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Facing Dayton: Neighborhood Narratives

University of Dayton

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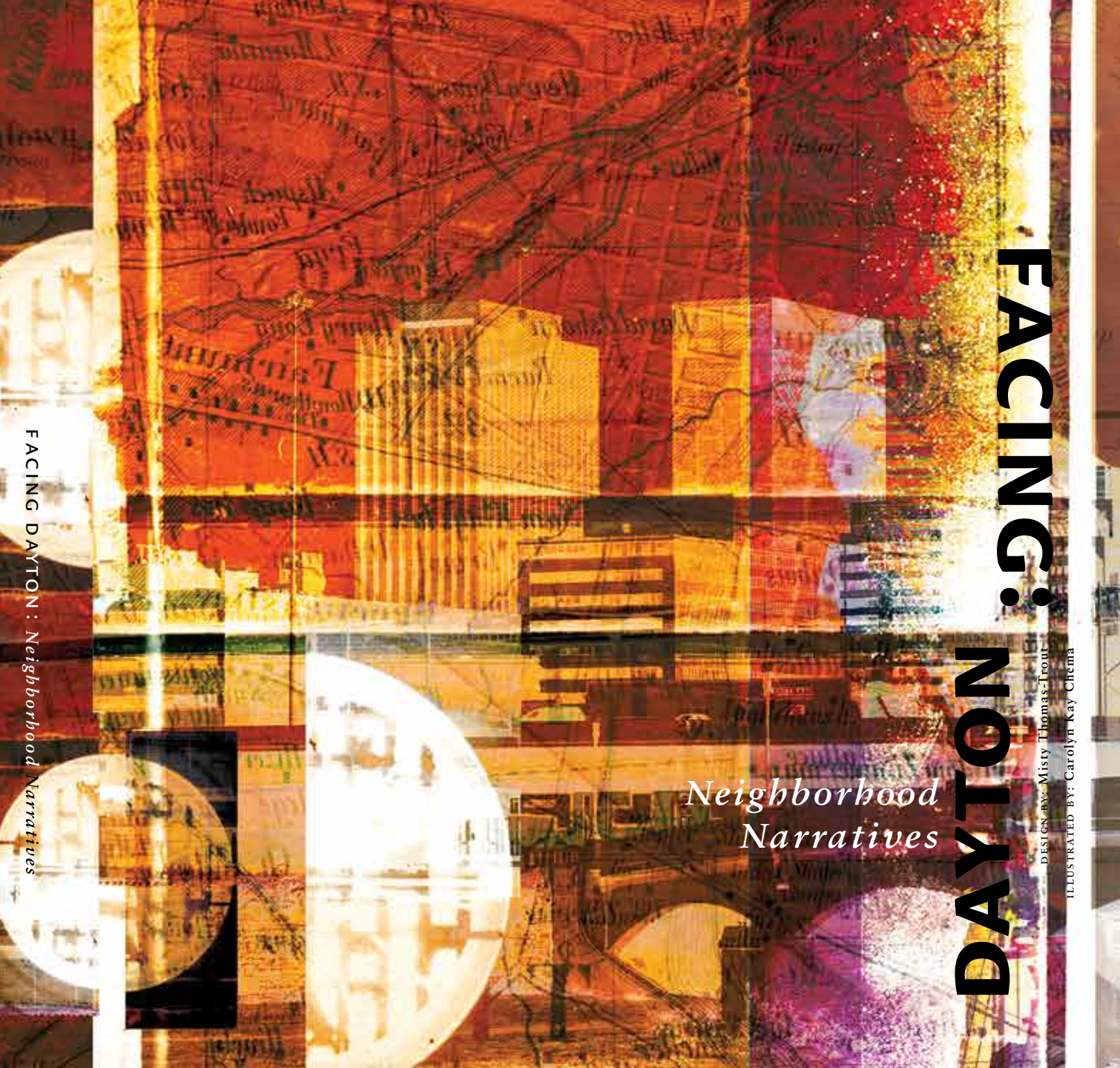
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FACING: DAYTON

*Neighborhood
Narratives*

DESIGN BY: Misty Thomas-Trout

ILLUSTRATED BY: Carolyn Kay Chema

FACING DAYTON: Neighborhood Narratives

FACING: NO LAYD
DAYTON

DESIGN BY: Misty Thomas-Trout

ILLUSTRATED BY: Carolyn Kay Chema

EDITED BY: Alexa Irwin

PROJECT COORDINATORS: Kelly Bohrer and Alexa Irwin

Typeset in SABON LT and CRONOS PRO families.

FACING: NO LAYD

*Neighborhood
Narratives*

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ILLUSTRATED BY: Carolyn Kay Chema



CARILLON

DAYTON VIEW

FIVE OAKS

HARRIS

HILLCREST

MCCOOK

MCFARLANE

OLD NORTH DAYTON

WEST

WOLF CREEK



TRIANGLE
EDGEMONT

ON TOWNSHIP

MADISON HILLS
FIELD

MIAMI CHAPEL

TROTWOOD

WOOD





With support from a Ohio Campus Compact grant, the University of Dayton has partnered with Citywide Development and several Dayton neighborhood associations to bring the Facing Project to Dayton. Our project is titled *Facing Dayton: Neighborhood Narratives*. These are collected stories from community members who have grown up or lived in the Dayton neighborhoods. We wanted to capture the experience of living in Dayton.

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KELLY BOHRER

*Director, Community Engaged Learning
Fitz Center for Leadership in Community*

Every person has a story to share and the narratives within this book capture these stories from the voices of neighbors in a variety of Dayton neighborhoods. Each story embodies one person's perspective of place—uniquely portrayed by each individual. The overarching interconnected purpose of these narratives is to share experiences, connect to one another and strengthen our Dayton community.

For many of our storytellers these words offer sweet memories and beautiful instances of human compassion and neighborhood assets. For others the stories offer memories that are bittersweet, or even raw, as they share instances of injustice and despair that are a part of their neighborhood story—of our



Dayton story. However, these stories also tell about personal and community resiliency and accomplishments in the face of such injustices. All of the stories are important, moving, historical, and holy—all of the stories bring us closer together, bind us in a common humanity, and create an opportunity for us to know each other better within our home of Dayton, Ohio.

These stories have been part of a journey of community building, story sharing, and awareness raising between Dayton neighbors in neighborhoods and the University of Dayton. The storytellers are excited to share this journey and their stories with you. So, now the journey continues because of you. Through your time with this book, we (storytellers, story sharers, book designers, friends, and neighbors) hope you will be inspired and moved to spark conversations in our community about how we want to address the challenges shared by our neighbors and how we want to honor and preserve neighborhood stories, history, and assets.

As we project these stories into familiar places and also into those places that have not heard—or have not listened to—the social realities of our Dayton home. We pray that opportunities are created for open dialogue, transformational change, and solidarity. With new (or renewed)

awareness, together we have the social responsibility to respond to the hurt and love expressed in ways that change the system and brings us closer to realizing the common good.

Participants in *Facing Dayton: Neighborhood Narratives*, which is a part of a larger national project called *The Facing Project*, have come together to decide what to share within in these stories. These narratives show the outcome of collaboration and desire to build community with one another and to share stories of neighborhoods and those who dwell there.

These storytellers were drawn to this project because of the intentionality around story sharing as a way to promote empowerment and social justice. Having the opportunity to share their experiences of Dayton with the younger generation—and those new to Dayton—is simply the beginning. Know the journey does not stop here with this book. The journey of justice has just begun and change will come because of you, my fellow reader and neighbor.

Join the journey by starting conversations and dialogue with these stories. Be a change-maker right here in Dayton and let these stories touch your heart and then move your feet for justice.



CARILLON PROFILE:

707 POPULATION

350 HOUSING UNITS

61 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

53 White

641 Black

4 American Indian or Alaska Native

1 Asian

0 Pacific Islanders

1 Some Other Race

10 Hispanic (of any race)

7 Identifies with 2 or more

\$27,800 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Investing in our Community

STORYTELLER: Mary Varnado

CARILLON

I've been in the neighborhood since '62. Almost everyone I know is gone now, but I moved here to be with my family.

A lot has changed in the neighborhood since I've been here. Dayton used to be a flourishing manufacturing city and a booming town with lots of entertainment, but after I-75 came—that's what broke up the whole city as far as I'm concerned. They tore down good homes—they were nice houses—but they wanted the road from Michigan to Florida to get the goods moved, so they just tore up Dayton. Just in our neighborhood, we had stores, a good restaurant—lots of families would go there and eat. There was a filling station, barbershop, ice cream shop, but when manufacturing went out, all the people and jobs went with them.

I was the neighborhood association president for 10 years. I stayed because nobody else would do it and I couldn't let the neighborhood not have a say with the City. I think the thing I'm most proud of was getting our community's park name changed from Welcome Park to the Virginia McNeal Park. She was the one who started the Carillon neighborhood association when 75 divided the city up. She was instrumental in getting the University of Dayton to let us have meetings there since we were in the neighborhood. She was on the School Board, she worked in government. She was on committees and had lots of influence all over the city. She was one of the "Most Influential Women" and really did a lot for our community.

BUT NOW, I WORRY ABOUT THE LACK OF INTEREST IN COMMUNITY BUILDING FROM THE YOUNGER GENERATION. I wish they would get more involved and invested in maintaining the neighborhoods. Once my generation is gone, there will be no one else left looking out for Dayton and its wellbeing. I'd say within the next 25 years, this neighborhood might not even be here. Young people just don't want to put in the time and it's not that hard; they just don't want to be bothered. You can't even get them to come to meetings. They find all kinds of excuses. Even

at church when we have something, they don't come; they want their time to be what they want to do. They don't like being told what to do, and would rather spend their time doing whatever they please instead of spending it helping the Dayton neighborhoods flourish.

Like I mentioned before, the Carillon neighborhood might not be here 25 years down the road because there's been a lot of changes in the neighborhood which are not necessarily good for the neighborhood. A lot of children are moving back to take care of their parents, which is a good thing, but the problem is young people don't take care of their parents' properties as they would their own property. There's been a lot of empty houses which tear the neighborhood down. Several houses are owned by individuals who fix them up and rent them out. **IF PEOPLE OFFER THEM ENOUGH AND THEY SELL, THEY COULD TURN THIS INTO A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME. WE NEED PEOPLE WHO WILL INVEST AND STAY ACTIVE. IF NOT, THE NEIGHBORHOODS WILL GO AWAY.**





We need people who are invested and not just here for the money. To me, politicians are just going through the motions. It has to be more than just talk. We need someone in office representing us and our neighborhoods; we need a voice in government that will fight for us and not against us. I think internships would get young people invested and interested in government which will then help Dayton because we would have someone fighting for us for the right reasons.

I think Dayton Early College Academy is really a good thing they are starting too. A lot of charter schools were just in it for the money and they are not doing what they're supposed to be doing. They are given money and not held accountable for it; they never spend it like they are supposed to, they just waste the money. I know of 8 or 9 charter schools around here that have closed. But I think DECA is more strong. They have more teaching invested in the city.

I think that education and internships are going to help Dayton a lot. But it's going to take several years. There's a lot of small pockets of good and hopefully they will all bloom out. I think that talking and sharing is so important. What's the hurt to sit down and talk? You don't know who might be listening, those who can

learn from this and move to the neighborhood and be engaged in the city and know some things that are going on. Students are still learning and Dayton is still growing.

We have a new neighborhood president, Gwen Buchannan, one who is doing a fantastic job. We had a meeting last night with the City and she always knows all of the right answers and how to use Facebook and all this new technology. We've got quite a lot of good things going on to get us back on the right path. It's beautiful.



Community Centered

STORYTELLER: Barbara Pinson

CARILLON

The first time I saw Carillon we were riding down Stewart Street during Christmas Time and it was just so beautiful. Every house was decorated. It looked like a wonderland, and I knew I wanted to live there.

I've loved being able to give my children a place like Carillon to grow up in. They're grown up and moved out now, but to them it's still "The Neighborhood." My kids were close enough to a school where they used to walk there and back with their friends, and then be all over the block afterwards playing ball. The kids were always out, and there were always people looking out for them too. When they were down the block playing and doing something they weren't supposed to, any adult who saw them would

chastise them, and you'd bet I'd hear back. We all looked out for each other, and neighbors were family. I used to never lock my doors. You never had to think about those things.

My house used to be called a do-drop-in. Anywhere people were coming from, anywhere people were going, they'd drop in along the way. Even now, when my son comes over and his car is in the driveway, people driving by know it's him and stop over. In no time my house gets filled with people. Every year there's a picnic where the old school used to be, and it's so packed you can't even get close.

Everyone used to watch out for each other, but not so much anymore. A lot of the old neighborhood has died off, and many of the new renters don't feel the same attachments. We're really trying to include them though because the neighborhood is still the neighborhood, and we're all proud to live here. It's just hard because there's nothing powerful enough to bring everyone together. The kids today have so much to deal with, and now more than ever they need a strong sort of community.

I've spent a lot of time working for Montgomery County, and I get to really see a lot of what these kids in the neighborhood are up against. So many of these young kids are vulnerable. You see a young girl, and she's 19 and has one kid and another one on the way.

It hurts my heart to watch these young girls get with these guys who don't care and watch their babies get hurt by the neglect. These kids don't know what they're doing. They haven't even grown up themselves. The young parents get frustrated and can't handle the pressure and end up hurting their kids, and it's devastating. And the babies that do make it out see too much too young, and they grow up into boys and girls who never got what they needed and don't know how to give it. I've met so many girls who don't have resources and support at home, and it's too easy for them to meet the wrong guy and not realize he's the wrong guy. They leave behind their families because it's the drug dealers who have the money and resources to give the girls what they think they need. But it's not what they need, and then soon enough the boys are in jail and these girls are alone again. The kids are trying, but it's an impossible burden because nobody's giving enough support. It's a cycle where everyone is a victim.

I didn't plan on mentoring the young girls that I met, but they had needs and I was there. My mom died when I was sixteen and my grandma raised us. She was an Evangelist and she had a knack for reading people and knowing what they needed. I think I got a lot of that from her. The girls would get my numbers and call me all the time for my morning prayer at 5:45, and tell



me what was going on and ask me to pray for them. **I'D TALK TO THEM AND TELL THEM, "YOU'RE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR LIFE. YOU ARE. AND THAT MEANS YOU DON'T GET TO LET SOMEONE BRING YOU DOWN." EVERYONE HAS A STORY TO TELL, I JUST HAPPENED TO BE THERE TO HEAR IT.**

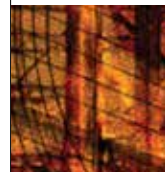
I believe in encouraging people to the max. Sure, there's a place for discipline, but what these kids ultimately need is someone who's going to see, not where they've been or where they are now, but who they can be, and someone who's going to push them to that place. There are so many nice young kids who didn't find this support soon enough and then find themselves in a hole. And when they get in this hole, they think that drugs are going to get them out, but then they find themselves in a deeper hole years later when they look around and realized they've spent so much time not doing anything. Kids need to know someone's got their back, and they need to know that someone's there to pull them out of the holes they've found themselves in. No one needs to feel that they're in it alone.

I see these kids get knocked down over and over again. I encourage them to read a bible or go to church because in a life with so many struggles, they need some hoping to keep them lifted up. They also need friends and peers to talk about these things with. It's one thing to

hear from an adult that these drugs are going to mess up your life, but it's so much more powerful when they can actually see someone like them who has turned their life around.

Kids today aren't just being raised by two parents, they're being raised by everybody. That's why what this neighborhood needs is a community center. What these kids need are mentors and a place to belong to. Girls need more than someone to depend on. They need a place where they can learn to be independent, and they need tools to learn to advocate for themselves. And these young boys need to know what their responsibilities are, and they need to know that we trust them. We need something viable that builds relationships and passions and belonging. There are people who want to give their time, and we need to give them a space to do that. We need a community center, if even just to provide a place to talk where people can share what's happening to them and hear that the same thing is happening to other people too.

The neighborhood has been changing, but that does not mean it stops being a neighborhood. We're still in it together, looking out for each other, and trying our best to give what is needed.





Community: Common Unity

STORYTELLER: Gwen Buchanan

CARILLON

Community activism was huge in my upbringing. It taught me the importance of being a good neighbor, a good person, and a servant. I owe my success to my past and to those who took the time to guide me. I had a calling to be a community servant. God inspired me to work in the community. I am the president of the Carillon Civic Council, a life and wellness coach and many other roles on top of being a daughter, a mother, a grandma, and Auntie Gwen. I'm carrying out the legacy of community involvement that Carillon was founded on and guiding our youth to be leaders of our future.

My parents moved to Carillon in 1965 during a transitional period after 1-75 divided the Edgemont community. The transition opened



up the community for other black middle class working families to move up and become first time homeowners. It was a prestigious little community, and they were proud to be a part of it. Carillon Civic Council was founded as a result of a few of those first homeowners who fought the highway dividing the neighborhood. Virginia McNeal, one of founders of the Carillon Civic Council, served as the president for many years, in addition to being the president of Dayton School Board. Mrs. McNeal was a force in the community to get things done and make Carillon the neighborhood it was.

I met Mrs. McNeal when I was 5 years old; and for my whole life she expected me to be somebody and do something in the community. When someone needed something, she told me I had a job, no questions asked. If the elderly needed help cleaning out their house, she volunteered me to do it. When the association needed help passing out flyers for the meetings, better believe I was there. Mary Varnado was another childhood role model as my Blue Bird and Campfire girl leader. She is my predecessor as Carillon president ... she handed me the torch and still advises me as President Emeritus.

