JOURNEYS INTO SELF & OTHERS:

VOICES FROM NORTH NORTHEAST PORTLAND

A VISUAL DOCUMENTARY

By

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A THESIS

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Title: JOURNEYS INTO SELF & OTHERS:

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Approved:

Prof. Julianne Newton

North Northeast Portland, Oregon is a predominantly African American community that has a long history of racial strife, as well as economic and social turmoil. Gentrification has caused many urban renewal projects to change the face of the community, both physically and psychologically. This process of change has been inflicted upon the community members. This thesis begins to present the voices and feelings of North Northeast Portland residents by exploring the history of the neighborhood and introducing readers to two residents of the area who have given their lives to helping North Northeast Portland and it's people thrive.

Accompanying this documentary is an investigation of the theoretical methods of ethnography and photojournalism employed for this study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude toward a few extremely instrumental people. First and foremost, I would like to thank the most influential professor and my mentor-Professor Julianne Newton. Julie has given much more than just a year-plus of her time (although that would be enough in and of itself). Julie has been an eternal source of strength, inspiration and encouragement. Without her, I am not sure if this project would have materialized. To her I owe much more than I can express.

To my family, Mom (Charlotte Dixon), Dad (Steve Dixon), and brother (Lewis Dixon), I would like to extend my love and appreciation for their never-ending love and strength. I feel blessed to have such an amazing family.

And last but surely not least, I would like to give thanks to Richard Brown and Sue Carey, two amazing people who have opened new doors and enlightened me in ways they are not aware of. Without them this documentary would not have happened.

PREFACE

While this documentary is indeed a thesis for the Honors College at the University of Oregon, it is first and foremost a journalistic work. Understanding this is paramount in appreciating this documentary, for I have completed a study that transcends the traditional confines of academia. My intention was to write a documentary that the members of the community I worked with--everyday people--could understand.

Introduction

A class or kind of people unified by community of interests, habits, or characteristics. A division of mankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterize it as a distinct human type. Inherited temperament or disposition. The *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed., 1997)[1] defines these social and personal attributes as *race.*

Race is, of course, more than textbook definitions. Race has the power to inspire and unify-and to separate and destroy humans in extraordinary and horrific ways.

The tension between blacks and whites in America is rooted in historical atrocities that some would argue have kept the black race mired in second-class citizenry. With recent race riots in Cincinnati and the racially charged verdicts of the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson trials, now, more than ever, there is a serious need for white America to unite with, understand and work for peace with black America. Cornell West explains the urgency of this task in his book *Race Matters* (2nd ed., 2001),

> To establish a new framework, we need to begin with a frank acknowledgment of the basic humanness and Americanness of each of us. And we must acknowledge that as a people-E Pluribus Unum-we are on a slippery slope toward economic strife, social turmoil, and cultural chaos. If we go down, we go down together. (p.28)

Every American citizen needs to start paying attention to the "others"-the people we judge against ourselves-in our society. Only then will we be able to unite effectively and avoid the cultural chaos West predicts.

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[1] I purposefully began my study with common dictionary definitions in order to frame the project within everyday language, rather than a scholarly tradition. My advisor and I discussed the importance of entering the project with as open a mind as possible, given the inevitable influences of growing up white. As I moved deeper into the ethnography, I studied critical race theory, social construction of reality theory, and reflexivity theory as a means for deepening my understanding and clarifying interpretations.

The city of Portland, Oregon, is inextricably entangled with this racial strife. Portland has a long history of racism and discrimination. Following the abolition of slavery in 1865, thousands of African Americans moved west in hopes of securing well-playing jobs and lives that were more stable. However, those who reached Portland were forced to live in dilapidated, industrialized areas-much like other cities of the North[2]- because of economic and social pressures. According to *The History o/Portland's African American Community (1805 to the Present)* (1993), during World War II the black population in Portland grew tenfold from 2,000 to 20,000 between 1940 and 1950 due to the availability of work in the wartime shipyards. According to the 1940 Census of Population, the total population of Portland was 305,394 people. African Americans made up 1,931 of that, or .63%. In 1950 the total population of Portland was 373,628- the black population making up 4,798, or 1.2%. This compares with the 2000 Census, which concluded that African Americans made up 37,434 people of the total population, or 5.7%.

These differences are a good example of the discrepancy between a community's understanding of itself and official external records of communities.

Racism was so institutionalized during this time that the effort at segregating this segment of the population into one area of town succeeded. This area is North Northeast Portland.

According to the Bureau of Planning's history of the area,

> The only housing, outside the Federal housing projects, open to blacks was located in a segregated and concentrated area…Real estate agents were bound by a code of ethics established by [the] Realty Board in 1919 that made them subject to dismissal if they sold outside the prescribed area…No mortgage

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2 As explained in Stephen Steinberg's book, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in American,* (2001), p. 176.

> firms were found to be interested in soliciting or financing loans to Negroes for buildings…this encouraged the growth of substandard housing in that area. (p. 75)

Though the residents of this neighborhood were never given the chance or resources to recuperate fully from the hardships and travails of their past and were often met head on with resistance, the bulk of the African American community of Portland still resides in this area. According to Richard Brown[3], chairman of the Albina Head Start, a program devoted to helping low-income children and their families, the area has often been given up for lost due to the reality of drugs, gangs and a low socio-economic profile.

Slowly over the years, however, the people of North Northeast Portland have nurtured a strength and resolve within their community. The vibrancy and cultural richness, as well as a keen memory of the hardships of the past, has created a "soulful" center of Portland. While the process of urban renewal has been occurring in North Northeast Portland for decades, the neighborhood has experienced unparalleled change and growth over approximately the last decade. Citizens of Portland who historically have not shown interest in the area have taken an increased interest in the North Northeast neighborhood due to the cheap housing, diversity and bohemian atmosphere of the area. It is the current "urban-chic" place to live. Because of this, *gentrification* is rampant. According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* (lOth ed., 1997), *gentrification* is "the process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces earlier usually poorer residents.

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3 Brown, personal interview, summer 2001.

The two people who I worked with on this documentary, Richard and Sue Carey, believe that these changes in North Northeast Portland will irrevocably damage the area physically, socially and economically, which will then, in turn, forever disintegrate the resolve and strength of Portland's African American community. This process of gentrification overlaps the concept of colonization. However, this overlapping of processes is beyond the scope of this thesis.

This is the state of relations in Portland between blacks and whites, as best I can see. However, in order to find the *best truth* of the situation in North Northeast Portland, two questions need to be explored.

Definitions

Before we begin our exploration of the issues at the heart of my project, some key terms and ideas need to be identified and defined. As noted earlier, I began with dictionary definitions in order to frame the project within everyday language, an important issue in participant observation work. Although race has already been defmed and applied to this project, I will outline once more the basic points to keep in mind while reviewing this documentary.

Race is "a class or kind of people unified by community of interests, habits, or characteristics," among other definitions (Webster's, 1997). However, most people can attest to race meaning more than the color of one's skin or the culture one shares with another. In reading this documentary it is important to realize that the way we understand and deal with race as a society, despite its hereditary nature, is largely socially

constructed[4]. West explains the advent of "whiteness" in America, "Without the presence of black people in America, European-Americans would not be "white"-they would be only Irish, Italians, Poles, Welsh, and others engaged in class, ethnic, and gender struggles over resources and identity5." This socially constructed concept is one of the largest creators of difference in our world.

In this documentary I searched for the "best truth" of the situation. Before we define this though, we need to discuss *truth. Truth* is "the body of real things, events, and facts…a judgment, proposition, *or idea that is true or accepted as true* [emphasis mine]," (Webster'S, 1997). Each individual creates his or her own truth out of his or her own perceived reality. In my pursuit of the truth of race relations in Portland, I have combined my truth--what I believe to be true-with the truths of my interviewees-the truths they believe to be true. Together these truths create the *best truth,* the closest understanding we can reach because it incorporates what I perceive what they have shown and told me.

This leads us to understanding who the "I" represents and who the "interviewees" are in this documentary. The "I" is the photographer; in this case a white, 22-year-old woman. A photographer is "one who practices the art or process of producing images on a sensitized surface by the action of radiant energy and light," (Webster's, 1997). In this case, the light I am capturing and turning into an image via my camera will work to create a story I hope will help people understand a community.

An "interviewee," sometimes referred to as a *subject,* is defined as "one who is interviewed-a meeting at which information is obtained from a person," (Webster'S,

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4 An idea presented by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in their book, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction,* p. 7.

1997). Once again, in this case an interviewee gives infonnation so essential that the documentary would not exist without it.

