. For me, "the field" became a sort of "sweaty concept" (Ahmed 2014, see also 1997, 2000, 2004, 2010), with vague boundaries and inadequate language to describe the embodied exposure patterns that underlie social knowledge production.

This zine is an experiment to think through the stakes of doing an ethnography at home, under stress. The uneasy

companionship that holds me the ethnographer and a project done by navigating variations of my own kinship networks in the community I am from is an example of what Anthropologist Chelsey Carter has called, a “homework ethnography” (2019, see also 2020): research in a place where commitments to relational networks and a deep longing for a better future conflict with models of academic knowledge production. In the effort to find a way to tell these stories and distill down an understanding of the stakes involved as an ethnographer of home, I’ve made this zine.

What the zine opened for me was an opportunity to just say what mattered without the pressure of couching it in conversation with academic literature and a forcing a coherency between the theory, the stories, and the method. Writing about a place I am from also meant that I am writing from a different part of myself– my heart space is guiding me, my politics are shaping why the implications of these stories matter, my bodies stress-responses are marking where to look deeper, and a collective understanding I cannot describe gives me the energy to push onwards. Zines are tools of process. When I began this project I did not have a clear plan for which stories would find their way into these pages, in which order they should be layered, or what point it was they were building towards. In many ways, this was a faith based endeavor. I hoped that the years I’ve dedicated to witnessing, collecting, and deciphering random bits of evidences was not all in vane. But this is a scary thing to do, a vulnerable thing, a thing hinged on hope and forgiveness of my short comings. I keep asking myself, “how many words do I have to write before I’ll trust my capacity to articulate the meaning?” I do not yet have an answer for this.

The vast majority of this ethnography was conducted during COVID-19 lockdowns. From home, I began remotely watching city council meetings, city planning sessions, and neighborhood association meetings, and combing through available archival documentation related to policy processes, and citizen-led interventions into the quality of urban life in Portland. Many of the things I thought I knew about Portland I had to unlearn. And most of what I came to then know did not make it’s way into the standalone articles my thesis is compromised of. This zine is a collection of the other parts that matter: the parts that are now part of me. And in doing this analysis I can also see that the relationship between me and the field is fundamental to how I spent my energy as an ethnographer; what questions I asked and with whom I felt safe spending my time.

For you, the reader, I hope this zine provides a glimpse into an ethnographic atmosphere and holds some useful knowledge about what it means to be an ethnographer of home, at home, on the toxicity of stress.



DO HARM AGAINST THOSE WHO
LOOK DIFFERENT FROM THEM.



VOLUME ONE

STRESS AND THE CITY

**THE RE-EDUCATION
OF A RACIST CITY**

THE RE-EDUCATION OF A RACIST CITY

When Trump took office in January of 2017, Portland became a flash point for white supremacist activity, public misinformation campaigns intended to alienate anti-fascist activists, and resurgences of deeply convoluted historical patterns that rocked Portland's sense of collective identity. The week Trump was elected Americans experienced a collective "oh shit" moment that had left most of the US in a state of shock. No one I knew believed it was possible for an openly racist figure like Trump to actually win the election. I was a world away in Amsterdam at the time and no one there believed it could happen either. But it did. I stayed up most of the night as the count took place, crying, pacing, calling home, drinking too much bourbon and baking chocolate chip cookies for comfort. Hung over and sick on sugar, I had to attend classes that next day and attempted to act like a normal human. Meanwhile in Portland mass walk-outs were occurring. High school students, college students, and labor forces of all kinds walked out and marched together through the streets. Portland convulsed into protests thousands strong day after day. The police regularly called "riot" and attempted to disperse the crowds with flash bangs and pepper spray. One hundred protesters were arrested in the first week.

Eventually the protests quelled, serging again at critical moments; on inauguration day and directly after the Women's March which pulled an estimated 70 to 100 thousand people into

downtown Portland. When Trump issued a "Muslim Ban" refusing immigration and travel to and from several predominantly Muslim countries, protesters came out again. And again when Trump refused to release his tax returns. And again for the International March for Science. And again to block detainees from being taken to an ICE detention center

TRIALS AND ERROR

Can Protesting Trump Inspire White Awareness About Racially Biased Policing?

Portland, Oregon, at once a liberal epitome and the whitest city in America, might find out.

BY REBECCA MCCRAY MAY 15, 2017 • 5:55 AM



for deportation when Trump started hunting for precarious citizens to deport across the southern border. With every oppressive policy roll-out people grieved, raged, and took the streets in solidarity.

In response to these protests, pro-Trump rally's also began to show up in and around the Portland Metro area. One group, a Christo-white nationalist organization called Patriot Prayer, hosted weekly protests of their own in downtown Portland holding banners that

read “It’s OK to be white!”.

But for many long standing racial justice activists in Portland, what was happening on the street was not solidarity. The scope of concerns that brought activists out to stand against Trump, his policies, and his aggressive supporters, had fractured the Black Lives Matter platform. Local activist and founder of Don’t Shoot PDX¹, Teresa Raiford, called this fracture an unexpected erasure in an interview with the Oregonian, “If activism doesn’t lead to advocacy.. then it’s actually just exploitation on another level and again to the detriment of people that are actually victim survivors of trauma that are putting their bodies on the line.” What wasn’t unexpected to Raiford and other Black Lives Matter activists however, was Trump’s successful election and rise of white nationalism across the country, this she described as absolutely expected.

Calling out racism continues to be a massive struggle against the veneer of a progressive and inclusive urban culture, nestled within a largely conservative state in an already deeply politically polarized country. Several decades of activism and strategic campaigning to make the impacts of white supremacy visible to those who do not experience the undesirable effects of structural oppression made it possible for public and institutional discourse to arrive

1 PDX is the airport code for Portland International Airport and used as shorthand to reference the city.

in the conversation. In the intervening years between Trump’s election and the beginning of the pandemic, the imperative to grapple with white supremacy and racism for community safety had become extremely loud.

Portland has a reputation as a progressive city, a place of liberal thought and actions. And while this reputation has been hard earned by activists and community advocacy groups over the course of history, only a couple of decades ago Portland was white separatists territory. In the 1920’s Portland was home to the largest constituency of KKK in one

place with over 9000 registered members. Oregon was once known as a sundown state, when constitution was established in 1857 it included a clause stating it was illegal for non-white people to buy or rent land or homes, let alone stay after dark unless they were slaves. On paper this law persisted on the books until 1973

when the constitution was ratified with the 14th amendment. In practice, when this law ceased to be practiced depends on who you ask.

Oregon was founded on the imaginary of “white exclusion”, a term that historically referred to strategies of preventing non-European immigrants from building wealth and accessing certain legal and social privileges. This underlying imaginary shaped policies and practices that made homemaking hostile for people of color, echoed the doctrine of manifest destiny that decimated Indigenous communities laying claim to the land they had thrived on, and libertarian fantasies about the virtues of settler pioneers. This

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness



In an April 29 photo provided by John Rudoff, Jeremy Joseph Christian is seen during a Patriot Prayer organized by a pro-Trump group in Portland, Ore. Police say Christian fatally stabbed two men who tried to shield two teenage girls from an anti-Muslim tirade on a Portland light-rail train on Friday. (John Rudoff/AP)

Portland, historically imagined using white supremacist logics, and contemporarily rendered as a majestic beauty, a progressive, weird, artsy punk wonderland where your DIY dreams can come true, was the version I was taught about in school (uncritically) and believed I knew as a young person (also, uncritically until I entered college). This is also the version of Portland that is recognized nationally as— a sometimes over the top— progressive, liberal safe space, a sanctuary city that welcomes differences.

The erasure of the version of Portland recognized for its political corruption, as a home of white supremacy and racist urban planning from the national zeitgeist, is in many ways a testament to the success of the decades of activism to shape the cultural and political environment.

In the years preceding the Pandemic lockdowns, 2017–2019, this reputation was being put to the test. More so than at any other point in my living memory, racism was abundantly visible. Trump's rise into a position of political influence empowered far right and white supremacist groups all over the country to rear their heads and start to claim space in

the social and political arena. One of the high profile examples of this was the "Unite the right" rally in Charlottesville, North Carolina shortly after Trump's presidency began — where a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd of counter protesters killing a young woman named Heather Hayer in the process. Trump had also mandated the federal counter-extremism surveillance program solely

on Islam, a statically absurd as the lions share of domestic terrorism in the United States is done by white supremacists. This move, as well as a multitude of dog

whistle comments Trump made in speeches and on twitter was interpreted by many people in the US as signaling to white supremacists that they would not be watched

Before Trump took office and the city became flash point for antifascist and far right clashes, Portland was a culturally white supremacist

space. Neo-nazi groups dominated the local music and bar scene in many major neighborhoods, using venues as recruitment sites to bring youth into their organizations. Skin head gangs roamed Portland freely, vandalizing the homes and businesses of Asian, Black, and Hispanic community members, and were rarely held accountable for their actions by law enforcement. During the lead up to Trump's election, Portland became a theatrical staging zone for alt-right groups to host pro-Trump rally's. Post inauguration, white nationalist orgs began bringing in members from across

the country rally in the name of the "patriot movement", a pluralistic effort to link the dregs of American culture: anti-government militia groups, die-hard conspiracy theorists, and all the various racist, xenophobic, extremist, anti-semitic, anti-Islam,

anti-immigrant, and violent by groups the FBI lists as right-wing domestic terrorists.

The "patriot movement" of Trump's

Kyle Brewster, convicted in notorious 1988 hate crime killing, seen at pro-Trump rallies in Salem, Portland

Updated 7:34 PM, Today 7:34 PM



A shot of the crowd at the Jan. 6, 2021, pro-Trump rally at Oregon's Capitol in Salem appears to show Kyle Brewster (with flag scarf) in attendance. Brewster was among three men convicted in the 1988 hate killing of Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant who was beaten to death on a Portland street.

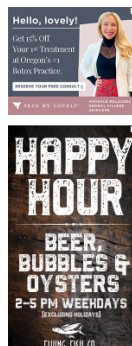
As Portland Police Stand By, Alt-Right and Antifa Protesters Beat Each Other Bloody

Today's brawling in Tom McCall Waterfront Park left several men bleeding and soaked in pepper spray.

TV Expanded



By Katie Shepherd
August 06, 2017 at 4:37 pm PDT



time, followed a similar pattern. When alt-right rallies would take place in Portland, reports of raised trucks menacing pedestrians, fist fights in bars, and drunk drivers being on the road would permeate social media. The Portland police also seemed to be accommodating these gatherings, keeping their distance. On one occasion an officer confiscated a set of automatic assault rifles from a group of Patriot Prayer members— a white christian separatist group— perched on a rooftop and politely returned the guns at the end of the rally. On another, emails and text messages leaked to the media showed Joey Gibson, the leader of patriot prayer, had a direct line with lieutenant Jeff Niiya from the Portland Police. The communications between them showed that Niiya and Gibson had been exchanging information about where the police would be in relation to clashes with counter-protesters with Niiya giving Gibson advice on how to evade confrontations with Police.

The intensity of the rally's and the violence surrounding these events, culminated after a white nationalist who had been participating in the regularly scheduled bouts of violence murdered two people and wounded another, traumatizing countless others. On public light rail system called the MAX, a white man named Jeremy Christians belligerently approached two Black Muslim women in their teens shouting a slurry of hateful announcements that drove them out of their seats to seek safety in a more populated portion of the train. Three white men, strangers to each other, stood up and put their bodies between Christians and the two women he was approaching. He slashed and stabbed them several times, aiming at the jugular vein in the neck. Two of the men died from the wounds. The third man narrowly survived, Christians had filleted him starting at his neck just under his left ear and ending the slice half way

down his sternum.

The city mourned. I mourned. I was living in Amsterdam at the time but geographical distance has the effect of amplifying grief when something so familiar and close to home is violated. Growing up in Portland I took the same train line the murders happened on regularly between my childhood home in a suburb and the inner city. My little sister continues to use the train as a daily commuter. We talked about what to do if we were to encounter a hate scenario like the one that ended in two intervening bystanders being stabbed to death. My sister purchased pepper spray. I considered taking a self-defense class. Neither of us knew what our bodies would allow us to do if confronted with a moment of fight or flight with life or death

Man shouting 'anti-Muslim slurs' fatally stabs two men in Portland

- Jeremy Joseph Christian, 35, charged with murder by Portland police
- Men were trying to stop the attacker from harassing two Muslim women



Police investigate the stabbing in Portland. Photograph: Jim Ryan/AP

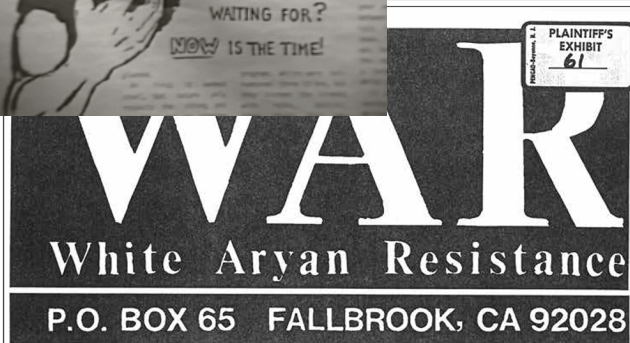
Two men were fatally stabbed in **Portland**, Oregon on Friday after they came to the aid of two women who were being harassed because they appeared to be Muslim, police said.

consequences, or how to interpret the risks involved to ourselves or others. But we had no trouble imaging the scene, we had both had enough exposure over the course of our daily lives to see— with high fidelity— a red-faced, belligerent white man with hate in his eyes threatening to kill two young women for no other reason than they exist. To imagine this,

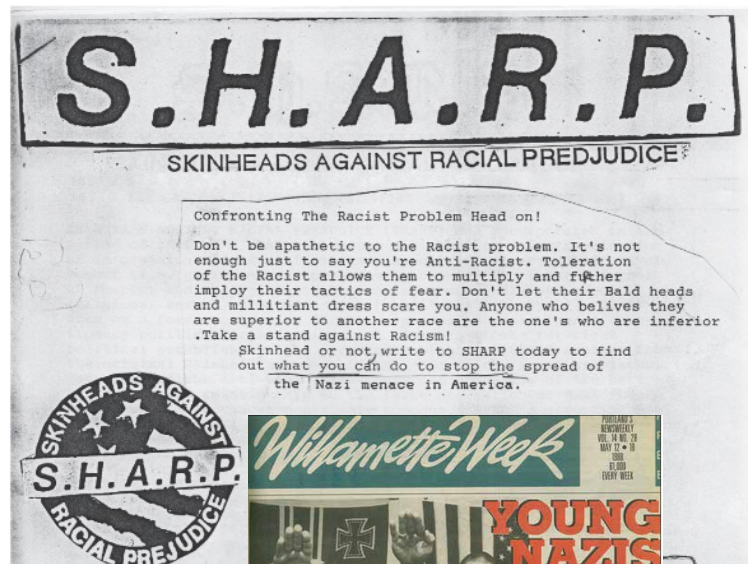
dozens of images, sounds, emotions, and knowledges rise to the surface—some from direct experience, some from the stories told by others, and some absorbed through media. Seeing a white supremacist raging is an image I would bet any American can easily conjure.

For older Portlanders, especially Black Portlanders, the image of Jeremy Christians brought up more than a question of 'what if' they had to look into the eyes of a white supremacist fueled with murderous intent but 'when' to expect it. On social media, activists recounted instances of white supremacist terrorism that took lives, like the murder of Clarence Debnam Jr. who was killed by members of a white supremacist gang in 1970. The white supremacists shot Clarence with

a shot gun at point blank range while standing in a phone booth. The murderers



WHITE ARYAN NATION (WAR) propaganda from the mid 1980s that advocated violence at the U.S. border resonates today. In this flyer, WAR tells its followers: "If it ain't white . . . waste it" to "stop the mudslide" into the United States.



were never caught. For those who remember what navigating life in a

city where being terrorized by white supremacists was normalized, the increasing presence of alt-right groups and the uncomfortably accommodating atmosphere the local police created by holding space for them, were echoes of life in 1980's and 90's when Portland carried the nick name of "skin-head city"— in part of because of rising neo-nazi youth gangs and in part because the rise of the SHARP movement, standing for Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudice, an international organization that had formed when punk culture polarized along lines of political identity and became a major player in anti-fascist activism in Portland.

Portlanders began to mobilize once again, applying pressure to City Council to take Jeremy Christian's violence as an omen for what might come and act. Several coalitions formed within civic infrastructure: A human rights coalition dedicated to maintaining Portland as a sanctuary space. A group called "Portlanders United against Hate" made up of 65 different community orgs that

consulted on city policy processes. Several councils formed to elevate racialized experiences and hoped to make change, such as “Walking while Black”, a public outreach initiative to make investments in city transportation designs response to concerns of Black community members.

Kent Ford, a life long social justice activist and one of the founders of the Black Panther Party in Portland, began offering regular walking tours through NE Portland to share place-based stories from his experiences organizing against racialized violence and educating the community members who wanted to learn. Theater productions, artists, and archival projects found lucrative funding sources to produce works that elevate histories often left out of Portland’s liberal self-narrative.

In 2018, the city’s civic life office in coalition with the Urban League of Portland began an initiative to unerase Portland’s racist history by offering social justice bus tours for small groups. On the bus a local historian would re-educate riders about the city they live in, layering stories of ruthless land grabbing, discriminatory housing policies, and urban development programs that segregate and disenfranchised non-white people while looking out upon

Nkenge Harmon Johnson, president and CEO of the Urban League of Portland, said the threat of violent racism continues in Portland.

“Our eyes are wide open,” said Harmon Johnson. “We know that the Patriot Prayer boys and the Proud Boys and the white nationalists and those other hoodlums who seek to make us unsafe, who want to bring us back to 30 years ago when Mulugeta was beaten on these streets by those thugs—we know there are folks who want to bring us back to that. But look at all of you here today.”



the familiar landscape of friendly neighborhoods, cozy parks, waterways, and highway infrastructures designed to offer drivers panoramic views. [*My mother-in-law went on one of these bus tours as a team building activity with her company, a large healthcare organization. She said it gave her the context to really begin to listen when activists would point to racism as the origin of cycles of poverty and unequal health.*] And official memorial markers began to appear at sites where hate crimes had happened, spatial reminders that the Portland as a liberal safe haven is only tender new skin smoothed over deep wounds.

Near a park I frequented one of these markers appeared in 2018. It was discrete. A small brown plaque resting atop the street sign marker for the intersection of SE Pine and 30th. The plaque had a portrait of a handsome young Black man and a name printed in Amharic, the language spoken in Ethiopia with the dates (1959–1988). The first time I noticed the plaque I did not understand what I was looking at unaware that a brutal murder had occurred at a crossing I regularly passed through. On another day, walking towards the crossing from another angle, I noticed that the sign had the name written in English: Mulugeta Seraw. I stopped and googled his name. Mulugeta Seraw was a father, a son, a husband, an Ethiopian immigrant, and a



PROTESTERS GATHER outside Pioneer Courthouse in Portland, Oregon, on September 18, 1989, after Kyle Brewster pleaded guilty to murdering Mulugeta Seraw, an Ethiopian immigrant. Brewster, along with Ken Mieske and Steve Strasser, who also pleaded guilty to the murder, were members of East Side White Pride, a white supremacist group in Portland.

beloved community member. He was killed in 1988, by three high school aged recruits to a gang called East Side White Pride, a branch of a national group White Aryan Resistance (WAR). The recruits randomly selected and brutally beat Seraw to death with baseball bats in a quiet middle class inner-city neighborhood.

Seraw's murderers were arrested and two years later convicted for their crime. One died in prison. The other two were paroled in the early 2000's. While one of the surviving murderers became an active anti-racist the other doubled-down and is regularly sighted at alt-right gatherings in Oregon, now a member of the Proud Boys—another violent white supremacist street gang. The three men who assaulted Seraw were not the only people held accountable for his death. Tom Metzger, a leader in the white-power movement and founder of WAR, had sent his son to Portland to train new recruits including the three that murdered Seraw, encouraging them to target and assault people of color as a terror tactic. On record, Metzger called the murder a "civic duty". The jury found both Metzger and his son to be liable for inciting the crime. Seraw's family was awarded 12.5 million dollars, a record breaking sum for a racism case in the US judicial system, bankrupting WAR in the process. Honoring Mulugeta's life by marking the site of his death, was an intentional consciousness raising intervention to elevate both the injustice of life lost to acts of hate and the history of collective actions that set the tone for a version of Portland that was fiercely anti-racist.

While many mainstream media

sources were quick to make the connection between Jeremy Christians and the historic case of Mulugeta Seraw, rarely was a reference made to a much more recent murder by white supremacists, the killing of a Black teen—19 year old Larnell Bruce Jr, less than a year earlier. In August of 2016, Larnell was assaulted by a white supremacist, Russell Orlando Courtier, a member of the European Kindred gang— while standing in front of a convenient store. When Larnell ran for his home the white supremacist and his girlfriend followed in their vehicle— a raised jeep. Video

from a security camera captured the driver's first attempt to run Larnell Bruce down, surging towards him and missing before whipping around and accelerating the wrong direction into a lane of traffic to try again. This second time, intentionally hitting

him, driving over his body and dragging him down the road. Larnell died in this hospital a day later. Courtier and his girlfriend, Colleen Hunt, were convicted in 2018 for Larnell's murder. This was the first time racism was explicitly named as the motivation in a murder conviction in Oregon since the precedent was set in the case of Mulugeta Seraw thirty some years ago. Racial justice activists critiqued the cities response to Jeremy Christian calling out the racialized blinders that amplify action for some while largely ignoring others— the men Christians stabbed were white and Courtier had killed a poor Black kid in the Portland suburb of Gresham.

The alt-right groups that had been organizing "freedom of speech" rallies in Portland were asked by numerous social justice organizations and the City Council to discontinue in the wake of the murders



THURSDAY, 2:00 PM, FEBRUARY 7, 2019

113

TIME CERTAIN: 2:00 PM – The City of Portland condemns white supremacist and alt-right hate groups (Resolution introduced by Mayor Wheeler, Commissioners Eudaly, Fish, Fritz and Hardesty)
1.25 hours requested

No fiscal impact.

on the MAX train. They did not. Instead, leaders from white nationalist organizations distanced themselves from Jeremy Christians claiming they are about “protecting white America’s right to freedom of speech not promoting physical violence”. At Christians arraignment hearing, one week after he committed multiple brutal murders he repeatedly shouted “You call it terrorism, I call it patriotism!”, “Free speech or die, Portland. You’ve got no safe place!” and “Death to the enemies of America!” Chants heard at alt-right rallies. Jeremy Christian’s was actualizing the rhetoric he had been radicalized with, fueled by the violent energetics he experienced at the regularly held alt-right events. Much like the three young white men indoctrinated by Metzger and the White Aryan Resistance to “clash and bash” any people of color they encountering while prowling around the city cultivating a state of perpetual terror, as they did when they murdered Mulugeta Seraw.

Shortly after this white pride leaders from around the country began showing up in Portland to speak at rallies and take photos with local members. Portland was now a PR destination for white supremacists with celebrity status within the patriot movement. Counter protesters began increasing in numbers. Around the country the pattern of more counter protesters showing up to patriot movement rallies as an effective suppression tactic. Portland was no different.

In early February of 2019, the city implemented a strategy to curb Portland’s position as a space for

openly white supremacist political activity—starting with

a “resolution condemning White Supremacy and Alt-Right Hate Groups” acknowledging the cities ongoing history with racism, stating an intolerance of hate groups, as well as launching an initiative to develop city-



The Portland City Council hearing on Thursday, Feb. 7, 2019, that resulted in the passing of a resolution condemning white supremacists and alt-right hate groups.
Erica Morrison / OPR

"I don't believe anyone in this room believes that today is gonna fix what's broken in our society. It won't but I also want to remind you that as an African-American woman who is African-American 365 days a year and 366 or leap years, I can assure you that racism is alive and well in Oregon. I can assure you that today, I feel less safe walking the streets of Portland then I have ever done in my almost 30 years here. Portland has a lot to make up for as it relates to racial reconciliation and today is the beginning of that process. I want to take this moment to really appreciate all my colleagues. The mayor's office is taking the lead on this but every single office has been involved in this resolution and you have my commitment today that this resolution is the beginning and not the end of a process. It is the beginning of an acknowledgment that we have a lot of work to do in this community."