When I was 18, I got my taste of the fast life in the big cities from Atlanta to Oakland to San Francisco; and returned to Dayton after ten years to raise my children. In 1996, I bought

my first house in Carillon, the community that I love. I grew up on the 500 block of Harriet Street, where family still lives; and later bought a house in that very same block. I'm one of about 15 of the originals from the Carillon Edgemont neighborhood. Mrs. McNeal's son is my neighbor. It was also the house that a childhood friend use to live ... and as a child I often played in her home. **GROWING UP, I KNEW EVERYBODY. IT WAS MORE THAN A NEIGHBORHOOD; IT WAS A FAMILY. THE CHILDREN WERE EVERYONE'S CHILDREN—WHEN THEY SAY IT TAKES A VILLAGE, THEY MEAN IT.**

In my early thirties, a couple years after moving back to Carillon, I started putting Mrs. McNeal's lessons she ingrained in me into action after I graduated from the Neighborhood Leadership Institute in 1995. I was appointed to the City of Dayton Housing Appeals board as a volunteer, followed by many other volunteer opportunities. Before she died, Mrs. McNeal told me, "You know it's your time to lead this community". Although it wasn't the best time for me, it was the best time for Carillon. I've known since I was 5 years old, but she gave me the call to action. I knew what it took, I watched them to see what it looked like to have your residents engaged and to call city council and demand things that matter.

Our neighborhood make-up has changed greatly since I grew up. Yet, Carillon is still a

draw; people want to live here because it is a nice neighborhood. There appears to be less homeowners. I believe that there is a strong sense of pride in becoming a homeowner, in addition to the emotional and financial investment. There's a decline in community involvement and the pride that comes with it; more folks from different worlds and values. Many of the newcomers don't want to get to know their neighbors ... some don't keep up the properties. It's "neighbor apathy". It saddens me to see trash on the lawn and the grass is overgrown. We try to lead by example in the way we take care of our homes. We reach out and let them know the community standards and expectations.

Our group has narrowed since the original Carillon Edgemont neighborhood. Now, us "old timers" stand on the legacy of Mrs. McNeal. But some of the older ones can't keep up their homes or be as involved as they used to be. Mrs. Anthony who's 87 still watches out for everyone and gets around real good. She'll put your trashcan up for you if you're out of town. And there's Michelle who feeds you if you're sick and shut in.

THEN THERE'S ME, LIVING OUT MRS. MCNEAL'S LEGACY BY CREATING AN EXPECTATION FOR OUR YOUTH TO BE COMMUNITY-MINDED AND SERVICE-ORIENTED AS I WAS TAUGHT AND AS I HAVE TAUGHT MY CHILDREN. There are many single parents now who

don't have the support system I had. I try to reach the parents through their kids, thinking that maybe if they see their kids involved, they'll get involved. I sit outside and I talk to each and every kid I see on the street and try to engage them in conversation: what's your name, where do you go to school, what kind of grades you gettin'? I pay for good grades, I give snacks and jucys for helping out.

They call me Auntie Gwen. I'll reach out to them, let them know when I need some help, and ask 'em, "Can I put you to work?" They even ask me, "Auntie Gwen, do you have any work for us?" It's important to teach these kids to be community servants. I tell them that this is your hood, this is where you live. On trash day I need you to pull my trashcan up. If you see trash on the street, I need you to pick it up because this is your hood, and we don't want trash on the street. I'm counting on you guys. **THAT'S MY WAY OF GIVING BACK. I HOPE THEY'LL HOLD ONTO THAT AND REMEMBER WHAT AN IMPACT IT MADE IN THEIR LIVES AND HOW IT COULD BENEFIT THEIR FUTURE.**



DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE PROFILE:

1,802 POPULATION

969 HOUSING UNITS

219 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

308 White

1,423 Black

8 American Indian or Alaska Native

6 Asian

0 Pacific Islanders

5 Some Other Race

11 Hispanic (of any race)

52 Identifies with 2 or more

\$59,300 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Dayton: The Home I Never Thought I'd Have

STORYTELLER: Leona Marmolejo

DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE

I wasn't born and raised in Dayton ... I'm actually from Chicago. How did I make my way from Chicago to Dayton? Well ... I came for a boy. We were supposed to get married, so I packed up and moved. I enrolled at Wright State, got settled, and was ready to begin my life here ... then by Thanksgiving, the boy and I broke up.

I don't know why I stayed. I could have went back to Chicago and returned to the teacher's college, but I liked my classes at Wright State. I was doing well, I had friends at school, and I liked my roommate. I flirted with the idea of going back to Chicago, but I think I liked my independence in Dayton a little more. I even started staying over the summers. I graduated from college, got a job here, and eventually bought myself a little place in the Northwest area ... so I just continued to stay.



Once I was settled, I met a man who would later become my first husband. We got married and moved to Trotwood where I was teaching ... but less than a year later, he had died. People thought I was gonna leave after that, but I stayed. **MY LIFE WAS HERE: I HAD A JOB, I WAS CONNECTED TO THE STUDENTS AND THE PEOPLE, AND I HAD STUFF TO DO. IT MIGHT NOT HAVE STARTED OFF AS MY PLAN, BUT DAYTON WAS MY HOME NOW.**

I eventually moved out of Trotwood and into a condo in the Northwest again. Trotwood was too small for me and that's why I moved. Chicago was a big city, much bigger than Trotwood. Dayton was a nice size. It was not congested, and everyone was always smilin' and wavin'. You get comfortable in an area, and I was comfortable here. It was convenient. There were shops near where I lived ... Kroger, a hairdresser, Fashion-Bug, little restaurants and things ... The Elder Beerman had everything from fur coats to diamond rings, all high quality. Anything you could want was there. There was even a little movie theater that my dad loved going to when he and my mom would visit, and then there was the beautiful Salem Mall. Everything I needed was in Dayton, so I stayed here. I could walk to all of those little place and I didn't need to go downtown

unless I wanted to go downtown. Living there for so long, I saw a lot of things change. Not many of those stores are there anymore, most of them started closing down ... but I remember them, even though they did not stay.

I met my second husband while living in that condo and we ended up living there. Meeting him was not a part of my plan, but it sure was someone else's. Slowly but surely, I learned to trust God and what he was doing with my life. After a while, my husband and I decided that we had outgrown the condo, so that's when we bought our house. I guess it was the next part of the plan. We now live in the Triangle, which is near Salem Avenue. It's quiet and friendly, as are the neighbors. We started a group where we would go to each other's houses and have dinner.

THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW EACH OTHER, KNOW EACH OTHER. We don't have a neighborhood watch, but we do have a neighborhood association and sometimes we get together and discuss what we want to do in the neighborhood. We are not in and out of each other's houses, but we have a sense of community. It feels like home.

Looking back, it was strange that I ended up in Dayton at all. I came here for a boy, and then ended up staying here for the rest of my life. I have watched a lot of things change along the

way, but I stayed through it all. God knew I needed to be here in Dayton. Without it, my life would have looked so much different ... Dayton became my home.

If you would have asked me in high school if I'd be living in Dayton forever, I probably would have told you no. But you see, it was all a part of a plan, it just wasn't mine.





Changing Neighborhoods

STORYTELLER: Mama Nozipo Glenn

DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE

I lived in Africa until '72, lived in Nashville, Tennessee until '75, and then I moved here to Dayton View. I've lived in the same house for 40 years, so as you can see, I don't like to move. But this neighborhood is not what it used to be, it has changed a lot, *a lot*.

I remember in the olden days there were a lot of people, every house was occupied by families. Every family worked together, neighbors knew one another; they looked out for one another. Elders were respected by the younger people, and it was just different. If you were young you could go sit at the neighbor's porch and listen to the stories of the elders, just like in Africa. For example, I have four grandchildren, and I remember I used to walk three of them to



school, but by the time I would get to the school I would look like a mother goose with her goslings following behind me. I would have half the kids in the neighborhood with me because when the neighbors saw me they would say, “Ohh can you take mine too?” I remember how much we helped each other out.

That street I used to walk down is called Lexington, and now it just breaks my heart when I go down Lexington because all you see is boarded up houses or homeless people who are cold, or green spaces. Green spaces. Other people like the idea of green spaces. To me, green spaces make me cringe because I think about how that used to be a home not just a house. It used to be a home, people used to live there, people had a history there, people raised their children there, people had good and bad experiences there. So that is what I see, I see a loss. I always wonder what happened to those people? Are they okay? Were they able to move to another place or are they homeless?

Another thing that changed is the economic face of Dayton and especially my neighborhood. Dayton used to be a flourishing city, you know. NCR had its headquarters over by UD. They had buildings and buildings and buildings. GM used to have all kinds of factories, too. We didn’t

have to go downtown. We had everything we needed right here. But then the factories moved one by one to other countries. The businesses in our neighborhood closed. It was sad to watch, people losing their jobs, houses being abandoned. The neighborhood was flourishing and now it's dilapidated. **WE ONLY HAVE ONE CORNER STORE—THE PRICES ARE SKY HIGH. AND GROCERY STORES, FORGET ABOUT GROCERY STORES AROUND HERE. WE HAVE TO GO ALL THE WAY TO KROGER'S BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY PLACE THE BUS WILL DROP YOU OFF RIGHT BY IT.**

But I have hope for the future. My grandmother always told me, "The glass is half full." My hope is in your generation, the young people. Your parents' generation, they blew it. But the young people, the young people are gonna bail us out of this mess that we made. I'm excited for the Gem City grocery store—it's gonna bring neighbors back together. **THERE'S THIS SAYING IN SOUTH AFRICA: UBUNTU—"I AM BECAUSE YOU ARE." THAT'S HOW IT USED TO BE, AND I BELIEVE THE YOUNG PEOPLE SEE THAT.** Like I said, I have hope for the future because of your generation, because of the young people.





Influence to Dominance

STORYTELLER: Dev Bailey

DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE

When I was growing up I spent most of my time outdoors. This is just what was expected of kids. Dayton had so many parks and so many places for us to be safe, that all my Aunties and Uncles would just toss their kids out of the house. It was just like that, and no one gave it a second thought. Dayton was different then. Crack use to be for parties, way back when, no one knew what it would do to them; no one had ever seen a drug like that before. Originally it was for parties; it was just like that. Quickly people became addicted. Soon our Aunties and Uncles that we all loved became the first addicts. The places we considered safe turned into something else.

I joined the army not because my dad was in the military; it was because I wanted to escape



the community that I had loved that was now beginning to crack and crumble. **IT WAS PETRIFYING TO SEE MY FRIEND'S PARENTS, MY AUNTIES AND UNCLES, USING. HOW COULD EVERY PERSON FALL TO THIS ADDICTION?**

I came back to the city to see my Uncles and Aunties expecting, hoping, to find the town changed. But, the city had become worse. So, I started working with kids. I loved teaching because a teacher is concerned with the future of the kids. Being a mentor to the kids and guiding them was so rewarding, helping them know what should be done in the community and for their future. Every person has their place in this life.

When I learned how to relate to others, the decision to become a politician became a duty. It was the only way to save my people, my kids, my city. I tried to run for the mayor of Dayton. It was a requirement that every candidate collect three thousand signatures from the people, to show they wanted and trusted me. The politicians played dirty, and I got disqualified. Some of the names I got before I had changed my address to one in the city limits, so they didn't count.

But I learned something. Those signatures showed me what I could do and that people still had hope. **AND THE POLITICS SHOWED ME THAT I HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT AT THE TABLE YOU'RE ON THE MENU.**





The Rugrats of Harvard Blvd.

STORYTELLER: Marco Marmolejo

DAYTON VIEW TRIANGLE

Some of the kids these days just drive me crazy. It makes you wonder where in the world their parents are! Just last week I had an incident with three little rugrats. I do have some experience working with kids. Unfortunately, Leona and I couldn't have our own; although, between her career as a teacher and my involvement with the youth group and soccer, we feel that we have too many children to count. Of course, some were easier to deal with than others but all were a gift from God.

I can remember when Emily, around 16 at the time wise beyond her years, had affirmed this. After bumming around one day she told me, "You don't understand, coach. You are meant to be the Meadowdale coach. You're a papa



to some of the kids that don't have one." Like wow. If that isn't a sign that I am where I am supposed to be, I don't know what is.

Of course, God likes to challenge us too sometimes. Going back to those rugrats from last week. You see here's what happened.

The grass had just come in that I planted the week prior. I had to plant more from the last time those kids had come through. I saw them out early in the afternoon. Riding their bikes all through the neighborhood, treating yards as one of those skate parks. Over the years I have been losing my patience with these kind of things. Leona on the other hand still had hers. She could tell I was getting antsy and wanted to check the situation out for myself.

"Oh they are just trying to enjoy the nice weather let them be," she said.

I assured her I wasn't going to cause any trouble. But those daisies weren't going to plant themselves. We had less than a month before the home show. I just wanted to see what those kids were up to.

She persisted. So, I just told her I was going to grab the mail, wouldn't be more than a minute, two tops. I am sure she didn't buy this for a second but before she could get another word out I slipped on my sandals and was out the door.

My eyes were planted on the three young boys. They seemed to be around Emily's age. I remember my initial thought was, "Man the little one could really use a belt ..."

I began to fumble with the mail box, I could feel Leona's stare from a mile away. Surely enough I turned to the window, Leona was waving that day's mail with her other wrist on her hip. I was caught in the act, surely wasn't the last. I blushed and gave her the look. She smirked and turned away. It works, what can I say. Just as I had charmed her over back in the day, it has been winning her over for years. I've still got it. Back to those boys though. I had given up on my mailbox decoy but before I could even turn around, "Swoosh." One of the bikes skidded to a stop sending old gravel stones into the yard.

I took a deep breath and spoke. "What are you kids up to?"

Two of them looked up at me and then quickly turned away as if they had just heard a gust of wind. My patience was beginning to run thin, "Excuse me, I was speaking to you." This time I got reactions from all three. It was also the first time I could get a pretty good look at them.

The shortest one had fair white skin. I was initially tempted to offer the belt off my own

pants but it was Maire's dad's, she probably would have gotten upset. Anyways, the other boy would be easily mistaken for any other tan white young man but he reminded me so much of Miguel, my older brother, when we were younger. I used to envy him for his fair skin as a Latino. When he spoke I even heard a hint of an accent. The last had very dark skin. If it was my guess, probably from a few houses down, being the west side and all.

I didn't get very much out of them at first. To be honest they almost reminded me of myself when I was that age, especially the one who had looked like my brother. I was telling them all about how I used to fool around and play the dozens. Of course, they gave me a funky look. Sometimes I forget it's not 1984. I felt that I was really starting to get to them though. After all I had been in their shoes. Unlike theirs, mine were tied ... but I have certainly been there.

Once I seemed to have their attention couldn't stop. I tend to do that, but it doesn't help that I just care so much about this area. I went on to tell them how beautiful the neighborhood used to be, being sure to make note of the abandoned houses with the broken windows, that who knows keeps causing ... I could see the ashamed expressions on their faces as if they

have done something similar in the past. I let it slide, I wasn't here to lecture them. I described the families that grew up here. The vibrant park across the street. The stores and places to hangout all up and down Salem and Main Street. I told them I wouldn't keep them here all night. So, I reached up for a handshake and without hesitation each young man smiled and shook my hand.

I'm always looking for these kids to have some type of "ah ha" moment. Within 20 minutes I may have gotten one. I am by no means attributing myself to fixing the youth these days.

THE POINT I'M TRYING TO MAKE IS THAT CONVERSATIONS REALLY DO MATTER. WE NEED MORE OF THEM. WE NEED TO SHOW THESE KIDS WHAT A NEIGHBORHOOD SHOULD LOOK LIKE. To respect one another as neighbors and support the children as if they were our own.

I went back inside and sat down in the living room. Leona looked up from her book and just shot me a smile. I couldn't help but smile myself as I looked past her through the window and saw all three boys riding away ... off the grass.