As mentioned before, understanding the concept of gentrification is important to understanding the issues behind black/white relations in Portland. Once again, *gentrification* is the process of white, middle-class people moving into poorer areas and displacing the original inhabitants (Webster's, 1997).

Because this project has a strong introspective aspect, the method of *reflexivity* needs to be defined. Reflexive is "of, relating to, characterized by, or being a relation that exists between an entity and itself," (Webster's, 1997). In this documentary I am the entity who has a relationship with herself Reflexivity has involved recognizing, understanding and applying my already-detennined and evolving thoughts and feelings about various topics, such as race, to my project.

Another tenn that needs clarification is *territorial imperative.* Described loosely by James P. Spradley and Brenda J. Mann (1975) as "the territorial dimension of existence"-that is as humans we connect meaning to the spaces and places in which we live, and conversely these places give meaning to us. This has obvious implications for my documentary in that both blacks and whites in Portland have attached feelings to the environments in which they live and also to the places they do not inhabit.

On a related topic, it must be noted that the tenns "area," "neighborhood" and "community" have been used interchangeably and refer to the quadrant of North Northeast Portland. Also, Portlanders often refer to North Northeast Portland as simply "Northeast," with no article in front, as it may be referred to as well as in this documentary.

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5 P.107, West, Cornel. *Race Matters,* Beacon Press, 2001.

Background

Returning to the first of the two questions that need to be addressed, *how do the African American people of North Northeast Portland feel about the history and the changes taking place in their community?* Have Portland citizens living outside of North Northeast Portland paid attention to the answer to this question-and essentially to the voice of Portland's African Americans? I think the resounding answer would be "no." Moreover, the vast majority would not comprehend the importance of the question. This suggests that the underlying issues behind this question are complex and involve ignorance, marginalization and complacency on the part of many Portland citizens.

If the citizens are to unite and work together for a better future, the first step is understanding the importance of how black people of North Northeast Portland feel about their changing community and its history.

The state of black/white relations in Portland hinges on how people in and out of North Northeast Portland relate to each other. History proves that white people have been given a voice. For example, there is a long history of local government-sanctioned urban renewal projects, large and small, that have been implemented without consulting the citizens of the North Northeast for their opinions[6], as will be seen in my body of work[7]. No one else can provide the expert advice and the true reality of their community but them. In this documentary I seek to listen to and understand the voices of North Northeast Portland and help others listen and understand as well.

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6 A historical fact presented by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Portland State University, in their study, *History of the Albina Plan Area,* (1990).

7 See photographs seven and eight, nine and ten, and eleven and twelve of the photo essay series. Photos eight, ten and twelve courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

The second question underlying this study is just as necessary as the first. To find the best truth of the situation, I need to understand my own limitations and feelings that will affect the end result. I need to ask myself: *How do I feel about black people in my community?* This question needs to resound continually in my head because its answer will constantly affect my work

My concepts of race are best looked at through the relationship of "others" and "self." As do most people, I define members of society according to how I define myself. This is detrimental because the "other" people exist solely in relationship to me and in how they differ from me. Of course the society in which I grew up has a great deal to do with the way I define others.

I have lived in the greater Northeast Portland (see map on next page)[8], my entire life. My parents raised me with a liberal and open-minded approach to life and other people. While I attended elementary and middle school, approximately 25 percent of my classmates were Asian American, and when I reached high school, approximately 40 percent were African American. Perhaps because of my upbringing and exposure to diversity, I felt completely free of any racial prejudice. In fact, I looked down at people, and still do, for making derogatory comments about minorities (which is, in and of itself, a form of covert prejudice). I saw myself as a model citizen who embodied the ideas of tolerance and "loving all."

Only within the last few years have I realized that I carry prejudice within me, whether I like it or not. Because of the society in which I grew up, regardless of what my parents taught me, I have learned to think certain things about certain races. For instance,

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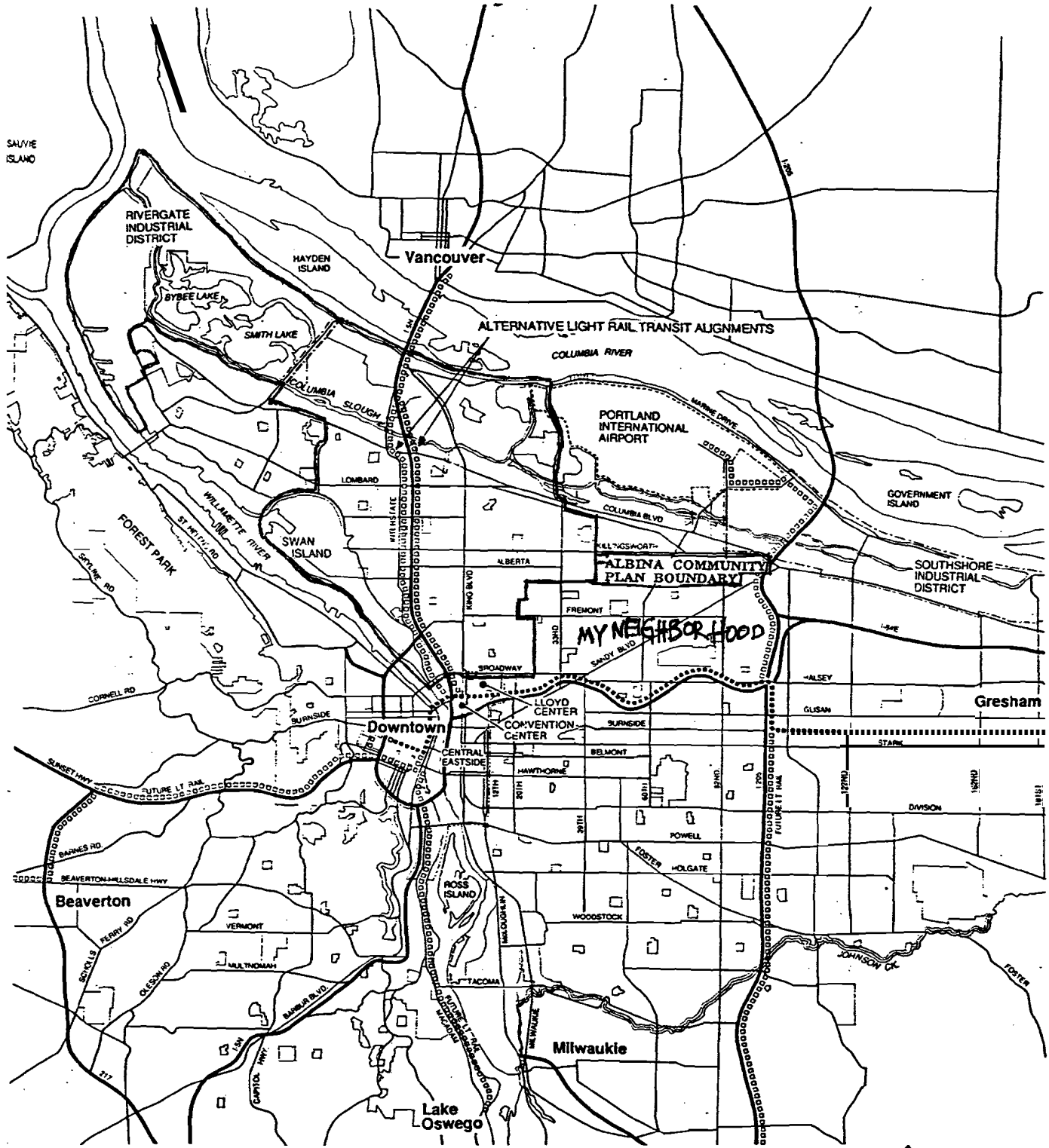
[8] Bureau of Planing, City of Portland. *Adopted Albina Commnity Plan,* 1993.



Albina Community Plan Area Vicinity Map

I know that when I am walking down the street by myself and I see an African American man walking behind me, my pace quickens without any conscious control.

I decided to do my thesis on the black community of North Northeast Portland because this prejudice that still resides in me scares me. It frightens me that a well-educated, open-minded woman of twenty-two allows societal prejudices to permeate her mind. I decided to do this project in order to meet head on the fears that reside within me.

It is important for me to understand and the feelings that create the filters of my mind and heart that affect my project-rather than try to separate myself from it. Today, documentarians and photojournalists are beginning to realize their unwitting and involuntary role in their work. It was my hope that by creating a photo/visual documentary, I would fmd at least some of the answers.