Commissioner,
JoAnn Hardesty



wide training on how to identify white supremacy within institutions. During the council meeting where the vote took place, residents of Portland shared stories with the council about their experiences with racism in the city. The leader of a white christo-nationalist organization— called Patriot Prayer— also appeared during the comment session to criticize the proclamation while incoherently monologuing about elevating love instead of calling out white supremacy.

The presence of the alt right groups was but one of the several catalysts for the city council to take on white supremacy is such

a direct way.

Joann Hardesty, an ex-navy officer who had held a position as member of the House in the Oregon legislature, been the president of the Portland chapter of the NAACP and hosted a call-in show on a local community radio station discussing racial disparities and environmental justice issues was elected to city council. Hardesty was both the first Black woman to be elected to city government and the first person who lived in the Eastside of Portland to be elected. During her time in radio, she had worked with my dad who taught field recording classes and read the evening news for the same station. I continue to be a huge fan of Hardesty's brand of activism through civic leadership.

A 17 year old Black teen was killed by police in Portland in Feb of 2017. He had fled when officers approached him about a report of someone being held up at gun point and a stolen food stamps card and later broke a window on a house to snatch a pair of winter gloves. Several officers and a canine unit hunted Quanice down and found him hiding in an alcove under a porch between a garage and home a short distance from where he had been questioned. As Quanice attempted to follow the confusing directions shouted at him by the cops he was shot and killed while kneeling on the ground in the driveway, three times, once in the head, and twice in the chest. It was an execution.

I remember reading about the murder of Quanice Hayes when it happened. News articles circulated a mug shot of Quanice that was in the police database from when he was 14 years old. The narrative focused obscured facts: there

"As Portlanders and as Americans several of us on this day are still learning and coming to grips with the ways in which our own actions and policies may unintentionally reinforce white supremacists structures in our city and still we are united and determined in rebuking white supremacy and racism. Yes, words do matter but words that are never spoken also matter. Now is the time for us to speak loudly and clearly about what we value as elected officials. We were elected to ensure the well-being of this city in its residents this resolution provides a clear signal to people of color that we are on your side and we will do everything that we can to ensure your safety and honor, your dignity as human beings. This is not a silver bullet but I'm hopeful that this resolution is a start and it's followed by meaningful determined action."



was a victim—the guy whose food stamps card was stolen, a perpetrator—a Black man with a gun, and several Police officers in pursuit, two of which caught up to him and who shot and killed him before he could shoot one of them. The response from activists was small at first focusing on memorializing who Quanice Hayes had been to counter the character of the criminal he was reported to be.

As additional information began to come

out, Hayes had been carrying a toy gun that was found near where he was killed but not seen on his person by either of the police officers that confronted him in the alcove. He had residual recreational drugs in the system that together make for a bad trip. The officer that shot him used an AR 15, a semi-automatic assault rifle best known for its popularity with murders who commit mass shootings and controversial for police to carry as the presence of these weapons increases the probability of people being killed. When an officer with an AR 15 as their weapon instead of the standard issue hand gun is called to a scene, their role is as “lethal cover”—which means that if they shoot, they shoot to kill. Hayes didn't have a chance. Hayes was the

"We have to recognize the history of this city and of this country and of white people nationwide, worldwide. I am NOT proud of some of, many of, the things that my ancestors did. Being from England and the, the colonization, the slavery, the invasion of this country. They did the annihilation of the Native American people. I am NOT proud of any of those and I'm sorry for all of them. I'm sorry for what happened in Port, what has happened in Portland, over the last 200 years and it's up to us to acknowledge these hurts and they're not the hurts of yesterday they are ongoing hurts. There is ongoing lack of wealth in the people of, for people of color in, Portland because of not being able to own property in the right places or keep property and because of not being able to get education and jobs because of having higher incarceration rates, poorer health outcome."

first Black person to be killed by Portland police in 7 years, a record streak for the department. Protests against police violence began, a hundred or so people strong, locating themselves in front of the building where city council meets. The mayor closed the council sessions to the public and police in riot gear guarded the building arresting protesters who tried to enter.

A grand jury

confused by conflicting commands being yelled by the multiple police officers present, "lay on the ground", "put your hands up", "crawl towards us with your hands where we can see them"- and he did not deserve to die for that. The defense



Friends and family gathered for a candlelight vigil in memory of Quanice Hayes, 17, on Sun., Feb. 12, 2017. The event was held in the parking lot of the Banfield Pet Hospital, 1816 N.E. 82nd Ave., near where Hayes was shot by police.

suggested that because Quanice was a child, he should have been watched, fed, and warm in the safety of his home, thus it was his mothers neglect that caused his death at the hands of the police and an assault rifle.

One year later, the family of Quanice Hayes sued the city of Portland for the death of their loved one, launching an independent review process into the most recent cases of the use of deadly force by Portland Police. The independent review report was finally published in January of 2019.

The review had found that police, at multiple moments in the investigation and confrontation with Quanice Hayes had not even considered an alternative, listing many examples- including that one of the other officers present had a shot gun full of less-lethal bean bag munitions that were not used. The "fatalistic conclusion" of Hayes death, was in other words not the result of his actions but of normalized police practices built on logics that made the outcome nearly inevitable.

On Feb 6th, 2019, the same day the findings of the OIR group report was



review declined to charge Officer Hayes with wrongful death. He had done what he was there to do. During the trial, the PPB's defense suggested Quanice had caused his own death by choosing to mix recreational drugs and not sleep the night before rendering his mental state such that he should have expected to be killed by police. When this argument of deservedness failed the defense turned to his mother, flipping her own claim of injustice that Quanice was a child with a toy gun having a very bad trip, cold, hungry, scared and lost on the streets of Portland he was too confused to recognize in his current state of mind, terrified of the German shepherd barking aggressively as it hunted him down,



(Illustration by Nicole Rifkin)

presented to the city council and the day before the city council issued their condemnation of white supremacy, they voted to accept a settlement with the police union on behalf of a police Sargent named Greg Lewis who had been terminated after making explicitly racist remarks to multiple colleagues

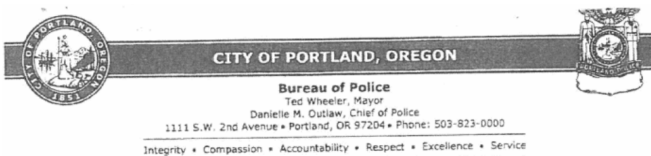
They misinformed us, and told us Quanice was shot three times in the chest. We later found out from the death certificate that that wasn't true, that Quanice was shot in the head and twice in the chest. Also, the Portland Police and Detective Camora and the D.A.'s office told us that there was three officers on the scene. There was in fact five officers on the scene. None of the other officers felt the need to use deadly force, only Officer Hearst.

Quanice was on his knees when he was shot in the head and in the chest. I think that's important when anybody wants to say that he was this dangerous robber, which is irrelevant at this point because he's not here to stand up for himself.

We would like to ask that the federal government step in and do a full investigation into the execution-style murder of my son.

while giving a presentation. During a staff meeting three days after Quanice Hayes was killed by a Portland police officer, Lewis told officers starting their shifts to "be smart" about whom they use force against in the community. According to accounts documented in the termination letter issued to Lewis nearly a year after the offense was reported by his colleagues, the statement went like this:

"If you come across a guy in a suit and tie that came downtown and had a little too much to drink ... he's probably not the guy you want to detox straight out of the garage. He will most likely sue you. If it's a homeless guy, you will probably be safe. I doubt he's going to sue you. If he's Black just shoot 'em!"



MEMORANDUM (CONFIDENTIAL)

January 12, 2018

TO: Sergeant Gregg Lewis, #22515, PRNR #199009
Personnel Division

SUBJECT: Discipline: Termination
IA Case 2017-B-0008

You are hereby notified that your conduct, while employed with the Portland Police Bureau, has not met standards acceptable to the Bureau. The charges are violations of the following Police Bureau directives and City Human Resources Administrative Rule (in relevant parts):

and requested a meeting. net with and in the lieutenant's office in Central Precinct. All three explained that they were uncomfortable with the comments you made during the C-Shift rollcall, relayed that several of the sergeants and officers present for the rollcall had discussed what occurred, and felt obligated to report the incident to command staff.

Written notifications of what had occurred were submitted by Captain Jeffrey Bell with the Professional Standards Division. Excerpts from the notifications are as follows:

On Sunday February 12, 2107 at 1600 approximately 1600 hours I was seated in the roll call room at Central Precinct while Sgt. Greg Lewis was running C Shift roll call, reading fliers and speaking to a group of 15-20 officers. A discussion between Sgt. Lewis and a few officers about the legality of placing someone into custody for public intoxication on a premise open to the public developed. To the best of my recollection, sometime during that conversation Sgt. Lewis told the entire group of officers to, "go out and shoot black people." I remember hearing some nervous laughter from some in the room and one officer exclaim, "oh my god!" Sgt. Lewis laughed, threw his hands up in the air and said, "Fuck it. What do I care?"

(Memorandum addressed to Captain Jeffrey Bell from February 13, 2017)

In reaction, another officer pointed to a comment made in an Oregonian article about the killing of Quanice Hayes describing that Portland police shoot to kill black people but only wound white people, to which Sargent Lewis laughed, threw his hands in the air and said, 'Fuck it. What do I care? Just got out and kill all the Black people.'

While the internal investigation of these comments had resulted in the termination of Sargent Lewis from the force, he was still eligible to be re-

Report to City of Portland

PORTLAND POLICE BUREAU

OFFICER-INVOLVED SHOOTINGS

Sixth Report / January 2019

p. 7 2 occurrences

One of the cases we review here – the officer-involved shooting of Quanice Hayes – engendered protests and strong reactions in segments of the Portland community who responded to the shooting in the context of notorious recent events nationwide involving the deaths of young African-Americans at the hands of the police.

That long history of injustice understandably frames the public analysis of cases like the Hayes shooting.

p. 75 2 occurrences

Hayes' actions drove the outcome. As we discussed above, a more thorough and constructive review would have assessed questions about how personnel might have altered the tempo of their response, allowing them to weigh options for providing cover, to better coordinate commands, and to consider safer ways to take Mr. Hayes into custody. In this case, we raise the following questions about whether the on-scene officers performed consistent with the training accompanying the action-reaction principle: ... Were there other options that officers could have deployed for cover (as they did after the shooting) such as utilizing the patrol car with ballistic doors that was on scene?

4 A GRAND JUROR: At that point when you
5 were in that position, you were eye to eye, was he
6 standing up or had he — was he on his knees at that
7 point?
8 THE WITNESS: Still standing up. Yeah.
9 A GRAND JUROR: Thank you.
10 BY MR. REES:
11 Q Any response to your command?
12 A No, no response.
13 So then we begin telling him. And I say
14 we — I should say I believe the K-9 officer standing to
15 my right begins giving him commands that he's to go down
16 to his — down to his knees and keep his hands up.
17 So he does that. But as he's doing it, he
18 doesn't, he doesn't keep his hands all of the way up.
19 He kind of drops them slightly towards his waistband.
20 It just raises my internal anxiety of why
21 can't you just keep your hands up all of the way. But
22 he goes down to his knees.
23 And then we begin telling him what you are
24 going to do is you are going to start to crawl out to
25 us. We want you to keep your hands way out in front of

1 you. And you are going to crawl out into the driveway.
2 And kind of before and after that command
3 is given, there's some kind of pauses, you know, to make
4 sure is he hearing us? Is everybody on the same page?

5 And somewhere in there I tell him again,
6 because I want this — him to understand what my
7 response is going to be. I tell him, "If you reach for
8 your waistband, I will shoot." I feel like I need to
9 tell him again because he's, he's not keeping his hands
10 away from his waistband.

11 When he dropped down to his knees that
12 first time, he let them kind of casually fall. This is
13 not a casual situation we're in right now.

14 So the command is then given, "Okay. Go
15 ahead and start crawling out to us." Instead of
16 crawling, though, he jumps up very quickly. His hands
17 are still up, but he jumps up.

18 And I remember — I think it caught all us
19 off guard. You know, we kind of almost jumped
20 ourselves. Because it was so very clear and obvious
21 what we asked and told and went over — what we told you
22 to do.

23 Q Up on his feet or raising his whole body or
24 torso?

25 A Up on to his feet. He's now standing. So

1 we've gone from standing to kneeling and now we're back
2 up standing again.

3 And somebody else, "We told you to crawl.
4 You know like, how could you have gotten that wrong?"

5 And he kind of offers to me, I perceived
6 it as kind of this false excuse that he knew wasn't
7 real, but he gave it anyway. He said, "Well, you told
8 me to come out to you, so I'm coming."

9 And then we told him again, "But we told
10 you to crawl." And so there's again, as these
11 instructions are given, there's kind of pauses in
12 between them. So in one of those pauses, I order him
13 back down to his knees, and he goes back down to his
14 knees.

15 Then we begin going over the instructions
16 again. "You are going to crawl out to us. Hands out in
17 front of you. Don't reach for your waistband. Now
18 begin to crawl."

19 So then he starts crawling. But as he's
20 crawling, he again is not keeping his hands way out in
21 front of him. As he picks up one hand, instead of
22 putting it — continuing it straight out in front of
23 him, he's drawing it back towards his waistband again.

24 And to me, I perceived it as possibly this
25 guy is getting ready to pull the gun; that he's, he's

1 almost practicing, 'cause I know if, if he's got a long
2 jacket on that's covering his waistband, he may be
3 trying to get a feel of where does the jacket lay
4 against the weapon? How am I going to draw? What is
5 this fluid motion going to look like?

6 So it's creating more anxiety, more
7 nervousness in me. What is this individual going to do
8 because he's not compliant and definitely not
9 appropriately compliant given the seriousness of the
10 situation we're in.

11 So he starts crawling and he's doing this
12 along the way. And I may have — I told him at least
13 three times what I would do if he reached for his
14 waistband. As he was crawling, I may have said it
15 again.

16 But he gets a little ways out into the
17 driveway and we tell him to stop, and he stops. And he
18 sits back up on his — kind of vertical. So he's on his
19 knees, vertical, with his torso. His hands are up in
20 the air. Still again not appropriately extended,
21 somewhere between a 90-degree bend at the elbow and
22 fully extended.

23 And we start giving him commands — let me
24 stop for a moment.

25 I — as he has crawled out, I have also
1 stepped out of the flowerbed and am now also in the
2 driveway right in line with him. And we start telling
3 him, "Now you are going to go down to your face. Hands
4 out in front of you. Slowly go down to your face."

5 As he does — as we give those commands, I
6 start noticing that he's looking around. And I
7 perceived it as either he's — you know, this is the
8 final moment. He knows he's about to go into handcuffs.
9 At least that's my perception.

10 So when he's looking around, I'm thinking
11 either he is looking for an avenue of escape to run or
12 he's looking at a target, an officer, to shoot.

13 And as he's doing that, he takes his right
14 hand and he drops it to the small of his back
15 (indicating.) But immediately, as he kind of puts it
16 down, he pulls it back out.

17 It's like a fluid motion. And it just
18 took my breath away. And I just remember, oh, I almost
19 shot you. Do you not realize what's about to happen? I
20 was just reeling from this reality that I almost shot
21 this person.

22 But the second that that emotion kind of
23 just went through me, in the same kind of fluid
24 movement, once it's brought out front, he reaches to the
25 front of his waistband, and I fired my rifle. I hear it

hired a practice which is quite common. Firing a police officer permanently from performing law enforcement duties here or elsewhere in the country is an extremely difficult task. The Portland Police Association— their labor union— has carefully designed their bargaining agreements to protect officers from being held accountable for their actions while "they serve". To prevent Lewis from being rehired the city agreed to a settlement that would give him back pay for the period he was on suspension during the investigation, a sum just over 100k as well as erase his termination from the record making him eligible to claim his pension and in return, he would officially retire.

This vote was part of a "consent agenda" meaning that the vote to settle with Sargent Lewis would not be openly discussed during the council session. What was discussed were the findings from the OIR report, in which the case of deadly force used to kill Quanice Hayes was included. During the session the authors of the OIR report had been called out by Commissioner Hardesty for omitting some of the key details that appeared in the report in the summary of their findings. One of these details they had omitted was that Portland police had shown aerial video footage of one of the cases under review and walked officers through the details of what was reported to of occurred as part of a "training experience" at the start of their shift, the day after the killing had occurred. This is an important finding because many of the officers who participated in

1 go off three times. Boom. Boom. Boom. And he
2 immediately falls to his face.

3 Q Do you want to take a break for a moment?

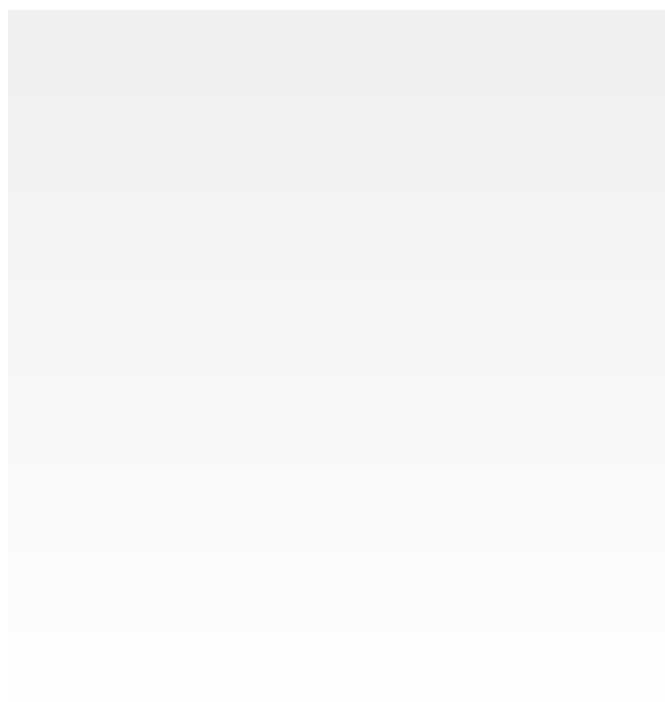
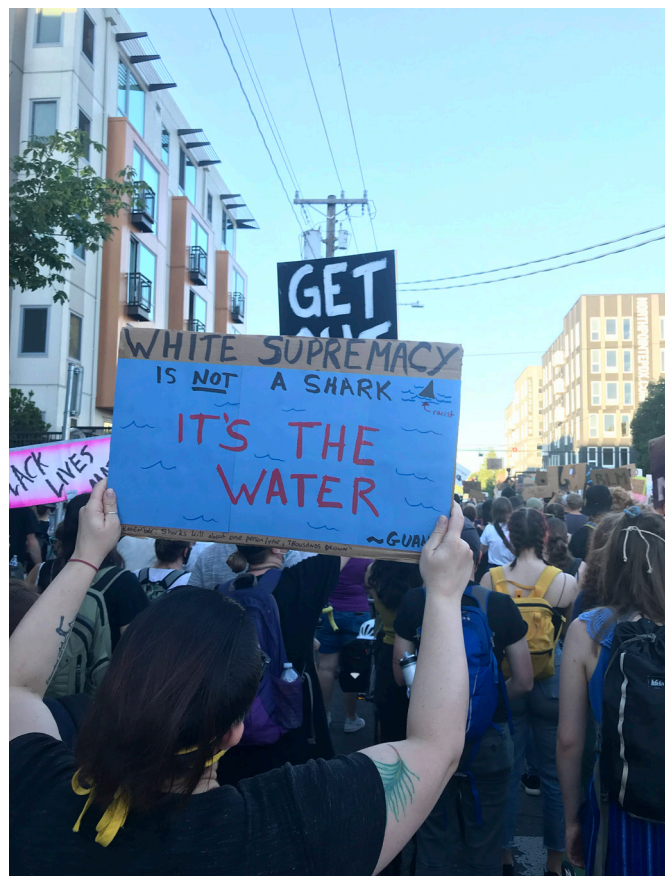
4 A No. I'm good. Thank you.

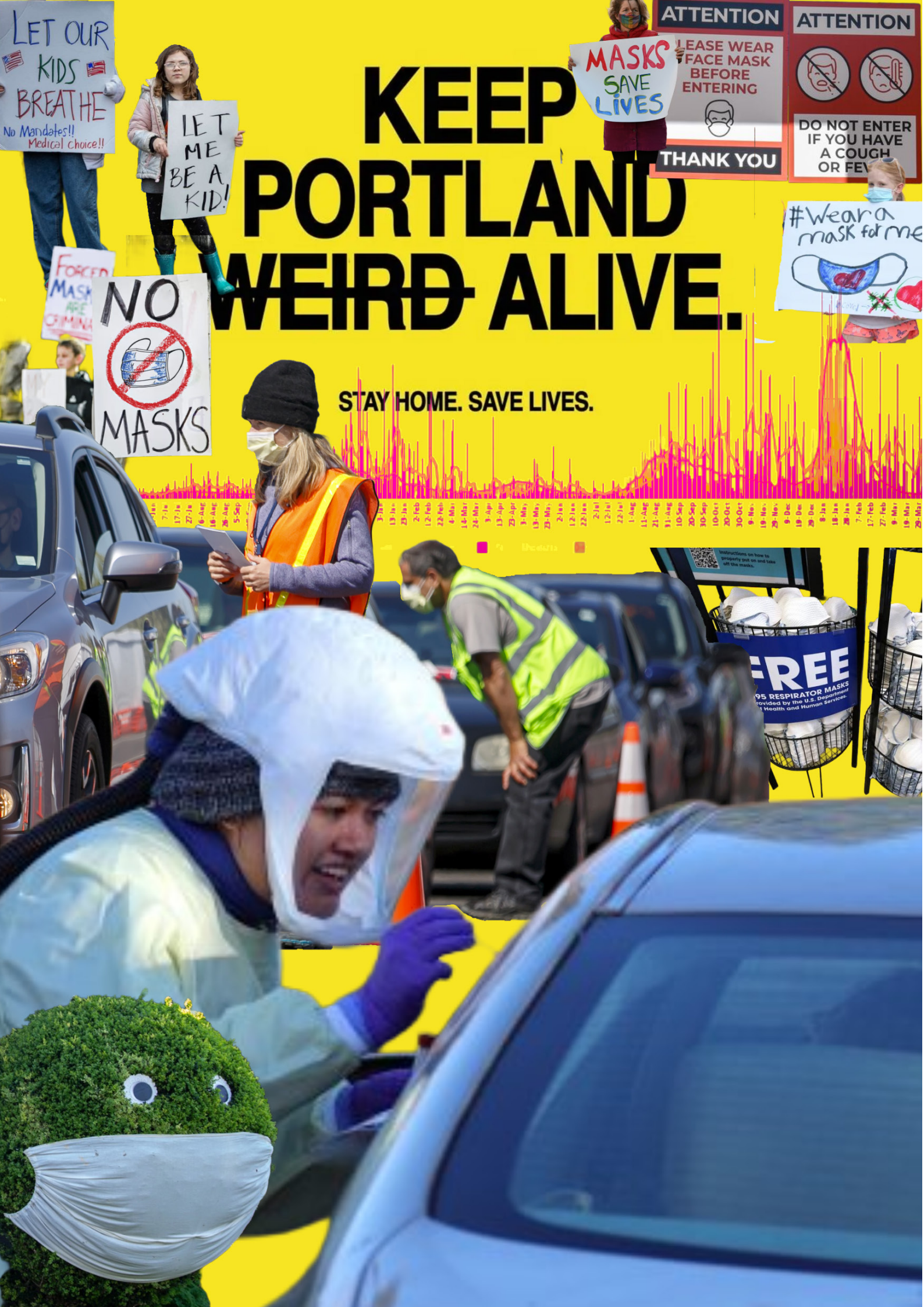
this “training” had also been involved in some capacity in the case and had not yet been interviewed by the internal examiner assigned, a major conflict of interest and suspected to be a strategy for aligning the details of officer’s stories for the examination to come. The second omitted detail that Hardesty pointed to was that multiple cases reviewed had been officially closed by the departments investigators before interviews with witnesses— both from the bureaus staff and the community at-large— had been completed.