EDGE MONT PROFILE:

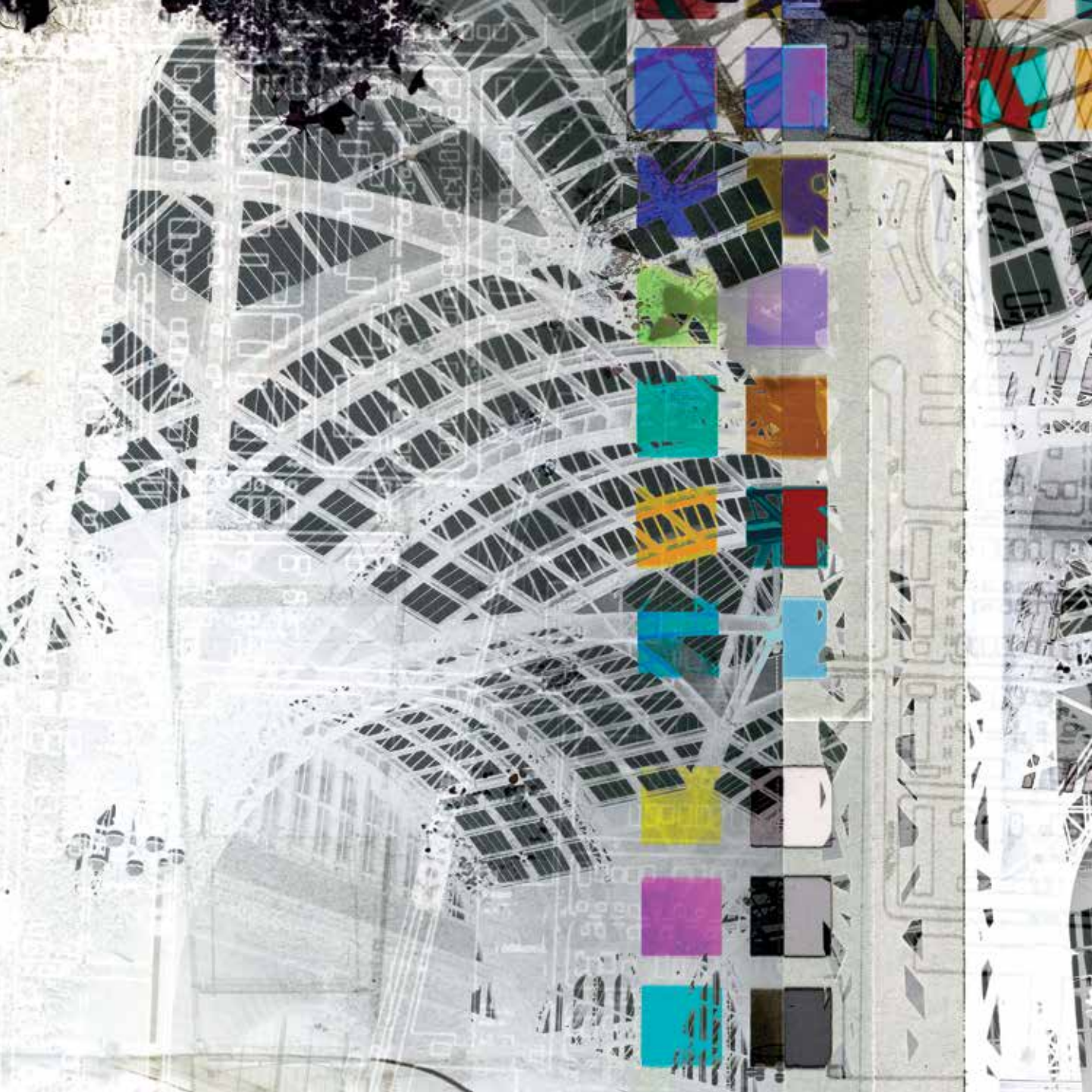
1,673 POPULATION
963 HOUSING UNITS
277 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

68 White
1,530 Black
6 American Indian or Alaska Native
2 Asian
0 Pacific Islanders
2 Some Other Race
26 Hispanic (of any race)
66 Identifies with 2 or more

\$17,500 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





My Grandbaby,

STORYTELLER: Linda Woods

EDGEMONT

Have I ever told you the story of how you got your name? You are named after the Ella Fitzgerald. You needed a name fit for the strong, African-American woman you are becoming. Like the Queen of Jazz you will leave your own legacy. Do you know how many generations our family has lived in Dayton? Our legacy all started when your great-great-grandparents moved from Atlanta. All these years later we are still here in Edgemont. But things were different then. Dayton was a different city then.

People came to Dayton because it was a place you could start from nothing. A place you could get a job. Man, woman, black, white, it didn't matter! Dayton was a place for anyone willing to work. **EDGEMONT WAS A TIGHT-KNIT BLACK**



COMMUNITY, A VILLAGE OF PEOPLE WILLING TO HELP EACH OTHER OUT. That is until the highway split us up into Carillon and Edgemont. That caused some changes, being separated from your neighbors. Before, you could walk down the street to go to the grocery store. Things started changing. When the jobs went away, everything else followed. Stores started closing, houses started to fall apart, and so did the people who lived there.

Despite this, Dayton offers so much for you. The youth, including you Ella, are the future of this city. You one day will go to Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, just like all your grandparents, cousins, and mother have done. **I KNOW IF YOU WALK DOWN SOME STREETS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOU SEE ALL OF THE BLIGHT AND HARDSHIP SUFFERED IN DAYTON. BUT, KNOW THAT YOU ARE SUPPORTED BY YOUR FAMILY AND THIS COMMUNITY.** It takes a village to raise a child, and if your family is close, that's your village. We are your village. You adopt people and people adopt you. Carry yourself well and people

will be kind to you. We need to build this community back up. Regardless of what happened to us, we are still here. Most of us are “old” people here hanging on, but you are the youth. Dayton is still a working woman’s town and I want you to know that you have the support of your community to get the education and skills you need to succeed and give back to Dayton.

Love,

Gramma



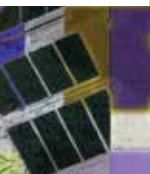


STORYTELLER: Tom Roberts

EDGEMONT

I was born and raised in the city of Dayton. I grew up in a large family with six brothers and three sisters (ten total). I attended Catholic schools during my childhood and adolescent years. I graduated from Chaminade High School, attended Sinclair Community College, and then graduated from the University of Dayton in 1977 with a degree in communication arts. This degree was versatile and helped me not only pursue a possible career in radio, but it also surprisingly propelled me into the world of politics.

Growing up in the city of Dayton was a great experience. Our neighborhood was very close-knit, and we as kids never ran out of fun things to do with one another. Being from a large family, we always had five-on-five basketball games



in the alley near our house, or we used to play baseball together. Also, there were about twenty to thirty other kids that were around our age in the neighborhood. We always knew how to make the best out of everyday. My parents had a big influence on me, because they helped build my ethical foundation through values and good principles. Living with all of my family and friends gave me a strong sense of community that still lasts today.

I first learned about politics when I was in high school. I was very close with one of my brothers, and he urged me into the political realm. My first job in this area was in the Clerk of Courts office. In my spare time, I helped people run campaigns, and this gave me some very good experience. I thought about working as a press secretary for candidates because of my background in communication. I served in the Ohio General Assembly in both the House

(1986–2001) and the Senate (2001–2009). My family was very supportive and had so much to do with my successes. I joke around and always say that we are similar to the Kennedy's, because we almost had a small built-in political machine. Many people in my family helped support me and helped run my campaign, so I didn't need too much outside aid to run for positions.

In 1997, I began to work with the Ohio Fellow Leadership Program at Sinclair Community College. It helps students to become principled leaders for their communities. Also, because of my long political history, I was asked to join the NAACP here in Dayton. I served as a political action chair for this great organization. This position was perfect for me due to my extensive political background. I now help members and the community understand what bills are being sent to the legislature, and I help anything the organization needs revolving around civic engagement to help my fellow community members. **THROUGH THIS JOB, I AM ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS SOMETHING MY PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS ALWAYS TAUGHT ME TO DO.**

In today's Dayton community, I believe that many parents are doing a lot to help their children. I sometimes hear kids today say, "I'm

bored.” Due to the large influence of electronics, children nowadays are much too involved with their phones and social media. When I grew up, my peers and I didn’t get bored very easily. We were creative and always found new ways to entertain ourselves. I remember my mother telling me once that I played a whole baseball game by myself. I played the field, batted, and even announced the entire game. It may sound silly, but I was creative enough to play and have a fun time alone without a phone or other electronics.

When I used to listen to music or watch television, all the lyrics and programs were filled with very positive messages and images. This made our music and t.v. inspirational and something we could be optimistic about. Nowadays, music has very pessimistic messages, and much of it promotes drug use and violence. When the youth of today listen to these things, especially at a young age they are more prone to these types of issues (even if they are not aware of it). Also, television and social media are filled with sad and vulgar images, which can harm the youth. So, parents can help reduce these influences by trying to keep their very young children away from this bad media as much as possible, even though they cannot fully prevent them from see-

ing/hearing them. If children can be in a close knit community with friends and family, they will feed off of each other’s enthusiasm and live happily together. This can be done by replacing technology with old school play.

I would love to see the city of Dayton go back to a simpler time. **PEOPLE SHOULD VALUE A LONG LASTING AND MEANINGFUL FAMILY RELATIONSHIP, JUST LIKE I WAS BLESSED WITH. COMMUNITIES FLOURISH WHEN PEOPLE CAN OPENLY COMMUNICATE AND BE PERSONABLE WITH ONE ANOTHER.** My time spent in the city Dayton with my large, loving family was unforgettable, and helped shape me into the person I am today.





The Ties That Bind

STORYTELLER: Dorothy Woods

EDGEMONT

I don't know why they took away the Priority Boards. They were such a good medium to talk about and try to resolve issues in our neighborhoods. They're still downtown, of course, but the neighborhoods don't have them anymore. We don't have them anymore. It's a shame, really, because the Priority Boards gave the average person a chance to speak up in their own communities. I was secretary on our neighborhood board for twenty-seven years or so. The board was the core of the community, real intimate leadership. They made people care, because they knew their needs mattered. I really wish we could bring them back.

Every neighborhood in Dayton had a place they'd meet-no one was left out-and the city



would send representatives to hear our problems. If there was an alley that needed cleaning, it was done within a month of your request. Those boards were our voice. It let outsiders know we cared about where we lived, and it discouraged crime and other unwanted behavior.

THOSE MEETINGS ENCOURAGED PEOPLE TO CARE ABOUT THE PLACE THEY LIVED. WE KNEW WE COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. DAYTON HAS HAD A HUGE IMPACT ON ME AND MY CHILDREN. IN MY OPINION, IT REALLY IS A WELCOMING PLACE WHERE ANYONE CAN BE COMFORTABLE.

Family is the most important thing in the world, of course, and I've loved living with my kids in a place where they know all their neighbors and aren't afraid to walk outside. Naturally, we've had our issues like any other neighborhood, but I see real love and kindness in the people around me. To love someone is to share what you have with others. When you love something, you got to do something about it. You can't just sit there and hold your hands. Instead, you can be active and bring about that love.

Say you like flowers. Maybe you go and plant some seeds, grow those flowers, and eventually give them to your neighbors. **WHEN MY DAUGHTER DIED LAST DECEMBER, SO MANY OF MY NEIGHBORS BROUGHT FOOD OVER IN COMFORT.**

They had known our family for years and wanted to lighten our burden. Love isn't something you can define in words, but it's something I see around me every day.

I've never felt any hatred here. I've always been comfortable. I've been here all my life. Dayton is all know. What I see in this community is a real sense of respect towards each other, even if we don't all get out and see as much of each other as we once did. Reba lives next door. I see her car leave her driveway every morning, and if I don't see it one day, I want to know everything's alright. Likewise, if she hadn't seen me for a while, you know, she'd ask my daughter Linda if I was doing alright.

We moved here because the highway was built in the seventies, and many people were displaced from their homes. It was hard at first, and we deal with difficulties now too, like food accessibility. We moved to this part of town because this is where our family was. The segregation happened naturally. People moved where their families were. If you wanted, you could live anywhere in Dayton so long as you could pay the rent.

FOOD ACCESSIBILITY IS AN ISSUE-THERE AREN'T ANY GROCERY STORES NEARBY-AND WE NEED A FULL-TIME MARKET WHERE YOU CAN GET FRUITS

AND VEGETABLES, ONE WHERE YOU CAN FEEL SAFE.

We don't have many programs that invite community participation the way we used to think it's important to get both young kids and us older people involved. I don't know why people think that we senior citizens only want to play Bingo; I want to do something that matters in my community. I want to get other people involved and make a difference.

The youth need the most attention because they are the future. When my daughters were growing up, there were training programs available to students who had just graduated high school. These programs trained anyone in a particular field so they could have the right qualifications to work in that field. One of my daughters, Elaine, went through and became a pharmacy technician. She's been in that field for about thirty years or so. Not everyone is smart enough to go to College. These programs gave people purpose. Jobs give people purpose, and make people care about the Community. That's what this city needs again. Train people to do something so they can feel like they matter. Give them a purpose.

I think we need to get away from this technology and all in school. We need to take the time to teach our children how to take care of

themselves: how to make a meal, mop the floor once a week, and iron their clothes. Teach them to care about themselves, and then they will care about the community more. We have to train our young people, to do a job that makes them feel good about themselves. Dayton is really a wonderful place—quite honestly, you'd think it was a made-up place you'd read about in books—and we can teach our children how to help keep it that way.



EDGEMONT



Just Keeping Hope: Margaret's Story

STORYTELLER: Margaret Smith

I've always lived in Dayton but not always in my current neighborhood. I was born in West Dayton. The house that we lived in, it was my dad's family home. It was a rooming house that my grandmother owned. Families lived together at that time. Everybody didn't have houses. When he and my mom got married, that's where they moved. My parents stayed on the second floor with three other families. There was a kitchen and everyone shared the bathroom. There was another floor, the third floor, and there were two families up there. There was always someone around.

When you came across the bridge to West Dayton, we had our own downtown. Restaurants, vendors: the ice man, the watermelon man, the milk man, all used to make deliveries.

**RUBENSTEINS WAS THE FIRST DEPARTMENT STORE TO GIVE BLACKS CREDIT. WINTERS BANK WAS THE FIRST BANK FOR BLACKS TO GO TO AND GET A BANK ACCOUNT. IT WAS A REALLY NICE PLACE TO GROW UP. THERE WERE WHITES, BLACKS, HUNGARIANS, AP-
PALACHIANS. WE ALL LIVED TOGETHER BECAUSE WE ALL HAD NOTHING.** We were all poor so we didn't know any better. Everybody knew everybody, if someone was sick, the whole community helped. If somebody died and there wasn't a mother in

that family, somebody would take those kids and treat them as their own. On the weekends, we cleaned. You started inside, then you moved outside. We cleaned up the yard, sidewalks, and the streets. If there was someone elderly or sick, you cleaned theirs too. Someone was always assigned to go in and help those that couldn't help themselves. It was a true village.

These days, my neighbors don't have pride in the way their house looks. So much trash. And here I am, out in the heat, keeping my yard looking nice. What kind of people are they? And they have kids. They aren't teaching them to have pride in their neighborhood.

The school was two streets over. You got your shots there, there was a dentist on certain days, you could get your eye glasses. Then we moved up in the world and started coming downtown for those things, where the city building is now. We didn't see doctors a lot but we weren't sick a lot either. We ate better, we knew what we were eating, you could look out the back door, a see your meat and your vegetables in the backyard. It was self-preservation, we lived off the land. As country as Dayton was, it was all I needed.

There wasn't a Kettering or a Beavercreek. Those popped up in the fifties. My father and



grandfather used to haul stuff out there but it was very small. I look back and can't believe that those fields turned into housing because we still had a lot of farming in those areas back then. Now we have all these municipalities that popped up because people had money and didn't want to live in Dayton anymore.

TO ME, DAYTON HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN UNDERCOVER RACIST. I didn't know it. You don't know about these things until you get older. Where Roosevelt is, that was whites and blacks. It was interracial where I lived, so I didn't know until I was in my twenties and I went to a store and was told to get out. As they say, we knew our place but I didn't know what I knew. When you're raised in it, it's hard to see.

THE BRIDGES SEPARATE THE BLACKS. Were they designed that way? I can't really say because where I'm at, Westwood, there were mainly whites in that area. They had better land but we were still in there together. Blacks owned a lot of stuff but everything was at a higher cost.

Families worked together, ate together, and shared everything because nobody had anything. Then we started getting hired at General Motors. That's when the breakdown started. Well, I'm not going to say it was General Motors itself, but when you start making money, and

you've been impoverished, you start wanting things and forgetting about family. The women and the children paid for it.

C.J. McLin was our head guy. You wanted something done, McLin would get it done. He went to my church. The Deacons watched him. You know how the President has guards, McLin had the Deacons. He was not afraid to go downtown and fight with them for our rights. He helped us get a lot of jobs, better schools. He was very political. He was everything. Oh, believe me, downtown was scared of him. **HE WAS OUR FREDERICK DOUGLASS.** If it hadn't been for him, we still wouldn't have anything. We'd probably still be renting rooms.

My favorite memories are at my grandmother's. She was the matriarch. She was my father's people. We didn't really associate with my mother's people. Until my grandmother got sick, my family always had traditions, everything happened at her house. Every day, someone was going over when they got off work. If you wanted to see a cousin, you just had to be over there at 3 o'clock. That's what we did. Family was essential. When she died, my aunts and uncles got disconnected. We see each other more now at funerals than anything—and we're about to run out of those too.

My mother's people, they were entrepreneurs. **MY MOTHER WAS LIGHT SKINNED AND THEY WANTED HER IN THE CLUBS AND SORORITIES BUT SHE REBELLED; SHE DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM.** She did not live her life to the fullest; she was babysitting her little brother but he snuck off with his friend and drowned in the river. It caused her to grieve herself to death. It's so strange because my great niece died in my house last year; she was seven months old. Now I can relate to that grief. I have moments where it's too much. But coming up my mom didn't have people she could talk to. I had to go and find someone that I could talk to; because of my family history, I didn't want to go through what my mom did. I don't know how she lasted as long as she did.

It took me having to care for my father at the end of his life to come to terms with who my parents were. They were hard workers; they just had demons that they didn't know how to deal with. That's what I've tried to teach my children, my granddaughter, you cannot fight this by yourself. **YOU'LL DROWN WITHOUT SOMEONE TO TALK TO AND TO SHARE WITH.**

I don't know if there is a comeback from this. Whites are moving back to the neighborhood. That's a good thing. When the whites start

moving back, the city starts noticing. It shows growth. The area isn't bad. The highways have connected us better. We have to get back together. If we could start being compassionate to each other, if our politicians could get more in tune to the destruction that they're pushing down, we might have a chance. We need a reason to have hope. **WHEN YOU TAKE HOPE AWAY FROM ANY NATION, THE BATTLE IS LOST.**

I think right now we are in very crucial times. I'll never say how low can it go because I've witnessed some stuff—nothing is sacred. We're leaving it up to the young ones. We've created something that we don't even know how to fix. I mean, it's so simple, but people have to want to have change. I don't care what culture you're from, all cultures start with family being the source of everything. We just keep on hoping, looking for the good.