Method

This project has been and continues to be a process of building a bridge between two essential questions: How do black community members feel about me as "the other," and how do I as "the other" feel about them? This process[9] has included many key moments that, in turn, have brought about other important incidents. Together the occurrences set in motion a chain of events that has led to the following *best truth* photojournalism story. In order to understand how I created my body of work, each enlightening step needs to be looked at further. While some may appear to be particularly

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9 This process is infonned by John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier in their book, *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (1986), in which they state, "Photographs can be communication bridges between strangers that can become pathways into unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects." (p. 99)

essential, it is important to understand that those steps might not have happened without the seemingly expendable events that occurred before.

This chain of events can also be seen as a process of interrelated realizations. The first of these epiphanies occurred in the spring of 2001 and was provoked by a lack of knowledge. As mentioned before, my family has lived in Northeast Portland my entire life. My neighborhood is in the southern part of the North Northeast neighborhood-a ten-minute drive from the heart of the African American community. And yet I knew nothing of the history of the area, and little about present-day conditions. I had no knowledge about the people of that community. Sadly, the only thing I knew about North Northeast Portland was that it had a large African American population and because of this I deduced that the community would be culturally diverse. And so I set out to learn more about this area.

When I began this project I had no close relationships with any African Americans who lived in the target area of North Northeast Portland. However, only weeks after choosing my topic, I received a break. I was sitting in Reporting I at the University of Oregon's journalism school when Mike Theole, editor and publisher of *The Tri-County News* in Junction City, a sleepy town 15 minutes from Eugene, walked in armed with advice for future journalists. After Mike's presentation on newspaper journalism, I decided to ask for specific advice on writing stories for my project. Upon explaining my intentions, Mike agreed to meet and provide further advice for me. His visit would be the first step in the chain of events that would guide me along my journey.

A week later I found myself sitting in the small office of *The Tri-County News* with Mike possible resources and avenues to explore. Near the end of our

conversation, Mike told me that he had an adopted, African American daughter living in Northeast Portland. Mike made a phone call to his daughter's grandmother, who also lived in North Northeast Portland and could provide more infonnation for my project, to ask her to work with me. Only after months had passed did I realize Mike had waited to find out whether I was well intentioned in my endeavors before allowing me a direct connection to his family. By the end of our meeting, Mike had imparted to me advice, possible sources to investigate and a vast amount of encouragement. I had passed the first test quite serendipitously.

That summer I packed up my things and moved home from Eugene, ready to explore a side of my city that many have forgotten. I had an appointment with Sue Carey, the grandmother Mike had contacted for within the first week. Loaded with a tape recorder, pens, paper, my camera, film, and extra tapes and batteries, I made my way down Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard (previously Union Avenue) toward Sue's house and into the heart of the African American community of Portland. I was scared. In my mind I saw a naive white woman, unaccustomed to her surroundings, wandering into the "black" part of town.

As I neared Sue's house, I felt like person on the street was staring at me. I rang the doorbell of her condo and waited, my heart thumping in my ears. Greeted by a grinning boy who I guessed to be seven-years-old, I was led upstairs to Sue's living room. Within minutes of settling into the interview, Sue's friendly demeanor melted my fears and insecurities.

Three hours, two full audiotapes and pages upon pages of notes later, I left Sue's home and headed for mine. I had decided it would be premature to take photographs on

the first visit, and yet I left feeling that I had already accomplished something. I had broken another self-imposed barrier and was ready for another.

Sue had written a list of highly influential people in North Northeast Portland for me. I called each one and the first to respond was a photographer named Richard Brown. While my initial meeting had introduced me to a motherly figure who made sure I was comfortable, my next introduced me to a warm, generous man who cared little about my race or background, and proceeded to tell me exactly what he thought. While Sue and I met in her home, Richard and I met at the neighborhood coffee shop, Reflections. A hub of social interaction in the community, meeting here with Richard would prove to be invaluable in discovering more about his personality and public persona and role.

This time, as I found myself driving back down MLK Jr., Boulevard, I felt reassured as comers and storefronts started to look familiar. Greeted with a strong handshake, a boisterous hello and a wide smile, Richard and I settled into my third interview. This time the race difference between us didn't fade away quite as easily as with Sue. Due to my own insecurities and the very public location of our meeting, I could not help but wonder what others were thinking of Richard, an older black man, sitting down and having coffee with me, a younger white woman. This is a direct reflection of how I see myself in relation to people of other races and the different-ness that I unknowingly create between us. Also, for the first time I felt like the minority in a situation. I was one of the few white people in the shop and Richard spoke bluntly and point blank about black/white relations. I had never been so aware of my race.

These first two interviews immediately put personal faces to the community. Conquering these initial fears allowed me to move further out of my comfort zone. I

decided that an infonnal tour of the area would be a good next step. The emotions I was to experience on this trip could not have been predicted.

I asked my younger, but much larger, brother to accompany me on my initial exploration of North Northeast Portland because he made me feel safer in this unknown part of town. I felt that if I had a man with me, I would not be approached or questioned. Setting out on this excursion I felt confident. I had taken two college-level courses in photojournalism, as well as two years of basic photography in high school. Taking pictures of this neighborhood that I now knew more about would be easy.

However, driving and occasionally walking down the streets, I felt like an alien. The old paranoia that everyone thought I "did not belong here" crept up inside. I felt scared and inadequate. As I pulled out my camera to shoot I thought would accurately portray the physicality of the community, I could not help but think that I was a fool to imagine I could do this project. How could I even think that I could accurately portray a whole community of which I am not a member?

Theory

These feelings led me directly to my next realization. I needed to look into different methods of ethnography and photojournalism in order to be more aware of and to combat the problems that arise when trying to understand and correctly portray a community new to me. In his book, *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), James P. Spradley defines ethnography as the study of culture. Contemporary theory and method in ethnographic studies emphasizes reflexivity, or focusing on the personal filters through

which one views others[10]. The most important and key method I learned about and applied to my work took the form of a question that continually ran through my head: How do I feel as a person and as the photographer and how will this affect my photographs?

This important question can be looked at as a method of reflexivity. The main idea behind this technique is to remain conscious and aware of oneself at all times. This includes the feelings and emotions that are filling your heart and mind at every point of the process - taking photographs, listening to stories and interviewing people. And when the research is complete, one must reflect upon the body of work produced. By doing this, many of the filters of one's mind and heart will be recognized. I have kept a personal journal of my thoughts and feelings concerning the process of my documentary and used it as a basis for evaluating my visual and verbal data.

Besides this basic ethnographic method of reflexivity, I have also developed a solid, basic understanding of the fundamentals of photographic ethics, which I have applied in conducting my documentary as well as in critically analyzing my work. For example, an integral aspect of photojournalism is being aware of how the project is affecting the photojournalist, as well as the interviewee, and how she or he will be changed forever by it. Good photojournalism and photo documentary are conducted with careful consideration of how both photographer and interviewee affect resulting photographs.

The theoretical approach of ethnography has also informed my work. In their book, *The Cocktail Waitress* (1975), James P. Spradley and Brenda J. Mann discuss three

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10 Ruby, Jay. *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, 1982.

general principles of ethnography, which they define as the study of culture. The first principle is that every human group creates its own reality, a shared culture. Second, everyone takes his or her own culture for granted. And finally, there is frequently more than one cultural perspective for any social situation. These three concepts outline the basic structure of what ethnographers consider essential to their work, and have been key in my application of photography as a research method.

Spradley and Mann also posit that once ethnographers, or in my case *visual* ethnographers, have immersed themselves in the culture they are studying, they begin to "know more than [they] can tell" because they have been inundated with information. I experienced this in my work on my photo essay, and have had to combat this overwhelming state by writing down as many details as possible of every experience I have had. This has insured some sort of structure, organization and thoroughness throughout my process.

The last key element that Spradley and Mann explore, and perhaps the most important in understanding my specific project, is the territorial imperative.

> Humankind cannot escape the territorial dimension of existence The ebb and flow of social life in every society occurs in the context of place And always we live under the territorial imperative: to give meaning to space, to defme the places of our lives, large and small, in cultural terms. (Spradley and Mann, p. 101)

This basic tenet of ethnography directly relates to the topic of my documentary, for place and the meaning one attaches to it are the basis of my project. The African American community historically has lived in North Northeast Portland due to many factors that have been explored in my documentary. The culture of this place is unique and has been created by the citizens who live there. Like any other community, this place has much

meaning attached to it. By completing this journey through issues of race and place, I have been forced to re-evaluate my own meanings of community, self and others.

By researching these basics of photojournalism and ethnography, I gained a sturdy base of knowledge and an appropriate outlet to help deal with the emotions of inadequacies and unpreparedness I was feeling about portraying a community new to me.