The authors of the report suggested the recommendations contained within would be used to improve police accountability structures but did not elaborate how. Donna Hayes, the grandmother of Quatrice Hayes, was in attendance to offer testimony. “My concern is having cops with no form of accountability” she stated before questioning the council about why the recommendations of the report, many of which were repeated from prior review processes, had not already been implemented. The quality of the writing in the current report, she assured the council, is better than in previous reports both letting the council know that she has thoroughly researched this matter and suggesting the current review board was taking their task more seriously than past boards whose existence had been hotly critiqued by local cop watch groups as a useless placation. She asked that the council ensure that this time the findings of the report would lead to a change in police practice, a gentle command from a concerned grandmother about the future of community safety in Black Portland. “Stand by these recommendations. Our lives depend on these recommendations.”, she said as she concluded her remarks.

The irony of the findings of a review process promising to improve police

accountability having been couched on the same agenda as a settlement with racist cop who was rather politely forced into retirement went unacknowledged during the council session. Donna Hayes who had been entirely gracious in her statements that day, left the room in tears.





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MASKS
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A COUGH
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VOLUME TWO

STRESS AND THE PANDEMIC

SHELTER IN PLACE

**STANDING FURTHER APART,
PAYING CLOSER ATTENTION**

SHELTER-IN-PLACE

“Shelter-in-place” orders began to take effect in March of 2020 as state by state, the United States went into lock-down to decrease the rapid spread of COVID-19. The emergency order to “shelter-in-place” is a cold-war era public safety strategy originally imagined to direct the public to immediately move indoors in the event of a thermonuclear attack. In the United States, this order has not been needed as guidance to prevent exposure to radioactive fallout but it has been issued in response to other toxic exposures. For example when plumes of noxious chemicals are released into the atmosphere, shelter-in-place has been called to reduce the possibility of the health and lives of nearby residents being compromised; refinery fires, explosions at chemical production facilities and in the wake of a derailed train that was moving deadly toxins.

In practice, the order has also been deployed for other uses, such as to prevent exposure to impacts of toxic social

behaviors. After the Boston Marathon massacre, for example, “shelter-in-place” instantly shut down all public buildings and transportation



systems as police forces took control of the city during a man-hunt for the bomber. What was the order protecting people from exposure to in this case; the enactment of a police state or the threat of further violence posed by the bomber?

The shelter-in-place order is also often issued in the case of a natural disasters, like Hurricane Michael in 2018, where residents in



Florida's panhandle were told to stay at home indoors unless they could reach an evacuation shelter. For the several hundred people whose homes were destroyed, the emergency shelters housed them for months to come waiting for safe housing to become available. Here shelter-in-place ceased to be crisis management and instead became daily life.

The most routine use of the emergency seek shelter order however, is in the case of active shooters. An occurrence that has become a regular and anticipated event in American society with mass shootings dramatically rising nationwide since the early 2000's occurring in shopping malls, grocery stores, movie theaters, concert venues, military bases, and elementary schools. Sheltering-in-place in the presence of an active shooter has become part of the broader "Run, Hide, Fight" strategy used by American public schools, prioritizing evacuation if safe, followed by hiding and, as a last resort, fighting. To shelter-in-place, students are trained to barricade or lock interior doors, hide under desks, in cabinets, behind furniture, and attempt to avoid exposure to death and disability from a barrage of munitions fired from military grade assault rifles by shooters who are overwhelmingly white and male.

In the context of the COVID-19 lockdowns, public health practitioners were attempting to limit possible transmissions of a virus whose lethality to human populations was not yet known. Each state had the authority to set the parameters of what the lockdown would entail. Oregon was among the first

wave of states to go into lock-down. The governor officially enacted the order on March 23, 2020 renaming it to "Stay Home, Save Lives". The version in Oregon did more than direct people to isolate indoors, it also required public education to shift

to a remote model, "non-essential" businesses to temporarily close, prohibited public gatherings and social and recreational activities, including outdoor group sports.

In Portland, the largest city in Oregon, the language of the order was not received well by the public, pointing to thousands of people living in informal encampments along highway underpasses,

in city parks, and against railway embankments. Houseless communities and people who were housed but unable to afford or access food, were abruptly cut off from the material and social supports they relied on, supports that had been largely distributed by volunteers who were now in lock-down. The public



health policy was enacting a scenario to let the unhoused die so that other lives may be saved.

The mayor's office directed county public health departments to use the term, "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" instead, to which the public pointed to the false logic of health being protected by living in isolation for many residents who require networks of other people to physically or mentally thrive. Again the city responded rhetorically, "Stay Home, Stay Safe", another popular variation in use, but this too was a fraught construction as concerned people began reporting that domestic violence was increasing after people were locked-in with their abusers. The number of women, youths, and children living in cars or in tents also began to suddenly climb, collateral damage for the good of the public.



STANDING FURTHER APART, PAYING CLOSER ATTENTION

By the time the pandemic hit in early spring of 2020 people in Portland were exhausted and confused. Life in lockdown had made just enough space for many people to slow down and begin to process some of the lessons from the “year of protests” as they came to bear on understanding the stakes of the current moment. Who was being hospitalized and dying from COVID-19 reflected whose labor was being used to provide “essential services”, whose bodily risk was deemed expendable, and whose material lives are rendered the least stable in an society with few collective safety nets, further compounded by active histories of racialized discriminatory policy practices that determine who can create wealth and under what conditions. The growing public understanding of the impact of racism and colonialism to individual and community wellbeing was a public health crisis long before COVID-19 illustrated Portland’s health disparities.

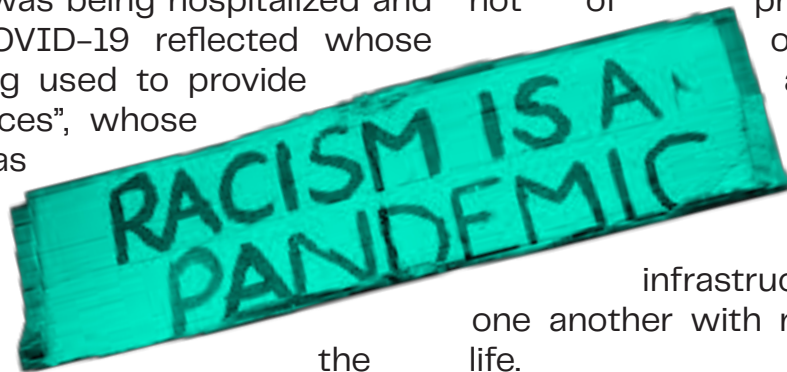
The city seemed to be transforming into a space of generalized exposure fears and latent political anger over policies that intentionally deresourced some in the name of upholding the relative health and comfort of others. While such a maneuver of state power was by no mean novel, the lockdowns had materialized an audience of concerned community members with the time to pay closer attention. The learnings

that had taken place in the prior years set the stage for robust collective responses.

Neighborhood pod projects popped up throughout the city. Neighborhood pods are essentially phone trees that connect neighbors within a block or two of each other, many of who may not of previously met to open conversations about safety concerns specific to each pods area, and create informal infrastructures to support one another with resources for daily life.

In the neighborhood I was living in, this looked neighbors taking turns accompanying a trans-woman who lived alone on her errands in the city after she was verbally assaulted by a Proud Boy while filling her tank at a local gas station. We have a few elderly neighbors living alone we would check-in on regularly. And an immune compromised neighbor who regularly asked for grocery deliveries.

Our pod also kept on an eye on a houseless neighbor who made a camp in the small patch of grass between the sidewalk and the public bus stop when the lockdowns began. He had a rather tenuous grasp of reality and in the time that I lived on the block, I was never able to engage him in a conversation, but I understood from others that he was both kind and wise when he was



present. The convenient store across the street became his resourcing lifeline, people picking up supplies at the shop would drop some next to his tent as they walked back to their homes and the pod coordinated regular hot meal drop offs to him.

Not everyone on the block was supportive of his presence however, and some people would terrorize him in the hopes that he would move elsewhere. On one occasion, I witnessed a neighbor appear from over a nearby fence and turn a high powered hose on the man as he sat in his tent, soaking him and all of his possessions. I alerted the pod and within minutes multiple people delivered a selection of dry towels, clothing,

and bedding. Another neighbor who knew the man with the hose mediated the situation, learning that there had been an ongoing dispute over our houseless neighbor using his yard as a toilet. A camping toilet was later dropped off at his tent. I moved to another neighborhood in

October of 2020 but looked for him whenever I'd pass by the bus stop. He was always there. I recently learned from a friend who still lives on the block that he died in the summer of 2023 of a fentanyl overdose. His family posted a note about him as a memorial at the bus stop where he lived and a statement on a neighborhood message board. It was the first time I learned his story: he had grown up on that block and after schizophrenia had taken capacities to materially support himself away, he had gone to live with his sister and her family who still resided in their childhood home.

When the home was destroyed in a fire and his sister moved out of town, he had remained, moving through social service programs and staying in shelters in Portland. When the lockdowns begin and many shelter spaces closed their doors, he sought refuge in the neighborhood where he felt most safe, the one he had grown up in, and setup camp on the only piece of public green space in the vicinity.

The mutual aid our neighborhood pod has performed for those on our block, was also being done all over the city by informally organized networks of people. For folks whose form of work could be continued from home, the financial disruption of the lockdowns meant an accumulation of surplus. For others however, the staggering job losses, lay offs and reduced hours, put accessing basic necessities at risk if not out of reach. Within days of the lock down orders going into effect community advocacy organizations focused on housing stability and food insecurity raised red flags and pushed for emergency ordinances to protect the delicate balance of resource provisioning and prevent people from losing their homes and going hungry. Food pantries shuttered cutting off an estimated 77,000 Portlanders from a vital food resource- some due to lack of available volunteer labor and others due to lack of PPE for folks performing labor with high exposure risks. Public transportation had also become limited, and for those with compromised immune systems, any movement outside of the home carried a heavy risk burden.

Numerous mutual aid group emerged to serve a wide spectrum of needs. In the early days of the pandemic, I worked in food support for a newly emerged organization, PDX Mutual Aid, a wealth redistribution collective aimed at making sure everyone in the Portland community was able to pay their bills, their rent, and access food. Volunteering for this organization, I would be given grocery

lists of people who for any number of reasons could not go to the store themselves, do the shopping on their behalf, drop the bags of goods at their door and be reimbursed for the costs from a donation fund.

PDX Mutual Aid was active for only about two months before allegations of financial mishandlings and problematic identity politics caused them to step back from organizing, reallocating the donations they had collected to other mutual aid projects. The struggle this group encountered was largely a problem of optics. They had materialized almost 100k in donated funds in less than 72 hours and had been slow to payout folks who would submit requests- eventually they released a statement explaining this delay in distributions was related to taxation regulations from the GoFundMe platform they had used to accumulate donations but the damage to their reputation in the eye of the public had already happened. The whiteness of people involved in distributing funds also had bad optics considering that in order to access the funds, people had to apply and prove they were a marginalized identity or carry some other marking of deservedness. Community activists called this out as an act of gate keeping and in Portland in 2020, tolerance was extremely low for solidarity work that echoed even the slightest vestige of white supremacy culture.

After stepping away from grocery delivery, I began picking up and dropping off food boxes for the Oregon Food Bank. Delivering food boxes was not as easy as shopping on peoples behalf. Hygiene protocols asked that I thoroughly clean my vehicle before starting a shift and wear a mask for the duration of the trip. Sometimes the food available was sparse- cans of green beans, a sack of potatoes, a bag of onions and at other moments it would be brimming with fresh fruits and vegetables, pastas, and

dry goods. During drop offs, I would check the notes given by the person requesting the box for specific instructions. Some people wanted the box to be left at their door while others, concerned about the possibility of someone walking away with their food before they would get to it, wanted a warm hand off. It was the warm hand offs that were hard. I would sometimes have to try multiple times at a home to be able to give the box directly to a person. Once the door was answered by a small child who appeared nervous and alone, asking me to please come in and play. Once the door was answered by someone other than the person who had made the request, who took offense at the idea of a free food box and berated me as I stood there holding a sack of potatoes and the dregs of the canned good aisle as offerings. I did not blame them for taking offense. When the boxes were disappointing I didn't feel great about delivering them, there was something undignified about offering sad food to people whose wellbeing was being rocked by structural inequalities like a consolation prize for those who hadn't made it over the stability threshold in the current round economic trials and

tribulations. "Better luck next time- this will keep you alive but expect no pleasure from this food..." the boxes sometimes said. But on most days, the boxes were enough to make a nice meal and the stigma of food aid was assuaged.

The popularity of this form of food relief work increased as the number of people off work or working limited hours from home grew idle hands and wanted to participate in "pandemic safe" activities- things that could be done at the appropriate social distance for the good of community. The Oregon Food Bank created a lengthy waitlist of eager Portlanders. The day I opened the shift sign up sheet and saw that it was full, I decided to step back for a much-needed break from driving around town and found an role instead cooking at a nearby soup kitchen preparing grab and go meals and assembling toiletry supply bags for people living unhoused in inner SE.

Not long after beginning to work in the kitchen, I received a casual e-mail from my landlord explaining that she was considering relocating from her condo in NW back into the house I was renting from her in SE,



which my partner and I would need to vacate. The reason she offered was that her condo would rent at a higher rate than the house would— it was over a hundred years old and had abysmal energy efficiency— and she wanted to bring in more money. This was a blow. The idea of having to move into a new apartment when vacancies were extremely rare and rents were severely inflated was quite stressful. The homes available on the market were dramatically overpriced because at that time, the demand for stable living was extremely high and landlords were price gauging when they could. An advocacy group for property managers had pointed to the eviction moratorium in effect as a reason for the bloated rental market, suggesting that property owners had to recover financially from the number of people who had stopped paying rent during lockdown.

The eviction moratorium was an emergency ordinance the city had issued within the first month of lockdowns. The moratorium halted both “no-cause” evictions— the kind landlords would do cause they felt like it, usually in order to put the home back on the rental market at a higher rate, and “non-payment of rent” evictions that allow the landlords to evict tenants if they are more than 4 days late in payment for any given rental period. Starting in April of 2020, evictions could only be done if the person was damaging the home, a case that had to be proven in court. Or, in the event that the landlord wanted to move themselves or a relative into a rented home they owned. Ending the “no-cause” eviction was a long awaited win for tenants rights advocates who noted that more than 500 eviction notices of this type were issued monthly in Multnomah County over 2019. But while people could now be assured an illness, job loss, or moody landlord would not render them homeless, they would still be on hook for

the back rent due. The protections that stopped evictions were designed as a temporary infrastructure, slated to last for two years.

The city assembled an emergency rent assistance fund that kept more the 13,000 households in their homes, during the first year of lock downs, of which county data recorded 80% as belonging to Black, Indigenous or other people of color. The applications were tedious and bureaucratic delays took months. Many folks who applied never saw a distribution and this disproportionately was the case for non-native English speaking applicants who reported difficulty addressing the convoluted questions asked in ways that got their applications approved. As the protections began to expire in April of 2022, more than 8000 households were at risk of evictions if they did not resolve back payments for missed rent within 72 hours of the moratoriums end date. In the year to come, over 800 evictions a month would be filed in Portland.

Bureaucratic delays were not only abundant in requests for emergency rent support, but also with unemployment claims, where it was not unheard for processing times to take up to 10 weeks, a devastating length of time for many people. An audit of the state of Oregon claims department showed a disturbing trend: processing times varied by ethnicity and income without explanation other than this was a mysterious artifact of the claims office computing system. The lower the persons income level, the longer the processing time. And for those identified in the system as Asian— processing took 16 days longer, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders— 10 days longer, and for white, Black, Hispanic, or unidentified applicants, processing was on average 4 days.

During the process of learning with and from tenants rights organizations to understand the conditions for fair housing unfolding around me, I sat in on town halls,

signed petitions for legislation that would further protect tenants and provide free legal representation against eviction but there were no protections relevant for me. Our landlord had suggested she would be moving into the home for the purpose of residing in it, one of the admissible clauses still in effect. I did however hear enough horror stories of abusive landlords disrespecting people's boundaries, giving folks intentional misinformation about evict law hoping they would leave before a formal process began, and being shady AF that my partner and I decided to attempt to buy a home rather than rent in the current climate. When we gave notice our landlord was pissed. After moving out, she came after us with exorbitant charges suggesting she had to redo floors, repaint entire rooms, and install new appliances because of superficial damage on decades old materials we left behind. My time tuning into tenants rights organizing had taught me well and arguing for my rights ended the conversation of us paying for her home remodel. The last email she sent me was a copy of market valuation report she had made showing the estimated rent of the home at \$500 higher per month than we were paying and informing me that we should be grateful to her for

undercharging us and she would not be returning our security deposit to make up some of the difference. Utterly exhausting.

We did not have much in the way of money saved, but we both had retirement investment accounts started for us by past employers who included retirement as a standard benefit even for entry-level workers, a benefit that is unfortunately less common these days. For the purpose of a first-time home purchase it is possible to withdraw 10k from a retirement account without accruing steep penalty fees. We both did this, and with our collective 20k afforded the closing costs and minimum down payment on a cute single level duplex home, built in 1969, containing two- 2 bedroom/one bath apartments on either side. We opted for a duplex because we both enjoy living in close

proximity to others and if it was for sale is was going to be bought. If we buy it, we could perform a kind of rent control in city with very few regulations to keep rents



affordable. We also wanted to use the property as an experiment in home equity redistribution. Renters never benefit from the equity that homeowners acquire in the process of paying on a mortgage over time. What if they could? What if when a rental property sells the equity is distributed across every person who paid into it over time? We explored co-operatives models and land-trusts to see if we could work the system in a way that would be less extractive on renters.

During the mortgage process, I learned that part of valuating rental properties is determined by a ratio score comparing the rent charged for a unit and the average market rent for similar sized units in the same area. The more the ratio leans towards profit, the higher the score. While this made no difference to us, it taught me something about the logics of bloated rents that I hadn't previously understood, one of the mechanisms of housing market inflation is strategies for optimizing rental ratio scores. By maintaining the apartments at cost instead of playing along with predatory rental markets, I imagined we would be participating in a harm reduction strategy, keeping the rent down while also ever so slightly skewing the

scores by suppressing the area average.

Our good intentions however, were difficult to honor in practice. There are no models to do what we were imagining. And we soon learned that the terms of our sale delivered us a home already fought with anger and mistrust due to the requirement that one side of the duplex had to be given an eviction by the seller prior to us closing on the property as buyers. I had assumed that when the duplex was listed for sale the tenants would be notified, or at least, when the current owner had accepted an offer from people whose mortgage stipulates they must be "owner-occupiers", that the tenants would be notified that they would be displaced in the process. Instead, we went through a 90 day sale process to arrive in a place where the renters absolutely hated us, having been given an eviction notice in the form of a hand written note scribbled diagonally on lined paper, the day before. Which side of the duplex would be evicted to make space for new owners was determined by the seller, but for the tenants involved, it became a personal vendetta against us.

We had become the shitty asshole landlords we were trying to subvert! According to the mortgage, we had to be residing there within 90 days, so we offered to extend the 30 day



eviction timeline noted by the previous owner if it would be useful to them. We also paid them \$7,000 as a relocation fee in accordance with Oregon housing law, a sum that was slightly higher during COVID per a condition in the tenants protection ordinance. I had hoped these conditions would assuage the blow for them a bit. It sucked to be the one who was the face of their eviction, but if not us, it would have another person with the same type of mortgage, or if not an owner-occupant mortgage, it would have been a private investor and as market trends suggest, they would be taken the first opportunity to increase their rent substantially, which likely included eviction.

The other side of the duplex was the home of a young person and a rotating cast of roommates. I immediately liked her, a lot. She is hilarious and has a vibrancy to her personality that was beaconing. When my partner and I removed a large a rotting tool shed full of massive spiders from the shared backyard space, she and her sister drew up landscape designs and help actualize them. The more I learned about her, the more I cared about her, and the harder it became to be a friend/neighbor/landlord. For all her luminescence, she also carried a darkness and in the year we shared a wall, that darkness grew through the use of fentanyl. She ODe three times that year. Her roommate reviving her with narcan each time and an ambulance taking her away for a day or two to monitor.

When she was using, she would

disappear for weeks, emerging from a bender like a corpse crawling from their grave; sunken eyes, barely lucid, depressed, dirty and disheveled. The dealers that would come by to sell to her, scared me. Dudes that looked like total creeps, wearing camo clothes meant for hunting, driving cars with "OreGUNian" stickers and alt-right group emblems.

When I saw them drive up, my stomach would fill with dread and I'd wonder if she would survive the night. Hyper-vigilant, I was aware when she would get high because her high pitched sing-song voice would suddenly be absent on

the other side of the wall. Leaving only the low crusty timbre of strange men mumbling while she slept off a ketamine induced delirium. Sometimes the strange men would bring over more strange men, who would watch TV and laugh in her living room while she slept. I worried about her. What else would happen over there without her direct consent? The next time I would see her, I would ask her about who the guys were and if she was OK. The asking was out of care, I wanted to know, but I also wanted her to know that I notice these things, and also to alert her that more men would come into her home once she was in bed. She assured me they were all friends. Always just friends. My heart ached over it. I made multiple attempts to talk to her about it, but I was not ignorant of the power differential between us and perhaps overcautious



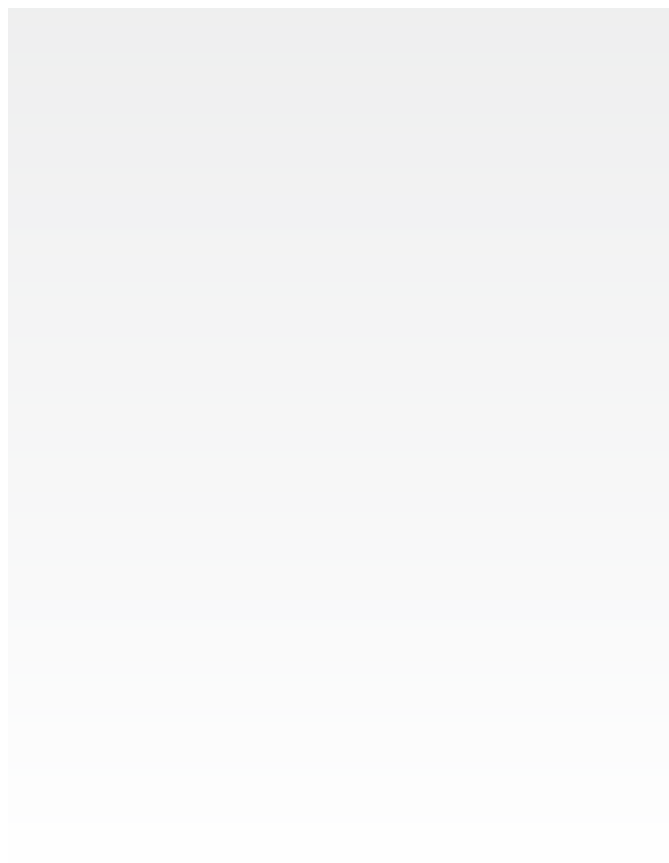
with my words fearing that my concern might read to her as threat on her right to live in her home.