THERE ARE STILL GOOD PEOPLE.





Rediscovering Our Values: Dayton Through My Brown Eyes

STORYTELLER: Steve Ross

EDGEMONT

I was born in Dayton, Ohio, on September 16, 1952 in the southwest section of the city called “Hog Bottom”. This community was made up of shanty and shotgun-type homes that were mainly built by the owners. Because of segregation, we were a self-contained city within a city; all families seemed to work very hard in our community. One thing for sure, there were high moral values in those communities. Southwest Dayton, which was divided by W. 3rd St., was made up of doctors, lawyers, dentists, grocery stores, gas stations, funeral directors and other professionals, as well as pimps and prostitutes. There were several movie houses and a bowling alley.



When I was born, we lived with my grandmother and several relatives on a small farm. My maternal grandparents came to Dayton in the early 1920s from Georgia. My grandfather died in 1944, the same year my mother graduated from Roosevelt High School. **THE FARM HAD LIVESTOCK, DOGS AND CHICKENS. WE ALSO GREW CORN, WHEAT AND RIBBON CANE (FOR SORGHUM MOLASSES). WE SOLD THE PRODUCE OFF OF THE BACK OF OUR PICKUP TRUCK.**

In 1956 at the age of four years old, my mother (Glenna) obtained her real estate license and began selling real estate for Fred Bowers Realty. Urban renewal came in 1959 and the city of Dayton bought our family farm; by then my parents had purchased their own home on Wisconsin Blvd. My father (Elmer) was a WWII veteran, a Tuskegee airman who worked construction and then later became the first African-American firefighter at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. He retired as Asst. Division Chief of the Base Fire Department.

My uncle Plato Hill (also a WWII veteran who was drafted into the military while attending Ohio State studying veterinary science) and my grandmother then purchased an 80-acre farm in Jefferson Township. The farming operation was expanded to well over 200 hogs; after

five years they purchased another 95-acre farm on Olt Road and continued to do truck farming while he worked full-time as an electrician at Delco Products. Most weekends and school vacations found me on the farm, working side by side with my beloved Uncle Plato, a modern-day slave driver.

As my mother built her real estate career, I became aware of redlining and the fact that lending institutions in Dayton did not make loans to minorities to purchase homes. I rode with my mother many times to banks in Cincinnati on Vine Street to seek home loans for minorities in Dayton. There were some stores in downtown Dayton where we could shop, but who did not hire black employees. There were other places that discouraged or prohibited black folks' business, particularly restaurants and eateries. W.S. Macintosh led the civil rights protest in downtown Dayton to open up all businesses to minorities. When desegregation came in the mid-60s it allowed black people to purchase homes in predominantly white areas, particularly Westwood, Residence Park and Dayton View. My mother often had to show homes at night because of the sensitivity of neighborhood desegregation issue. **"WHITE FLIGHT" DROVE WHITES TO THE SUBURBS AS BLACK**

PEOPLE GAINED ACCESS TO FORMERLY ALL-WHITE COMMUNITIES. DAYTON, OHIO REMAINED ONE OF THE MOST SEGREGATED CITIES IN AMERICA FOR MANY YEARS. As integration took effect by allowing black people to move into certain areas and to shop in stores which once barred them, we began to lose the economic value we had in our community. Black-owned businesses that once thrived in our community were shuttered.

In the late 60s, West Dayton was torn apart by race riots, and never fully recovered. Also, as a possible by-product of the Vietnam War and returning veterans, West Dayton began to experience a heroin addiction that flowed throughout the community like wildfire. People were dying from overdoses and those that were caught with the syringe or drugs were put into prison. There was no treatment for the addiction or sympathy towards those who were using heroin. In 1970 Dr. Abdur Zafr began Project Cure in order to deal with the heroin addiction ravaging West Dayton. Project cure is operational even today, and is building a new facility in Moraine, Ohio. Heroin was an epidemic in the black communities in the 60s and 70s. No one seemed to be concerned about it like they are today because it was an "inner-city" problem. Now that it's affecting rural and suburban communities,





everyone is concerned. Unfortunately, the opportunity to learn and better understand heroin addiction before it became widely available and reached “epidemic” status, was lost. It’s going to be difficult, if not impossible, to deal with today’s drug users because the drugs on the street now are a lot more powerful than they were in the 60s and 70s, and a lot more deadly. Suburban and rural communities across the United States may lose at least a generation and a half, maybe two before the drug problem is brought under control. **WHITES ARE THE PREDOMINANT USERS, AND BLACKS ARE THE STREET SELLERS WHO ARE BEING LOST (AGAIN) TO THE PRISON INDUSTRY.** I am a firm believer that to stop this drug epidemic and horrendous loss of human capital, we need to legalize drugs in the United States. Set up government clinics to treat people and control the drug usage, and take the profiteering out of the black market sale of drugs. In order to stop the multi-billion dollar illegal drug industry in this country, the profit motive must be removed. In a capitalist society, that’s the only hope.

We still see the lingering effects of problems in our community that began in the mid-60s. **NOT ONLY IS THERE BLIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY, BUT IT HAS ALSO BECOME A “FOOD DESERT”.** This means there is no full-line grocery store within

a one-mile radius. **NOT ONLY HAVE TWO-PARENT FAMILIES DISAPPEARED, BUT THE FIBER OF VALUES HAS COMPLETELY ERODED.** Values and morals that we were taught as youth growing up in Dayton have vanished. Sadly, parents and children today are concerned only about "what is good for me" with no thought given to their fellow man, to the greater good, or to doing the right thing.

In 1971, I graduated from Chaminade High School and began my college career. Upon my graduation I returned to Dayton Ohio, married and began raising a family on Wisconsin Blvd., next door to the house I grew up in and where we lived for the next 18 years. It was an inner-city neighborhood where many of my childhood friends also returned to raise their families or to visit parents who still lived there. It was a supportive village that taught my children how to succeed in life. Many neighbors helped watch over and correct them. The housing projects and apartments nearby helped them see the realities (and choices) of everyday life. Thankfully, all our children are college graduates with professional careers, as are many of the kids (and grandkids) from Wisconsin Blvd. That inner-city neighborhood yielded many productive citizens who continue to contribute to our society.

My first job after graduation was a psychotherapist at a local community mental health center. I was invited to join a neighborhood organization that focused on community gardening. It was called the Edgemont coalition. I now work as executive director for Edgemont Coalition to address the food desert issues in our area. The Edgemont Neighborhood Coalition has vowed to turn this situation around one neighborhood at a time. We are going into neighborhood schools, starting 4-H clubs and introducing the children to proper nutrition and urban farming. Working with local business partners and colleges we are in the process of developing green technology jobs that will empower the community economically.

I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT URBAN FARMING WILL INTRODUCE A NEW GENERATION TO WORKING WITH THE SOIL AND UNDERSTANDING HOW TO GROW PRODUCE, FLOWERS, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING CARE OF THE EARTH, WHILE INCORPORATING VALUES AND MORALS THEY CAN USE TO LIVE BY.



FIVE OAKS PROFILE:

3,009 POPULATION
1,689 HOUSING UNITS
595 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

762 White
2,080 Black
5 American Indian or Alaska Native
15 Asian
2 Pacific Islanders
25 Some Other Race
73 Hispanic (of any race)
120 Identifies with 2 or more

\$23,000 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





My Neighborhood

STORYTELLER: Joan Means

FIVE OAKS

My husband, Michael, and I, along with five children and a dog arrived at 807 Neal Avenue in the Five Oaks Neighborhood of Dayton, Ohio, on August 8, 1963. Michael had just gotten his Doctoral Degree from the University of Florida and had accepted a job at the University of Dayton in the English Department

Fortunately, good friends, Bud and Anita Cochran, who were already at UD volunteered to do house hunting for us. We traveled from US-25 (I-75 had not yet been constructed) to N. Main Street and Neal Avenue. My heart sank! The houses were very close to each other, the front yards were postage-sized and treeless. Further on up the street there were more trees and larger front yards, but still the houses were



what seemed like an arms-length apart. Growing up on a farm in Wisconsin I was used to space and distant neighbors. However, we had signed a rental lease for one year. I told Mike, “After a year we are out of here.”

It was a challenging first year. The neighbors on our block were mostly 70- to 80-year-old widows who welcomed all of us warmly. Maybe, partly because of our UD connection. We were the kind of family they were comfortable with. But there were no children on the block for my kids to play with, except for one little boy who didn’t much come outdoors. Again, our friends, the Cochran’s and their three children who lived six blocks away came to our rescue.

At the end of the first year when Mike and I began looking for a different house, our landlord, Mr. Trout, offered to sell us the house. What a decision! Move or stay? We had become comfortable with our neighbors, Corpus Christi Church and School and Longfellow Public School. And, most especially, we asked each other, “Do we really want to pack up five kids and a dog, again after only a year? And most importantly, we were by now very much a part of the UD family and as such were granted a loan for the mortgage down payment. At that point, my ultimatum of “one year and out” became a “53”-year-stay.

SLOWLY THE NEIGHBORHOOD BEGAN TO CHANGE. WE SAW NATIONAL GUARD JEEPS DRIVING UP AND DOWN OUR STREET DURING THE RACIAL RIOTS. OLDER FOLKS DIED AND YOUNGER FAMILIES MOVED TO THE SUBURBS FOR “MODERN” KITCHENS AND BATHS AND A HOUSE THAT WAS MORE THAN AN ARMS-LENGTH FROM THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR. Rental properties became the norm. In most cases neither the landlords nor the tenants maintained the properties. Unlike before, there were now kids everywhere, many unsupervised as parents worked two jobs.

During this early transition of the neighborhood, the Means grandparents from Wisconsin were visiting us. While we were sitting down to dinner one of the teenage girls from the family across the alley came running in to ask if she could use the phone because her brother had just shot the stepfather who was abusing his mother. We assured Mike’s parents that this was totally unusual; it had never happened before. Unfortunately, this was one of the first African-American families in the neighborhood; more incidents did happen and more and more people left the neighborhood.

The real change came in the early 90s when crack-cocaine invaded the neighborhood. Where in an apartment building across the street little

old ladies once would call to alert us “that our little doggie was out” or ask a kid to drop a letter in the corner box for a nickel, now three or four emaciated young women wrapped in shawls sat on the steps waiting for a dealer or a john. Their drugs came from a grandmother who lived in the house next door. She kept the children of daughters who were in jail, amidst their boyfriends who kept drugs flowing in and out of the house. This was when I was most scared in my neighborhood. Gun flames from a drive-by shooting directly in front of my house, aimed at that house made me hit the floor with my heart thumping. Another time while I was meeting with our community based police office a car drove by, this time they shot into the air. Not all that exciting.

I worked with FONIA, our neighborhood association, for Five Oaks to become a gated community in an attempt to keep out drug traffic and other sorts of criminal activity. Unfortunately, in the long run it didn’t help and more people moved out. Absentee landlords from as far away as Hawaii and Portland, Oregon purchased foreclosed property online. More houses deteriorated beyond repair.

FIFTY-THREE YEARS ON NEAL AVENUE AND THIS IS STILL MY NEIGHBORHOOD! THERE WAS THE NATIONAL

GUARD DRIVING DOWN NEAL AVE. DURING THE RACE RIOTS, THE CRACK EPIDEMIC, THE GATES TO DEFEND US COME AND GONE, AND BLOCKS OF VACANT HOUSES. I AM NOW THE OCTOGENARIAN ON THE BLOCK, STILL LIVING AN ARMS-LENGTH AWAY FROM MY NEIGHBORS OF THIRTY SOME YEARS. I’m still working to make a difference in this, my neighborhood, and still not ready to leave. So much for that one-year ultimatum!





The Story of Helen Serrano

STORYTELLER: Helen Serrano

FIVE OAKS

I was born July 19, 1951 in Brooklyn New York. My parents came from Puerto Rico. When they first arrived in this country, my father became the superintendent of the building we lived in. My mom was a stay at home mom for a while, and we lived with my two sisters. My parents weren't married, and they decided to separate when I was about 5 years old. From Brooklyn, I went to Manhattan with my mother and my grandmother. My grandmother was the first to come to America from Puerto Rico, and she worked as a live-in maid. My grandmother took care of us while my mom would go work in the factory. I would see my father regularly on visits, so I did have contact with him, which I thought was good.

Then from Manhattan, we moved to the south Bronx and I stayed there until I left New York permanently. **I WAS EDUCATED IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS; I WAS THE FIRST ONE IN MY FAMILY TO GO TO COLLEGE, AND FROM THERE I WENT AND GOT MY MASTER'S DEGREE.** I decided to be a social worker. I didn't realize that I would love social work like I did, but I did for 38 years. I worked for a non-profit child-welfare agency that worked with families, and that's where my interest in community really started because I worked with a lot of intense, multi-problem families that dealt with things like alcoholism, poor-parenting, and more. I realized that things wouldn't necessarily be better if there weren't changes in those communities, so I got involved. After about 15 years, I went into medical social work and worked my last 10 years as a dialysis social worker. I learned a lot with those experiences. I had two daughters from two different marriages, but that wasn't a problem for us. It was important for me to give my daughters perspective on not only life, but how the world works. I would bring them on my house visits to show them the differences in people's lives, and how they should be thankful for their lives. I always taught them to understand difference between what they want and what they need. I didn't

want them growing up getting everything they wanted because I knew that isn't how the world works. I really wanted them to have as good of a life as I could give them.

When I was 63 I thought about leaving New York and moved to Dayton. My two daughters were grown and I felt that I could leave the big city. The thought to actually leave was never really in my mind, but I felt more and more resentful that despite the fact that I got a good education, I wasn't gaining anything in New York, and I didn't feel that was right. When my kids were young, I was more concerned and fearful that if I left New York that there would be problems with my daughters' dads, so the thought never crossed my mind. When I decided to leave, I was seeing a change in the New York that I knew, and I think a lot of people saw it too. I wanted something better for me and potentially for my daughters. In New York, everyone in the family depended on each other, whether that was for a place to live or just money to get by. There were often several generations living in the same home. As a result, I decided I should do it now, when I still have a part of my life left. My sister was living in Dayton, so the transition was easy and comfortable.



WHEN I LEFT, MY DAUGHTERS CAME TO VISIT ME A FEW TIMES AND THEY SAW HOW LIFE MOVED AT A DIFFERENT AND SLOWER PACE IN DAYTON THAN IN NEW YORK, AND THAT YOU COULD ATTAIN DIFFERENT THINGS HERE. When you are living in an apartment your whole life, you have no real say in anything and you're at the mercy of your landlord. That becomes tiresome and you feel like you're trapped. Here, with the recession, many people lost their jobs and there were a lot of foreclosed homes, and I was lucky enough to buy one for very cheap. I hadn't seen the house until I signed the papers. When I left the office and my sister brought me to the house, I thought to myself, 'What did I do?' because there was a lot of work to be done on the house: half the ceiling was gone, mold was found in the walls, and the house needed plumbing, new electric, and many other things despite these setbacks. I saw all the potential in it. **ALL THE HOMES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, FIVE OAKS, HAVE THEIR OWN PERSONALITIES; THERE ARE NO COOKIE-CUTTER HOMES AND THAT GIVES THE COMMUNITIES A UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE.**

When I was settled into Dayton, I started doing volunteer work for the community. I really wanted to use my skills for the good of other people. I volunteered with the private animal

organization for about a year, and then I started working with my church more. I've noticed that people here are so nice in comparison to New York, even the people addicted to drugs. Dayton is such a giving community; if someone is in need, someone else will be there to help them. I have never seen anything like it.





HARRISON TOWNSHIP PROFILE:

22,388 POPULATION

9,631 HOUSING UNITS

NA VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

11,400 White

9,293 Black

NA American Indian or Alaska Native

28 Asian

NA Pacific Islanders

43 Some Other Race

768 Hispanic (of any race)

NA Identifies with 2 or more

\$32,300 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Blessed in the Valley: The Life Story of Billi Ewing

STORYTELLER: Billi Ewing

HARRISON TOWNSHIP

The word “valley” can be defined as an “elongated depression in Earth’s surface—a low point or condition.” *Hold that concept and walk with me ...*

FROM MY EARLIEST CHILDHOOD MEMORIES, I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS “DIFFERENT.” My friends and family knew it too, giving me nicknames like “Woman, SugarLump, and Wild Bill” to name a few. Once I learned and understood my beginning, it all came clear to me where my “differences” came from and why they were embraced by most people I encountered in life rather than isolating me from them. My father was a fifty-four-year-old wise, retired, handsome gentleman, originally from Chicago, who was a child during the Great Depression, so he lived



a pretty hard life. And my mother was a twenty-seven-year-old feisty, beautiful, soul singing divorcee from Dayton raising two little girls by herself when they met and fell in love. So, when I meet new people and they ask, “You’re not like most people I meet, where are you from?” or say, “There’s something about you...” I tell them “Well there’s literally a wise, old man who takes no crap and a nurturing, determined, vibrant woman who loves everyone within me, so that’s why I’m different.”

I was officially identified as a gifted learner as a second grader attending Meadowdale Elementary and ended up transferring to Lincoln I.G.E. (Individually Guided Education) Elementary School for the Gifted and Talented, a unique academic institution that no longer exists, in the third grade through my sixth-grade year. From there, I went on to attend Stivers School for the Arts, where I followed my desire to play another instrument, to accompany the piano and my budding beautiful voice. My childhood up to my early teen years didn’t look like most of my friends’. While they were playing sports, going skating, bowling, & just hanging out in the neighborhood, I was busy taking ballet, piano, & violin lessons, singing in the church choir, preparing for talent shows, speech contests, chess matches, science fairs and spelling bees, along with attending

meetings for the various youth organizations and groups I was involved in. My mother was a well-known servant leader in the community, employed by the Dayton Urban League at that time so I sat in on numerous community organization boards, such as Catholic Social Services, National Council of Negro Women and more. She instilled that spirit and the importance of sharing our gifts and giving back to others in me since I could remember and I have been following her footsteps ever since.