The next time I met with Richard, I ventured out of my comfort zone and began taking photographs of my interviewee. Being a photographer himself, Richard understood the give and take of subject and photographer, as well as the silent interactions that occur between the two. With the new information tucked inside my brain, I was able to reassure myself continually of my purpose while taking the photos. When I began to feel inadequate, I reminded myself that I was preparing the best truth of the situation-I was not purporting to create anything more. Now I was conscious of the essential factors that create a best truth.

I had finished a successful photo shoot/interview with Richard, and now I was ready for Sue. It was more difficult for me to take photos of Sue because, unlike Richard, she was wary of the camera. The day I arrived to conduct another interview and take pictures, Sue greeted me wearing one of her pretty dresses, hair done and earrings on. I was worried that because I had given her prior notice of my intentions, she would control the truth of the situation. However, then I realized that Sue being dressed up for her photo shoot would end up telling more about her than expected.

Because Sue has two illnesses that affect her mobility, she asked me to zip up her dress for her. At first I was taken aback at such a personal request, but then realized that

Sue truly had let me into her world. This was a gratifying realization that someone could trust me so quickly.

One set back I experienced during this photo shoot with Sue was that the situation was such that the use of a flash was needed but I felt it would be inappropriate. Many members of Sue's family were at her house that day. Since it was my first time photographing her picture, a flash would have caused too much of a commotion and drawn too much attention to me. I was worried this would taint the truth of my photos, due to both Sue and her family being more aware of my presence. Unfortunately, due to the poor lighting, my photographs did not expose correctly and I was left empty handed.

That fall I began the last year of my undergraduate degree and the body of work, my prospectus, that would precede my thesis. As I sat down to attempt to compile all the information I had collected thus far in my journey I recalled the idea of Spradley and Mann's (1975). I had found so much information that I "knew more than I could tell." Furthermore, I had learned so many things that were interrelated that I was going to have to remember to explain in depth each aspect. This brought me to my next realization. In order for my audience to fully understand and appreciate the best truth I was creating, some background and history of North Northeast Portland was needed. Adding the history of the area would provide the basic background that my audience would need to understand the full extent of the neighborhood as well as the experiences of Richard and Sue.

As I began my research about the history of the community, I decided that I would incorporate old photos, old maps and new maps in order to show the effects of urban renewal on the physicality of the neighborhood.

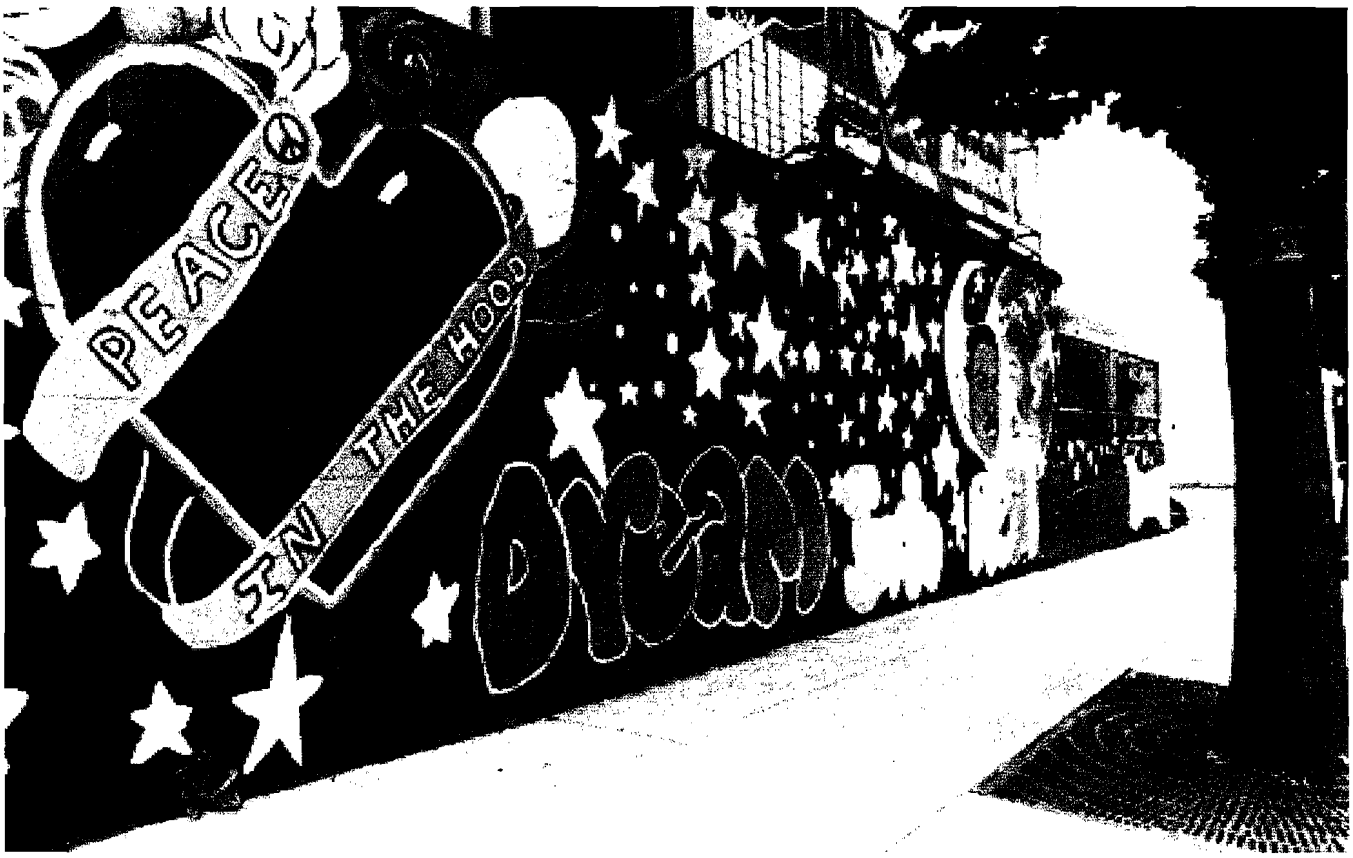
Because of my decision to include a bit of history, the amount of content in my project grew. To compensate for this I decided to concentrate solely on the stories, experiences and voices of Richard and Sue.

Aside from the chain of events that created my thesis, there are a few integral, moving experiences that began to happen slowly over time, without a chronological or explainable order. The first moment was when Sue began to let me into her bedroom, a place she says not many people see. As mentioned before, Sue has two ailments that hinder her mobility, which means she must have a hospital bed in her room to accommodate her. The fact that she allowed me to see her in the heart of her home, at her most vulnerable point, showed me that Sue trusts me. This led me to believe that because she trusted me, she had not been withholding information and had been telling me the complete truth.

While Sue was beginning to truly trust me, Richard was slowly taking me under his wing. At one point, Richard greeted me with a big hug in the middle of Reflections Coffee Shop. I realized Richard wanted to see my project succeed almost as much as I did. From that point on Richard and I always said hello with a hug.

RESULTS

The results of my documentary are presented here in the form of photographs and accompanying text. I present to you a "reasonable truth," or the *"best truth* „11 that **I,** as someone learning about another culture, can communicate to you.



North Northeast Portland is a vibrant area rich in cultural diversity. However, few community members have forgotten the neighborhood's dark history full of prejudice and discrimination.

For the entirety of its history, North Northeast Portland has been an area riddled with turmoil. Originally the city of Albina, named after the wife and daughter of William page, an early mover and shaker in Portland, in the early 19th century, racial tensions have run high since the wartime shipyards brought an influx of minority workers from the south, the majority of whom were black.

Despite its history, there remains a resolve among the people of North Northeast Portland to better their community. This mural is one of many painted by business owners or community groups to cover local buildings and walls with inspirational images celebrating the culture of North Northeast Portland.

Known as Grandma Sue to many, Sue Carey still has a fire and energy to her eyes even though health-related-reasons forced her to retire early from Head Start, a program for inner-city kids. Sue worked for Head Start for many years. In the name of "urban renewal" she has experienced first-hand the results of change in her neighborhood.

"It was such a dramatic change to my world...it was progress, is what we were told. A lot of the time you felt like it was watering us out, moving us out...so we didn't have the strength of a community;' Sue says.

Richard Brown, a photographer and folk artist, knows intimately the issues affecting North Northeast Portland. As a member of the Black United Front, a grass roots organization working to better the lives of African Americans, and as chairman of Head Start, Richard has experienced first-hand the travails of the people of North Northeast Portland, including gang and drug activity, racial tension and poor housing quality.