Eventually, the pattern of losing time caught up to her. Her friends disassociated. She lost her job. Dropped out of the degree program she had been working on for the last three years. I started running scenarios. How long could we cover the mortgage without rent if needed? How long am I willing to share a space with someone who brings creeps by? How steadfast are my politics? I never had to answer these questions fully because they were soon made obsolete.

Unexpectedly, she called and announced that she had decided to enter a in-patient treatment program for fentanyl addiction. She had become addicted when exposed to street pharmaceuticals like adderall that had be spliced with fentanyl, a practice in recreational drug manufacturing that had become common place. Adderall from a dealer is a fractions of the the cost of perscription meds and popular among students who tended to have less supportive insurance coverage. The rehab program would be a minimum of 3-months but could take up to 9, she wouldn't know until she started doing the work. She also had to travel to another state where treatment is more available, the wait time for a spot in an Oregon rehab was more than 6-months, and she feared if she delayed she might not be alive to go.

She asked to keep the apartment, and we worked out a deal with a massive rent reduction to make it possible. But ultimately she decided to cut the cord with Portland and start again in her home state with the support of family. This was relief to me. Bending myself as much as possible to create a supportive space for her was wearing on me and I feared if she returned the creeps would never let her stay clean. We had

a joint garage sale and she liquidated as much as her stuff as she could. As the big move date approached, the weight of what was happening hit her hard, she started to shut down and talk about cancelling rehab and doing it herself. For the first time since I'd known her, I gave her life advice and compelled stay strong and go. Her sister helped her move the rest of what she wanted to keep into storage and my partner and I disposed of the things she left behind. It was an exhausting and emotional end to our first experience lording the land. My partner and I considered putting the duplex back up for sale feeling like we were in over our heads. Taking on such a intimate thing as managing the commodity of "home" was far more complicated than my imagined collective project of wealth redistribution could face. Yet, the duplex had brought me into the orbit of someone I care for and I expect, it will do it again. So I leaned in to pay closer attention and continue to imagine possibilities for more equitable models of housing.





VOLUME THREE

STRESS AND THE PUBLIC

**THE STOCHASTICITY
OF TOXIC STRESS**

SOUP FOR MY FAMILY

THE STOCHASTICITY OF TOXIC STRESS

On February 19th, 2022, a man drew a gun and opened fire on five women in Normandale park. One person was killed, June Knightly, a 60 year old queer community activist, who was shot directly in the face. One of the women she was standing with was paralyzed from the neck down, and two others were critically wounded, one being shot twice and the other five times. The ripples of these events were later described by local racial justice activists as “stochastic violence”, a form of harm that is anticipated within a landscape of relational conditions that make violence inevitable without

attributing responsibility to any particular form of authority.

The women shot were doing something called “corking”, a community safety practice used to protect people participating in protest marches as they move through city streets. Corking involves strategically creating temporary barriers in roadways using the bodies, bikes, and vehicles of coordinated volunteers. The five women corking the intersection at the entrance to Normandale park were approached by an irate man who lived in the adjacent apartment building. A survivor from the shooting testified that the man came towards them yelling misogynist slurs and calling them “violent terrorists responsible for destroying Portland”, a narrative that had been circulating in local news media outlets associating the economic struggles of Portland’s downtown business districts as a result of the aftermath from nearly a year nightly Black Lives Matter protests proceeding the police murder of George Floyd in May of 2020.

“Four women. Unarmed. Non threatening. One with a cane. Two more heard the shots, came to help, he shot them too” the survivor wrote on Twitter.

The shooting ended when someone in the crowd fired a gun back, hitting the man in the hip and causing him to collapse to the ground where he was restrained from doing further harm and given first aid care along with his victims by trained medical providers participating in the march as they waited for emergency



services to arrive.

The protest event was a vigil for Amir Locke who had been killed by police in Minneapolis a couple of weeks earlier. Amir was asleep on the couch when the police broke into the home using a “no-knock warrant”, and shot him twice in the chest at close range when he was startled awake in the commotion. In Portland, the vigil was organized by Leitha Mullings, a Black-Lives Matter activist who regularly coordinates vigils when the police kill. Leitha is the mother of Patrick Kimmons, a young Black man who was killed by police in Portland in the fall of 2018, shot to kill in the back nine times as he ran with his hands up from the scene of another shooting between himself and a rival. The statements given by the police stated that they were charged by Patrick while he had a gun drawn and that they “fired their weapons to protect their community”. The courts would eventually acknowledge this report to be false due to the trajectory and entry points of the bullets into Patrick’s body, and the position of his arms when his body hit the pavement, however the deadly use of force was not disputed by the judge and no accountability for his death was held.

Leitha Mullings mourns the death of her son every time another Black life is taken by police in the United States. On the night of the vigil for Amir Locke, Leitha had spoken passionately about the demand for accountability when police kill, noting that she had been a fervent supporter of law enforcement until her son’s life was taken and the officers who shot him blatantly lied without consequence. A local cop watch group that archives the Portland Police Association’s (the union) press releases recorded that the association president refused to acknowledge the discrepancies in Patrick Kimmons case, instead

issuing a statement that any discord about the legitimacy in the use of force was “fueled by false narratives” warning that “we must stop the spread of false information.” The cop watch group included a cartoon in their newsletter (Feb 19, 2019) editorializing the PPA’s president’s impetus.

When the police issued a press release the next day informing the public about the mass shooting, they described the crime as “the incident started with a confrontation between an armed homeowner and armed protesters.” The press conference that followed later that day was convoluted. The public relations officer began by thanking the cities police force for putting their lives at risk in an increasing dangerous line of work. The PR officer said he had two incidents to describe from the night before, and began telling a rendition of a traffic stop that required a collaboration with officers from Washington State as the stop was unsuccessful, resulting in a car chase that crossed state lines. During the chase someone in the car on-the-run fired gunshots at the pursue police. He again thanked the officers for their good teamwork and bravery. As he began to describe the Normandale park shooting,

‘Completely predictable’: the Portland shooting and fears of escalating extremism in America

The killing of June Knightly sent shockwaves through a city that has seen frequent protests, and raised fears of further violence



Sam Levin
Sun 27 Feb 2022 17:58 CET

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Levin, S. (2022) “‘Completely predictable’: the Portland shooting and fears of escalating extremism in America”, The Guardian, 27 February. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/feb/27/portland-shooting-extremism-america-predictable>

he described that officers were called to scene of an unknown disturbance shortly after 8pm where they setup a perimeter and issued a “shelter-in-place” order for the apartment complex where reports of shots being fired has originated.

Before the officer could say much more, a middle aged white woman yelled out from the audience and identified herself as a witness and survivor of the Normandale park shooting. With her voice uncontrollably quivering, she interrupted the press conference and centered herself in the cameras view of the stage area demanding that the police acknowledge that Black Lives Matter activists were being intentionally made unsafe because of police bias against them. She implied that police were complicit in the doxing (publicly naming) of activists that led to death threats and harassment at their homes. She named a white supremacist motorcycle gang as a major threat and suggested the police were leaking information to them so they could do harm to activists. And she called on the PPB’s PR officer to include certain details about the arrival of the police to the scene at Normandale Park that had been left out of their press release statement, including that upon their arrival they forced the individuals providing first aid to cease the activity and arrested those who would not comply. Another voice from the crowd piped up, claiming that it has taken more than 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive, a fact that is notable because the park is only a few short blocks away from a major hospital complex.

The press conference did not continue. On social media, activist groups called out the Portland Police for intentionally spreading misinformation about the mass shooting to serve an anti-Black Lives Matter political agenda. By calling the shooter “a homeowner” they had evoked a powerful institution in western colonial culture, “the castle doctrine” stating that “individuals have the right to use

reasonable force, including deadly force, to protect themselves against an intruder in their home.” By pitting the homeowner, singular, against “armed protesters”, plural, in their initial description, the police had also evoked the visage of the Antifa boogey man, a villain whose death could be excused under the logic of threats to community wellbeing.

What the PR officer had not said during this conference, was that the shooting at Normandale Park was the second time that evening a “shelter-in-place” order had been filed. Just two hours beforehand two officers responding to call about a man with a gun being creepy in an apartment complex on the other side of town, had shot and killed a man named Joel Michael Arevalo. The reason for his killing was not released for over two weeks, leaving the residents of the building and the loved ones of the victim in a state of grief and confusion. Eventually documentation from the responding officers would show that Jason was killed for not taking his hands out of his pockets when they commanded him too. This was the incident many activists had expected to be mentioned when the PR officer said two situations were to be described, rather than a self-congratulatory car chase.

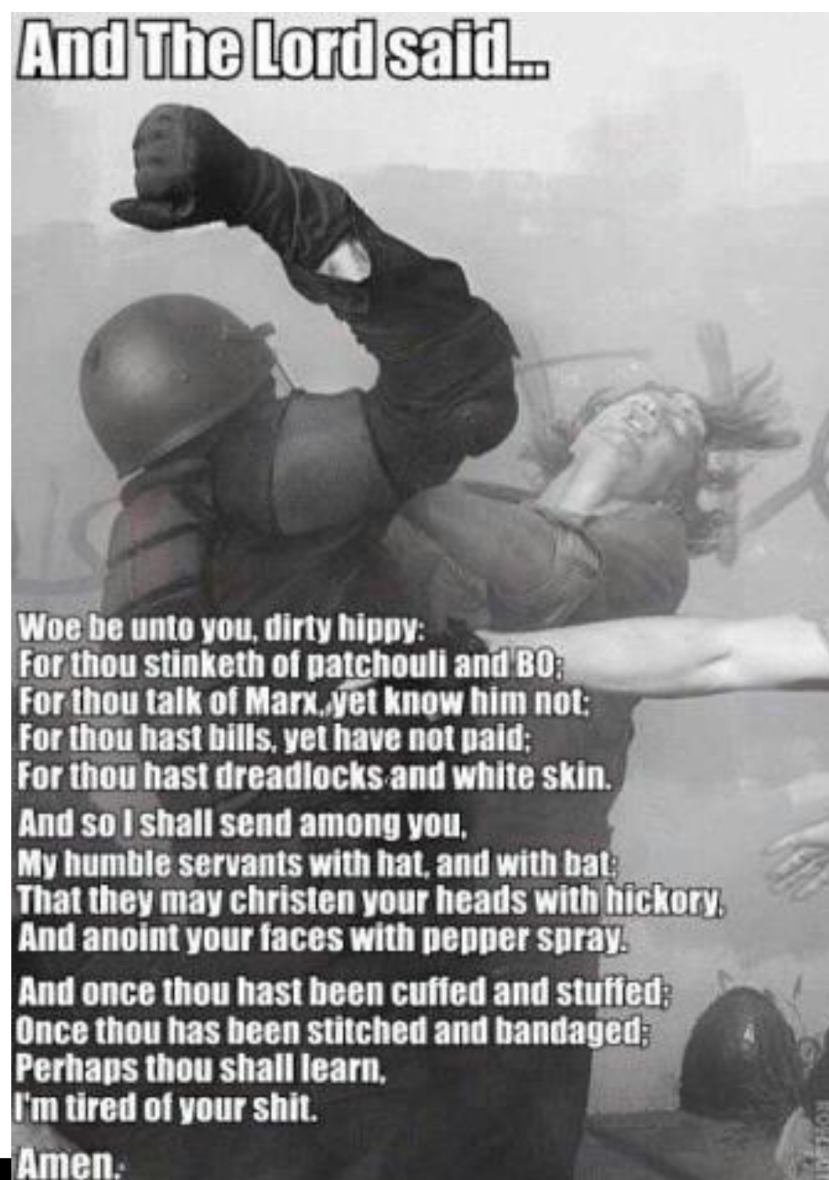
Activists applied pressure to city council and the police bureau to acknowledge the Normandale Park Shooting was a politically motivated crime, one that people who had been paying attention to the anti-BLM protest sentiments being echoed by land owners of business complexes in the downtown district and politicians whose interests they serve had been warning about. The mayor of Portland had previously made comments during city council sessions that he wanted to “unmask” those destroying property and believed it was time to “hurt them a little bit.” That call was rebuked at the time by civil rights groups, as well as by city council member

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who warned the remarks could be interpreted as encouraging vigilantism. Those who had been flagging the possibility of violence against activists pointed to the mayor's comments as an example of the kind of rhetorical empowerment that had motivated the shooter. Zakhir Khan, a civil rights advocate and government relations manager tweeted "When Wheeler does his presser I hope someone

reads all of these [statements made by Wheeler in the months proceeding the shooting] out loud and asks if he wants to apologize for creating an environment where it was okay to demonize and attack people for practicing their constitutional rights.— Zakir Khan (@ZakirSpeaks) February 22, 2022". When mayor Wheeler did comment on the relationship between the overall political climate and the shooting at Normandale Park,

he framed his comments as clearly attempting to hold protesters accountable for their behaviors that caused destruction of public property, like breaking the windows of the police union office, banks, and institutions that are understood by racial justice activists as involved in perpetuating inequalities. "It was crystal clear from the context of my statement that I was not referring to or advocating violence... If I regret anything it's that I used a statement that could be used out of context for political gain.", Wheeler stated during a press conference.

The mayor's comments were just one of many points where the Normandale shooting may of metastasized as a possible outcome from cultivating a culture that empowers violence against BLM protesters. As the weeks went on local journalists reported that the shooter had been on an FBI terrorist watch list since 2006 for posts he made in a online community of Furries with Nazi



A meme from a PowerPoint slide used in a Portland Police Bureau (PPB) training presentation which was found during the discovery process in an excessive use of force lawsuit against the PPB and later leaked to the media on Jan 14, 2022, one month before the Normandale Park shooting. This meme is known as "The Prayer of the Alt-Knight": affiliated with the far-right movement and encouraging violence against protesters.

sympathies, expressing racialized desires to do violence to people and rage towards the Black Lives Matter movement. His neighbor had also recently reported him to the FBI as having been “radicalized” during Trump’s time in office. The FBI however defers to local enforcement for low profile cases. Under the so called, “red flag law” passed in 2018, the police have the power to renege gun licenses for individuals who are flagged as potential threats to public safety. The Portland Police, had not followed up, even after receiving a warning call from the shooters own brother reporting that he was mentally unwell and had been making concrete plans to do violence at Black Lives Matter protests.

The morning after the shooting, I learned of the events that had transpired in the evening hours from the dozens of posts relaying first hand accounts on twitter and Instagram. Among the posts were statements made by victims of the shooting, and recorded live streams from Leitha Mullings giving a play by play of the events from her perspective, including the actions of the Police. The accounts and videos were heartbreaking and disturbing. I immediately reached out to a friend who was a regular member of the corking crew to check if they were safe. I had run into them dozens of times doing this work since May of 2020, and occasionally, my partner and I or friends we were attending with, would stand in as overflow corks to help keep the divert traffic away from the often massive protest crowds as they moved through the city streets. My friend could have easily been one of the victims in the shooting, but they were taking a night off on that particular date. By February of

2022, I had been sitting out the protests for several months due to the birth and arrival of my son. Even though I was nowhere near the shooting and did not personally know the people involved, the safety of the corks I did know, and safety for myself as an occasionally stand in, felt under immediate threat.



I do not recall seeing footage of the shooting until after the trial. But I did see footage of the way the police handled and related to the corks and the people in attendance at the vigil who soon

arrived on the scene. The accounts and videos showed the disdain the police held towards the people attending the vigil. A local cop watch group released an audio recording of the dispatch call that brought the police to the scene, during which the dispatcher repeated a caution that the scene of the crime was an “anti-police protest” multiple times. When the police were called out on the way they framed the events that night as a stand off between a homeowner and armed protesters, they issued a response shared on the local news, claiming that they reported information they had at the time, and that their knowledge deficit came from the fact that no witnesses would come forward to talk to them. I found this comment baffling given the number of first hand accounts I had watched or listened to on social media. It was clear that the police were not listening and did not care about the safety of the people at the scene. The leader of a Portland-based advocacy group for the victims of police violence, was quoted by a local journalist critiquing the narrative framing by the police department as, “... [done] to entice vigilantism. I can’t think of anything else that could occur from that

type of misreporting or misinformation.”

On March 24, 2022, about one month after the violent events of February 19th, the shooter appeared in court for the first time. I attended online to see how the defendant would plead. He also was in attendance online, considered too medically fragile to travel to court, and used a video call setup in small cell of a nearby jail. The image of the man on the screen showed man in prison garb wearing a medical mask with sunken eyes. He appeared to be heavily drugged with a confused and delayed speech pattern. There was little need during this initial hearing to speak, other than to state his plea. He plead “not guilty”. The remaining time in the court hearing was spent negotiating a trial date between the judge, the prosecutor, and the defense. The prosecutor asked repeatedly for a quick turn over on the case as the victims are suffering and would like the legal

proceedings to end as soon as possible. The public defender assigned to the case stated an extremely high workload, particularly the number of murder cases he had to work as the number of homicides had gone up considerably during the pandemic. During the discussion, the shooters live feed overwhelmed the audio several times with the sound of the releasing door lock mechanisms outside of his metal cell and the rhythmic clanging of his cuffed ankles which were chained to the chair he was seated at. The judge eventually ordered the defendants audio feed be muted and a trial date was set for one year later.

During the trial hearing on March 8, 2023, he changed his plea to guilty and refrained from making a statement causing outrage from the victims and their loved ones in the room who expected some words of remorse at the very least. A few weeks later, he was sentenced to life in prison.

“I’ll never be able to erase the physical and emotional marks this person has left on me. I am not the same person. A part of me died that night. It made me a person who is angry, more bitter. Someone who is more pessimistic. I am reactive. I am aggressive. It has just felt like drowning. It has felt like drowning this entire time. And I see that as one of the worse impacts of this. It’s not the scars from the gunshot wound. It’s the parts that we lost that night. It’s the parts of us that did not leave the park that night.”

—Statement from a survivor made on social media after the sentencing hearing.

SOUP FOR MY FAMILY

June 9, 2021

In remarks made during a meeting with the National Association of Police Organizations Leadership on July 31st, 2020, Trump described the activities of racial justice protesters as weaponizing cans of soup against police. “Because you can’t throw a brick, it’s too heavy. But a can of soup, you can really put some power into that right? And then, when they get caught, they say, ‘No, this is soup for my family.’

They’re so innocent.

‘This is soup for my family. It’s incredible. And you have people coming over with bags of soup, big bags of soup. And they lay it on the ground and the anarchists take it and they start throwing it at OUR cops, OUR police. And if it hits ya, that’s worse than a brick cause

that’s got force.’” While soup can throwing was immediately debunked as a protest practice, this infamous quote gave rise to a number of creative memes fueled

by the absurdity of the statement.

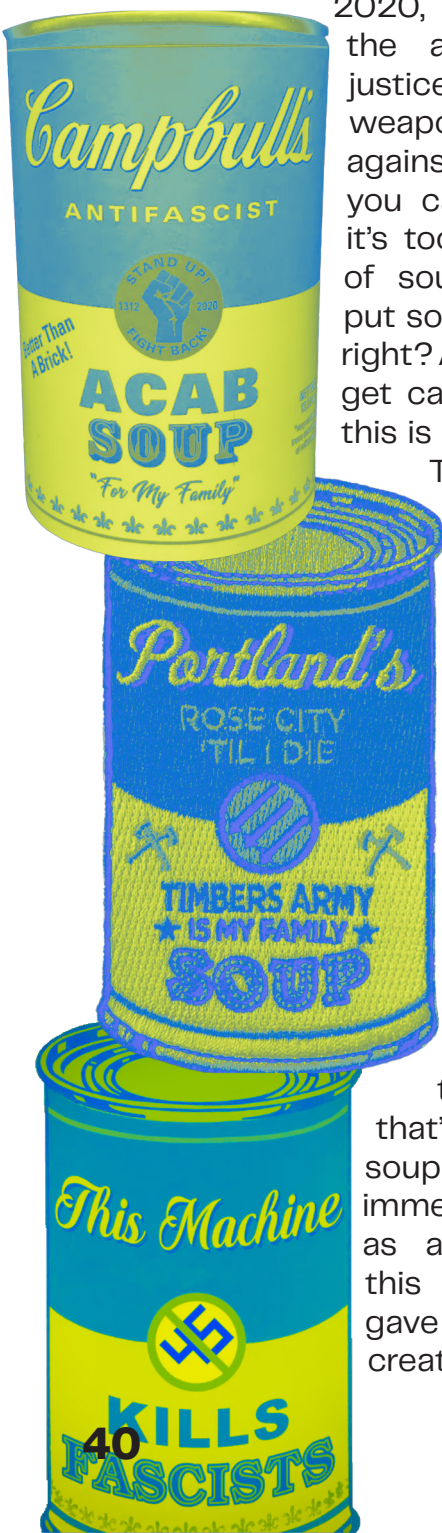
Funny as it may be, the collapsing of food solidarity work and racial justice protesters was stated in the context of equating anarchists as criminals – or “radical-left maniacs” as declared in Trump’s remarks– and this carries a long history of leftist organizing posing a threat to the hegemonic powers of the state.

The amount of organizing that occurred all over the country during the 2020 racial justice protests was formidable. The continuous crises that occurred in 2020; social, political, ecological, and economic, both revealed and exacerbated the tenuous state of everyday survival that operates in deeply inequitable ways. This exposure was radicalizing, it drew the public into action, in force, and one of the ways this solidarity work was done was through “mutual aid” practices.

About Mutual Aid

The concept of “mutual aid” is generally attributed to anarchist theorist, Peter Kropotkin, a geographer writing at the turn of the 20th century. Kropotkin, like anthropologist Marcel Mauss– was writing to counter narratives that naturalized capitalism using theories of evolution such as “survival of the fittest” (see “The Gift” 2024). For Kropotkin, “Cooperation and not competition...was the driving selective pressure behind evolution and the key to ensure collective survival’ (1902).

While it’s worth mentioning the genealogy of mutual aid as it’s picked up in anthropological literature it’s also important to point out that the praxis of mutual aid happening now is based on lived





experience and a community orientation to care, not ideology.

Legal scholar, Dean Spade, calls Mutual Aid practices one of the key under narrated pieces of creating social change, and writes about it's lively revival during COVID-19. In Spade's words, Mutual Aid is "the work we do to care for each other and meet basic survival needs based in a shared understanding that the systems that dominate are not meeting those needs and/or are causing the crises in our lives." From material supports, political education, and providing a model for ways of being together that aren't about centralizing power and sustaining racialized gendered norms.

History of Mutual Aid in Portland

In Portland Oregon, Trumps comments about soup and description of Portland as a "anarchist jurisdiction" became something of a badge of pride as a community members of all ideological bents answered the call to do mutual aid and community defense during the summer protests of 2020.

The history of this form of mutual aid as practiced in Portland has roots in the Black Panther Parties Breakfast Program. Originally started in the Bay Area in the late 1960's, the breakfast program provided nutritious and filling meals for school ages children in Black communities. The meals were meant as a harm reduction measure for kids from food insecure families who would arrive to school hungry and stay hungry hindering their learning in the classroom.

This program and others formed a

national network of counter-institutional resources that found its way onto the FBI's list of "threats to national security" and shortly after many party members were assassinated or incarcerated leading to the dissolution of the chapters and their programs. Portland's programs continued until 1979.

What these "community survival" programs were building was a solidarity economy– a network of sites and actors that instantiate an economy based on redistributing vital goods and services where most needed. A solidarity economy is located within the community it serves and functions as a seed from which a differently organized society might emerge, through values and practices unhindered by power relations of capitalism.

The right to food and a cared-for body was one-way base building was done by the Black Panther Party, manifesting

a sustained culture of resistance, "survival pending revolution". The convergence of this history with the present moment left me wondering, "what is being weaponized when anarchists make soup for the family?"