With such a diverse, structured, caring Christian background and upbringing, one would not think to add teen mother to that list, but somehow, I did. I learned that I was pregnant the summer before entering my tenth-grade year at Meadowdale High School while attending Wright State’s Wright STEPP camp. I’d gotten sick, which I just figured was from the late-night over-indulgence of Squirt Pop and Doritos my dormmates and I engaged in. But per camp protocol, all students had to be sent home to get checked out if any symptoms of illness were present and it was in that moment the true source of my nausea was revealed. Also per camp protocols, I was no longer eligible to complete the summer camp, blowing my chances at the 4 years of free tuition I was working so hard to earn—so I thought.

OF ALL THE DESIRES AND DEMANDS PARENTS CAN HAVE FOR THEIR CHILDREN, MY MOTHER'S ONLY REQUEST WAS THAT WE ALL GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL WITHOUT HAVING A BABY OR GOING TO JAIL. NOWADAYS THAT CONVERSATION IS USUALLY DIRECTED TOWARDS YOUNG, BLACK MEN IN MY COMMUNITY, BUT MY MOTHER KNEW THAT IT COULD HAPPEN TO ANYONE, BECAUSE IT HAPPENED TO HER, SO I WAS IN THAT DISCUSSION. Imagine how I, and the community felt when word got out that the “smart one,” Bill Boy’s little girl, was pregnant. Instead of shutting down and giving up, I kept my eye on the prize, which was to graduate at the top of my class and still attend college like I’d always intended. Unbeknownst to me, others were watching and following my new journey as mother and student, and were proud of the tenacity I’d shown through it all. So much so, that I was still awarded a four year Wright STEPP scholarship, allowing me to attend and graduate from college with my now three-year-old daughter!

Fast forward fourteen years, and that little girl who was also a Stivers student, is now a Senior preparing to graduate from Skidmore. I found out, after having a series of tests with multiple doctors, that the vision issues I’d been noticing in my right eye since October 2013 were the result of a slow-growing brain tumor that was pressing on my optic nerve. I thought

about the first “valley” I experienced in my life, about how those two teen parents who have now been husband and wife for fourteen years, and all the blessings we received from that “mistake.” On September 9th, 2014, instead of choosing fear, I chose faith and agreed to have a life-saving thirteen-hour craniotomy to remove a benign atypical meningioma at caring and capable hands of Dr. Mario Zuccarello of the Mayfield Clinic at the University of Cincinnati Hospital.

SINCE THAT DAY, THAT SAME TENACITY AND DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS HELPED ME THROUGH THIS PARTICULAR “VALLEY.” My willingness to share my story with anyone who would listen turned into me becoming an advocate for brain tumor awareness and birthing a movement entitled “Billi’s BELievers—From Tumor to Triumph!” in support of and with the help of the medical entities and organizations that have played a tremendous role in my journey towards restoration. Because of my advocacy, I received awards such as one of the 2016 “Top 25 Women to Watch in the Miami Valley” through WIBN, proving again that being a little different is okay and that you can be blessed while in the valleys of life.



HILLCREST PROFILE:

3,366 POPULATION

1,739 HOUSING UNITS

443 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

801 White

2,355 Black

19 American Indian or Alaska Native

17 Asian

0 Pacific Islanders

62 Some Other Race

107 Hispanic (of any race)

112 Identifies with 2 or more

\$37,600 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





The Best of Times and the Worst of Times

STORYTELLER: Charles Burks

HILLCREST

While I grew up in a time when racism and discrimination were rampant in the nation, in my own sheltered little world, nothing could have been better. If you haven't already, you'll eventually learn that the key to a successful marriage is two simple words, "Yes, dear." Linda and I have been together for years because of those two words, among a number of other things, of course.

It took each of us a previous marriage and a few kids to find our way back to each other, though we'd known each other for years. My wife and I lived in the same neighborhood when we were younger. In fact, I had to walk past her house when I wanted to go anywhere. We were very different though. She was into music and



reading. I was into sports. She was introverted. I was extroverted. We never really had a strong friendship in those days because our interests differed so much, but I've grown to adore these differences. After reuniting after many years apart, we fell in love and married. She teaches me something new every day—it's amazing.

Our school was built in 1923, and it was huge—one of the biggest in the nation, in fact. I'm not quite sure if it was a good thing or a bad thing, but almost everyone in that school knew me. I was the popular kid—the kid who could be friends with almost anyone. I realized at a very young age that I had a gift, although at the time I wasn't sure if it was a gift or a curse. Many people came to me with their problems, seeking some kind of advice. I turned my extroverted personality and skill for listening into a career. Now I work as a social worker and youth worker, and I absolutely love every minute of it.

My dad died when I was very young, and I was raised as a single child in my home. My other siblings had all grown up by the time I was born, and they had all left the house and begun their own lives. Because I had no brothers and sisters to entertain and annoy, and no siblings to entertain and annoy me, I had to find other ways to occupy my time. I was an athlete and I played ping pong, basketball, baseball and swam

all summer long. I ran around the neighborhood making friends, playing sports, and maybe making a bit of trouble. I spent most of my time at the YMCA, where my life was shaped. I became a social worker working with kids later in life, in part, because of the men who poured into my life at the YMCA. Because I was an only child, it helped me become popular with the other kids. They would come to my house because they were welcomed, I had a lot of toys, and we had a big backyard. We played ball and croquet there. I loved the freedom of the summer, but I was always ready to start back to school again. Times were very different then; no one ever skipped school. If a child was seen walking the streets during school hours, they would most certainly be stopped and asked why they were not in class. But we loved school; it was a chance for us to see all of our friends; it gave us something to do.

I lived in a time when everyone knew their neighbors. I knew the names of every person on our street. People owned their houses, and divorce was almost unheard of. The neighborhood was mostly black. At the same time, I had never heard of racism. All I knew was my neighborhood and my school. **I GUESS YOU COULD SAY WE WERE SHELTERED — SHELTERED FROM THE INJUSTICE THAT EXISTED THROUGHOUT THE NATION. IGNORANCE REALLY IS BLISS, AT LEAST DURING**

CHILDHOOD. Life was good to us. We laughed. We joked. We played. We lived.

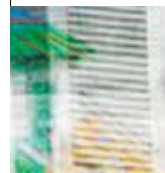
In about seventh grade, public housing started happening, and this was the first time we started getting exposed to other people who were not homeowners and who appeared to have different values and priorities.

Our parents did not expose us to the discrimination that they suffered. We grew up not knowing much about segregation and prejudice except what we saw on T.V. Our parents shielded us from this. I remember taking trips to Kentucky to visit our relatives and not making a single stop along the way. **WE SIMPLY PACKED THE FOOD WE WOULD EAT ON THE DRIVE THERE. I DIDN'T THINK WAS ANYTHING OF IT, UNTIL LATER IN LIFE WHEN I REALIZED THE EXTENT OF SEGREGATION. WE BROUGHT OUR FOOD WITH US BECAUSE WE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WELCOMED IN RESTAURANTS IN THE SOUTH.**

My wife is partly white, as am I and almost every African-American that I know of. My grandmother was fathered by a white doctor at the farm where her parents share cropped. The problem was that, back then, in Alabama, where my family came from, a white man could not be charged with rape of a black woman. It was just not acknowledged as rape. Yet I was not raised with any anger towards that. We were raised to not speak out to authority, whether it be our

parents, teachers, or law enforcers. We simply accepted the life we had and never questioned what it would be like if it were different or how to go about making that change.

Now, I live in a time when every day, a man who looks like me will be killed by another man who looks like me. Unjustified violence is something that is part of today's life. It is something that pains me, and, sadly, it doesn't have to be like this. While there has certainly been some improvement, as a country, we still have a long way to go. It is a sad truth that every black parent will teach his or her male child from the age of seven on up, to immediately put his hands up when a policeman speaks to him and do exactly as he is told. That is my reality. That is the reality of my children and my grandchildren. And if we don't start making changes soon, it will be the unfortunate reality of generations to come.





The Story of Me

STORYTELLER: Linda Burks

HILLCREST

I grew up in a large family; I have four sisters and three brothers. I am the oldest. We grew up in Dayton, Ohio. My parents had moved here from Kentucky. My father was in World War II. After the war, my mother and father moved to Dayton in January to find a job. My father got a job at the Veteran's Administration. My mother stayed at home and you can imagine what she was doing during that time: taking care of all of us. I grew up in a neighborhood of many, many children. We would walk to school, walk to wherever we wanted to go, and we could walk all over.

My father was a preacher, so my family was quite involved in church. My father also had to work several jobs to support all of us. I grew

up going to church every day, I was involved in everything at church. My sister closest to me and I use to sing together. I had a close-knit family; we would spend a couple weeks in the summer going back to Kentucky to visit grandparents. We would also do family things like go to the movies and have picnics. My mother was very protective. I had friends, but was never allowed to spend the night. All the kids came in at 6 o'clock to watch Little Rascals without being told.

School, I loved school. I always knew I was going to be a teacher. I taught all my siblings how to read and write. I taught my sisters how to read and write. By the time one of my sisters went to kindergarten, I taught her how to write everyone's name. In school, because I liked school, there was no problem. I loved math. It was my favorite subject, especially in college. My life was mostly involved in church and singing, helping out at home, helping do chores and reading. I was an avid reader. I read almost everything. By the time I was in the 8th grade, I was reading one book a day. I was not an outdoor person.

My neighborhood when I first moved in our house, we had white neighbors, but after a few years we had almost exclusively black neighbors. **WE LIVED A NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE WE COULD GO TO THE MARKET UP THE BLOCK. THREE BLOCKS AWAY WAS AN A&P SUPERMARKET. THERE WERE**

NO WORRIES ABOUT VIOLENCE. We were cautioned, but it never happened. We'd always be in groups, especially walking to and from school. We were always picking people up and dropping them off.

Our neighborhood right now in the Hillcrest area has changed since we moved here in 1994. The occupants owned all the houses on our street, but now several are rented. Crime used to be low in this neighborhood but has increased significantly. Some of our white neighbors have moved out and been replaced by black neighbors and many of the businesses on N. Main have closed. In Dayton, when I grew up, anyone who wanted to work, would work, jobs were plentiful. Since I went to college and went into teaching, my income was low. Teachers didn't usually get paid as well as everyone else. Everyone back then had a high school diploma; it was uncommon not to have one.

We as black people discipline and correct our children more today because from day one we are told to do better and be better and have to compete with others around us.

I LIVED THROUGH THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, THROUGH WHICH I GOT TO WITNESS THE FIGHT FOR BETTER JOBS AND BETTER OPPORTUNITIES. IT WAS A DIFFERENT FOCUS THEN. You could go to a restaurant and worry about not being seated because of your skin color. During this time, employment

and housing was not equal. Black people lived on the Westside, and the White people would be elsewhere. If you haven't noticed, the big divider are railroad tracks or a bridge.

I would say we lived through the best of times and the worst of times. We never heard racial slurs coming from our families, never. **WE JUST GREW UP WITH PEOPLE DIFFERENT THAN US AND ACCEPTED THEM.** Back then, we used to know our neighbors, and now we don't. We were unaware of discrimination. Our parents went through it but didn't tell us, they just told us later. Our teachers were our first line of African-Americans with degrees, so they were dead set on us being educated so we could do things in the world. The reality is that someone that looks like me is going to be killed, every weekend. **WE HAVE TO TEACH OUR KIDS OF COLOR AT A YOUNG AGE IF YOU SEE THE POLICE, PUT YOUR HANDS UP. TO US, AND MANY OTHERS, ATTACK ON PEOPLE OF COLOR BY PEOPLE OF UNIFORM, IS THE REALITY.**

There are many things that I consider to be highlights in my life. One of them has been able to travel around the country. One time we went to Washington D.C. for a family reunion. We got to go to the White House to see President Clinton. This was on the Fourth of July. We were on the lawn and they had big trucks full of dove bars and popsicles, the red white and blue ones. The Air Force band was also playing,

and then the Clintons came out and waved. We had our children with us. Clinton was our first advocate as people of color because there were people like us not just pushing brooms but, carrying briefcases in the White House. It was important to us that our kids could see this, so they could know they can be like those people someday. We grew up in a time when we knew we couldn't tell our kids they can be anything they want, which is why this experience was so important to me and my husband.



MADDEN HILLS PROFILE:

735 **POPULATION**
408 **HOUSING UNITS**
71 **VACANCIES**

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

8 **White**
704 **Black**
0 **American Indian or Alaska Native**
17 **Asian**
0 **Pacific Islanders**
7 **Some Other Race**
9 **Hispanic (of any race)**
15 **Identifies with 2 or more**

\$30,600 MEDIAN INCOME

2010







Reminiscing: Willie's Story

STORYTELLER: Willie Clemons

MADDEN HILLS

It's everything. My neighborhood means everything to me.

I was born in Texas and served in the Navy. I was in the military for 30 years. I started working for the government in 1959. All the work I did in the government has probably changed by now. There's not that much to tell. I've lived a very short life. I'll be 90 in July. Finished high school 1947, I fought in WWII, went to college, rejoined the navy, and spent 25 months in Bermuda. I got married in Bermuda.

I'VE BEEN IN DAYTON SINCE 1957.

I've lived in two neighborhoods. The first neighborhood I lived in was Westwood and then my wife and I built a house in Madden Hills. We moved into this house in 1970. I moved to



Dayton because my wife was an alien per se and she went to school here, Central State, and started student teaching here, she was in the Dayton school system for about 45 years — she died in '08. We have four kids. I also have eight grandkids and seven great grandkids. **OUR HOME WAS ONE OF THE FIRST HOMES IN THAT PART OF TOWN. MADDEN HILLS IS BEAUTIFUL.** It is one of the most progressive neighborhoods in Dayton, very stable community; 99% of the houses, people own them, and we don't have any for sale signs.

I am very active and avid about my neighborhood. I am a part of the Madden Neighborhood Club. We meet the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m., we had a meeting last night. We have a lot of things going on, we have projects, like we're operating with the city to get the landfill squared away, that was one of my biggest headaches for the last year or so. I think it's called the Stony Hollow Landfill, so right now it appears that they got control of the odor but you know that thing moved in and almost

destroyed our neighborhood. We haven't had anybody come and build a house in the last 10 years, I'm sure it's because of the landfill.

**DAYTON HAS CHANGED. RACIALLY, ECONOMICAL-
LY, THE SCHOOL SYSTEMS—WE'VE HAD A ROUGH
TIME AS FAR AS JOBS GO, ALL OF THE BIG INDUS-
TRIES LEFT.** Most of the people who work are gone because the jobs are gone. But really, if I could change anything, I would bring my wife back—she probably wouldn't want to come back though. Dayton is very different now.





Through Life's Changes, God Provides: Bill's Story

STORYTELLER: Bill Johnson

MADDEN HILLS

I have learned many lessons during my 77 years of life: relationships matter, your word is your bond, and most importantly, that God provides. I have lived in Dayton all my life and have seen the city change. **IT IS EASY FOR MOST TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THOSE CHANGES, BUT I HAVE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO BE PART OF POSITIVE EVOLUTION OF DAYTON.**

I was born within sight of Miami Valley Hospital, but not in it. The good doctor attending to my mother would not pay the fee to practice at the hospital. So I was born at home one block north of the hospital in the South Park neighborhood. My family rented the house, and even though both were college-educated, my parents struggled to find jobs worthy of their education.

The economy still suffered from the effects of the Great Depression, and racism was alive and strong in the city. Despite these factors, my parents taught me to keep a positive attitude and the importance of a strong work ethic and integrity.

When I entered elementary school, we lived in Lower Dayton View, a mostly white neighborhood. As one of only five black children at the school, we experienced the negativity of racism, my older sister taking the brunt of it. But Dayton was changing. When I started High School in 1953, I was one of 1,250 students entering Roosevelt High School. This was its biggest class. When I graduated four years later, there were 350 students in the class. When I entered, 90 percent of the high school was white and four years later it was 90 percent of the students were black.

After high school, I followed my sister to Ohio University. **AFTER SEEING THE HARDSHIP OF TWO TUITION PAYMENTS ON MY PARENTS, I STOPPED AFTER A YEAR AND TOOK A JOB AS A LABORER WITH INLAND MANUFACTURING, A DIVISION OF GENERAL MOTORS.** Inland represented the one-time industrial and manufacturing strength of Dayton. They even needed to recruit workers from outside the city to staff the factories during World War II. But the manufacturing base of Dayton

was changing, too. Manufacturing left the vital neighborhoods that were built to support so many workers. The loss of manufacturing left the neighborhoods struggling, and in decline.

My work ethic served me well, and I was placed on a promotion track and eventually rose to General Foreman. My business experience counted for credit in an adult degree program at Antioch College. I completed coursework to receive a Bachelor's in Business Administration. Concerned about changing practices at GM, I left for a new direction. I joined CityWide Development Corp., the housing development division of the city of Dayton, rising to Director of Housing Development. In this role, I could bring positive advancements to Dayton neighborhoods.