In recent years, Richard has watched the process of gentrification slowly begin to take hold of the area. "The larger neighborhood has changed considerably. Property values have gone up, white people have moved into the community and with them they brought their standards...a lot of their standards clash with what they perceive to be the standards of the people who live there. That's created a lot of problems;' Richard says.

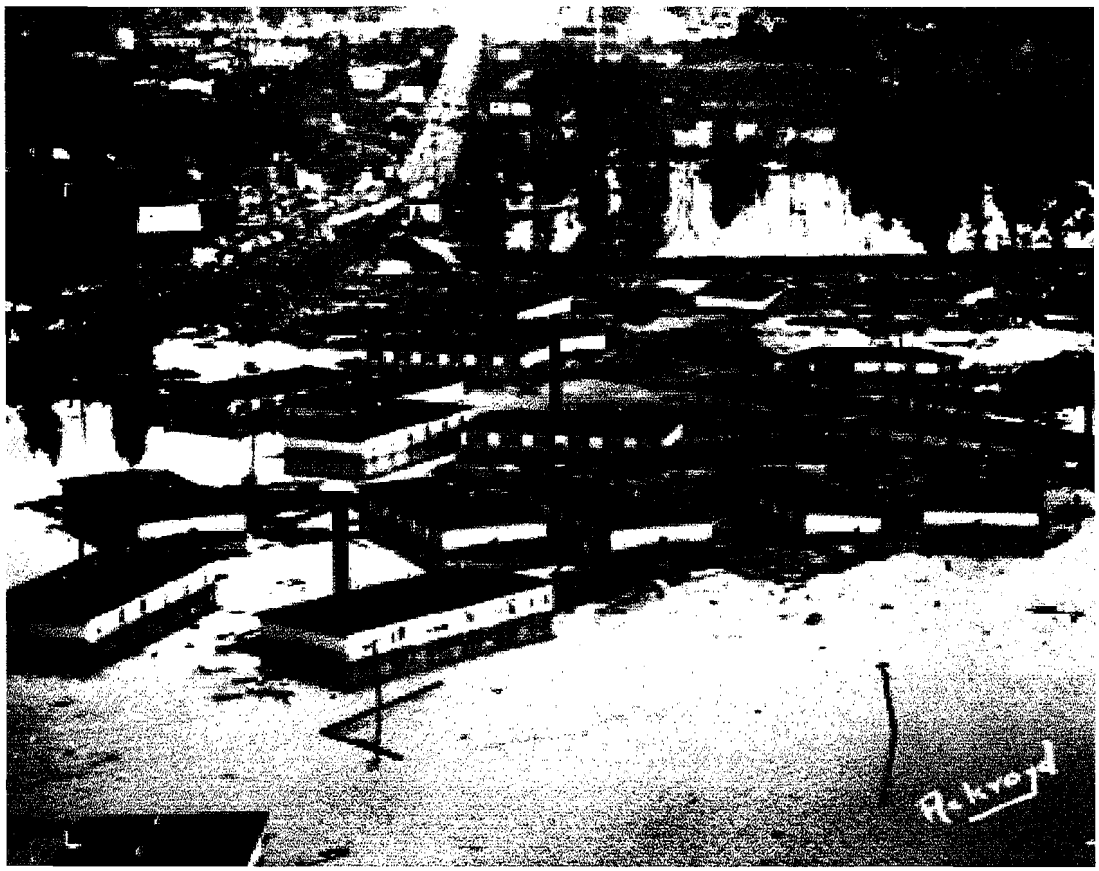
A community group put up this sign to symbolize the entry to North Northeast Portland, "The Soul of Portland:' Located on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in a commercial district, Richard argues that the sign is too far from the community's center.

According to Richard, many people in the community didn't agree with the placement of the sign welcoming people to "The Soul of Portland" because it didn't accurately depict the beginning of the true community. Possibly in response to the placement of the sign, this reader board for a closed market was utilized to signify where some members of the community may believe the true entry to North Northeast Portland lies.

Sue speaks of her life in Portland and the transitions that shaped the future of African Americans in the city. Growing up, raising her own children and working in North Northeast Portland, Sue experienced changes in her neighborhood, each in the name of urban revitalization. Each wave of changes brought with it political, economic and social upheaval, disruption and strife for the lives of Portland's African Americans.

During World War II, a man by the name of Henry J. Kaiser opened a large shipyard in Portland. According to *The History* of *Portland's African Americans (1805* - Present), by the Portland Bureau of Planning, the African American population of Portland increased tenfold from 2,000 to 20,000 between 1940 and 1950 due in part to the availablity of shipyard jobs. Due to this mass influx of people to Portland, quick, cheap housing was needed. Vanport City was built to suit the shipyard workers. While it has been touted as a kind of diverse utopia with blacks and whites living and working together, anyone who lived there can tell you about the reality of the segregation of the city.

In 1948 a levy broke from the Willamette River and destroyed the entire city. These marshlands, along with soccer fields and baseball diamonds, are all that exist today.



Vanport Flood-1948 (Photo provided by Oregon Historical Society)

According to Sue, this corner of North Williams Avenue and Russell Street was a major hub of social interaction within the community. During the 1960's, the value of land inhabited by Portland's African American community rose.

This land became in demand for industrial uses, and was reclaimed in many different areas of North Northeast Portland for these puposes- often with little consideration for the people who lived there. The "urban renewal" of this corner is an example of this process.

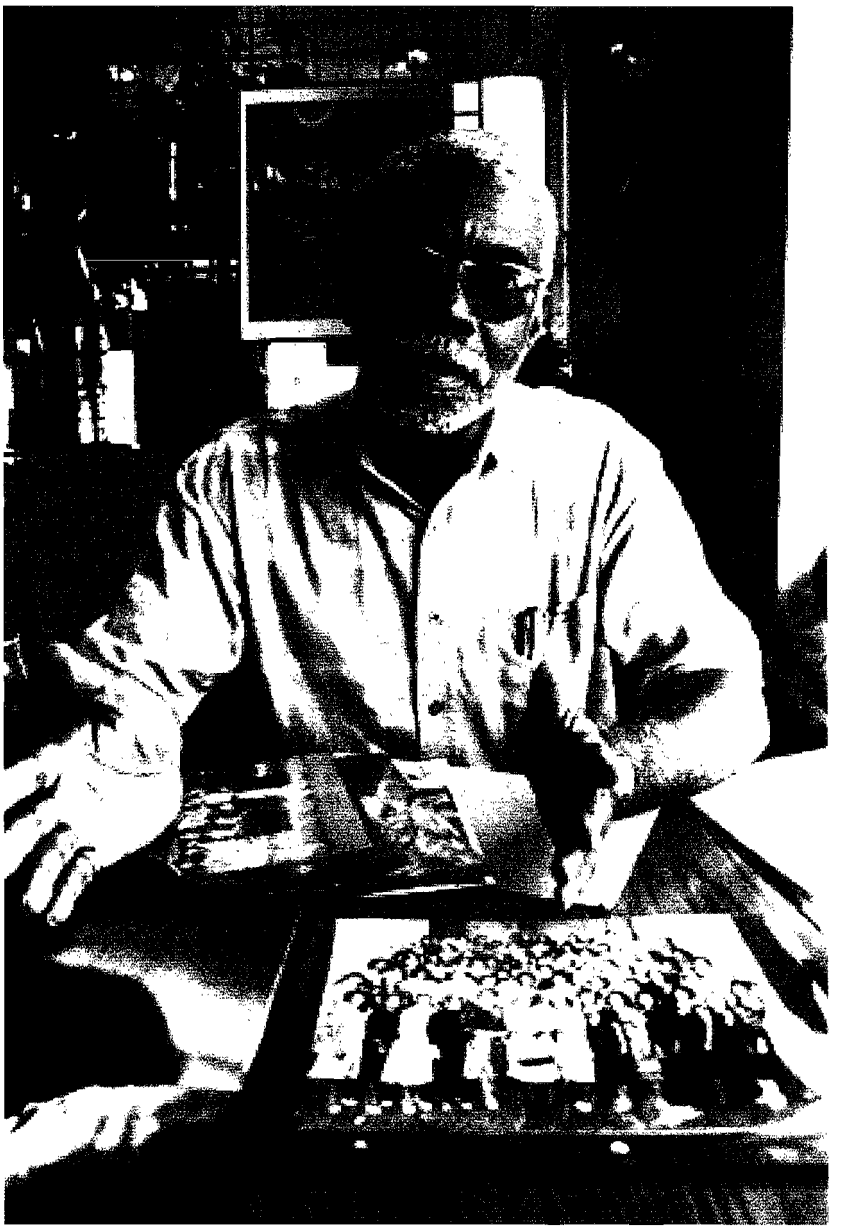
North Williams Avenue and Russell Street-1962
(Photo provided by Oregon Historical Society)

Many black citizens had settled into this area of North Williams Avenue and Russell Street after wartime jobs dried up. Opening "mom & pop" groceries, dry cleaners, shoe repair shops and other local businesses, a strong community center was created.