Mutual Aid during COVID

Since the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic in March of 2020, I have been involved in the community food solidarity work responding to the crisis, recognizing that those in the Portland community living with food insecurity were among the first to feel the vital impact of quarantine practices and economic shut-down. Community centers and food pantries where resources could be obtained were temporarily closed—some due to lack of available vital volunteer labor, others due to lack of PPE for folks performing labor under high exposure risks. Public transportation had also become limited, and for those with compromised immune systems, any movement outside of the home carried a heavy risk burden. As people lost their incomes in the economic shut down and state services such as “unemployment compensation” took months to process the tens of thousands of new claims received, the number of food insecure people increased. One report suggested that 1 in 4 Oregon families have regularly experienced food insecurity during COVID while pre-pandemic that ratio had been 1 in 10.

The Kitchen

In an effort to reduce the harms that the orders to “stay home, stay safe” had created

for many in the Portland area, a community kitchen run by a social ecologists network delivering a variety of mutual aid services formed, I was one of many volunteer cooks.

The kitchen used donated raw ingredients to prepare to-go meals and functioned as a community food pantry for our unhoused neighbors in the surrounding area. The food came from Whole Foods and Amazon Fresh warehouses—the online marketplace’s grocery delivery service, both owned by Amazon corporation. The food we received was often higher end brands, expensive specialty products, and a plethora of fresh fruits and vegetables. The only fault of the pre-packaged food that arrived by donation was that it was overstock, meaning the distribution channels that feed into the regional retail sector would not be able to move the full stock of product held at their distribution centers before expiration. In Whole Foods case, for example, the corporation’s strategy is to donate mass amounts of overstock as a tax ride off rather than to devalue the goods by pricing them at a discount and moving them through local shops to consumers. The donations then moved through a formal network brokered by the Oregon Food Bank who had a contract with Amazon Fresh and Whole Foods to receive their surplus food and re-distribute the donations across a network of registered non-profits. The non-profits then move their unused portions from the donations into an informal network of grassroots run pantries and meal preparation sites, including the micro food justice kitchen I cooked at.



The Constriction

In March of 2021 however, the trickle-down food donations abruptly ended. Our contact at the non-profit reported that the Oregon Food Bank had decided to begin monitoring where and how the donations filtering through them were used. The reason being, their contract with Amazon was being audited and new regulations imposed to ensure the “legitimate use” of items moving through the donation chain. The passing of goods from a formalized network to an informal one was not acceptable as “legitimate use”. This decision came as Amazon corporation was simultaneously attempting to suppress

is unknown. Community empowerment in this way is directly threatening to system of power that segregates and makes access conditional in a controlled way; qualified as “legitimate use”. In this case, Amazon would rather surplus be wasted than used in a way that unsettles their dominance- in this case, passing resources from a controlled formalized network into community base building within in an informal network.

Dylan Rodriguez, in “The Revolution Will Not be Funded” (2017) argues that the regulation of donations to formalized networks in the non-profit section mandates that social justice work become professionalized, resulting in the replication of a paternalistic hierarchy, garnered by funding opportunities that silo social stability issues and prevents solidarity across intersections to block to possibility of base building.



the unionization efforts of it's employees in several other states under increasing pressure from labor strikes in Alabama.

While the kitchen was able to secure other lines for donations and continue making meals for our unhoused neighbors, our offerings went from gourmet dishes to simple and sometimes odd fare made from expired or random ingredients as we struggled to keep up with demand.

The non-profit industrial complex

Whether or not Amazon knew that operations such as ours were decommodifying their products and providing delicious meals as a public good

The Winter Storm

Another example of the “legitimate use” mechanism of control occurred in Portland just a few weeks prior. In mid-February Portland experienced a severe winter ice storm. Heavy snow compacted into ice downing trees, power lines, and roofs all over the city. For over a week, 38,000 businesses and an estimated 300,000 families went without power or internet.

The Kitchen's power was not impacted, we cooked on and made massive amounts of soup that week. A continuous flow of food began to appear on our door stop, delivered by gleaning organizations such as Portland Gleaners, Mouse Army and Team Raccoon, who keep tabs on food waste



trends of retail and wholesale markets in Portland. When consumable food is being disposed of, gleaners will show up to collect what is serviceable and re-distribute it to the hungry.

As the power outage continued, grocery big-box stores were required to dispose of refrigerated and frozen goods they were no longer able to maintain at ideal temperatures. The gleaners moment had arrived. Dumpsters behind grocery stores and restaurants all over town were become prime collection sites due to the significant amount of food being discarded.



One store however, a location of the Fred Meyer corporation, had several employees out guarding the food being discarded from gleaners, citing an US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) recommendation that in the case of a power outage, to discard frozen and refrigerated food after 4 hours for concerns of harmful bacterial overgrowth, and this store had been out of power for 48 hours. This logic ignored the fact that the temperatures outside had been averaging 24 degrees Fahrenheit during that time and much of what had been stored in freezers was still frozen at the time of disposal.

The gleaners began sharing their experience on social media and more gleaners arrived. As the crowd peaked around 50 in number, heckling the employees to release the food, the store management called the Portland Police in as re-enforcements. The police sent 11 armed officers to defend the dumpsters noting in a press release that “as it was private property, the officers asked the group to leave store property or risk potential arrest for trespassing.” The crowd dispersed but returned once the police had departed. When the store called the police back to

scene, they opted not to return unless there was a risk of personal injury imminent. A choice many in the activist circles assumed was made due to sheer numbers– 50 angry people wanting to access the food in the dumpsters is more than the police wanted to take on in the name of protecting

property, especially when the property in question was literally in the garbage. The gleaners salvaged thousands of pounds of consumable food which filtered through the network to those in greatest need.

Conclusion: the problem of social reproduction

The work of Food Studies scholar, Maggie Dickinson, articulates the intentional design of hunger into the economic system as an issue of legitimacy: 30–40% of all the food produced in the US is wasted and yet the most vulnerable are not able to lay claim to these surpluses. Dickinson describes how food scarcity is used as a tool to enforce a labor politic that ensures a precarious labor pool obliged to perform unsafe jobs, and this political commitment she says, “has turned the emergence of this dangerous novel virus into a protracted catastrophe on multiple fronts, including what we’re seeing now with this escalated hunger crisis” (Dickinson 2019, see also 2021).

During this protracted catastrophe of all that has been laid bare by COVID-19, Dickinson points to social reproduction theory as a framework for making thinkable the legitimacies of caring labor and to evaluate the political commitments behind organizing for survival. According to Dickinson this framing creates an



imperative to “undo the common sense that upholds the lie that work as it is currently constituted is a path out of poverty and to recognize that care for our children, for each other, and for the earth that we inhabit, is incompatible with a capitalist system that’s dependent on the reproduction of poverty and hunger”.

In these dispatches from food solidarity work in Portland, there are the practices of macro systems, those of the state and the corporation, to control and define what use of food and resources are legitimate and an implicit determination of whose body is worthy of being cared for. There

is the arbitrary
violence



of the rule of law and the defense of property– of revenue lines and product values. There are reactive systems that constrict when threatened and retaliate against the unity of a base.

And there are also stories of actors strategizing for community survivance through collective care. There is the creation of a solidarity economy and the praxis of mutual aid. There are mouse armies. There are Team Raccoons. There are community run initiatives. There are skills being shared. There is a new way of supporting people’s needs being devised. There is anarchy and in the words of anthropologist David Graeber, it’s “operating on the sly, between the cracks, or shifts, or informally, or in what’s not said, or entirely subversively” (Graeber et al 2021).

As more and more people begin participating in mutual aid practices, they are also being radicalized with a common sense which no longer resonates with the one that underlies the structures of hegemonic power.

And this, I argue, is what is being weaponized when anarchists make soup for their family: shared imagination. The collective imagining of a system of social reproduction that puts into practice a common sense that says humans at their core are motivated by care and community, and these practices are incompatible with a capitalist system that’s dependent on the reproduction of poverty and hunger. This particular revolution of consciousness

is a shift in the two competing common senses: away from one that insists on the divine right of the economy– of money and property– over the wellbeing of the community, and another that centers the most vulnerable as a strategy for collective survival. And in this shift lies the promise of a possibility to organize society in ways that care for all.



VOLUME FOUR

STRESS AND THE BODY

CARTESIAN CONFUSION

LIGET

CARTESIAN CONFUSION

Early in the summer of 2020, I watched a surgeon open my abdomen and remove a hazelnut sized lipoma— a small benign tumor tucked between the muscle and the last bone in my rib cage. I had gone to the surgeon for a consult to see if an “out-patient” lipoma removal procedure would be an option for me. The surgeon determined it was indeed an option and also that he had enough time to do the procedure right then and there because his schedule wasn’t yet full for this type of thing. COVID rates had just ducked under the threshold required by state lockdown policies to allow non-essential surgical



procedures again. I didn’t hesitate— “Yes! Take it out!” He collected the necessary equipment from the drawers in the clinic room: a couple of scalpels in sanitized wrapping, clamps and scissors in various sizes, a syringe with an analgesic, suturing materials and cleaning supplies.

Before the procedure began he handed me a small hand mirror and asked if I would like to watch. I did want to watch. I’m weird like that. Medical techniques

have always fascinated me and seeing into my own body was a rare opportunity. I laid down on a examination bed and lifted up my shirt. As he cleaned the area of skin and injected the analgesic, we started making small talk. I remember him asking me if I had weekend plans— a question which felt so familiar yet in the context of covid lockdowns quite strange— the normal kinds of activities one might reply with were obsolete. “I’ll be attending Black Lives Matter protests but don’t have an exact plan yet.” I replied, watching the only part of his face I could see past the mask for a reaction, his eyes. I was unsure if it was wise to expose a piece of my political identity to a man who was about to expose my internal tissue. “Me too”, he quietly replied. I immediately felt at peace . It had only been a couple of weeks since George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis and Portland had been raging every night. The narrative in the news had focused so hard on busted Apple store windows, and the looting of a Prada storefront, that protesting had become a very polarizing thing. Locals who had not been to a BLM protest in Portland seemed to have very strong opinions about what is or is not an appropriate means of community expression for the anger and grief that comes with an onslaught of disturbing killings by police nationally: Ahmad Arbury, Breonna Taylor, and then George Floyd.

The protests were so much more than a space to rage and the people who attended them understood this, it’s

why we kept showing up. Portland had dozens of professional BLM organizers who put together events with speakers, artists, musicians, historical tours, and occupations of pivotal spaces. BLM events happened at different times of the day all across town. The only constant event was the nightly gathering at the park in front of the (In)justice Center, the building that is home to the Multnomah county jail, situated adjacent to the court house and city hall. While some daytime protest participants became night time protesters, many did not. The events that would happen during

the day were primarily to educate a white audience on the history of white supremacy in Portland, reframing the killings of Black people by police locally through the words of people who loved them, and sharing a wide scope of perspectives on what is required for a transformative future. The protests at the (In)Justice Center were for the explicit purpose of applying pressure to city government to defund the police and reinvest those funds in ways that will increase the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in Portland.

I asked the surgeon, a middle-aged white presenting man with a disarming demeanor, what he had been to. He told me about marching through his neighborhood with his two sons, 8 and 13, so the kids could feel the energy of community solidarity and learn about what was going on firsthand. Advocating and organizing for social justice was a skill this man wanted his kids to have because he did not believe that the problems of the systems that disproportionately harm would be solved within his lifetime. His

kids, he described, needed to know how to show up when they are called. I asked him how he explained the context to his sons— how do you tell children that the long arm of the long extends the brutality of white supremacist thoughts and actions whether the individuals signing up

for the job are aware of it or not. Before replying, he asked if I could feel when he poked the numbed area, ensuring the analgesic had been effective. I could not feel so he began to cut. As he cut, he explained that he is Jewish and his sons know the stories of their family and it helps them understand BLM.

The weight of our conversation had distracted me from the weight of the mirror in my hand. The thunk-thunk feeling as my flesh twanged with each calculated motion of the knife suddenly reminded me that I wasn't here to conduct an interview and didn't want to miss the show. Watching his knife isolate the little ball of flesh, carving space out from the tissue around it, I reflected on what I believed the tumor to contain: the awakening of a capacity to comprehend the material reality constructed by white supremacy in America.

I had first noticed the growth in the fall in 2017, I was in St. Louis for a semester participating in a Trans-Atlantic Exchange Program, which included the institution I was regularly enrolled at, the University of Amsterdam, and the one I was visiting, Washington University in St. Louis. I had strategically joined the program so that I could do ethnographic research on antimicrobial resistance science in a lab at WashU while I was there. I had never before been to St. Louis. And I had never before aligned myself with an elitist white space like Washington University in St.





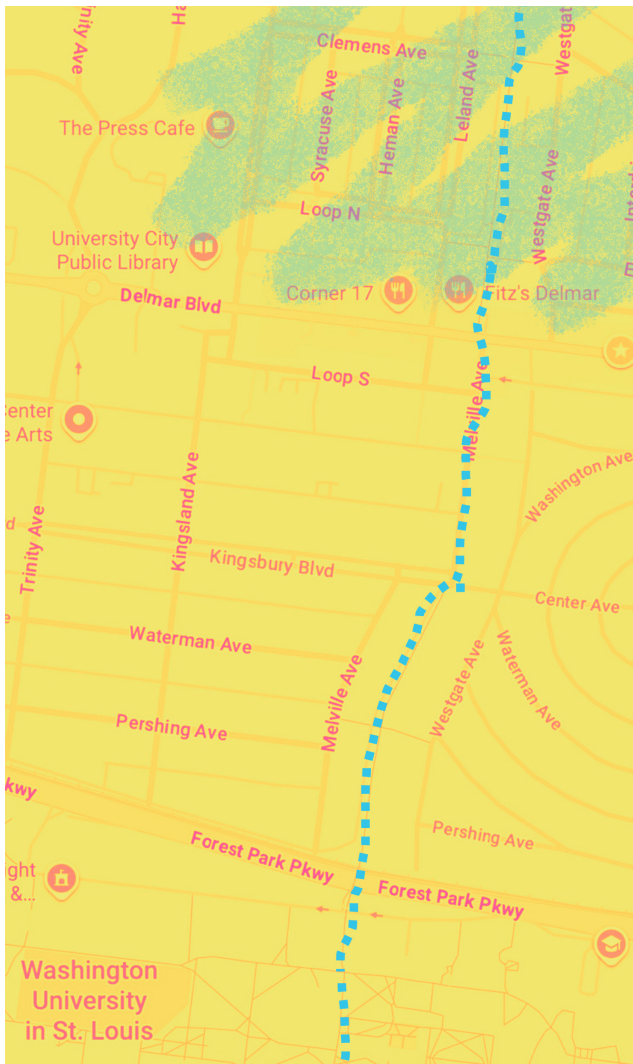
Louis. I was having a hard time with all of it.

A few months into my tenure at WashU, I became unrelentingly sick with a flu. Lying in bed, I remember gently palpating across my empty belly and found a small lump. The lump lay just under my ribs on the right side. Examining the lump I guessed it was about the size of a hazelnut. If I moved my abdominal muscles in just the right way a sharp pinching sensation would reverberate out from area where the lump pushed against the rib. “What is it?” I asked myself, considering the options: tumor, massive sudden ingrown hair, swollen lymph node...? A lymph node made the most sense given that I’d been horizontal for over a week and felt like death loomed. Surely one could not feel like this much shit without a dramatic immuno-response.

The flu turned into chronic fatigue, hair loss, hormonal imbalances, unexpected dramatic weight gain, and intense anxiety. Weeks passed. All signs of a busy immune system had ceased but the lump remained as did many of the other symptoms.

My doctor ran some blood work and determined nothing was abnormal. It wasn’t a lymph. The doctor suggest I continue to wait and return if the lump remains after 5 months in because it was a cyst to give it time to resolve. I waited. The lump remained. An ultrasound confirmed it was a lipoma, a small benign form of fatty tumor. But while the lipoma was not at risk of metastasizing, it was at risk of growing. Googling this terrible images of softball size tumors protruding out of people’s bodies appeared.

I wanted an explanation. I wanted to know why this had happened. My doctor did not have an opinion on the matter, “these things just happen”, they told me, suggesting there may be a hereditary component to lipomas, and I should ask my relatives if they had grown any. I did ask- no one shared that they had experienced a lipoma growth. I started collecting the health data available in my medical chart and reflecting on the period in question, to explore potential connections and found that when the lipoma grew, a series of other unfamiliar



bodily effects had also happened.

With no other frame of reference to comprehend the experience in my body, I associated the dramatic transformations with the environment I was in. It became impossible for me to separate the fear, hurt, longing and devastation happening inside myself from the act of processing through the imperial and white supremacist histories omnipresent in my material reality. It felt like a cause and effect relationship. The more I took in, the sicker I got.

**Excerpt from fieldreport
February 18th, 2018**

**There are many evidences I
could offer to explain this further.**

To construct an abridged version requires dropping many of the subtle details from the mundane activities that compounded the observations and information gleaned during academic and ethnographic activities. Translating the power of how immersive the experience became is difficult, perhaps impossible, but that is also the challenge of the writing of ethnography. So I'll offer a few illustrative stories taking as a starting point one particular occurrence where my positionality came into conflict with the field. A visit to one of Washington Universities mental health counselors.

The option to visit the school's health center comes with strings attached. I was provided with significantly subsidized and full coverage health insurance for the time I would be residing in St. Louis by Washington University. Washington University has a fully functioning health clinic (complete with radiology department and internal specimen processing lab) on the first floor and lower level of one of the larger residency halls. The clinic is only open to students, staff, and faculty connected to the university. To get to the clinic, I walk for 20 minutes through the University City neighborhood where my apartment is located. The apartment is managed by an Wash U's property management office, located in a cute 2-level red-brick 4-plex. The 4-plex looked identical to all the buildings on the surrounding blocks, remnants of early 20th century residential density designs, homes for working class Black families. The housing had been fairly recently annexed by Wash U and Black residents systemically pushed out as their rental leases came up for renewal. Land-grabbing Black homes and expanding Wash U's territory had been the institutions answer to the problem of increased housing needs for international students. I learned this

from Henry, the only original resident still in the 4-plex I was staying in, one of few Black community members still on the block. Henry was a man in his 60's that I had gotten to know through the window of my bedroom. He would stand just outside the back door of the building at night and smoke a cigarette. While he smoked, he would quietly sing gospel hymns. His voice was beautiful. When I'd hear him I'd pop my window open to let the music in, it was positioned directly above the back door. And sometimes we'd chat before he went back inside.

Between the neighborhood and university campus was a roundabout where two large columns frame the Blvd. The columns are called the "gates of opportunity" and separate the palatial mansion homes where many of the university's faculty and administrators reside from the housing where nowadays many of students, staff, and other community members live. The gates were designed in 1911 by E. G. Lewis, a turn of the 20th century urban planner who conceived of the large pylons as guardians of what he envisioned as a city representing the "American dream". On top of the columns, a lion on one side and a lioness on the other bear their teeth in mid-roar facing those who would pass through into University Heights. The large predatory cats were sculpted by a local artist who has been commissioned by the city to produce three pieces of art, the Gates of Opportunity, a series of cherubs that adorned the Women's Forum building, and a Confederate Memorial Statues that remained in the Forest Park from 1914 to June of 2017.

Turning left and continuing up Big Bend Road, I passed a sports field where one of the universities soccer teams was skirmishing and a group of students were doing circuit style exercises standing in a circle. The

faculty (75%) and student body (60%) is predominately white, yet the school boasts a high "ethnic diversity score" due to the significant number of international students from Asia (nearly 20%), the number of African-American and Hispanic students was so statistically small that a visual segment was not ascribed to it on the demographics pie chart. The African-American presence on campus was in



positions of service- custodial, food related preparation and customer service roles. Washington University had also recently been called out by the Washington Post in an article about elite universities with the lowest number of Pell grants offered, Washington University had won first prize.

On the next block student housing began and this is where the Habif

Health and Wellness center is located, named after a family who generously gave a legacy endowment to the university to support the wellbeing of Wash U students.

What had prompted me to go to the Habib Health and Wellness center was a feeling of exacerbation. I had concerns and anxieties on my mind and was looking for some help disentangling and perhaps some



guidance on how to cope with what I was experiencing. I had been regularly attending protests on police violence and learning about the history of the city's racial segregation and various renewal/ divestments from different neighborhood zones. With only 300 some thousand-people residing in a city designed for a million, walking the streets of St. Louis's vacant homes and relatively hip urban districts

with plentiful parking and seldom a pedestrian felt like arriving on the scene of a abandoned movie set but in other parts of town, like witnessing the aftermath of a deep trauma that occurred to a cities center. University City has a very high concentration of affluent students and – I suspect because of the students– a significant number of panhandlers. The performances offered when making an ask seemed specifically targeted to evoke a feeling of white guilt, sometimes very intense emotional stories of experiencing racial oppression, violence, and struggling with mental health trouble because of it. It was effective storytelling.

The guarantee of at some point in a day having an interaction with panhandlers who tell stories of oppression and loss were more than I wanted to regularly engage with. But to be directly dismissive was also not an interaction I wanted to have. So there were days I stayed inside or walked well out of my way to avoid the neighborhood in order to protect myself from feeling the world. This stopped working after a while because as I learned more stories and attached them to the urban spaces where dramatic inequality was palpable, I felt the weight of St Louis's white supremacy everywhere. Walking through St. Louis reminded me of an article I had once read about fascist architecture in which the design of the buildings were meant to make viewers and inhabitants feel insignificant and irrelevant. The imperial grandeur of St. Louis and the show of wealth some buildings, blocks, gated mansion zones, and Washington Universities walled castle like campus represented in juxtaposition with the resource poor neighborhoods lacking grocery stores, public schools, and access to social and health services felt intentionally designed. The message I read was "only some can have wealth, and some will

always serve, the gates of opportunity are not open to all”.

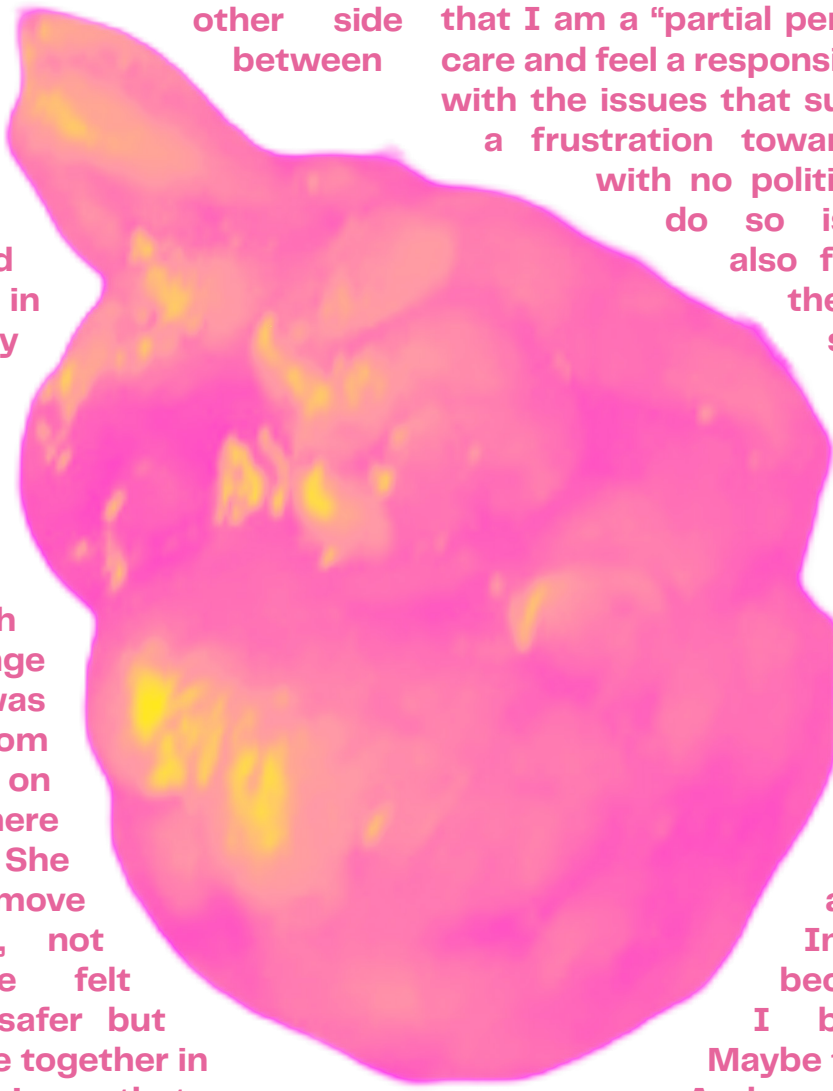
I had been trying to engage in discussions of St. Louis and social political issues facing the city in class—especially on days when reading Foucault on power and domination as part of the course. But week after week discussions of local community issues were strategically avoided and conversations redirected when brought up. I was not alone in wanting to talk about local events, the protests, the reactions local institutions and so as a class, we asked to include space to have these discussions. The professor explained that the department is apolitical and tries not to put an emphasis on “hot political issues” as it polarizes classes since the student body is of “mixed constituencies”. The professor felt that a more productive and nuanced conversation could be had if current political issues were avoided. So that was that.