My appreciation of the importance of home ownership came from my experience in 1966, when I tried to build my first house in the West Wood neighborhood. **LOAN SERVICES WERE NOT ATTAINABLE BASED ON MY SKIN COLOR AND CHOICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD, A PRACTICE KNOWN AS REDLINING.** At CityWide I managed a city-based lending program for home improvements and worked hard to extend services to the people in Dayton neighborhoods. My relationships led to other opportunities, and I ended up as the Manager of Housing and Neighborhood



Development with the City of Dayton. I was able to work directly on neighborhood redevelopment and restoring homes and properties in the city. I feel proud of the positive changes we were able to bring to Dayton neighborhoods.

In building my current home, I chose the Madden Hills neighborhood. I had worked on the Madden Hills Neighborhood project beforehand, which was the first urban renewal project in the city. Part of my work in retirement focuses on our neighborhood association. We are working on obtaining status as a nonprofit organization so we can buy or take over abandoned homes and apply for grants to continue to improve the area. This neighborhood has a good base of people, but the population is aging. There are no easily accessible stores for healthy food. Some of what we do as an association is to offer care for seniors who want to stay in their homes but need access to food. We encourage people to make wills and plans for their home to avoid abandoning properties when they pass on.

It is easy to look back at the changes in Dayton and identify the problems that caused them. But I prefer to look forward and be part of the developments that improve the city. **I'VE SURROUNDED MYSELF WITH GOOD PEOPLE AND**

HAVE WORKED TO TAKE A NEGATIVE AND MAKE IT A POSITIVE. GOD IS GOOD AND PROVIDES FOR US. I am grateful for the opportunities to serve Him and the people in the Dayton neighborhoods.





My Life In Dayton: Jamesetta's Story

STORYTELLER: Jamesetta Lewis

MADDEN HILLS

My name is Jamesetta and I was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee. I was the only child of my parents. My parents built their own house and made it very clear that I had every opportunity to own my own house. Why would you throw money away for rent? They made sure I went to college. I attended Knoxville College and, luckily, the college was right across the street from our house.

I graduated in Social Work and met Chuck in college. We got married and came to Dayton. Dayton has been my home ever since. Chuck and his family were from Dayton.

I worked for the State of Ohio and Montgomery County as a social worker. Chuck worked in many positions in the YMCA, serving at one point

as the Executive Director of the West Dayton. We live in this community and let me tell you why it matters to us.

It Matters: Everyone Can Buy a House

All of the people from the YMCA met periodically. Another white couple about our same age also said they were house hunting and found a house. “We got our loan right away—there was no trouble.” I said, “Really?” The white couple wondered why we did not get our loan. They couldn’t understand. **WE WEREN’T GIVEN THE SAME CONSIDERATION BECAUSE WE WERE BLACK. THAT IS WHEN I TOLD THE WHITE COUPLE, “WELL THAT’S THE WAY IT IS.”**

Our realtor told us she knew this older gentleman who had a company. We met the gentleman and he said, “Oh, yeah, I know Charles, he works at the YMCA, been in the service. I’ll take a chance and lend him the money.” That is how we got the loan for the house. Not from a bank, really.

It Matters: Access to Healthy Food

About the food desert, I never had to do that. We were lucky. My dad was a carpenter by trade but he was a maintenance supervisor in a building for forty years. He didn’t have to go to the military because his brothers did. My mom was a nurse.

THERE AREN’T A LOT OF PLACES AROUND HERE TO BUY FOOD, ESPECIALLY FRUIT AND VEGETABLES. YOU’D HAVE TO TAKE THE BUS TO GET TO KROGER BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE DON’T HAVE CARS. The only places to buy food that are close enough to walk to are some little convenience stores, but they only sell junk food. If they do ever have produce it isn’t very fresh. It’s old. So people who need food can have a hard time getting it. This makes many areas in Dayton food deserts.

It Matters:

Young People Should Have a Safe Place

In Dayton, the libraries are consolidating. Desoto Bass is the name of a large low-income apartment complex in the center of town. It was named after Reverend Desoto Bass who was a community leader in the west side of Dayton. All of the kids that live at the apartment complex at Desoto Bass can walk to the Madden Library. They had a meeting in West Dayton to listen to the community, but their minds were set. They have chosen to consolidate the libraries to the area off Route 35.

Madden Library was the only good place for local children to go after school. They can read or they can do homework or just be somewhere after school. Now, the only place for kids to go after school is the Boys and Girls Club.



It Matters: Clean Neighborhood

Even Montgomery County gave up on cleaning their own properties. They own the Human Society and surrounding land on Nicholas Road. There is trash everywhere behind the Human Society. It looks horrible and is located across from the neighborhood elementary school. Don't they know it affects the neighborhood? No one wants to live by the trash! No one wants to live where the street looks awful! That's wrong. **WE CARE.** Our neighborhood association continues to request a cleanup.

The local incarcerated men assisted in the neighborhood cleanup. I made them sandwiches and took some food to the prisoners who were picking up trash and thanked them. They commented on my car. The prisoners liked my car. I told them to work hard in a job when you get out of prison and you can buy yourself a car too. I think I gave them hope for the future.

The City and County let a company put a landfill and sewage treatment at the top of the hill. It's the highest point in Dayton—it is a landfill. A man-made hill of garbage and trash. It smells for miles in the surrounding areas and residents have filed a class-action lawsuit.

We are trying to find solutions for our Mad-den Hills Neighborhood. We formed a 501(c)

that protects the neighborhood. The community will not allow the purchase of homes in the neighborhood from people with outside influences. We don't want people buying homes and renting the homes out to people who don't take care of the home or abandon the house.

It Matters: People Should Have a Job

McCall's Magazine was very popular in the 80s. McCall's magazine plant was here in town and a big part of the area. They closed and we lost all the jobs here and also as the result of GM and other large manufacturing companies leaving the area. Dayton lost 400,000 jobs. We need jobs for the area.

All of these issues are important to the families of West Dayton neighborhoods. We care about the community and the children and the future of the area.





Facing Neighborhoods: Dale's Story

STORYTELLER: Dale Richardson

MADDEN HILLS

One night I came home and got into bed and my wife tapped me on my shoulder and said, "Mister, if you see my husband, tell him his wife and kids would like to see him."

I always tried to be in as many places as I could and talk to as many people as I could. I really wanted to make an impression and would go any place, anytime. I wouldn't and I couldn't say no to anything.

There was an ad in the paper one day for Channel 22 that said, "If any community member wants to do editorials on the newscast, contact us." So, I did that for about 7 years. I wasn't a celebrity, but people knew me. I'd go in a restaurant and people would say, "I know you!" People got to know who I was in the city, not that I was looking for any attention.

Then the factory went out. Child Services came around, and hired me as a recruiter for Foster and Adoptive Homes. They said, “Do you know the community?”

Like the back of my damn hand!

I was just a guy doing stuff. I would go around and give people the information needed on fostering and adopting children; I wanted to saturate the community with information. I’m very proud of the work I did. I made public presentations to every municipality in the county. I would just go in front of their commissions and tell them that there is a need. Not to make them become foster and adoptive parents, but just to give them the information. I hate that heavy-handed approach.

I was a recruiter for 33 years at children services. I had to retire at 68 because of my knee. Now my knee is better and I regret that I retired, but I try and go back as often as I can.

There was a guy the other day, Don, who’d been married for 52 years, and I said, “Congratulations!” And he responded, “Congratulations,

for what?!” And I knew what he meant. I won’t say it’s a grind, but it’s a struggle. Now I’m not a marriage counselor or anything. But you have to overlook some things. You make that commitment. I believe you have to give it everything you got.

But ... a man, if he has potential he’s worth it. You have to work with potential and that’s all my wife did. We’ve been married for 49 years. Without her I’d be the guy on the side of the road with a sign saying, ‘Homeless, will work for food.’

Now, for what it’s worth, I volunteer at the VA in the hospice and nursing home every Wednesday. **THEY HAVE A PROGRAM CALLED ‘NO VET DIES ALONE’ WHERE VOLUNTEERS SIT WITH VETERANS IN THEIR LAST MOMENTS.** But going into a stranger’s room at that time in their life can be ... awkward and uncomfortable. I was a stranger to them. The VA would call me and it felt too much like an assignment, I wanted it to be a lot more natural. So, now I’m allowed to roam around and talk and sit with people. It is an honor and a privilege

that I have permission to be in that room with a vet. I have heard amazing stories about what the men have gone through—hellacious fights and ambushes. But I also talk to the families, the kids, when they visit. It just makes me so very proud to be an American.

Now I talk a lot. I was talkin' to one guy—he's passed away now—and he looked at me and said, "Why don't you shut up? You talk all the damn time!" Because that's what you think you need to do, is talk and be engaging. He said "Why don't we just sit here and enjoy ourselves in the quietness. Just keep me company."

In retirement, I'm vice president, which is more title than anything, of an advocacy group called the Latino Connection. It's been around for ten, fifteen, maybe twelve years. The group brings together as many community organizations as we can—you know, the RTA, banks, police and fire departments—to talk about issues that affect the Latino population. We have speakers come in and talk about these things to county commissioners and such. Bring awareness. So if the banks had

job openings, maybe they could offer the jobs to migrants, which pushes to help them work in fair conditions.

YOU NEED OTHER PEOPLE. YOU DON'T DO THINGS BY YOURSELF IN THIS WORLD. STAND UP FOR FOLKS, IF YOU THINK SOMETHING IS WRONG, IF YOU SEE SOMETHING SAY SOMETHING. Share as much as you can and learn from one another. The key is neighbors need to look out for one another. We need to talk and we need to have dialogue. I'm 71 years old, and I swear to you, I feel so stupid in life right now. Because you operate under a lot of assumptions throughout your life, but when you get to know people you find out it's not the way you thought they were. You cannot stay static; you have to always continue to learn.

Atlanta, Georgia, used to have a slogan: "The city too busy to hate."

That's who I want to be.

I WANT TO BE A MAN TOO BUSY TO HATE.

770 POPULATION
492 HOUSING UNITS
139 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

616 White
114 Black
3 American Indian or Alaska Native
0 Asian
0 Pacific Islanders
12 Some Other Race
25 Hispanic (of any race)
25 Identifies with 2 or more

\$18,400 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Where Are You Now? Jerry Bowling III's Story of Reinvention

STORYTELLER: Jerry Bowling

MCCOOK FIELD

Jerry Bowling has lived in McCook Field for nearly all his life and now holds the position of president of the neighborhood association. He has seen the neighborhood change, for better or worse, and the neighborhood has seen Jerry change as well. Jerry's story is one of personal reinvention at a time when the neighborhood itself was being reinvented.

This is McCook Field, not Old North Dayton. I find myself subtly correcting people that aren't from here. We have to have pride in our neighborhood. We have to have pride in ourselves. McCook Field is a working class neighborhood. It's a safe neighborhood too. The housing stock isn't great, but it's being improved. Throughout my life, I've lived on three different blocks and



in four different houses. My mom was even born in this neighborhood and wrote a story called, “Memories of McCook Field”. Everybody knew everybody. When I was younger, I delivered newspapers. Now, I pass homes and still think that was the lawnmower man’s house, that’s where the dog-catcher lived, that was the candied apple lady’s house. This neighborhood is my home and my support system.

In 2009, I lost my job as a contractor at Delphi, where I worked for 15 years, after the engineering center closed. That’s a major thing in somebody’s life you know. I did not have a degree. I was a designer by trade. I had to go on unemployment and get a part time job at Kohl’s. Ultimately, I ended up getting two other part time jobs and in 2012, I went to Sinclair to get a two-year degree in engineering. In eighteen months, I had obtained my degree, but it was pretty challenging while working three jobs. I also filed for bankruptcy, probably later than I should have. With all the stress, I began to experience physical issues: you know, having trouble sleeping, discomfort. I had insurance, but it wasn’t great. I went to the hospital on December 30, 2013. They checked my heart out and everything was fine, but \$8,000 later I was left with the consolation prize of high

blood pressure and diabetes. It was just another challenge on top of not having a full time job. Things would get better, though. I was in the process of reinventing myself.

In 2009, McCook Field became a Superfund site because of the Behr Plant contamination. McGuffey School even had to close a week before school started because of the toxicity. They’re remediating the situation now, but it’s an ongoing process. The groundwater is contaminated and moving toward our houses. We have mitigation systems in our homes to keep the air clean and residents are legally obligated to disclose this information to future homebuyers.

REVITALIZATION IS SLOW MOVING, BUT IT TAKES TIME LIKE ANYTHING ELSE. MY SISTER, WHO LIVES ACROSS THE STREET, IS WORKING ON FIXING UP HER HOUSE NOW, AND THE TURKISH IMMIGRANTS FIXED UP THEIRS TOO. The first major step to re-invention was tearing down the public housing projects, which tainted the reputation of the neighborhood. The second major step was the \$72 million investment in the beautiful Kroc Center, built on a 17 and ½ acre campus. This neighborhood center is only the start of reinvention though. I’m waiting for the next big step.

Financial issues are difficult, but I do have support. At first, there was a lot of shame. It’s

difficult to ask for money. It hurts, but it gets easier even when you don't want to do it. I had to think alright, who do I go to first? Of my seven brothers and sisters, three helped me big time. For example, I needed a retainer for my lawyer and my brother helped me. **BEING PRESIDENT OF MCCOOK FIELD WAS ANOTHER SORT OF SUPPORT SYSTEM. IT GAVE ME PURPOSE IN MY PERSONAL LIFE.** By giving back to the community and helping others, I helped myself along the way. Every week I would go to the bank to get a money order and the cashiers, which I love, would ask, "Oh, are you getting a money order Jerry?" I was also required to attend a financial class as a result of bankruptcy court. There were so many people there, I realized oh, okay I'm not alone. In 2014, I finally got a job. It was a three-month internship. It was something, and in my field so I was excited about that. I was asked to stay longer and then eventually hired. Now, I'm approaching three years employment and I have good insurance. I'm reestablishing myself, but it's an ongoing challenge. I make three quarters of what I used to, but I have to make the best of it whether I like it or not.

WHERE AM I NOW? This past spring, I was discharged from bankruptcy after four years instead of the standard five. I didn't know why,

but I didn't question it either. I went back to the bank and as usual they asked if I was getting a money order. This time I proudly said no. After my dissolution from my wife, I moved back into the house we used to rent out, next to my parents. The mortgage was paid off a few months later. Talk about being excited. I was finally able to start saving some money and start paying back debts. I even got to buy more presents at Christmas time. I've learned that recovery is tenuous though. The engine recently went out on my truck and my credit was not good enough to get a reasonable loan. Luckily, a friend loaned me a vehicle to use until my credit improves.

So, you know, one thing can set you back again when money is tight. I worry about medical things and how far away work is, but I'm in the process of recovery. There are steps to progress and support helps. I can't give up hope. I have to keep plugging away.



791 POPULATION

460 HOUSING UNITS

141 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

32 White

741 Black

0 American Indian or Alaska Native

2 Asian

0 Pacific Islanders

2 Some Other Race

4 Hispanic (of any race)

14 Identifies with 2 or more

\$14,900 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Sharon's Story: Pave the Way

STORYTELLER: Sharon Mitchell

MACFARLANE

The bus will let them off in the back and they'll come running in here with their little backpacks. You'll hear them singing, and you'll hear them talking, laughing.

I met Father Hoelle, that's really how I got here.

I met Father Hoelle, our founder, while I was working for the city of Dayton. That's when I got involved in the neighborhood—it was going through a kind of decline. And it was during this time that Father Hoelle was looking for some help with the Center. He told me there was a vacancy with the executive director and asked me if I would temporarily fill the spot. He assumed I would be retiring soon.

I laughed and said, "No, I'm at retirement age, but I don't want to retire right now. I want

to wait a few more years”. And he just kept ... he would say, “Okay, okay. But the Lord told me ya know...” and I’m like, “Eh, I don’t know...” I told him I’d think about it.

So, needless to say I thought about it and I said yes to Father Hoelle. He was a person that you just could not say no to. I mean he had a way of twisting your arm with kindness and with love—you know you always wanted to say yes to him. He was such a wonderful person. I contribute all of my dedication and my passion to the love that he had—not only for this neighborhood, for this center, for service. He had such a passion for it and it just resonated in his spirit every time you talked to him. He was always asking about how the community was. He’d ask, “How are they? Because this is their center, it belongs to them.” He always would tell me, “Sharon, whatever you can do, make sure they know it belongs to them.” From the time he started this center in 1965 until the day he died in 2005, he lived the community, he lived service, he lived helping people. I mean, that spirit, for

anyone that knew him, that spirit would kinda float over on you. You know? I can’t describe it. It was such a magnitude of giving and of love. It really was.

OUR BIGGEST PROBLEM HAS BEEN REBUILDING THE COMMUNITY. YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU TEAR SOMETHING DOWN AND YOU DON’T HAVE ANOTHER PLAN, THEN YOU’VE GOT A BROWN SPACE. When you continue to get more and more brown spaces, then it looks like a desert over here. You know a few houses here a few houses there. It’s not cohesive; it’s not a real neighborhood. Those brown areas are where they have torn down houses. Now when you drive through this neighborhood, you just see a lot of space—with nothing but empty lots.

We have to equip the youth with some of the knowledge to be able to handle these problems. I just look at some of the young people that have come through here and how the center changed their lives. I look at it as not only change, but stability. It gave them a place to come to—a safe place, like Father Hoelle wanted. A place



where they could find themselves. They could build character. This is our mission—building character, connecting community. And now they are out there changing, the world for the better, filling the brown spaces with love and ambitions. That’s been the happiest moments of my time here at the center. Holding on to this dream that Father Hoelle wanted—that’s what makes me happy.