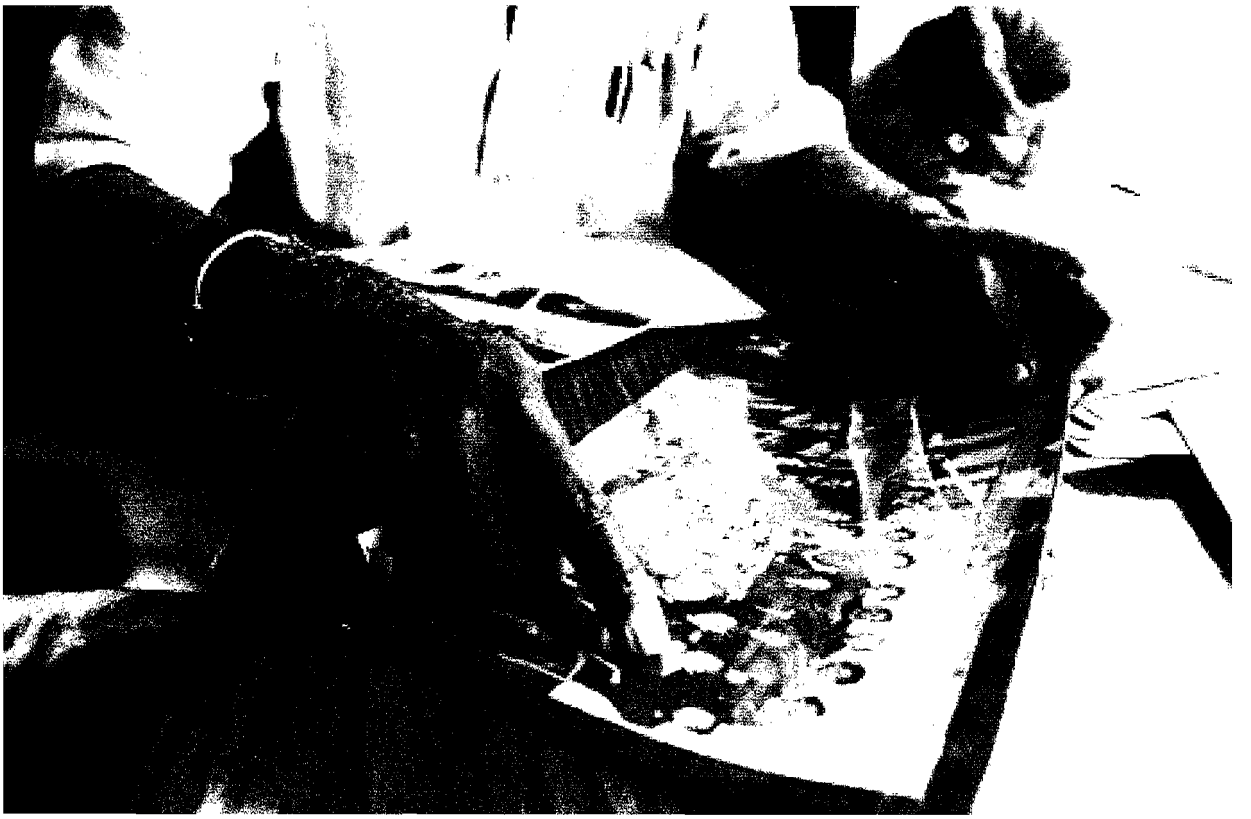
One major upheaval in this area was the expansion of the Emanuel Hospital campus in 1967. Overall, this massive expansion cleared 188 houses to make room.

As can be seen, in the year 2002 there is still land that has not been used by Emanuel.

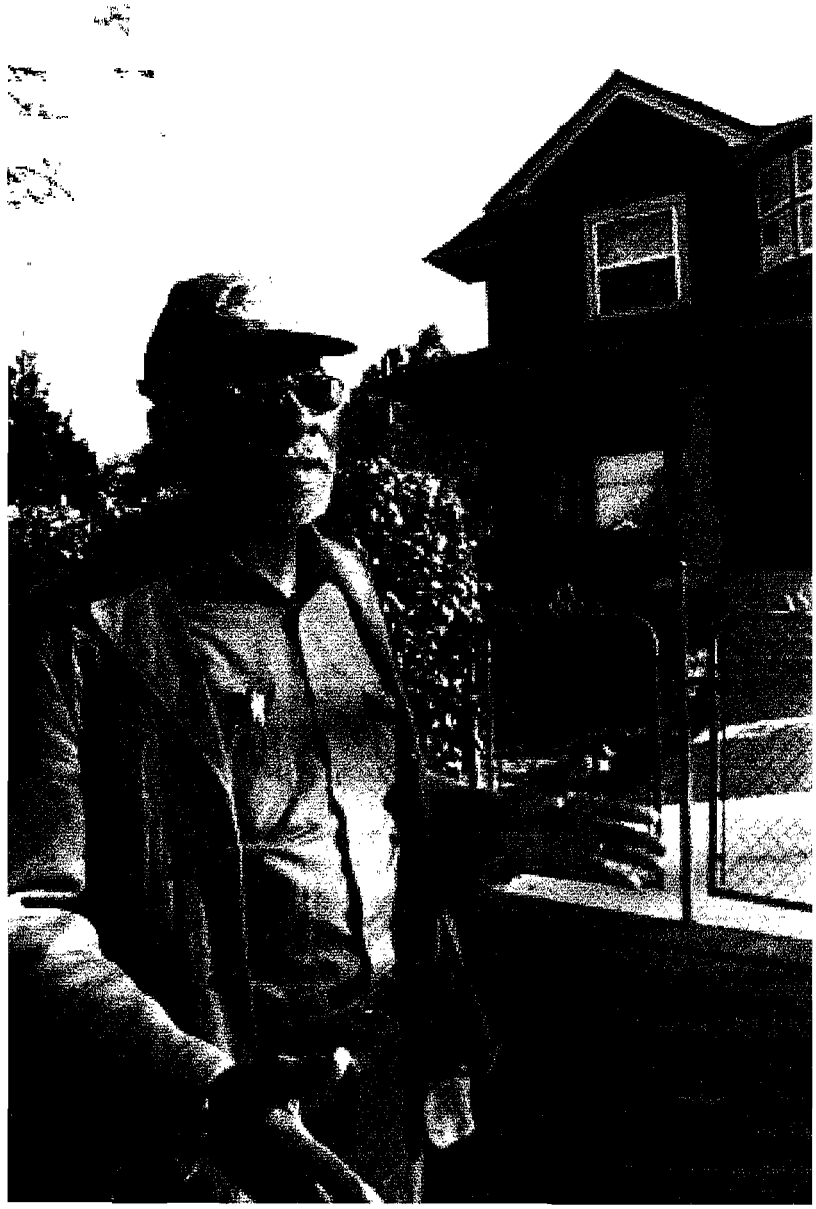
Emanuel Hospital Protest-1973
(Photo provided by Oregon Historical Society)