Within the department, I often felt alone. In a castle. With people who preferred to turn a blind eye to the community present all around them. This was also around the time I was being recruited as a potential PhD student. It was a strange way to be, to feel dejected by a community for my values and simultaneously being rather aggressively recruited. The constancy in the narrative at departmental meetings of how prestigious the university is and selective the department felt like a targeted reminder that I was being offered a truly privileged position. I felt cornered and my frustrations with the institution compounded. How was it that I came to be recognized as someone who could be assimilated into their culture? What would it mean to align myself with the institution as a member rather than a visiting observer? What would I have to concede in myself to do so? And what would I

become complicit in if I sign my name to this? Of particular concern to me was the eerie colonial imaginary the institution was reproducing through its enrollment and staffing practices. Expanding this line of questioning out to St. Louis as well, what type of community and future was the city attempting to manifest?

I arrived at the Habib Health and Wellness center, raw, and needing an outlet to talk about the discomfort of the muck—historical and present—in St. Louis. The counselor was kind. She gave me space to tell her the stories of the buildings, the histories of neighborhoods, the health statistics like the high rate of HIV infections that was only impacting the Black community while multiple world class medical facilities were present in the city, the stories and facts and figures from the protests, the number of elderly people who live on the street just on the other side of the divide from University City, the targeted and confronting experiences the walk to and from campus creates. She offered me tissue and asked me to do an activity with her. She pulled out a folder filled with photocopies of a document. She handed me one of the copies inside and asked me to read the document aloud. The paper contained a list of ten affirmations. I began. “1.) I deserve to be happy even those around me are not. 2.) I deserved to be cared for and respected even when those around me are not. 3.) A deserve to be healthy even when those around me are not. 4.) I deserve to eat good food even when those around me cannot. 5.) I deserve to feel safe even when those around me” I choked on the affirmation about safety and stopped reading. She asked me why I had stopped, and I said that I did not agree with these statement and the idea of safety was loaded— who gets

to be safe, where, by what means, and who is rendered unsafe in this process. I tried to articulate my discomfort with the constant presence of the private, armed, police force patrolling Wash U and the flashing blue safety lights on the emergency call boxes that adorn the walk from student housing to campus. From my apartment I heard gunshots on a nightly basis. Just on the other side of the boundary between Wash U's secured territory and "out there", a toddler had been killed in a drive-by shooting. One of the colleagues from the UvA that I had traveled to St. Louis with for the exchange program was renting a room in a house on the street where it happened. She opted to move in with me, not because she felt substantially safer but so we could be together in a shared experience that was harder to process than either of us had anticipated. This "safe space" that the University creates was troubling. A constructed bubble where the fear of being unsafe- out there- keeps the students inside the bubble, protected from the disturbing urban structures that the university has directly benefited from yet once you know you're in the bubble and at what cost, the safeness of it is entirely perverted.



The counselor explained that to be a good social scientist, Washington University first wanted me to be a "whole person" and that recognizing issues of social and health inequality is good but to help address it I would need to be able to not feel personally affected by it. Later, I would reflect on this and feel conflicted. While I agree that to be miserable has little utility, the idea that I am a "partial person" because I care and feel a responsibility to engage with the issues that surround me and a frustration towards institutions with no political will to also do so is troubling. I also felt haunted by the counseling session wondering if every student who finds St. Louis a confronting space and Washington University an absurdly privileged space is offered this list of affirmations. Instead of becoming "whole", I became silent. Maybe that is worse. And so, I began encountering the field somatically. First with headaches, then with fatigue, bouts of gastritis, significant hair loss, and rapid weight gain. These are symptoms of chronic stress. These were my bodies' way of communicating a resistance to the palatial buildings, the institutional apathy, the grandmothers who make their beds on the street, the panhandlers painful stories, the

intensely disproportionate health outcomes experienced by the Black community, and predators that guard the American dream.

As the procedure came to an end, I was drenched in sweat. At some point, the thunk thunk of implements digging, prodding, and untethering the lipoma from my flesh had triggered my nervous system into a state of flight or fight. I could feel the adrenaline surging as he closed the wound and tapped it shut. I snapped some quick photos of what had been removed, a firm lump of flesh that looked surprising like a small heart muscle, and with a motion so fluid I surprised myself I was up off of that table and out the door before we could discuss aftercare, thanking him for his good work and good will as I ran. It wasn't exactly a dramatic exit, but in retrospect, it was transparently awkward.

The embodied stress reaction I experienced was not only a result of the cutting away of my flesh and I didn't have the energy to explain myself to the surgeon with the baffled look as I fled. While I felt my body was "safe" in that moment, the thoughts moving through me were firing all of my alarms. Safety is a complicated matter. And I laid there silently reflecting on the experiences that had brought me to that moment, and realizing that Portland, the city I resonated with as "home" has taken on a menacing quality despite all the good that is there. Returning to thoughts of St. Louis, where the stakes of living in an imperialist city were clear, my home, Portland, had begun to expose itself in increasingly confronting ways that I had been socialized to not see at home and too think of as issues occurring out there in less blatantly liberal and middle class urban spaces. In talking about this with a friend, she pointed out that it is healthier to have white supremacy be explicit and

visible than not.

But once I could see it, it was everywhere.

Shortly after the lipoma was removed, I was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition called Hashimoto's Thyroiditis. Ironically, the diagnosis came because I had maxed out my annual health insurance out of pocket premiums having the elective surgery and wanted to take advantage of this moment of no cost lab tests. I asked my primary care provider to run some tests looking at the same inflammation biomarkers I had been reading about in clinical studies measuring the effects of toxic stress. Some of the results came back showing a very high load of inflammation and a particular set of antibodies that explained many of the physiological and psychological symptoms I had been experience for years.

Hashimoto's is the most prevalent auto-immune condition circulating in the human population and it occurs almost entirely in women. One of the theories for what Hashimoto's is and why it happens comes from mitochondrial research, called "cell danger response" (Naviaux 2014), explaining that autoimmune responses are part of the intelligent design behind physiological healing processes.

My endocrinologist explained cell danger response to me as, "your mitochondria are responding to your nervous system's signal that you are unsafe, and instead of producing energy to fuel all the systems of your body, they are making what that they think you will need to survive, trapping you in an inflamed state, and compelling you to hibernate until safety arrives." What do my mitochondria know about survival? Quite a lot it seems. Mitochondria are endosymbiotic, meaning they were once distinct organisms—akin to bacteria—that found their way into the cells of another, provided a vital service for survival

within that cell, and so were passed on generation after generation. Mitochondria are passed on from mothers to children and their distinct DNA remains largely unchanged in transmission.

I find some humor in the thought that the auto-immunity I experience is my ancestral mothers telling me to “go to bed!”. I’ve been working on finding ways to gently reply, “no, not right now.” Because right now, there is work that I must do to tell stories about metabolic justice and human wellbeing in times of unsafety. But to do this, I have to find ways to signal safety when everything inside of me says there are good reasons to be afraid for the future and this is not easy.

LIGET

On a warm fall day in 2022, I attended a memorial event for Keaton Otis in Portland, Oregon. Keaton Otis was murdered by police in 2010 during a traffic stop by a special division of the Portland police called HEAT- the "Hotspot Enforcement Action Team" commissioned to reduce gang violence. The officers who had pulled him over believed he looked like he could be in a gang because he was driving where the hood of his sweatshirt pulled up.

The officer had seen Keaton pass by while waiting in line at the Starbucks drive-thru and decided to follow him. In the court testimony, the officer describes noticing the car, "It was like a clean, nice Corolla. It was regular stock like, and it wasn't filthy or anything, It was just kinda nice, it was a nice car." (DeFrain, p10). The quality of the car and the "scruffy" appearance of an unshaven young man with his hood up in the drivers seat was interpreted by another officer at the scene as, "that guy doesn't match that car, there's just something, something not right about that." Foote, p4



Keaton was driving his mothers car and when the police ran the plates and saw it was registered to a middle-aged woman, they suspected Keaton had stolen or worse, "... we do traffic stops on bad dudes all the time...this guy was bad. I'm like this guy just killed somebody or something... one of those guys that has an attempted murder warrant...." (DeFrain, p18)

Keaton had barely left home in several weeks. He had been experiencing increasingly debilitating anxiety. He believed being out in the world would bring him harm. On this day, he had pushed himself to go out to meet friends, but soon after the anxiety took hold and he retreated for home, pulling his hood up as a comfort seeking action, to hide from the world on his way.

In the ensuing events, he would be tazed and punched while sitting in the front seat of the car, crippled with fear, "uncompliant" in the eyes of the officers. In a video of the event, one of the officers is heard saying "Let's do it!" before the three of the six officers surrounding the vehicle



simultaneously opened fire, 32 shots, hitting Keaton Otis 23 times, killing him.

The father of Keaton Otis, Fred Bryant, held a monthly memorial at the site he was killed until his heart gave out and he died in 2013. After his death community organizers continued the tradition, grieving two lives- a father and son- taken by police violence at the corner of 6th and Halsey in NE Portland.

The memorial for Keaton Otis I was in attendance for that September of 2022 was not one of the regularly scheduled monthly vigils. It was the opening of a Kintsugi art installation, a Japanese technique of inlaying gold into the cracks left in the surface of repaired ceramics, increasing the value and beauty of an object. The place where Keaton Otis was killed is riddled with bullet wounds and visible layers left by road repaving



that only partially sealed the street. The sedimented streets expose multiple eras of urban infrastructure. Volunteers under the guidance of a local artist-activist, inlaid a gold concrete sealant into the cracks and marks left by history. The flowing gold lines became precious scars that prevent the erasure of the loss of human life taken by the incomprehensible systemic violence being allowed to persist.

I did not know Keaton Otis prior to his death but I knew some of the organizers of the Kistungi event. After more than two years of close attunement to Black Lives Matter activism in Portland, I had heard his story at dozens of events, met people who had been close to him, and encountered details of his life and death in unexpected ways including in my own memories from living in Portland when he was killed. His story had started to feel familiar as did the voices who would tell it. My partner

and I, and our 14 month old son, attended the memorial to be with a community of so many familiar faces. A local historian and Black studies professor opened the proceedings. Family and friends of Keaton spoke as well as members of Pacific NW Family Circle,

a community support group for families whose loved ones have been killed by police. I was hanging out near the back of the crowd, sitting under a tent with my son and a few other young children in a play area hosted by a neighborhood pre-school in support of the event.

One of the performances was a local poet, who told the story of Keaton Otis's life and death. In the poets telling- and based on an audio recording by a witness from the scene- the last word Keaton spoke was an anguished "Mamaa". As the poet reenacted this moment, screaming a devastating emotive "Mamaa" into the mic, echoing across the reach of the PA system, my son, who had just begun to



emulate language, looked at me and with perfect intonation mimicked the cry.

A feeling I had never experienced before took hold of me. A swelling, heaving sensation entered my stomach and pushed a flow of thick heat up through my heart, catching in my throat, and forcing an audible moan from my lips. I pulled my son against my chest, closed my eyes and rocked back and forth trying to calm the deluge of truths passing through my body. To invite life is to also invite profound loss, a collective understanding that resonated in the atmosphere for all who were attuned to the possibility. I thought I might throw up, and breathed with intention to return to a sense of fragile composure. All the children, including my own, looked at me questioning with concern. I didn't know how to convey to them what my reaction had meant so I asked them if they were OK. Little heads nodded and they went back to playing.

"Liget", I thought to myself, this feeling was "liget". A word I had learned reading the ethnographic work of Michelle and Renato Rosaldo (1980, see also 1983, 1984) on Illongot culture in the Philippines. Liget, as the Rosaldos describe it, semiotically relates a social context to a deep embodied emotional experience, a cluster intense love, anger, shame and rage, marked by collective moments where the balance of the "sameness" of social bonds was disrupted and harm was symbolically, or physically done in a way there could never be justice for.

I can't say I understand what liget means as an important social construct in the Illongot language but I understand the version of it articulated by the Rosaldos. Liget, is personal, "embodied thoughts... that are somehow felt" (1984, 143), as Michelle Rosaldo, the linguistic anthropologist described. After her death— an accident that occurred while in the field, her husband, Renato Rosaldo described liget as a potent source of energetic understanding, a "high voltage"

human experience, that he could only understand once he stopped intentionally crafting boundaries around his identity, grief, and intellectual pursuits, and allowed liget to enter and move through him.

Reading through the transcripts of the witness testimonies included as evidence during the grand jury trial investigation of the death of Keaton Otis, I was struck by the juxtaposition of two descriptions. On the opposite corner of the intersection where Keaton was killed, two cars were stuck at a stop sign, the roadway blocked off by police cars minutes before the shooting began. The first car was driven by an older Black woman, who upon being told by an attending police officer that for her safety she must immediately drive away from the intersection where the police have a potentially dangerous situation with a suspect of interest playing out, she refused and remained in her car, parked at the stop sign. In her court testimony, she described an intuitive understanding of what was going to happen, "they had a Black guy over there and they were going to kill him", she stated. She became distraught, raging and crying inside her vehicle watching what appeared to be an inevitable murder play out. Afterwards, she told one of the detectives investigating the case about a direct interaction she had with Keaton through the windows of their cars, in the moments before he was killed.

"He was scared. He was sitting with his hands out. I don't know what the confrontation was about, what the police call was about, but he [the officer] jumped out of the car, right at the window. He commenced to telling him [Keaton] to put your hands where I could see your hands. He began to pull on him, hit on him and the young man was saying, 'I don't have nothing. You don't have to hit me. Stop hitting me.' He was trying to protect himself, putting his hands up and... the tall, bald officer kept hitting him. So I yelled out the

window and asked him, 'what are you doing, why are you hitting him like that?' The young man hollered to out to me, 'Ma'am, don't leave. They gonna kill me.' He had a frightful look on his face then like he was afraid." (Detective Book 1, p204-229)

The second car was driven by a middle aged white man with his friend as a passenger. They pulled up after the woman in the first car was already parked. This witness reacted very differently, describing that after the attending officer told him what was going on, he noticed that the woman in the car in front of him was convulsing with grief in her seat, "throwing her hands up and dramatically thrashing around,



like wailing". His interpretation was that the suspect the police had cornered on the next block must of done something to the woman in the car in front of him, harmed her in some way to elicit such a reaction. And he hoped the police "would catch him", according to his witness testimony. When the shots went off, this man interpreted that the police were doing their job.

The word *liget* once again comes to mind. The woman in the first car embodied knowledge and connection to what was happening in context around her and it opened her to the powerful frenzied energy of collective

experience. There was a familiarity that resonated with truths she knew well and the stakes of living in a society marked as a stranger. Her response was a deeply human, intuitive, feeling reaction, one that channeled collective experiences of harm and the impossibility of justice in the American system. The man in the second cars nervous system did not engage in *liget*. For him, the sameness of the encounter had not be disturbed. He understood law and order to be in motion, maintaining the balance of social order and chaos. In the man, the effects of a cultural narrative that has naturalized the violence of law enforcement against people, especially African-Americans and

most predominately, young-Black men is grossly apparent. The man, like the cops, didn't hesitate to pass judgment on Keaton, perceiving him as a threat, a "bad-guy", who without question must of perpetrated a crime.

The man's interpretation shows a deeply broken understanding of the value of human life and the naturalization of power under an authoritarian rule of law. Here the mans identity is a tool of control, limiting what

he can be sensitive to perceive. And this matters. Because this man, like the jury of peers that ruled on this case on May 28, 2010, found that the officers' use of deadly force, killing of Keaton Otis, to be justified. Justified. Even though there was ample circumstantial evidence, including blurry video footage captured by a neighbor on the block of the entire ordeal, that a gun was planted in his car after his death, and that the officer he supposedly shot in leg prompting the those surrounding his car to open fire, was hit and went down after the shooting began, struck by another officer, not Keaton.

These truths which are so clear to

those able to perceive the liget in the room, are forever imperceptibility to: the man in the car, the cops at the scene, the media that barely covered his case, the jury that would not convict an officer of the law, or the citizens at large that did not even blink an eye when another person of color was killed on the streets of Portland by cops on the job.

The liget in the room stands as marker for the tense boundary between what is knowable or not for differently constructed social identities. Renato Rosaldo only experienced liget once he deconstructed his own identity, one built on veneers of professional scholarship and scientific objectivity and gave into the emotive pressure building inside of him. After that, Renato turned to poetry to express the understanding he had gained through ethnographic inquiry and the complex relationship he holds to shattering grief, anger, and the responsibility to disseminate cultural knowledge.

After the death of Keaton Otis, his loved ones turned to amassing evidence, and created a thorough archive available on the internet (<https://justiceforkeatonotis.wordpress.com/>) cataloging every aspect of his death, the official investigation, the court case, the analysis done by the activist community showing a counter-narrative, and the continual acts of remembrance that proceed today. The evidence speaks, layered like poetry expressing truths beyond dispute but this archive has remained largely unexamined by those outside his network. Google analytics show his name has been searched at varying intervals between 2010 and today. Spikes appear on the graph corresponding with other high profile police murders, and the Black Lives Matter organizing that would follow; March 2014 (Eric Garner and Mike Brown), February 2018 (inauguration of "Unapologetically Black Day", a day of unlearning and relearning about all forms

of racialized violence), and Feb-May 2020 (Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd). Interest surges when the collective rages. But who does this story reach?

Must one be a stranger, or have at one point tapped into the strangeness of American culture as an embodied experience to attune to the injustice of others living under the constant threat of state sanctioned violence? How one is positioned in proximity to grief, desires for vengeance, and the injustice of normalized violence have entropic effects on the sensitivities possible. Under what conditions can the stomach turning, rageful sensation of liget be awakened in those whose identity have distanced them from a capacity to perceive the stakes of injustice?

During an online workshop on somatic care for activists hosted by social worker, Resma Menakin, author of "My Grandmothers Hands", an audience member asked for his advice on trying to increase to presence of white people in BLM organizing efforts. Resma's suggestion was not to attempt to do so. His reason, in his words, was "White people are frozen... They have not dealt with the deep trauma of their own settler identities and are unable to cope with the complicity they have had in genocides, slavery, and the de-humanization of others."

And this matters. It's now 2025 and Brown people and political activists are disappearing in droves from communities across the US in one of the most aggressive forced deportation campaigns the country has known. And the world has watched as more than 700,000 people have been killed in Gaza by the Israeli military, several hundreds of thousands more are missing and presumed dead, and the largest intentional starvation of children plays out before our eyes. Who can feel this? Who is raging? Who is allowed or able to

take the risk of being released from the identities that bind?

I want liget to be viral- a cosmic heaving expanding and contracting that cracks open the veneers of social identity of anyone it touches, and brings people into proximity- restoring the potential of human connection and capacity to transform systems of perpetual harm. I want to write high voltage stories that awaken and birth the collective frenzied energy needed to perceive what truly matters for creating safety for all. Can a story do this? I'm not sure. I haven't experienced a story that can come anywhere near the potency of reality. Perhaps I should read more. Or perhaps this is the purpose, and beauty, of protests and community vigils. Collective spaces of rage help release the pressure of profound unjustifiable loss but the grief always remains.

In this grief, I believe in the transformative power of kitsungi- in the practice of exposing the cracks and through their acknowledgment, finding a strength the surpasses all expectation of community solidarity. During moments when watching patterns on repeat over and over that tell me change is not happening, I image that the thousands of people who came out every night to participate in the Portland protests, vigils, and demonstrations being cracked open by the truth of the experience; Chanting together, rising up together, being gassed together, and brutalized by police together. Their identities fractured, gilded, and never the same.



DIGNITY



VOLUME FIVE

STRESS AND THE HOME

FASCISM ON MY DOORSTEP

WAPATO LESSONS

FASCISM ON MY DOORSTEP

A preface

May 6th, 2021 - June 10th, 2021

There is a poster pinned to the wall of my home office that reads. “Ever wonder what you would have done during the rise of fascism? You are doing it right now.” I picked it up from one of the many racial justice protest events I attended last summer. A local anarchist artist collective had set up a screen printing tent and was producing posters on random slices of recycled paper or whatever someone from the public presented them with. I had regrets about not wearing my jean jacket that day but was grateful to have obtained a print for the wall.

Months later as I reflect on this poster’s message and the conditions under which I came by it, I am realizing that I understood “the rise of fascism” to be contingent on time and place such that one could choose when to be confronted by it. I knew how to locate fascism online and could choose when to retreat into the protective space of ideologically safe accounts. I expected to find fascism when I attended meetings held by certain institutions and to confront it on the street during political rallies and protest events. I believed that fascism was somewhat contained and went about my daily life as if confronting fascism was a side hustle that I could consent to and only select for when I wasn’t consumed by mundane tasks.

The meaning behind the warning the poster was offering finally hit home, quite literally, on Thursday, May 6th 2021.

**EVER WONDERED
WHAT YOU WOULD
HAVE DONE DURING
THE RISE OF FASCISM?**

**YOU’RE DOING IT
RIGHT NOW.**

The night it happened here

May 6th, 2021

My partner, Mark, and I were heading out to the grocery store around 5pm and as we pulled out we noticed that the parking along our neighborhood street was full of large trucks peppered with stickers representing the various symbols of white supremacy. As we turned on to the next block, we saw that in front of a historically Black church on the left and a culturally Asian church serving a diverse community of Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese congregations on the right, a large group of at least 20 white men were congregating, dressed in camo prints, biker

attire, and yellow plaid– the trappings of a white nationalist group called the “Proud Boys” – an identified “hate group” by the legal advocacy organization the Southern Poverty Law Center, for their explicit claims of misogynistic, Islamophobic, homophobic, and white supremacist ideologies. Some of the men were wearing headsets or carrying walkie-talkies. We looked on with concern wondering why so many people who looked uncharacteristic for the community were suddenly here, some of the men observed our concern and looked back with hungry eyes.

On the drive to the store, I searched twitter for hints about the events taking place and possible direct actions or protests planned in the area that may of drawn in the men. Nothing came up. I couldn't shake the ominous feeling rendered by the sight of these men while we shopped and when we returned, I was disappointed to see their numbers had grown. I also noticed that the church on the right, was now open and a new group of white men were lined up for entry in front of a check-in table. The men entering the building did not look like those outside, they were neatly dressed– some in business casual attire and other younger men, wearing a modern yet decidedly “I just finished a round of golf with my CEO” aesthetic.