I THINK THAT IT’S IMPORTANT THAT ALL OF US REMEMBER, ESPECIALLY MY GENERATION, THAT SOMEONE PAVED THE WAY FOR US, SO WE SHOULD PAVE THE WAY FOR THEM. I have to make sure that you understand that it’s not gonna be easy, and it’s not instant; it’s a continuous work. I’m continuously working now. I’m continuously on the phone. I’m continuously emailing. I’m continuously communicating with other people about what we need to do to continue on with the work that we’re doing. It’s a continuous job and we have to equip you. If we don’t, we’re not doing our job. My job is to empower others so that they can do their best. I don’t feel like my

job is complete unless you’re better when you leave here. I don’t want you to leave here worse; I want you to leave here better. That’s the way I feel about our young generation. They have to be able to lead, and they can’t lead if we don’t show them how to lead.

Little did Father Hoelle know I’d still be here, at the Dakota Center, seventeen years later. And when the bus lets them off in back and they come running ... that’s how I know my seventeen years here have been worthwhile. Not only have I done what I wanted to do, but I did what Father Hoelle wanted. I made sure that the people who came here felt safe, secure, and I made sure we empowered them to be better.



MIAMI CHAPEL PROFILE:

1,792 POPULATION
941 HOUSING UNITS
209 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

52 White
1,662 Black
0 American Indian or Alaska Native
2 Asian
0 Pacific Islanders
10 Some Other Race
33 Hispanic (of any race)
56 Identifies with 2 or more

\$17,300 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





A Grandfather's Destinee

STORYTELLER: Les Hamilton

MIAMI CHAPEL

I'M GONNA GIVE YOU SOME HOMEWORK. WHEN YOU GET HOME, I WANT YOU TO GO ON YOUR COMPUTER AND PULL UP SWIM-TO-ROW. S-w-i-m, t-o, r-o-w. Just like it sounds. My granddaughter, Destinee, always laughs at me for being an old fart, but I learned how to do this technology thing all by myself. I spent hours working on the website and adding all the pictures and videos. I think you're going to be really impressed. Destinee founded the program. It's a program that will work to teach young girls from ages eleven to thirteen how to swim, and after their completion of level five swimming, they will be taught to row through the Greater Dayton Rowing Association, coached by Destinee. This program can also get some of the youth of our community to



want to come back and support the things that helped them grow.

Raising Destinee was how it all started. It was the best thing that could have happened to an old guy like me. I am so ... *proud*. Proud of everything that she has accomplished in her life, and I know that there is more in store.

I spent decades in the Air Force, so for years, everything I did came with instructions. Somebody else was always telling me what to do and how to do it. Now raising a kid don't come with a manual, but she was such a good girl that it really was a pleasure.

I am a native Daytonian, born and raised, but I never realized how few opportunities for young girls there are in my community until I saw it first hand while raising Destinee. **WE REALIZED THAT WE OFTEN DO TOO MUCH FOR THE BOYS AND NOT ENOUGH FOR THE GIRLS.**

But way back before all this started I had nothing on my mind but being a kid. It all started with my own father, who taught me how to swim and first brought me to the water.

When I was a boy, I loved swimming. My friends and I used to always go down to the river and play and swim in the water. Now some of the stuff we did was dangerous, I won't lie, but we didn't care. We spent hours down in that river, and it's a memory that I won't ever forget. **BUT NOW, KIDS DON'T GO DOWN TO THE RIVER TO**

SWIM. HECK, KIDS THESE DAYS DON'T EVEN GO TO THE COMMUNITY POOL. THOSE THINGS ARE GETTING HARDER AND HARDER TO KEEP OPEN. That's one of the problems in this community too. Kids don't have anything to do after school, and they get into trouble. A lot of the smarter kids get out of town and never look back. They go somewhere else where they can prosper. They don't give anything back to the place they grew up in. That's what we are trying to fix.

I remember when Destinee was on the swim team, and when I would take her to practice, I noticed that there were always older kids that came back to visit or help out their old swim club. They loved participating so much in the sport that they wanted to share that same experience with the younger generation.

A program like this is so important to have in this community, trust me. It will make the kids put down the Flamin' Hot Cheetos and go get some exercise. Now I'm not an idiot, I know I'd get some looks if I showed up on the docks with twenty inner city girls. Rowing is a pretty prestigious sport, but we're trying to break that barrier. We have been blessed with having a wonderful natural resource right in our backyards. The Great Miami River was once called the Great Divide, but it can also be something that brings us all together. It can only reach its full potential if our community learns how to

safely participate in the programs that it has to offer. This program really is the answer, and I am positive that it can make a difference in our struggling community.

I am so proud of my granddaughter. She has worked hard her entire life, and now she's in college. Despite being so young, she is working so hard to make a difference already.

RAISING MY GRANDDAUGHTER MADE ME THE MAN I AM TODAY. If it weren't for Destinee, I'd probably just be sitting around, being an old man. But instead, she opened my eyes to the problems our young people face. I have become passionate about a cause, and I feel like if we want to see positive change, we have to do something about it. I have very high hopes for the future of Miami Chapel and the little girls that live here. I will continue to support swim to row with everything that I have, and I hope that others in the community will follow.



OLD NORTH DAYTON PROFILE:

5,902 POPULATION
2,990 HOUSING UNITS
581 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

4,544 White
957 Black
14 American Indian or Alaska Native
47 Asian
9 Pacific Islanders
131 Some Other Race
217 Hispanic (of any race)
200 Identifies with 2 or more

\$24,100 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





STORYTELLER: Mary Jo Dahm

OLD NORTH DAYTON

I was born in Old North Dayton to my fabulous mother and father. I have eight brothers and two sisters, so there were eleven of us living in a three-bedroom house with one bathroom, next to the bakery. And the ironic thing is that I moved back to Old North Dayton three years ago, and I live catty-corner from where I grew up.

WE HAD QUITE A VARIETY OF PEOPLE. WE HAD STORES ON EVERY CORNER. YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DRIVE ANYWHERE. You wanted some clothes, you went down to Kirk's, and we had groceries stores, and we had the pizza houses. That I miss. That I miss a lot. We had our local bars that guys, you know, the fathers would go there and have their beer.

It was nice. I miss that neighborly stuff—really truly. If you ran out of a cup of sugar, you could go next door and borrow a cup of sugar. The door was always open. You just didn't think about anybody stealing from you. You didn't think anybody was evil. North Dayton has changed a lot, but I still feel safe there.

I went to St. Joseph Commercial High School to be a secretary, and I graduated in '61. You know, back then, you went to school, you got a job, you lived with your mother until you met someone and married them and moved out. But I was the real renegade of the family, because I moved out of the house early and actually spent a few years in Texas. When I was thinking about moving, a friend told me, "Go. You'll always have home. Go."

ONE THING I'VE LEARNED IN MY LIFE: TELL GOD YOUR PLANS, AND HE'LL LAUGH AT YOU. I can't tell you how many times in my life that I figured how the rest of my life was gonna be. And I won't even do that now, at age 73.

Here I am—after living so far away and moving back to the other side of Dayton—right back in my old neighborhood. I'm in an apartment now, but everybody thinks what's really funny is if I would rent my old house. I have some family in the neighborhood, so my kids say, "Don't you

wanna move somewhere?" I say, "No, I'm perfectly happy where I am and with what I have, and I feel blessed that I have the good neighbors that I have." You can't move into a new apartment complex and get that.

ONE TIME, WHEN I WAS FEELING UNDER THE WEATHER, MY MAILMAN SAW THAT I HAD LEFT MY KEY IN THE DOOR, SO HE CALLED THE POLICE TO COME CHECK ON ME. HOW MANY MAILMEN WOULD DO THAT? He's such a sweetie, and he takes good care of me. Another time, my next-door neighbor Victor heard me hammering a nail into the wall so I could hang a picture, and he came over to check on me, just to make sure everything was okay. They take care of me so well.

Even outside of my apartment complex, I have some very good neighbors—many of them are immigrants. I have always been a Catholic, and I don't agree with many parts of the Koran, so I want to sit down and talk about that with some of my Muslim neighbors. But, the hardest thing is to quit grouping people. You have to meet each individual. There are so many good people out there.

One day, I was going to a party, and I was carrying a heavy Crock-Pot, and I set it down on the sidewalk to take a break before I got to the car to open the trunk. And all of a sudden,



this guy runs across the street, saying, “Let me help you with that!” So he took it. I opened the trunk of my car and he put it in. I had my little wallet right in my hand, so I took a couple dollars out to give to him. So I said, “Thank you so much. Here,” and he goes, “No, no! We’re neighbors! I own the store there now. We’re neighbors. You need help, I’ll help you. I need help, you help me.” His name’s Zyair, and I know he’s married, has a couple little kids, and runs the Muslim grocery across the street.

Whenever I see my neighbors walking outside, I’ll always say “hello” or “good morning.” Some of them don’t usually respond, but I’ll keep saying it every time. But, one day, this woman called me over, and she spoke not-good English, but she asked me if I lived there alone, and I said yes, I have children, and I’ve been a widow for many years. So, she said, “You come for coffee sometime?” And I said, “Sure! Yeah.”

So, even while the Koran bothers me, now there are two Muslims there that I could be very good friends with. I hope that, you know, if we keep talking, that we can try to understand each other. Again, you’ve got to take each person individually. You can’t group ‘em together. There’s good and there’s bad.

Old North Dayton has changed a lot, but then so has the world. It’s a whole different world, and I’m sure, because my mother used to say, “Oh, for the good ol’ days,” that when you’re my age, you’re going to be telling someone, “Well, when we grew up, it was so much better than it is now.”

But, I’ve had a good life. If God took me tomorrow, I would be happy. (Not really, because my apartment is a mess right now, and I’ve got to mop my floor! But, other than that...) I’ve had a good life, even if it hasn’t always gone as planned. I’ve always told my kids, tell God your plans, and He’ll have a good laugh. I even have a date this weekend with a guy I had a crush on in seventh grade. Can you believe that?

BOY, GOD MUST BE LAUGHING.





Cory's OND: A Town of Transition

STORYTELLER: Cory Ivory

OLD NORTH DAYTON

It was—for me—a very close neighborhood growing up. We would go to the neighborhood watering hole because my cousin lived next door; it was just down the street and I was always at my cousin's. The lady that owned it, Betty, she would always say, "You kids gonna come over and sit with me and have a Coke and a Reese's Cup?" So we would be like, "Mom, we're going next door." We would sit on our little bar stool and eat our Reese's Cup and have our small Coke from a bottle. We never realized it was a bar until later.

AS A KID, EVERY YEAR WE HAD OLD NORTH DAYTON DAY, AND WE HAD A PARADE DOWN THE STREET, RIGHT HERE. It started over Keowee Street, over the bridge, and we had it down Leo

to the park. At the park we had rides—well the rides came later—but we had booths set up with music, and it was just fun. When we went trick or treating, for instance, we knew just about everybody's house we went to. I mean, yeah, not everybody, but it was more so when my dad and mom were growing up, all the family names. It was like, "Oh, the Schwindermins live here. Oh, there's the Kielbaso's." You know, you knew just about everybody, and our parents loved taking us trick or treating because they would stop by and see their friends.

I went to Chaminade Julianne (CJ) for high school. I felt like being from a neighborhood like this, where most of the kids go to Dayton Public Schools, going to a school where, you know, kids grew up with more money and stuff. I didn't feel like I fit in. I was pretty miserable freshman and sophomore year—and looking back on it, I think I was being more judgmental than they were. I do not remember anyone being specifically mean to me.

I HAD A CHIP ON MY SHOULDER, LIKE I AM FROM DAYTON, I DO NOT NEED TO BE AROUND ALL THESE RICH BOYS AND GIRLS—THEY HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON WITH ME. Then, my junior year I was like, you gotta be here, so just enjoy it. Then, I started hanging out with two girls who were

actually from my neighborhood and more friendships grew from there, and I don't know, I ended up enjoying it a lot more.

My best friends and I would go to the church. The church that is there, the Catholic church, is Saint Adalbert's and it's the Polish-speaking church, or, well, the Polish church. They had a festival every year, and we went there. They would have a polka band, and we would do the polka. And, one year, I remember, like, it rained and nobody was out there dancing except me and my best friends, Chrissy and Maureen, and they were out there dancing with me. There were some boys from the neighborhood that we got to get up and dance. **WE JUST SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT DANCING IN THE RAIN; IT WAS SO MUCH FUN! I REMEMBER THAT WAS ONE OF OUR BEST EXPERIENCES.**

Now, none of that happens anymore. A lot of the Old North Dayton families are moving out, now, and I guess it is overrun by a lot of parents who aren't raising their kids. I mean, you'll have teenagers who are out causing havoc, and, you'd ask, "Where are their parents?" It's just sad what it has become, but I have so many good memories of all the fun in this neighborhood.

My best friends' parents were both members of the Polish Club, too. So, I got to hang



out with them at the Easter egg hunts and the Christmas parties and stuff. I remember playing pinball sometimes when we went to the bar part. When I turned 21, I became an official member. It has been pretty cool because, for me, the Polish Club is like a good meeting place for a lot of the people who moved out of the neighborhood. A lot of my family, especially my extended family, doesn't live in Old North Dayton anymore but still come to the Polish Club.

The Polish Club is a good social place, like I said, to go see everybody. My cousin Paula at one point wanted me to move down to New York with her because she is an immigration lawyer there. Before I went back to nursing school, she was like, "Oh, we need secretaries and I can get you a job right now. Blah blah blah. Come up here and you can stay with me until you find a place." And, I once again considered it. Everyone is like, "You just need to move." I have always been like, "Nope, I just want to stay in Dayton."

For a few years, I moved to Centerville, Ohio. Centerville feels like living on another planet for a while. I was living in a condo, and the condo association were like snooty. They had their little meetings, and they stuck their

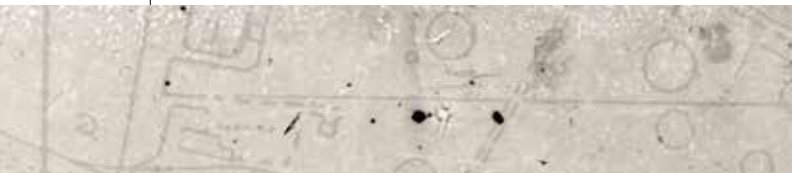
nose up at everybody. **I HATED IT AT FIRST. I WAS LIKE, "THESE ARE A BUNCH OF ASSHOLES."**

That's why I didn't want to move to Centerville. **LIKE MY NEIGHBORHOOD, YEAH, IT MIGHT BE GHETTO. YOU MIGHT SEE SOMEONE PULL A GUN ON SOMEBODY— I SAW THAT ONCE— BUT AT LEAST THEY DO NOT ACT, LIKE, ALL SNOOTY IF THEY SEE YOU.** But then, once again like the CJ (Chaminade Julianne) thing where my defenses are already up, once I got to know it and everything, I loved it. I loved where I lived, I loved the neighbors.

I am telling you, in our neighborhood, people around my age, are really proud of Old North Dayton. I see, like, lots of tattoos. Like, my best friends want the three of us to go get **OLD** tattooed on us—that's what we call it: **OLD**. And, I'm like, yeah, I can't do that. I just cannot see myself getting a tattoo.

I AM PROUD OF WHERE WE GREW UP — BUT I DON'T WANT IT TATTOOED.





They Still Call Me Coach

STORYTELLER: John Ivory, Sr.

OLD NORTH DAYTON

I'M JUST GLAD TO BE FROM NORTH DAYTON AN' DAYTON'S BEEN A GOOD PLACE.

I lived in that house over on Troy Street, ya know, the one that's still next to Evans Bakery. We lived there, eleven of us kids, and I was number eight. And my cousins lived a few blocks down. I have a lot of good memories here. I remember where we got into trouble, which places we knew not to go to an' where I played little league because we had a pretty good little league system.

It's funny, ya know...I wasn't planning on coaching little league but my brother was coaching a team and I used to play so I started helping him out. Then another coach got sick and I ended up taking over his team. I was only



18, ya know, not much older than the guys on the team. I kept coaching for about 16 years, and I met a lot of people during that time. One time there was a little girl I seen, started working with my brother, an' we started talking and everything. In fact her sister was the first girl to play little league, and I was the only one willing to take her. Later, that girl on my team would be my sister-in-law. **MY WIFE AND I JUST HIT IT OFF. GOOD GOLLY, IT'LL BE 39, NO 38 YEARS THIS AUGUST.**

I coached until my kids started growing up. Then I watched the kids while my wife worked and I got a job making pies and cakes at Bluebird Bakery on Kiser Street. I had to work nights so I had to give up the teams, because of my work. After I left the bakery, I was unemployed for a while and I learned my first lesson—don't quit a job until you have another one lined up. So then I got into roofing an' later went to work construction with my brother-in-law. Mostly all the jobs I had were in north Dayton, an' I liked 'em all because each day was different. Roofing especially, you got to see and learn about the city, and the people you meet was interesting.

I'd say I'm a people person, and people still see me around and these guys just say, "Hey coach how ya doing?"

BACK THEN I DIDN'T REALIZE THE IMPACT I WAS MAKIN' ON THESE KIDS LIVES, BUT THINKING BACK TO IT NOW, ONE STORY STANDS OUT TO ME. This boy, he was a street kid, but boy did he love baseball. He passed away when he was young, and before the burial his mom came up to me and told me she had a problem. She said she wanted to bury him in his baseball uniform, but he loved his jersey so much he wore it all the time and she just couldn't let it go. She asked me if she could have my uniform to bury him in; so I gave her my uniform for him to be buried in. Now that was a memory that was kind of touching from when I coached.