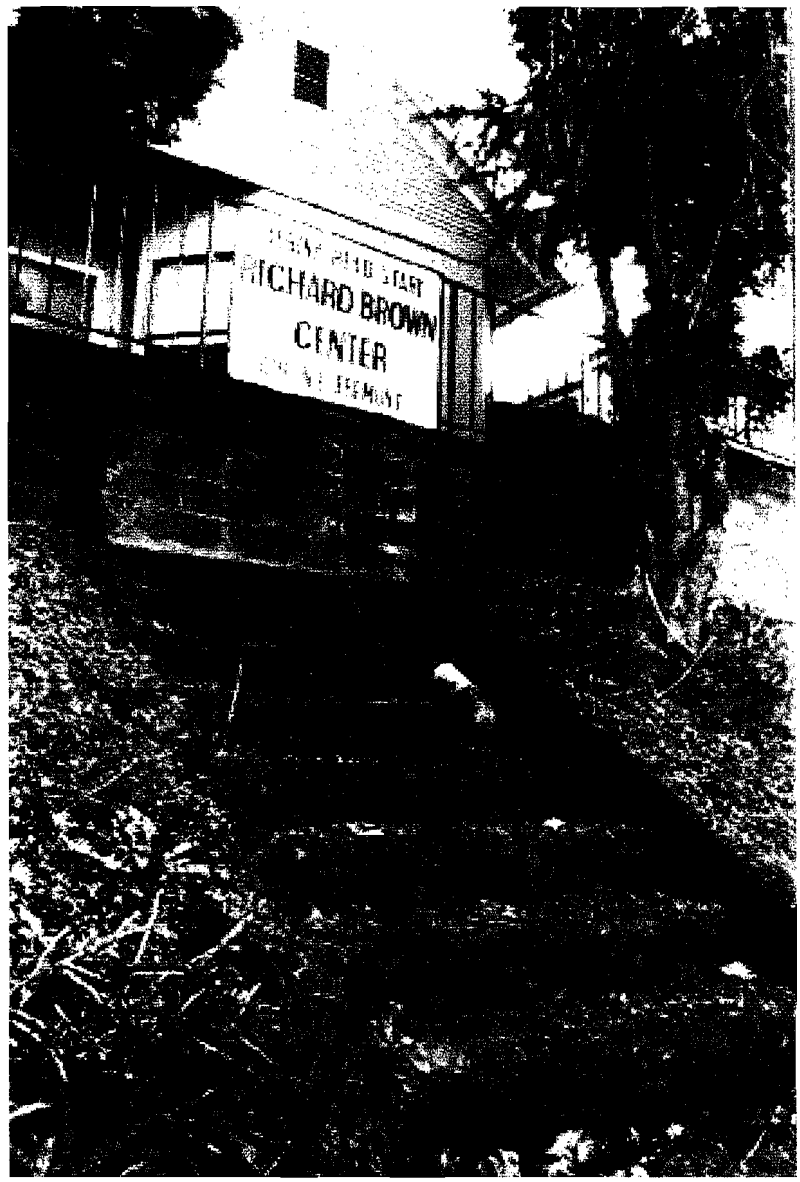
While Richard may not have grown up in or experienced first-hand each transition in Portland, his sense of community involvement runs deep.



Interested in all aspects of North Northeast Portland, Richard collects old photographs of the community. Particularly interested in preserving the heritage of the area, Richard finds photographs of families with long histories in North Northeast Portland at local antique shops and garage sales.



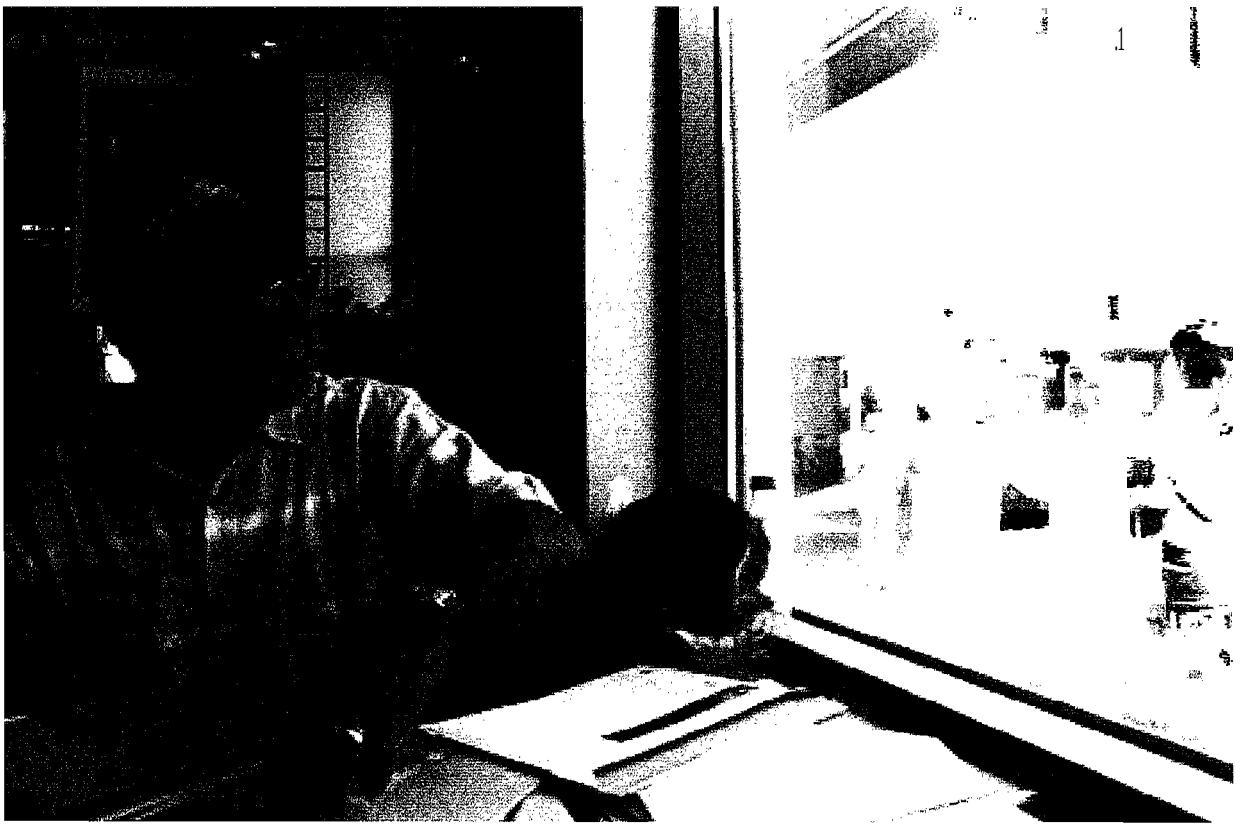
Not only is Richard interested in the past of North Northeast Portland, he has a great deal invested in the future. He spends many hours as a mentor to some of the community's youth.



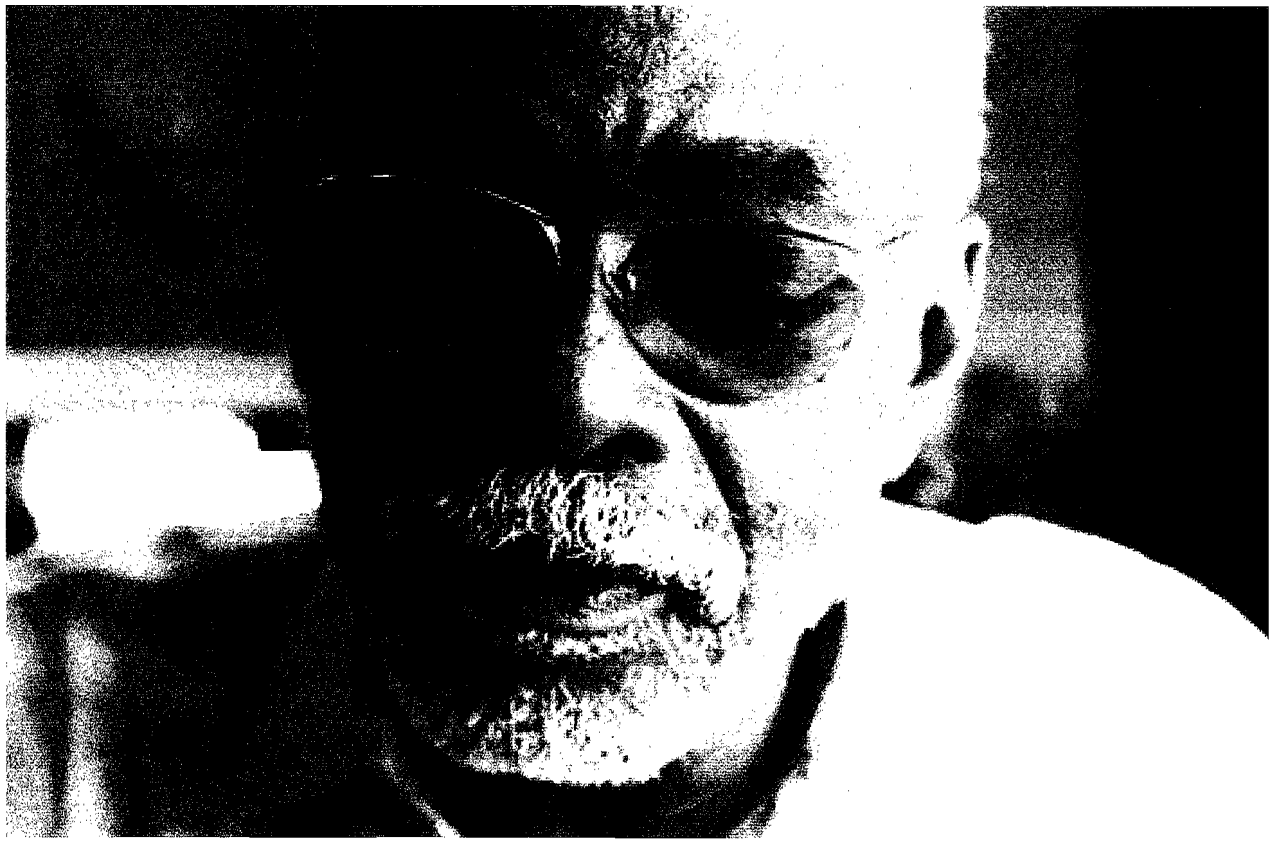
Albina Head Start is funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and provides medical care, dental care, mental health care, nutritional advisement and parent involvement.