When we pulled into the driveway of our duplex, we ran into our neighbor, shaking, eyes wet with recently produced tears as she scrambled out of her front door towards a friends waiting car. “Are you OK?” we asked. She explained that

while she was outside under our shared carport doing her daily exercise routine, she had seen the same group of men pass back and forth in front of the house numerous times and while wearing an elastic thigh band, had waddled out to the sidewalk to see what was going on. She described watching a car pull up and a well dressed, clean shaven, young white man emerged. She asked him if he was going to the event at the church to which he replied “What event? I'm just going to a friends house.” He walked away in the direction of the church and went inside. With increasing curiosity

she asked again, this time to one of the men who was patrolling back and forth along the sidewalk, asking what was going on at the church as he passed. “Just a church business meeting”, he replied and then returned her interest by pointing to her thigh band and inquiring what it was. As she explained it's purpose another man approached them, circled around her, sizing her up with his eyes. “What's your problem?” she responded. “Fuck around and find out!”

he aggressively snapped back and then followed with “If ANTIFA shows up we know who to come after first!”

Perhaps she was targeted and threatened by these men because of her personal aesthetic– a short asymmetrical haircut mixed with faded strands of colorful dye. Or perhaps she was singled out in that moment because she was alone. Whatever their interest, the threat was enough to send her packing. She had decided to leave for the night and stay elsewhere fearing that she had been targeted and her presence put the whole house in



danger. She apologized profusely for the potential risk to our property she felt she had accidentally garnered, stating the men had stalked the house multiple times since and taken a photo of it. She assured me she had not antagonized these men and in the act of leaving, was hoping they would lose interest in our shared home.

I was trying to process the complexity of the situation and in the moment could not find the right words to reassure her or at least convince her that I would never hold her accountable for the actions of a known hate group should property damage be done by them. Words were not enough however, so I gave her a hug and watched her and her friend drive away.

Being fairly new to the neighborhood, I was unsure of who to reach out to for support but feeling that support was much needed, I wrote into the mutual aid discussion group to ask if anyone might be aware of why Proud Boys were present. No one knew what was going on. Next, I called the one person I had met who also lives on the block. They too were not aware of what was going on but offered to start a text conversation with the handful of neighbors they personally knew on the street.]

The text conversation involved 5 of the 12 households on our block and began with an ask if anyone knew about what was taking place at the church and why so many groups of men were circulating on the street. With no knowledge available to explain the happenings outside, one neighbor took a walk and sent in this photo snapped behind where the men were congregating: a sticker that read "FREEDOM, 1776, NOT SOCIALISM, pdxproudboys.com".

Mark and I decided to pull lawn chairs out and observe the activities on the street from our driveway. Men were standing in groups of 3-4 on each of the street corners visible from our home. They were laughing. Some were drinking cans of beer. Men patrolling the side walks had walkie-talkies and moved between the corner standers in rotation. I reported this back to the families on our text chain, who then followed suit and came out to sit on their various porches. We

waved at each other from across the street. We also made multiple attempts to ask the patrolling men directly why they were here, the responses came on repeat, "Because we can. It's a free country", and "We are making your neighborhood safer"

A friend from the mutual aid group where I volunteered and his partner swung by to offer support. We chatted about what had been observed. Another neighbor, a public historian, who I had not yet spoken to, overheard our conversation and came by to introduce himself. At this point we still did not know why the men were here or what their true intention was. The historian, having lived on the block for over 10 years, had some ideas. They explained that our neighborhood of Montavilla used to be a flash point for white supremacist activity; home to two groups, called the "Hell shaking street preachers" led by Allen Pucket and "Patriot Prayer" led by Joey Gibson. A quick google search brings up an article written by Rose City Antifa chronicling the descent of these organizations from christian nationalism to overt fascism. One detail stands out to me: as the groups found alliances and gained exposure to variations of racist ideologies, they become 'empowered through a brotherhood of actors uniting misogynists, islamophobes, homophobes, anti-semites, racists, and white supremacists' under the slogan "Diversity is a code word for white genocide".

My historian neighbor is also an ardent political activist. They would nervously slip back into the shadow of the trees when the patrols passed fearing the possibility of being identified and targeted for their past efforts outing neo-Nazis. They explained that in part, their fear was because they knew a couple of members of the Hell Shaking Street Preachers to also work for the city of Portland, one for Parks and Rec and another for the Water Bureau. My neighbor had spent dedicated time collecting information on their online activities, hoping to make a case for their removal as city workers. Thus far, their heroic endeavors had been unsuccessful.

More neighbors began to filter over, eager for companionship as the hours wore on. We became a group of nine. Reports of seeing

patrol men open-carrying firearms and observing the men taking photos of homes on the street with visible Black Lives Matter signs were shared. One neighbor brought over a Bluetooth speaker. Another put on some anti-racist jams to make a point. For a short time, we danced, hoping to dispel the aura of intimidation being crafted by the activities of the proud boys and reclaim our street as a space for our own joy. The passing patrols jeered us on. We did not give them the benefit of a reaction.

As our group returned to somber conversation, one of the patrolling men commented “why did you stop?” to which a neighbor replied, “why are you here?!” and we got our first actual piece of information from them, they were “hired security” by the group inside the church. “What group is it that is inside?” I asked, “Just a church group.” the man replied. A group of four men pass us, they had flash lights and had been shining them on the homes as they passed. One of them turned their light on us and flashed us in the face. The neighbor shouted back, “I have one of those too!” and pulled out an extremely bright security light, shining it back at them. They all turned their flashlights on our neighbor who had flashed back at them and one of them began a strobe effect. The neighbor strobed back. “Mine is stronger than yours!” he heckled. He was right, it was.

A police officer in an SUV rolled up and parked along our street. The neighbor with the flashlight went over to talk with them. He had called them earlier in the evening to make sure the presence of the Proud Boys was on record. Another neighbor standing by exasperated, “wow, now I feel even more unsafe.” When the neighbor who had called the police, returned and informed us that the police had questioned the Proud Boys and been presented with proof that they were hired security and had the appropriate credentials to prove it. This made them immune to loitering clauses but the officer said he was observing from his car, as was a small police surveillance plane (Cessna 182t model) that had been deployed to fly overhead. He described that the

officer on the ground and the ones in the plane were in constant communication. The buzzing humm of the plane suddenly came into my purview. Even though it had been circling for sometime, I had not noticed it until he pointed it out. There was a lot going on.

We tried to take our mind off of how surreal the scenario felt by getting to know each other better. We swapped facts and stories, shared tips for home remodeling, cracked jokes and trash talked our local Home Depot.

The police officer observing the scene pulled his vehicle up to us and rolled down his window. One neighbor called out to the officer, “Hey, your friends are all already inside!” Insinuating that the officer was a sympathizer, if not a member, of the white supremacist groups present. “I was just coming over to have a conversation” replied the officer, “but since you have it all figured out already I’ll just go.” He sped away with a wounded and apparently quite fragile ego. Truth be told this disappointed me. I hoped the officer would have had more emotional grit than that and have shared whatever information he had with us anyway. I did want to know. Our sarcastic neighbor was not wrong in his insinuation however, there is a long history of inaction by the Portland Police against white nationalists and supremacists and their presence in the ranks of the PPB has been well documented. Joey Gibson for example, had a direct line to Lt. Jeff Niiya, trading information and facilitating Patriot Prayer protest actions. And PPB Captain Mark Kruger who was known to own and dress up in a nazi uniform since 2004, in 2010 was temporarily suspended for creating a shrine to five Nazi soldiers by nailing their photos to a tree in a public park, and then persisted on the force until retirement with honors in 2014. And these stories are just the low hanging fruit.

As the night wore on, we observed a shift change in who was patrolling the street and their demeanor. The three to four men now in circulation were more interested in chatting with us than the

previous crew. One stopped to attempt to assure us that they meant no harm to us or our community. He was a stocky man with a long black beard and short graying hair. He was wearing all black; black jeans, a black t-shirt, and black vest. He was well spoken and polite. He was sober and engaged. I asked him how he thinks it must feel to have his group patrolling our neighborhood from our perspective and then described to him what our neighbor pod had been observing from the other men present that night and their attempts to intimidate. His face took on a look of disgust and he stated he had no control over what other people do, he was just hired help but that no harm would come to us, he promised. I felt my

eyes call bullshit and his face dropped in reaction. There was nothing in his words that could possibly assuage our tension however, and I tried to explain this to him. "I hear you and appreciate your attempt to assuage our concerns but it does not matter what you personally say here, we know what we have witnessed and we don't want you or your organizations patrolling our block." He then tried to appeal to us that he was sorry he could not

leave and would like to honor our requests but someone inside the church has been threatened by ANTIFA and he was obligated to keep them safe. He then repeated the tired line that he would keep us safe as well should ANTIFA show up, "I'm sorry you feel intimidated by us, but you don't want them here, they are the same people destroying property and beating people up at the justice center every night!" he compelled us.

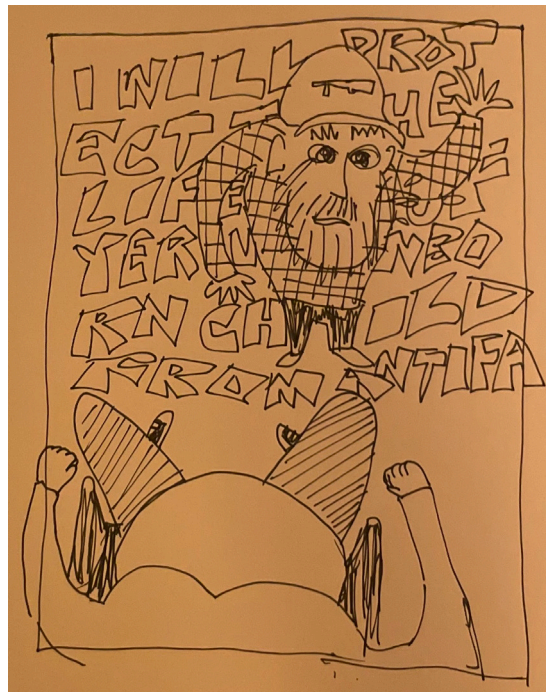
Another man approached. This man was tall and thin, his face was shaven except for a thin and long goatee, the smell of stale beer wafted off of him. He wore a yellow plaid shirt, a black baseball hat and jeans. He also tried to be friendly. We weren't buying

it. "It's weird how we are like, being watching!" he lamented to the other man so that I would hear. "Yes, you are being watched." I replied and continued, "We are witnessing your activities here tonight and taking notes. We want you to leave." I wanted them to have no misunderstandings about what our intentions were or to believe some false assumption that we could be won over and trust them. "What are we doing that's illegal?" he asked Mark. Mark did not reply because the line between legal and illegal was not the relevant question.

Voices between the third man in their crew and some of the other neighbors present began to rise. As if in an instinctual coordinated effort, my voice joined in, "I do not feel safe

with you on my street!" and another neighbor, "You are making me feel unsafe. Leave my neighborhood now!", our chorus began to echo. The man in black moved to de-escalate the third man, who once retrieved, focused his attention on me. "From the bottom of my heart" he proclaimed to me, "I would never hurt you, I value human life above all else" he says as he examined my pregnant belly with his eyes. I should mention here that I am 8 months

pregnant. "I would give my life to protect you and your unborn child" he continues. Then awkwardly shifting his gaze to Mark, "I would give my life to protect you and your family" he says. Mark stiffened. "We don't need your protection" Mark replied with his most opposing intonation. The man returned his gaze to me, "When are you due?" he asked with a smile. "Not now" I replied. "I should hope not," he said laughing. "I came to protect the Multnomah County Republican Party not you know, catch a baby..." as he began doing some kind of body language reenactment of what he thought catching a baby during birth was like. It reminded me of videos I have watched of veterinarians delivering calves by reaching



their whole arms inside the mammal to pull out their young. The audacity of this man to write himself into my birth story in his own imagination. His entitlement rendered me wordless.

The interaction was absolutely strange and I did not know the rules to the game being played but it clearly involved gas lighting and needling at us for ways to provoke reactions. Yet, I had just learned an important piece of information, it had been revealed who was inside the church and who had hired them as security. This third man was the drunkest of the group. I asked him for more info in the friendliest voice I could muster, "What is the republican party doing at the church tonight?" and to my surprise, he told me. "They are holding a special board election and it's not going well. Trust me, it's a shit show in there." He replied. "We might be here awhile." The man in black, possibly overhearing this admission, ushered them away. Mark and I got the distinct impression that the man in black was not only the only sober one, but also the only member of the tripod who had security training of some kind. The other two were unpredictable and unhinged. The man in black was their handler, pulling in the reigns when they began to step over lines. From the other side of the street, we heard the third man's plea again, "Truly, from the bottom of my heart, I would never hurt any of you, we are here to protect you!". "Rabid masculinity" I replied quietly to our pod. "There is nothing quite like white male saviourism" another neighbor responded.

As the night wound down, we watched as groups of men escorted elderly white couples back to their cars parked on our street or the next block over. The men looked like they were performing the role as seriously as they could. Some did this with more finesse than others, fawning over their guests with chivalry as if they were royals. I wonder if the people being escorted truly felt safer because of these escorts and if they really believed that the leftist boogeyman, "ANTIFA" was waiting outside to do them harm. One of the

security men looked particularly impaired and had wrapped himself in a large blanket in lieu of having a coat as the temperature dropped outside. He followed along one of the escort groups making shifty movements, his massive blanket cape dragging behind. It was an absurd display.

Finally, the security men began to depart as well. We heard the engines of their trucks rumble and then the distinctive call of the Proud Boys, a drunken fraternal howl, as truck after truck left the parking lots associated with the churches on the corner and turned off of our street. Those that rumbled passed us slowed as they went. One rolled down a window and a man spit on two neighbors idly observing, both young women. Another truck had a blond white woman inside, who rolled down her window and screamed at us "Fuck you bitch asses! Fuck BLM". Charming people.

We waited until we could no longer hear the rumbles and then began to say our goodnights. One neighbor suggested when we get home we take a moment to inventory for fire suppression supplies, in case our neighborhood should be targeted the way Piedmont was, another area of Portland where all the homes with BLM signs in their front yard had been subject to arson attempts in a single night. We thanked each other for the solidarity and support we had just shared. It was well after midnight. We agreed to keep our phone volume turned up.

The morning after: Exposing the story

May 7th, 2021

I barely slept that night and found myself wide awake at 4am wanting, needing, to know more. I googled "Multnomah County Republican Party meeting March 6th" and immediately found an article published 2 days prior in the Willamette Week about a meeting taking place on the 6th and an undisclosed location. The headline reads "Multnomah County Republican Party Plans Recall Vote of Chairman Who Advocated for Diversity" followed by a subtitle, "We

dare not announce where and when we are meeting in the city of the original Antifa group, Rose City Antifa.” The subtitle is rather funny as it locates the origin of anti-fascism in Portland, with a group that has only existed since 2007. The article describes a petition that was circulated and signed by 54 of it’s 141 members to recall the party’s chairman, Stephen Lloyd. Lloyd was accused of wanting to open the party’s meetings to the public without requiring attendees to prove registration as republicans. This, the petition describes, opens the party up to be infiltrated by ANTIFA. The petition also takes a problem with two quotes by Lloyd that the petition said are out of sync with promoting the party platform, “Diversity is an extremely important part of society and diversity of ideas is what we should be striving for,” and ‘The only thing we should be focused on when it comes to ideas is bringing more diversity of ideas together because that’s how you make the best stuff in the world.” Lloyd responded to the Willamette Week stating, “We have a responsibility as a political organization to represent the people in our community,” He continues, “If we can’t be in the community because we’re afraid of being hurt by riotous people or people who are going to assault us, then we can’t do the job that we’re supposed to be doing.”

As if by a self-fulfilling prophecy, the event on my street was the republican parties attempted coup against their chairman whose ideas were sounding too progressive and in the events design they inscribed a deep fear of others, isolated themselves, secured themselves with the support of militia groups from different ideological variations, united under an echo of the neo-Nazi slogan “Diversity is a code word for white genocide”.

Googling at 4am, I also learned that the Multnomah County Republican Party has been using far-right groups as event security since 2017 when they passed a resolution stating that they “may utilize volunteers from the Oregon Three Percenters, Oath Keepers, and other security groups to

provide security where such volunteers are certified to provide private security service by the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.” Another Willamette Week article clarifies the story describing that the party feels that Portland is not “safe for conservatives” and since Trump’s presidency, they feel they require protection to operate meetings in the city. I do not envy the project Chairman Lloyd is endeavoring to do; to give a new face to the republican party, one that is relatable to the community at large and publicly accessible. This is a task that feels impossible based on what I observed last night; a legitimate political party, desperately legitimizing a hate group. Last night showed me that this political party no longer has any reasonable friends and they are holding on to power with paranoia and fear and recruiting from the far-right dredges for support.

However, the utilization of known hate groups as security made our community feel unsafe for many who reside here. These men came believing

Put simply, your event caused harm to our street and our community. I believe that was not your intention, but my neighbors and I do have some questions:

- What was the name of the organization that rented your space yesterday evening?
- What is your policy or protocol for vetting private security for events?

they were going to confront an “ANTIFA” boogeyman that never materialized leaving only Portland residents to encounter these men, some of whom were aggressive, armed, and looking for confrontation. Ironically, they thought they were protecting us. The everyday anti-fascists that camped outside

for several hours to monitor their actions in a small, non-violent act

of resistance. But that is the trick that has been played. ANTIFA are the people that look like them. The rough tough militia like

- What is your plan to repair the harm this brought our community? Would you be open to suggestions?
- What commitments are you willing to make as a faith community about the types of organizations that you bring into our neighborhood?

crew that show up to protest events and put their bodies on the line. We need people willing to put their bodies on the line and stand up against fascists and state violence. But some peoples bodies are already on the line in a myriad of ways depending on who you are in an unequal system. Our neighbor pod did not contain bodies currently being put on the line as front line protesters. We are pregnant, Black, Jewish, Muslim, Queer, have chronic diseases, and soft dispositions. That does not mean we are the sheep that the Proud Boys speak of in twitter discourse, borrowing from law enforcement's metaphor of police as "sheep dogs, protecting the sheep from the wolves." The men "protecting us" last night could not see us for what we were. We only fit into their schema as sheep. But I'd like to claim the title of sheep in another capacity, as knowledge for group survival. We did something that night. We started the hard work of building up community around ourselves for social protection, keen surveillance, and collective accountability. We made our power known. We did not back down. We did not shy away from confronting fascism. We grouped up, sat squarely in their shadow and witnessed them, reminding them that they are not welcome in Portland. We did this without a violent brawl. We used our eyes, our body language, and our collective chorus.

At the end of an evening that we could

not control and there was no one to stop these men from conducting their "lawful patrol", we went to bed empowered in the knowledge that in Portland, your neighbors are Antifa.

In this somewhat impassioned realization I wrote a letter to the community of Montavilla, my neighborhood area, chronicling the night's events. I used the "non-violent communication" technique of removing the subjective experience and just listed what we witnessed in the simplest of terms. In the letter, I suggested that if the broader community is concerned by these events and feels compelled to do so, they contact the church and the MCRP and let them know their thoughts. I shared this letter with the group of neighbors from the night before and asked for feedback and permission to circulate printed letters along the streets above and below us. Mark made an e-mail address to offer to people so we could collect contact information and set up a phone tree to alert people around us of issues in the future.

The group made some suggestions and consented to the letters' circulation. I printed the letter off at Kinko's and made the rounds to slip in the mailboxes of locals. A handful of people saw me approaching and came out to say hello and receive the letter in hand. This opened short conversations where I received many apologies from other neighbors for the experience I had



endured. I must say though, that I had not found the experience particularly traumatic, not in the way it felt people were acting as though it might have been. Perhaps because as it was happening, I felt safe and protected in the presence of like-minded people. This was a collective experience and we collectively weathered and processed together. Or, perhaps the performance of the Oath Keepers and Proud Boys just wasn't convincing as a threat. Or, I may just be naive.

While I was doing this, another neighbor was writing a beautiful, emotional letter to the administration at the church. She reminded them of the lingering impact of allowing the event to bring Proud Boys into the neighborhood, the recruitment stickers they left behind and about the experience of the parents who had to pick up their children from the Head Start program located in the building across from the church that had hosted the event, the historically Black church next door to them. She asked who was being made welcome in our neighborhood in this atmosphere and if that was in integrity with the values of the church. And then she asked them a series of questions about their plans to repair the harm done:

She said that a representative of the church immediately reached out to her, horrified, and apologetic. The church had not vetted the request to rent their space for the evening. They had not even documented the organization involved. From the records, they had a first name written down and "policy meeting" as the purpose for which it was requested. In the churches bylaws, they do not rent to political parties or allow the space to be used for political events. Because of this, they said they contacted the person who had reserved the space and told them they may never come back to the church.

This eloquent neighbor had also posted an abbreviated version of the story on Next Door, a neighborhood communication platform. There are 166 comments (as of Sunday afternoon), most of which are angry neighbors—upset that this can

happen here, on our doorsteps. Some responses were less in solidarity. Several people questioned the legitimacy of the description, demanding photos that no one took as none of us were interested in drawing the wrath of the groups present, but perhaps we should have taken the risk. While other people dismissive, citing "what about ANTIFA" and property damage as reasons to delegitimize the experience we had with the Proud Boys. Specific details were called into questions, such as the mention of the presence of police aerial support. "I would have heard that from my house" one user exclaimed. Countered by another who shared the link to the aerial flight path maps of PPB planes made public showing that they were indeed above us that night. Another person said they saw no one the streets that night and tried to call bluff but out of the woodwork people we did not know offered accounts of interactions or concerning observations that had been made while on an evening walk or passing by on their way in or out of the neighborhood. It was a few parts infuriating to read the comments but many parts vindicating to see our reality confirmed by unknown others.

Meanwhile, I had shared the letter that I had passed around the neighborhood with the mutual aid network to inform them of the details of what had been going on. They had passed it on as well, and soon it was being tweeted about by and the Portland chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. On the twitter sphere people were also questioning the lack of photographs. I found myself dwelling on this common detail. I think the often incredible visual social media coverage of direct actions and protests has set an expectation that visual data is always possible. But not a single one of us sitting out front of our homes that night were interested in taking on that role in the same way we might have in a public space. This was not a protest event and there were no journalists present. We were vulnerable here in our mundane space and as one of the neighbors involved that

night mentioned, some neighbors stayed out until the very end because they were nervous to be seen walking back into their own homes.

One day later: a frustrating reality

May 8th, 2021

Today I wrote to the Portland City Council communication line and requested the standard 3 minute time slot to address the council at an upcoming meeting. My intention is to ask for their support in changing the public policy that allows political groups to hire volunteer security forces from hate groups. I was hoping it would be possible for the city to have a vetted list of event security companies that orgs were obliged to use. When I shared this update with the group, my historian neighbor informed me of the problems with this proposed plan. If the city does stop allowing non-profits the ability to use "volunteer security" for events, this would have deleterious impacts on many arts and music events throughout Portland communities. At this time, "The City is preempted by state law from regulating private security as the state regulates that via DPSST and unfortunately state law allows unlicensed people to do security for nonprofits." he tells me. To change this practice or the details of it, this will need to go through legislation, the neighbor explains, and the law in question is:

Subpart P of ORS 181A.845 - Applicability of ORS 181A.840 to 181A.891 - 2020 Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter: 181A - State Police; Crime Reporting and Records; Public Safety Standards and Training; Private Security Services, Section: 845, Year: 2019, Last Accessed: 2020-05-16 <https://www.oregonlaws.org/ors/181A.845>.

Another neighbor suggested since the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) has to approve volunteers

at a minimal level of oversight, we could follow their "lodge a complaint" process. The men on our block violated some DPSST standards. However, if we file a complaint, and an investigation were to be done- it would be difficult for individuals from the orgs to be identified and held accountable. Also, if we were to pursue this pathway, the names of who filed the complaint as well as a copy of the complaint will be given to the org- in this case, the Proud Boys. None of us felt comfortable with the reality of this option. "I think these rules and laws need changing. How does one complain safely against an extremist group when the agency must share complainant info." asked one neighbor.