I still think about going back to coaching. Especially now since I'm retired, but maybe one day ... if the timings right. It's just that the kids aren't the way they used to be. I don't know if I could do it. Kids nowadays, they don't understand respect. You know, you just can't lie an' cheat your way through anything or you know cuss an' be a bully. You gotta answer to what you do. I was always fair to my kids when I was coaching, I had a good time with those kids. I still got kids who I used to coach, now in their 40s and 50s, come up to me and tell me I should coach again. I keep telling em' the time has gotta be right. I do miss them kids, and them young kids is when they need it the most.

I'M COMMITTED TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD YA KNOW. I JUS' WANNA HELP KEEP NORTH DAYTON GOIN'. I KNOW WE'VE GOT PROBLEMS, BUT PEOPLE ARE GETTIN' TOGETHER AN' TALKIN'. My in-laws, brothers, sisters, we still meet for dinner every two months, an' I know a lot of families aren't like that now, but different groups like the neighborhood association are pretty active.

IT DON'T HAVE TO TAKE A LOT. IT'LL BE BETTER.





Heart and Home: The Story of Ray and Shelby

STORYTELLER: Ray and Shelby Deck

OLD NORTH DAYTON

Ray grew up in Dayton and has been here almost his entire life. Shelby moved here from Kentucky with her parents when she was eighteen. They have been married for fifty-seven years.

RAY: In my younger years, I did all the things most children do. **I HAD A SCOOTER AND A TRICYCLE—MY FAMILY COULDN'T AFFORD TO BUY ME A BICYCLE—BUT I USED TO RIDE THAT TRICYCLE UNTIL MY LEGS HURT SO BAD MY MOM WOULD HAVE TO RUB THEM WITH LINIMENT JUST SO I COULD SLEEP AT NIGHT.** My family used to live between McGuffy School and Deed's Park. Growing up, we would always go up to McGuffy to play football and basketball, or we would go over to Deed's to play baseball. I loved playing at the park. Sometimes, it would be dark before I came



home. There was one time when my dad told me I had to stay home as punishment for being out too late. He locked the old wood gate in the back fence so I couldn't go. I wasn't too happy about that, so what I did was take a running start and jump right over that gate, and then I just went on running all the way to the park.

RAY: Now believe it or not, I was supposed to go to Miami University, but instead, I bought a car—a yellow and off-white fifty-five Chevy. It was a sharp car. And, well, that pretty much ended my going to Miami University. Not long after that my sister said to me, “I’ve got someone I want you to meet.”

SHELBY: His sister had married my brother, you see.

RAY: One time, we were both visiting them. I was sitting with my baby niece, just swinging her around a bit.

SHELBY: I was afraid he was going to drop her.

RAY: I was the third-oldest of nine so I was used to kids.

SHELBY: I went over there to make sure.

RAY: I don't know, when I met Shelby something just clicked right away.

SHELBY: I thought I already had my husband picked out. I guess I was wrong.

RAY: On our first date, we went to, oh I can't remember, someplace. Frisch's maybe. I think it was a Frisch's. It was kind of a short date.

SHELBY: My dad was strict because my sister had run off and married an older man.

RAY: Now me, I could have stayed there, but Shelby had snuck out so she had to get back. It wasn't long after that, that I knew I wanted to marry her.

RAY: When we got married, we moved over to Gunckle Avenue. 160 Gunckle Avenue. It's not there anymore, but when we lived there, it was apartments. A disc-jockey and his wife owned the place. He would always let us borrow the records he would bring home from his job because we couldn't afford them. It was all sorts of music, I don't remember all of it. I remember one thing. There was song called "I'm Thankful." **YOU SEE, WE BOTH CAME FROM SINGING FAMILIES AND SHE PLAYS THE PIANO. AND THE ORGAN, AND WE LEARNED THAT SONG.** We used to sing it together.

RAY: We lived over on Lamar Street for a while. In Old North Dayton. We loved living there. We had great neighbors. There was one woman, Mrs. May, she was the best old soul. When our kids had their tonsils taken out, she walked down to the store on Troy Street, bought

those children ice cream, and brought it home to us. I used to love to just sit on her porch and talk to her. She really made a big impression on me. We moved away for a while, and it was a big mistake. I was under so much stress back then, I had a breakdown. I suffered for a long time with depression.

SHELBY: The house on Lamar Street hadn't sold so I told the kids, "we need to get him home." So they helped me pack everything up, and we moved back. **THEN, SURE ENOUGH, RAY GOT BETTER. WE'RE PARTIAL TO OLD NORTH DAYTON, I GUESS. IT'S OUR HOME.**



TROTWOOD PROFILE:

24,375 POPULATION
10,193 HOUSING UNITS
NA VACANCIES

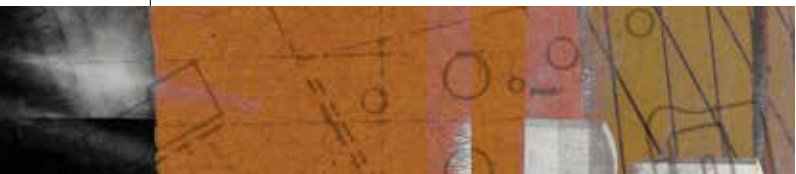
RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

6,789 White
16,300 Black
NA American Indian or Alaska Native
138 Asian
NA Pacific Islanders
113 Some Other Race
206 Hispanic (of any race)
NA Identifies with 2 or more

\$36,300 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





I Am Proud: Roma's Story

STORYTELLER: Roma Stephens

TROTWOOD

I have been to hell and back.

I have seen the army tanks at the edge
of my neighborhood in West Dayton.

I have seen my friends be treated like animals.

What I have witnessed has enhanced
my blackness and womanhood to become
an unyielding protector of my people.

I AM PROUD.

I have been removed from school
for celebrating my blackness.

After I took my walk of shame
down Germantown Street, James Brown's voice
rang in my head:

"Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud."



It's not my fault the school couldn't handle an Afro.

After MLK died the same school who kicked me out allowed us to write a book of comments sent to Coretta Scott King.

My comment was about how I pledged to go to Georgia and fight for my people's rights.

I went to high school feeling my race being expunged from my soul.

I learned that I sounded white, as an African princess, whenever I spoke.

I learned to be unapologetic for my semantics.

I also took a class on Black History and learned how my country, my home, was built on the backs of my people.

I was and still am a Black Panther sympathizer, silently fighting with and for my people.

I AM PROUD.

I experienced racism at work too.

I was more than qualified for the job.

They told me on the phone to come in for an interview.

When I walked in they said the job had already been filled.

My blackness was shameful for them.

I PERSEVERED AND I AM PROUD.

College wasn't any better for my blackness. The school was dominated by young white males, who were a far cry from my black self.

College didn't work out for me but I still treasure learning outside of the classroom.

I AM STILL A LEARNER, AND I AM PROUD.

The more I lived and worked with my people, the more I realized people were working against us.

I have witnessed authority pretend to support the youth of my people.

I have seen and felt what it is like to be an afterthought.

I sympathize with these youth because at heart I still am one.

I just want to give these children a shoulder to cry on and a hand to hold.

I want the world to see that my people's lives do matter.

I NEVER HAVE NOR WILL I EVER GIVE UP, BECAUSE I AM PROUD.

I was married.

For a long time.

He had his issues and I had mine too.

After the mental abuse was too much,
I took my son and left.

Our house was barely standing.

I did not care.

For the first time in my life, I felt peace
even though I couldn't afford to eat.

I left and I forgave him because of God's glory.

I FORGAVE, I RETURNED, AND I AM PROUD.

Some days are harder than others.

Some days it hurts to breathe;
I am in so much pain.

My health is deteriorating.

I appreciate people helping me,
but I just want to be independent.

I have seen the ends of the earth;
I can handle my own pain.

But it hurts so much.

I AM RESILIENT AND I AM PROUD.

I try and try and no one listens to me.

I wish I could just scream "listen to me."

I want the young women of color to look
at me and my story and learn.

I want everyone to look at me and the hell
I have been through and learn from it.

I want people to learn that love
is always the answer.

I CAN STILL LOVE BECAUSE I AM PROUD.

I AM BLACK.

I AM A WOMAN.

I AM A MATRIARCH.

I AM A PROTECTOR.

I AM A DEFENDER.

I AM A LOVER.

I AM A CHILD OF GOD.

I AM PROUD.



WESTWOOD PROFILE:

5,604 POPULATION
3,538 HOUSING UNITS
1,008 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

149 White
5,255 Black
24 American Indian or Alaska Native
4 Asian
0 Pacific Islanders
19 Some Other Race
78 Hispanic (of any race)
153 Identifies with 2 or more

\$22,700 MEDIAN INCOME

2010



- A Court House
- B First Presbyterian Ch
- C Second Presbyterian
- D Methodist
- E Asphellite Baptist
- F Union
- G Episcopal
- H German Reformed
- I Catholic
- J Academy

- K Catholic Church
- L Baptist
- M German Ch
- N Methodist
- O Campbellite
- P German Reformed
- Q Lutheran Church



STORYTELLER: Jackie Patterson

WESTWOOD

I remember great Grandma taking me into the voting booth with her. She wanted me to see that she was voting for John F. Kennedy. She told me that she didn't usually vote for Democrats or Catholics but that Kennedy had promised to make things better for our people. My great grandmother wanted me to see this. She also needed me to make sure that she was reading the names on the ballot correctly when she made her mark when voting.

I know how important it is to be involved, to make sure that someone is hearing your voice. I was six years old in that voting booth. Kennedy won the election and I've been involved in politics ever since. When there's a council meeting, I'm there and I speak up. I let them know what

it is that we need and want in Westwood, my neighborhood. I ask hard questions. I argue with people that don't like being argued with. I was one of the original plaintiffs in the case brought against the landfill. I put my name on that, I had to. I'm not the only one who speaks up, either. My friends are activists, too. Involved people. Agitators. My family members, too. You don't learn about this on your own. I'm not just doing this for fun. If I don't look out for my seniors in my neighborhood, who will? **IF I DON'T GET THE RESOURCES FOR WESTWOOD THAT OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE CITY ARE GETTING, WHO WILL?**

There are answers to these questions. No one else will look out for us. No one will. The white neighborhoods will get the money, not us.

It's not that I don't like other neighborhoods or other parts of the city. It's that I'm from Westwood. I've never lived more than two miles from where I live now, though I do leave Westwood everyday to go to work at the Air Force Base. It's working at the base that has done so much for me. Working with service families, I saw how much they give up for their country. I saw how much is sacrificed to make this country like it is, but I also saw how different this city is for white neighborhoods and for black neighborhoods. **I COULD MOVE OUT OF WESTWOOD, BUT I**

COULD NEVER LIVE IN ONE OF THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF DAYTON. THEY DON'T WANT A PERSON LIKE ME IN KETTERING, IN CENTERVILLE. I CAN'T GO TO THE GROCERY STORE AND BE COMFORTABLE THERE. That's why I stay in Westwood, even though Westwood doesn't have a grocery store and there's no place where you can buy fresh, healthy food. There's not even a Subway. I drive past four or five Subway restaurants leaving the base every day—even before I get on the highway. But we don't have any healthy options in Westwood. It's like the city doesn't want us here. So I segregate myself in Westwood. I know this segregation is awful, but it's much better than the alternative.

People don't believe me when they hear me say that. They think that it can't be true, that racism like that doesn't exist in Dayton, doesn't exist anymore. But I was just called a nigger by a Trump voter in a line of nice people at a Kroger in the Dayton suburbs. He called me a nigger and said I was probably paying with food stamps and he had cash money. **I LET HIM AHEAD OF ME IN THE GROCERY LINE. I DIDN'T ARGUE WITH HIM BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE YOU CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT.** There were dozens of people around, though. Dozens of nice, suburban whites. After the man left, someone apologized



to me for the man's behavior. Why didn't you say anything to quiet him? I asked. She didn't have an answer.

How did I know he was a Trump voter? Because he was wearing a Trump shirt and the red hat. And I'm a black conservative! I'd been working for the county Grand Old Party for decades until they nominated this president. Then I told the party, I can't vote for him. He doesn't want us here. If you nominate him, if you endorse him, you will be sending the message that you don't want us here. They voted for him. I guess they didn't really want us here—even the few of us who would vote for their candidates—either.

That message has already been delivered by Dayton many times. **I DRIVE THROUGH THE WHITE NEIGHBORHOODS AND SEE SCHOOLS, SHOPS, CHURCHES, PLACES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO GATHER, SAFE PLACES PEOPLE CAN MEET IN.** You won't see any of that in Westwood, though.

What do we have? Liquor stores. Fast fried food. Which means we also have obesity, hypertension, and heart disease.

Great.

They're putting a dialysis center in Westwood.

Great.

So we'll have a dialysis center for our fast food, but no public meeting places. We've got no

good-paying jobs. **THE GROCERY STORE IS GONE. THE BUSINESSES PULLED OUT. GM MOVED OUT, TOOK THE JOBS, AND LEFT THE BLIGHTED FACTORY.** Now we've got no jobs, blight, and what else? Teen pregnancy, drug abuse, poor schools.

THAT'S WHAT WESTWOOD IS KNOWN FOR. WESTWOOD: THE TEEN PREGNANCY CAPITAL OF THE COUNTY.

Great.

How can you compare this to somewhere else, a different neighborhood in the city and not think that the city doesn't want us here? They don't.

The city needs to do something to show us that we matter. We live here. We were here before those other neighborhoods. We stayed here when things were hard and now they're harder and we're still here and the city is doing nothing for us. That's why I can't leave Westwood. Too many people already have. The city wishes I would. The city wishes we'd all move out to Englewood or Trotwood. It wants to act like we're not here, to spend money elsewhere, but that's our money, too and we deserve the things that the other neighborhoods get. I'm going to be in Westwood, making sure that they know we're here, until they stop acting like they don't want us here, because if I don't who will?



WOLF CREEK PROFILE:

683 POPULATION

421 HOUSING UNITS

125 VACANCIES

RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

26 White

624 Black

1 American Indian or Alaska Native

3 Asian

0 Pacific Islanders

12 Some Other Race

20 Hispanic (of any race)

17 Identifies with 2 or more

\$13,400 MEDIAN INCOME

2010





Paying it Forward: Dion's Story

STORYTELLER: Dion Sampson

WOLF CREEK

I have lived in Dayton my whole life. I love my community so much that sometimes the issues we have to deal with make me want to leave. Then my wife reminds me that no matter where I go, I'll find some issue that I'd want to fix, so I stay. I have lived in Dayton long enough to realize that while the communities vary, the people don't. Everybody has needs, gifts, talents, goals, dreams, and experiences—this connects us. Although we are interconnected, we are still unique. We cannot forget that! The fact that I have my own set of unique fingerprints and you have yours is an indication to me that we are both unique.

**MY EXPERIENCES, MY CHILDHOOD, AND MY LIFE
WERE GIVEN TO ME AS A GIFT FROM GOD, THEY'RE**



MY “FINGERPRINT.” THEY’RE A REMINDER THAT I HAVE SOMETHING UNIQUE TO GIVE TO MY COMMUNITY THAT ONLY I CAN GIVE. Yeah, I had problems, I had pain. But man, who doesn’t? Life is rough, I agree, but that is not an excuse to just lay down and die. Our pain connects us to each other, it makes us human. If we let our pride build walls to people who see the Light that is within us, we will never grow from that pain. I would’ve been in jail or dead if I didn’t grow out of mine.

Yeah, I didn’t formally meet my dad till I was in my 30s. I got married at 35.

Yeah, I lived in a single parent house with my mama and had two different step fathers.

Yeah, I didn’t know what it was like to share a meal at the table with my family.

Yeah, I never had any man verbally call me “son” until I was on my way to college.

But it only took one!

It took one person to open my eyes and realize that it’s not all darkness and pain that surrounds me. That man was Lloyd Martin, my band director at Dunbar High School. He saw my 1.6 GPA and told me I was going to college. I thought he was crazy. I said, “You seen my report card?” He told me, “This report card is not an indication of who you are.” That was all it took. It changed my life.

I went to college from there, Central State University. I had another band director, Dr. James Oliver, who kept me driven to succeed. I was able to travel internationally to places I would have never thought I'd see. It was transformative. It was my senior year when I decided to drop out. **THERE WAS A LOT OF VIOLENCE IN DAYTON AT THE TIME, AND I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. I CREATED "BROTHERS ON THE MOVE" IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET SOME YOUTH OFF THE STREET.** The first year I was paired with 25 young men who were failing school, in one year, we were able to help them get to B's and C's. After the first year, we moved into four schools, doing the same thing. I discovered my passion was connecting with youth and adults. I ended up in education and have been there for over 20 years.

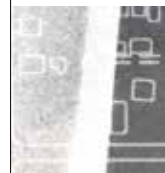
Since then I have become many things: a husband, a dad, an educator, a youth and college pastor, an elder of a church. **HOWEVER, MY PHILOSOPHY HAS REMAINED THE SAME: MEET OTHERS WHERE THEY ARE AND GIVE THEM THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO EMBRACE THEIR PAIN AND DO BETTER FOR THEMSELVES.** I look toward Jesus for support. He was a master at it. He met the need. People were hungry and he fed them, people were sick and he healed them.

The day I learned Mr. Martin died—I was devastated. I decided that living is my way of paying forward what Mr. Martin had done for me.

I SERVE MY COMMUNITY BECAUSE I AM CONSTANTLY REMINDED OF HOW MUCH GOOD MY COMMUNITY HAS DONE FOR ME.

So overall, life is a blessing.

THANKS, MR. MARTIN, YOU'RE A GREAT GUY.



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