The National Urban League's mission statement is, "The Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. The mission of the Urban League movement is to enable African Americans to secure economic self-reliance, parity and power and civil rights." This is their mural of inspiration.

Sue has hope for the future. She wants her children's children to live harmoniously with their neighbors, regardless of their race. Sue believes that North Northeast Portland has great potential to be a model neighborhood in which cultures mesh and appreciate each other. "The community isn't just one race, it's beginning to be an international kind of neighborhood because a lot of young families...black or white or whatever are going where the housing is still affordable, it's still this community. I think that's good because it'll mean people will need to work together to resolve issues so that they can continue in living their lives in an international setting...inclusive and not exclusive. I think that's good; I think that's really good;' Sue says.



Richard believes the children are the future and that education is key in ensuring a bright one. "Those are the things that are important- recognizing those kids that are doing great, or those that are marginal but don't get in trouble;' Richard says.



Richard and Sue hold hope and optimism for the future. They both realize however, that more changes are always on the way for their community. "I think we're going to see many changes over the years;' Sue says. Change as it might, North Northeast Portland and its people will never forget their past trials and triumphants. It is important that the entire city of Portland remembers this part of its history.

Discussion

Thee photographs warrant discussion due to their subject matter and their deeper significance to my documentary. For each photograph, two aspects need to be explored.

in keeping with reflexive ethnographic methodology, I will note my initial thoughts about the scene I was photographing and in which I was participating. Second, I will explore deeper meanings I realized once the photograph was viewed and discussed with other images from my documentary.

The first image to discuss is the fifth in the series. It is a photograph of the King Food Mart with "Northeast-The Soul of Portland" written on its reader board. My initial thoughts of this scene were informed by Richard, who had explained the controversy over an earlier sign, with the same message, placed by a community group farther down MLK Jr. Boulevard.

I was stopped in rush-hour traffic, stuck in a left-tum only lane, when I noticed this sign at the King Food Mart. Knowing I didn't have much time, I rolled down my window and snapped a picture without much thought of composition or to the rest of the scene.

Only months later did the deeper symbolism reveal itself. After completing the initial editing of my images, I knew that picture was essential to my photo essay. However, I felt that a better-composed photo was possible. Once I reached the corner, I realized that the market with the reader board was actually empty. While I worked my way around the perimeter, looking for angles of the reader board, I felt that showing the closed market would produce a more moving photo by creating a conundrum between the

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reality of the situation and the message on the board. I could feel the journalist blood coursing through me. And then it hit me. By making a conscious choice to shoot the market from a different perspective, in order to make its image more poignant, I felt that I would be violating a basic tenant of photojournalism ethics that I follow.

As discussed earlier, good photojournalism and photo documentary are conducted with careful consideration of how both photographer and interviewee affect resulting photographs. By looking for a specific angle to present the environment I found in such a way that a situation might be perceived as more negative than the reality of it, only to make a point, could be seen as distorting the truth.

In the I decided to run my initial photo of the market with its reader board because I felt that it would be closer to a *best truth-absent* of any purposeful commentary on my part. process of understanding how I could affect the end result of my photo essay, for good or bad, with the filters of my mind and heart can also be looked at as the process of *reflexiVity,* previously discussed.

The second image for discussion shows the Richard Brown Center sign and is the 16th in the series. Initially I took this photograph solely to show the importance of Richard in his community. Again, the deeper significance didn't show itself until the editing of my photo essay.

I went searching for this building, thinking that is was significant that one of my interviewees had a building named after him. Once I found the building, only after passing it several times, I realized it was going to be an interesting photo compositionally, since most the of building was hidden from the street by trees. Once again, I found myself walking the perimeter of the scene I wished to record.

Mediating Reality, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. London, 2001.

Knowing I needed to have the sign with Richard's name included, I decided on the shot included in my fmal photo essay. As can be seen, this image includes the sign, some trees and the building-all objects I felt essential to the end product. Without understanding the symbolism hiding in the foreground, I unwittingly included a staircase in my composition.

This staircase proved to be more than just another object found in my image. After taking a closer look at my final chosen images, I realized that the staircase led nowhere. Paired with the Albina Head Start building, this staircase now did more for the image than just sit in the foreground. It now acted as a metaphor, on many different levels, for aspects of North Northeast Portland. A staircase that leads nowhere can be translated to hope that is eventually thwarted-or hope that is unending. staircase, with Albina Head Start in the background, can also be seen as a metaphor for "even when it looks as if you have come to the end, something is there to help."

Once again, as these thoughts were crossing my mind, the journalist within me, always searching for a story, was getting very excited. I decided to run this image because I had taken it without previous knowledge of its hidden metaphor-I didn't go back to the scene in hopes of providing a clearer view of this metaphor.

The third and final image that deserves further discussion is the 17th in the series. In this image we see a mural of a black student in graduation regalia. We can read in the background the words "Our children" and "The Urban League of Portland." In the foreground is a barbed wire fence. While surveying the environment of North Northeast Portland I came upon this mural-yet another of inspiration and celebration. As in most situations, I walked the boundary of this scene and eventually took the photo from a point

where I could view most of the mural. Once again, I didn't realize that an object found in the foreground would prove to be invaluable.

The barbed wire, much like the staircase in the previous image, revealed itself as a metaphor during the editing process. Once placed within the context of my photo essay, the black man, dressed in graduation regalia, can be seen as rising above the travails of his past and obstacles placed before him because of this race. The barbed wire can be looked at as the obstacles that this man has had to rise above.

The discussions of both the second and third photos include an aspect from the method of reflexivity. As previously discussed, employing reflexivity includes reflecting upon the body of work produced. Only after completing this step in the process of my thesis was I able to discover hidden meanings my images.

Significance

What does this all mean? Where has this process of a yearlong journey into race, self and others taken me? Have I answered the two questions I set out to explore? The answers to these questions are complex.

This project has slowly begun to change my concepts of race. Each new and different experience I have had and continue to have work to peel away one preconceived notion at a time--slowly exposing a new outlook. With each experience, a new layer of realization has been exposed.

The relationships I created with Richard and Sue were the catalysts of the metamorphosis that took place within my self Other, smaller but equally as important factors working to peel away and reveal evolved ideas were the time spent taking

photographs in North Northeast Portland and my realization of the things that work together to create ideas about race.

In my case this includes creating a divide between "us" and "them." Setting down roles like these in the case of race dictates relationships around them. These roles are applied unconsciously and consistently. In the past I have tried to comprehend that we are all the same—only skin color separates us. This project is only the beginning for me in understanding and accepting the differences that do exist between black and white people. These differences include our culture, life experiences and history. I have tried to gloss over these in the past because I thought that what I had to do to "love all." Although I have begun to understand on a deeper level the different aspects of race, I realize how extensive the problem is and do not in any way purport to have a full and complete understanding of race or of Portland's black community. This depth of understanding was reached via the peeling of yet another layer---exposing yet another realization.

A deeper understanding of how concepts and meanings of race, history and race relations are inextricably connected is reached by looking at the city of Portland as a case study of "self among others."

While my initial questions may have produced insightful and enlightening answers for myself and, I hope, for others, more questions remain. What will I do with this realization of the existence of socially constructed roles of "self' and "others"? How will the people of the city who view this project think differently of North Northeast Portland? How will this information be applied?

I believe that in the world today, more than ever, it is important to make an effort to understand the perspectives of others. I used photography as a tool to confront an issue

that affects society as well as myself. By looking at how race affects Portland, Oregon, I was forced to explore the concept of "otherness" in my search for the "best truth." Any medium can work in the pursuit for truth, as long as the voice of the subject is taken into account and the voice of the explorer is realized.

This process is only a start at tearing down the walls that I have created within my "self' that separate me from racially different people. I believe if the City of Portland applied what I have set forth in this thesis to their everyday interactions with the community of North Northeast Portland, a progressive and proactive dialogue may be reached. This dialogue could manifest some of the theoretical methods and critical race theories investigated here-forever improving the relationship between a historically oppressed minority and the city in which they live.

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