We brainstormed for a while and came up with a plan to ask our district representative in the Oregon legislature, Khanh Pham, to introduce a citizen sponsored bill. The process for this is to outline what we'd like to propose modifying or accomplishing. If she is onboard with our proposal she would have us work with her legislative aide to draft a bill to present at the legislative council. Unfortunately the next session to introduce bills does not occur until February of 2022, which feels like a long way off. Another neighbor pointed out that we would need buy-in from a legislative public safety committee member as well, because someone from this committee would need to co-sponsor the bill given its topic in order for it to go to the floor and be voted on.

This left us with a somewhat defeating feeling in the conversation. It felt as though the system had tied our hands and rendered us powerless to stop fascists from occupying our space and enforcing their will through intimidation.

On the second day: a reckoning

May 9th, 2021

It came to our attention via a neighbor who is personally acquainted with the owners of the church that had hosted the event, that the church has been bombarded with calls calling them white supremacists

since we started circulating our story. While the church, as a gatekeeper in this scenario, does bear some responsibility for what happened since they did not do the minimum amount of due diligence required to ensure the event was allowable under their institutional bylaws, what is at stake for them is highly nuanced. The neighbor described that the church had lost much of its original congregation to lack of affordable housing displacement and now rents out its space to host multiple other small community services in the area. They rely on the rental of their building to sustain their financial operations. Also, as a culturally specific Asian church that had been the target of racially motivated graffiti in the past, the weight of white supremacist groups using their space was already quite heavy, being scorned by community members did nothing productive.

We all felt guilt over introducing more harm to this space. This church is a victim of white supremacist systems that suppress difference, weaken community and exploit the resources of communities of color.

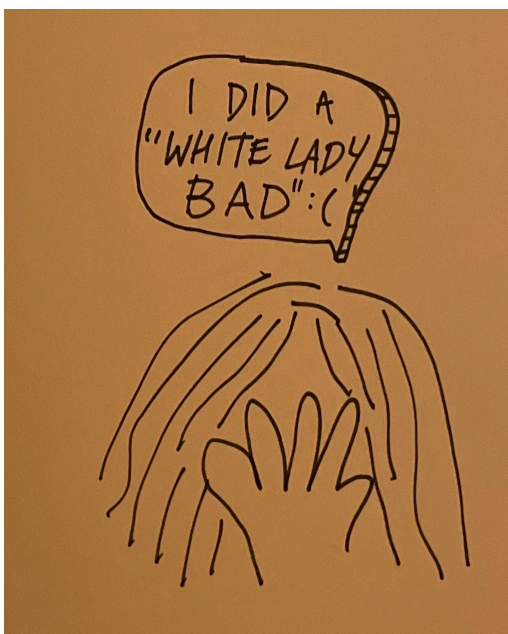
My eloquent neighbor amended her Next Door post, including an update front and center:

UPDATE: I WANT TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE CHURCH REFERENCED BELOW DID NOT KNOW WHO THEY WERE RENTING TO, NOR DID THEY KNOW THAT PROUD BOYS WOULD BE PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THE EVENT. AFTER SPEAKING TO THE LEADER OF THE CHURCH, MY NEIGHBORS AND I ASK THAT FOLKS NOT DIRECT ANY CALLS TO THE CHURCH, BUT RATHER TO THE MULTNOMAH COUNTY REPUBLICAN PARTY. THE CHURCH IS AN ETHNIC MINORITY INSTITUTION, AND THE LAST THING WE WANT TO DO IS CAUSE HARM TO OUR BIPOC NEIGHBORS. THANK YOU.

I had been the one who first circulated the church's administrative phone number and email in my letter to the community at large, inviting people to contact them directly to comment. A letter that had been

put into circulation and there was no way for me to offer such an update. I felt like a capital A-hole. I felt I should have known better. Aren't I an anthropologist? But in the sleep deprived emotionally dilated day after haze, I didn't even consider the implications of my actions.

"We did a white lady bad.", my eloquent



neighbor wrote to me. "I think I'm worried about a minority group now facing the worst of the backlash for actions taken by racist white folks". And I think she was right. Fuck.

I wanted this story to find a venue because it was important, but only if it would also take the heat off of the church and place it squarely on the Republican Party whose practice is it to hire hate groups as security. But while the story is being circulated in fragments, people will latch on to the low hanging fruit to channel their frustration and anger. And I'm out of my depth. We lost control of the narrative. What can we do to regain it and make sure all the needed details are being made available?

I suggested we probably needed a legitimate journalists help.

Talking to journalists however also carries serious concerns:

One neighbor expressed concerns that more visibility would increase the chances of the Proud Boys returning to our area to cause trouble, retaliation or worse.

Another reminded the group that some of us on the block have more vulnerabilities than others.

We are not sure how to proceed. There has been interest from journalists but we haven't officially spoken to them yet. We all want to speak with the media but none of us have answers for what that might mean for our community. We are currently trying to schedule a meeting amongst those on our block to caucus up on the matter.

I was hit with the sensation today that

there may not be a resolution to be had here. Perhaps we cannot make a lasting positive change through this experience. It may be the case that the potential harms outweigh the positive impacts. This might be the lesson to take away here, that of “what to do with an unresolvable reality” but I have not yet learned what this is trying to show me.

On the third, a perverse word

May 10th, 2021

This morning I was offered a time slot to deliver a 3 minute communication to the Portland City Council. However, it is not until June 16th and there is a good possibility I will be giving birth around then. I talked to the pod and we agreed that I'd draft a statement, and if needed, someone else from the block would deliver it at the meeting.

I also tried to request a copy of the police report from the event but the officer monitoring the activities did not file one. The records employee told me they likely would not unless someone was being charged with a crime. They suggested that the best thing to do was to request the “dispatch log” which offers a play by play of what actions were taken and by whom. The piece this log does not include however, is the rationale for these actions. To know this, I would have to talk to the officer that responded. I requested a call back.

When he reached back out, we spoke on the phone for over an hour. I explained who I was and framed my concern as there appeared to be no recourse for having members of known, “hate group” patrolling the streets of our neighborhood against our will, and telling us it was for our own safety. I wanted to know what he thought about that and what role a public safety officer should be playing in such a scenario. He debated my use of the term “hate group”, saying, “I didn't see any hate happening there!” I explained that “hate group” is a designation give by civil liberties advocacy groups, specifically, the Southern

Poverty Law Center had determined the Proud Boys to be a hate group because of their xenophobic, misogynist, and white nationalist rhetoric and inclusion of a wide coalition of extremist groups including neo-Nazis. The officer scoffed at me but also said he understood my concern but unless a crime was happening there was no action for him to take. He described that on that night in particular, he had come to assess the situation and see what the neighbors concerns were. He began by approaching the church to learn what event was taking place and then sat in his vehicle to watch the proud boys make their rounds, watching for signs of bad behavior. After sometime had passed, he determined there was no disturbance occurring and drove past the group of neighbors who were convened outside as witnesses. He vividly and with emotion described the moment my neighbor had accused him of belonging inside the church among the far-right conservatives. This statement had hurt his feelings and hit a nerve. He admitted that it had solidified his perspective that the neighbors who felt unsafe were the problem and drove away without further engagement. The rest of our conversation revolved around his feelings about the anti-police sentiments the public in Portland carried. He stated that each time he showed up on a call, especially if it was connected to a Black Lives Matter event, people would chant at him, “quit your job, quit your job!” and this had driven him into a deep depression. “I just don't know what the citizens want from me anymore. I don't know how to serve them!” he lamented with a quivering voice as if he was choking back tears. I did not know what to say so I just listened and he kept talking. I had never had a conversation with a police officer, let alone a man who was a stranger to me, that had gone anywhere near this one.

I described the conversation to one of my neighbors who had asked me for an update on what I had learned about the events of that night. She felt sorry for the officer. Her father had been a member of the Portland police. She asked me for his

name and made him a custom quilt by hand and personally delivered it to his precinct in the hopes it would cheer him up.

I googled him and found that he had been involved in a high profile news story a few years prior and felt far less sympathetic towards him. A christian white nationalist group called, "patriot prayer" had showed up to a anti-trump rally and taken a position on a roof top with an arsenal of sharp shooter guns and ammunition. Someone called their presence into the police, who showed up and determined the men not to be a threat to public safety. Their solution was to store the weapons arsenal on behalf of the patriot prayer men in their squad cars until the protest ended to avoid escalation. The incident was not documented in their notes or as a report because the responding officers did not recognize this activity as a threat or there being possible criminal intent. The same officer who made this determination about patriot prayer in 2018 had also made the same determination about the presence of the proud boys on our block in 2021. I think he should of quit his job.

Over the next couple of weeks

Later in May of 2021

One of the men who had gotten down on bended knee, professing he would give his life for the safety of my pregnant body and my unborn child, was captured on a video that circulated on twitter threatening to stalk and rape a female journalist who worked as a freelancer for independent news outlets while she documented a far-right gathering at the state capital in Salem, Oregon.

The day before the council meeting

June 8th, 2021

In preparation to speak in front of the city council, I consulted with a policy specialist from the western states institute who follows white nationalist activities with expertise in Portland. I was advised to avoid using labels when describing

the proud boys, like "white supremacist" and "fascist" because these words have particular power to alienate an audience. "White people, especially white people in positions of power, stop listening if you use these terms", I was told. The advice was to counter this narrative by using other terms. Terms like, "anti-democratic", "authoritarian", and "paramilitary group" are advised for getting a point across to white liberal audience. Another lessons gleaned during this conversation for living amongst white supremacists was the adoption of a communication strategy to intentionally include details to humiliate hate groups whenever possible, "these groups thrive on the appearance of being powerful and legitimate organizations, if you can, take that away from them", I was advised. I took this advice into account when composing the statement I would read aloud to the city council.

Statement to City Council:

Agenda Item 425

Wednesday, June 9th, 2021
at 9:30 AM

[I was now full term in my pregnancy. My lung capacity was limited by the pressure of my massive uterus and I struggled to maintain my breath as I spoke. I must of came across as quite nervous but internally, I was not.]

Good morning,

Thank you for granting me space on your agenda.

I'd like to share a story with you:

I recently had a strange situation play out in my neighborhood. A church on my block was rented by the Multnomah County Republican Party to host a recall vote of their then chairman and for this event, they hired a group of Proud Boys out of Oregon City to patrol the neighborhood against the threat of an imagined disruption by an "ANTIFA" boogeyman. This meant that our neighborhood block had an anti-democratic, authoritarian, paramilitary group stationed on all corners, patrolling

back and forth for several hours on an otherwise uneventful weekday night. While on our block, myself and other neighbors watching in discomfort observed these men acting intentionally intimidating to residents, taking photos of homes with BLM signs, stickering, and by the end of the night becoming intoxicated and in some cases, belligerent. Including in a bizarre display at the end of the event where one man who had forgotten his coat, wrapped himself in a comforter blanket before escorting elderly meeting attendees back to their vehicles.

A police presence came for a short time but could do nothing on behalf of the community since the men had a security contract giving them a legal right to be present and at least some members had certificates authenticating them as volunteer security.

From doing a bit of background research, it appears that hiring such groups has been a common practice for the county's republican party since Trump's inauguration in 2017. And just last week they repeated the practice of renting a church, located in a community neighborhood, and hired the Proud Boys to again, perform some kind of service on behalf of a subset of the party, this time in Gresham.

As both a Portlander and a social scientist with a vested interest in understanding how city processes shape the lived urban experience, I would like to see this unsettling practice come to an end. This practice of an official county political party legitimizing anti-democratic paramilitary groups known to seek violence by bringing them into neighborhoods to patrol our streets at their discretion.

In an effort to follow-up on the possibilities of preventing this pattern from becoming normalized in neighborhoods, I've considered the following:

A complaint could be filed with the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training; however, if they investigate their policy is to give copies of our statements and personal information

to the party the complaint was about, in this case, the Proud Boys. If we pursue a legislative angle to change the regulations stating how volunteer security can be done, we risk impacting the future of security at non-profit arts and music events.

It seems to be a wicked problem—one where the solutions may do as much harm as good. I am hoping there is a better solution to this community safety concern and that the council might have some thoughts on how to achieve this.

And thank you for your time today.

And then...

June 10th, 2021

Around 4pm today my water broke. Roughly 42.5 hours later, my son was born, and my whole world changed.





WAPATO LESSONS

ON TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING DESIGNS



March 25th, 2022

In pre-colonial times, the land at the intersection of the Willamette and Columbia rivers, known today as Portland, Oregon was Wapato Valley, a thriving trade hub named for the nutrient dense tuber vegetable, the Wapato– an essential foodsource for lower Chinookan tribes who call this place home; the Multnomah, Clackamas, Tualatin, Kalapuya, and Molalla peoples as well as many others who past through seasonally. As Anthropologist David Lewis describes, Wapato was potentially the single most important factor that allowed permanent pre-colonial cities to form in the fertile crescent of two salmon-rich rivers.

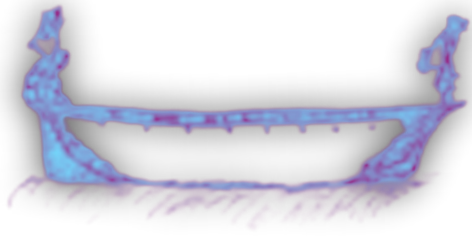
In an analysis of foodways and land-use practices of Wapato Valley's thriving communities, Professor Lewis found that wapato was traditionally harvested by women in specially made

canoes to navigate the patches of tender rhizomes along the banks for the rivers and slough (sla-ow). Just as rhizomes do not recognize rigid boundaries, neither did their consumers, to quote Professor Lewis, "...there is a shared land-use model, a model that appears to approach what we today call the commons when addressing public lands." (Lewis 2021, see also 2020)



Through Wapato, relations were made and sustained, an ecology in balance, and a reciprocal economy maintained.





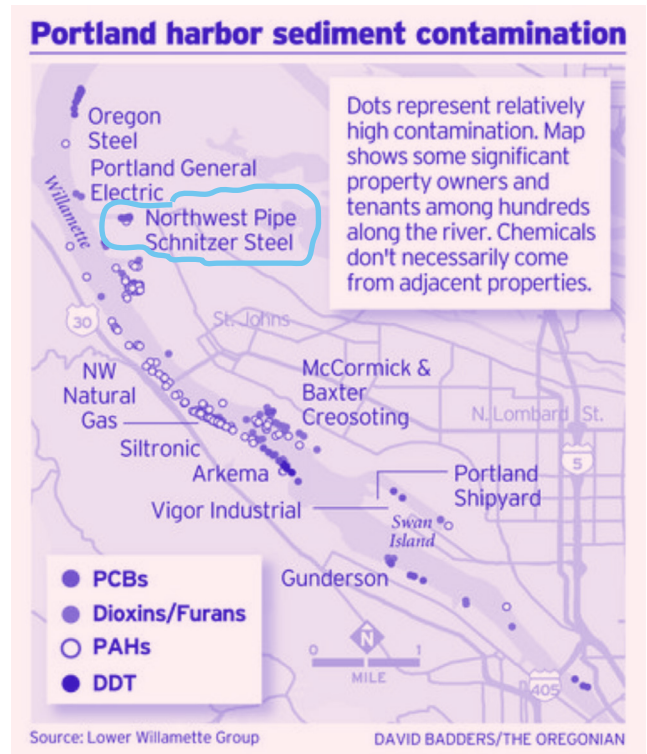
The wapato no longer grow in thick rhizomatic tangles around the swampy wetlands and river banks in Portland, Oregon. Perhaps because the possibility of the commons was systematically destroyed by land grabbing and intentional community displacements starting with the Oregon Land Claim Act of 1850, granting settlers 320-acre parcels of land, provided they were white and male, with an additional bonus of doubling the lot size should the settler be married. Wapato cultivation does not easily map onto the modern urban landscapes where property is private, and environmental toxins produced by decades of steel manufacturing have lead to the EPA classify these waterways as a Superfund site and the fish no longer plentiful with many species considered poisonous to consume.

Wapato took on an additional meaning in Portland in 1996 when residents voted to construct a jail on the edges of the city citing deep concern for rising gang and drug-related crime. Journeying across the city to the Wapato Detention Facility,



a 155,400-square foot minimum-security jail built in an intensively industrial outer edge of Portland, visually noticeable changes occur in the road infrastructure—lanes widening, pedestrians and bus stops disappearing exposing a hinterland of logistics and distribution centers. A landscape designed for semi-trucks to inhabit and not people.

The jail was completed in 2003 and never opened, sitting dormant for nearly two decades due to a budget shortfall



that prevented the facility from being staffed.

The property was eventually sold for a fraction of it's construction cost to one of the region's largest commercial property and wealth holders, the Schnitzer family- a family that made their wealth in Portland producing steel and now have one of the most ubiquitous names in Portland, plastered all over their various endowments through downtown. The Schnitzer's then gifted use of the property to an anti-recidivism non-profit that serves the houseless community 80 miles away along the Oregon Coast, working with individuals who have fallen

into a pattern of seeking incarceration in order to have access to basic needs. In fall of 2021, Wapato jail was renamed and opened as the Bybee Lakes Hope Center.

Among housing policy practitioners and advocates, the Hope Center's model was wildly unpopular, described as an



attempt to warehouse undesirable people away from the downtown business district at the whim of the wealthy downtown landowners like the Schnitzer's who have been vocal that encampments had devastated their annual revenues. The goal of the center as stated by Jordan Schnitzer at the grand opening ceremony, "put these people back into circulation as productive members of society... back to building their families, back to having jobs, back to being the kinds of people they want to be and we want them to be."

I had been following the development of this story during the pandemic through the lens of housing justice but it was the way the Hope Center's care model was described that recently caused me to investigate more deeply, "a unique model of person-centered, data-driven and trauma-informed care".

What is "trauma-informed" in this model is described by the organization as the integration of social determinants and behavioral health coordination. It is "person-centered" to allow for individualized goals and trajectories into drug treatment, job training, and stable

housing opportunities. And it is data-driven because the center has created its own proprietary database software company called, Tactical Demographics Systems (TDS) to manage the "trauma-informed trajectories". This software tracks every resource an individual accesses and consumes as well as accountability tracking to assess their progress towards returning to productive status.

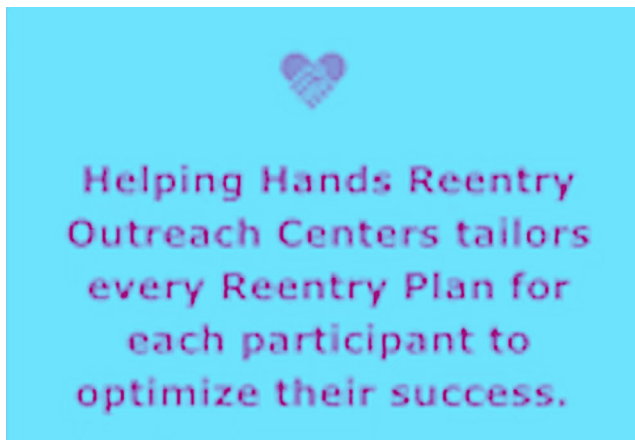
The current mayor of Portland, a descendant of local timber industry wealth, recently contracted the Hope Center as an oversight manager for all county and city houseless services due to their "successes as a data-driven model." To date, the hope center has sheltered 228 people. On any given night in Portland, it is estimated that between 8-10,000 people are living on the street or in their vehicles. And every day, several thousand people are served by the network of formalized resources such as non-profits and county programs as well as the informal mutual aid networks which do extensive outreach and material support. So if people served is not the metric for which a successful model is



based upon, than what are the criteria leading to the Hope Center's promotion as such? The media reporting about the oversight contract suggests success is located in the statistics collected by the TDS database which claim that 65% of the center's residents are gainfully employed, mostly by their partner organization- a major outdoor sportswear manufacturer,

whose distribution center is located next door.

TDS is now preparing to scale up, calling themselves a “whole person population health platform”, currently in



search of start-up investment to expand the model to cities serving houseless people nationwide.

Fundamental within models of trauma-informed care is a centering of the most vulnerable and practices of sensitizing an environment by intervening in policies or procedures that might create a re-traumatizing experience.

The question here is not if the 228 people who have so far participated in the services provided at the center have been individually helped or harmed—this is a deeply personal question and

highly contingent on if the individual being served is philosophically on board with the project of rehabilitation on offer, one that uses an understanding of human value as wage earners, family supporters, and active consumers. I don't have the expertise to say if a model originally

designed with anti-recidivism in mind makes sense to be located in converted jail. Or if people who sign up for this voluntary model of partial incarceration find comfort in being surveilled and held accountable. Or if the partially indentured servitude experience of laboring at nearby warehouses has a therapeutic quality.

But I can point to the patterns present in origins of harm's origin.

And I can say that when models of harm reduction are located within scientific theories of damage that signal they will be protective of difference yet when put into practice carry relations and logics that are thoroughly entrenched in systems of oppression, a deep consideration of what origins and for whom harm happens must be attended to.

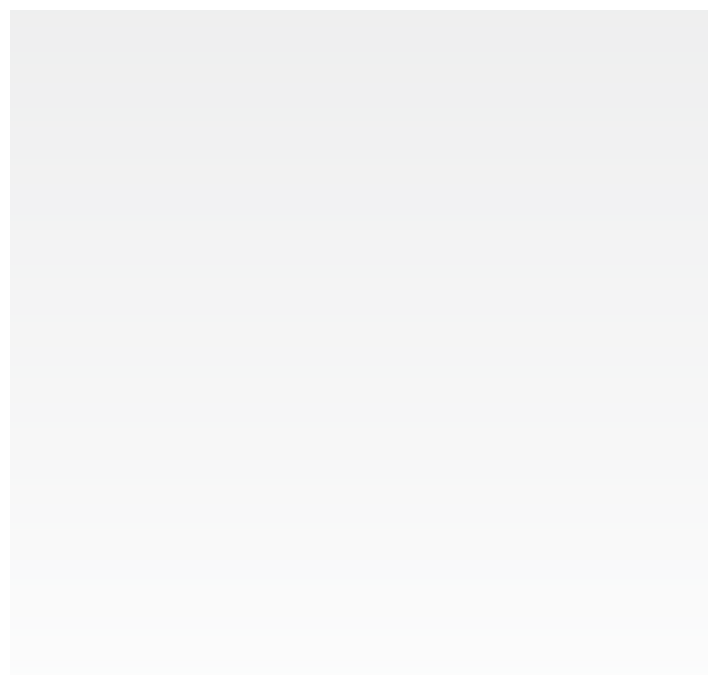
According to the last census, 2.5% of Portland residents are Native American yet Native identity is represented in 10% of the houseless population. A disparate reality and continuation of a settler-colonial legacy of the right utilization of lands and resources, an imaginary still actively shaping the cities policies and procedures that attempt to move houseless people out of sight of the cities wealth holders. Wealth holders such as the Schnitzer family, owners of the Schnitzer Steel company, one of the main groups responsible for



the Superfund site at the nexus of the rivers and whose descendant now owns the land where the namesake of wapato, was misappropriated into the carceral imaginary as a jail, which has now been reimagined as a solution to the effects of the deeply inherent inequality that

dispossess large swaths of society from the possibility of homes and food security in the interest of infinite scale, accumulation, and exploitation. These imaginaries, settler-colonial, carceral, and capitalist- are caring not for individuals but for the system from which they all share points of origin and there will be no revolutionary possibilities from within this configuration.

It matters that the success of this model is couched in its capacity to transform people that have been dispossessed by capitalist infrastructures into a reclaimed source of labor power. It matters that a network of wealth and whiteness is leveraging this particular model- the same network whose wealth originates in land grabbing and resource extraction. It matters that this model is preparing to scale up and expand beyond Portland, making claims on lands and labor elsewhere. It matters that there are no longer Wapato growing in Wapato Valley, the gifts they offered for collective futures went with them.





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