

Enough Is Enough: Genocide Ideology and the Bereavement Process in Baltimore and Rwanda

a thesis presented by

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PREFACE

As I began the process of compiling these stories, I was unprepared for the emotional weight that would fall on my shoulders as I read and remembered each one. All of the interviews were conducted in person and almost exclusively one-on-one. A number of the interviews were audio-recorded (with explicit permission) and then transcribed. The process of transcribing, or typing up each audio recording, was much more difficult and time consuming than I had expected. Although I had thought seriously about recruiting help from fellow students who were well removed from the project and had better typing skills than myself, I decided not to outsource my transcriptions. I realized that listening to these interviews multiple times helped me to unpack and begin to understand the conversations that were taking place in both Rwanda and Baltimore.

I struggled to find “appropriate” times to transcribe, and ended up typing the majority of these interviews in between classes and on the bus. I desperately wanted to take out my headphones and share these stories as they were being told, but knew that they didn’t hold the same weight out of context. For that reason, I would like to spend a moment introducing each participant and explaining why I decided to write this the way that I have.

There are 19 different participants, including myself, who are featured in this project. The participants are from Baltimore, Maryland and Rwanda unless otherwise specified. They are anywhere between the ages of 20 and 75. Although a number of participants were adamant about using their legal names, I mostly refer to participants by pseudonyms, or fake names so that they can remain anonymous. To briefly contextualize each participant and their contributions to this project, I have listed them alphabetically and included a brief biography

with details that are relevant to their stories. I include myself in this list because my positionality, or who I am in reference to the communities and people I spend time with is deeply important and cannot be ignored.

I have also included an info-graphic that explains the overarching theory of interactions behind this project¹. As I will explain later, “genocide ideology,” or the violent and genocidal ideas that are normalized and accepted by a society, means very little on its own. Although each of these sections could easily stand alone as powerful examples of an abstract term, they mean much more when they can be connected to each other. I connect genocide ideology to three separate pieces of society that I call “informal”, “formal”, or “individual”. The “informal” and “formal” can be further divided into “structures” and “systems”, but the “individual” (sometimes called an “agent”) cannot be divided. The “agent” or “individual” cannot be divided because their interactions occur within systems and structures, but as individuals, cannot single-handedly operate separate systems and structures. The info-graphic (figure 1.0) on page six will continue to explain this theory of interactions.

This project is written differently than most Senior Honors Theses. It does not have a “methodology” section, nor does it extensively attend to the existing literature surrounding bereavement, violent death, or grief studies. A dear friend from Goucher told me that “if something is not accessible it’s not radical”. Their words have become my mantra in the

¹ This theory has been heavily influenced by Loïc Wacquant’s work. He calls his own theory a “three-headed analytic missile” which he explains as “*An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*”. Wacquant, Loïc. 2009. *The body, the ghetto and the penal state*. *Qualitative Sociology* 32(1): 101-129.

process of writing this thesis, and I encourage readers who are involved in higher education to think beyond this text about ways that we can all engage in radical and accessible scholarship.

To be perfectly transparent, this is not an “objective”, “research-based”, project. I am of the belief that everyone is an expert in their own lived experience. That being said, I have not had these experiences and they are not mine to critique, deny, twist, or censor. I believe that what people tell me is their truth, and thus, it is the truth for them. Although I would like to use as few of my own words as possible, the very nature of ethnography will frame these narratives in ways that involve my own representation. Simply choosing which narratives to include and deciding how to include them will inevitably shape the representations I give to each participant, no matter how much or how little I use my own voice. I think that it is perfectly reasonable to present the words of survivors of homicide and survivors of genocide in conversation with one-another, but to critique either would place my voice, as an academic, a scholar, and ultimately, an outsider, above the voices of their lived experiences. My expertise, no matter how much I have read, simply does not match up to the deep knowledge that is revealed in personal narratives. To that end, I have organized this project into sections, or “parts” that focus on specific observations about genocide ideology that are addressed by participants in Baltimore and Rwanda. This project would not have been possible without the insightful wisdom of Rwandese participants, however it is predominantly focused on Baltimore. Within these chapters are a series of vignettes, conversations, interview excerpts, and my occasional reference to positionality or context.

Although I am not including classic literature review into the body of the text, I reference a number of scholars and previous research in endnotes at the end of each chapter.

Within these endnotes I have included some suggestions for further reading as a way to reference the theorists who have helped me construct my own ontological identity as a writer, researcher, and learner.

I have tried to make this thesis as short as possible, in the hopes of keeping people's attention for just long enough to read and reflect on its contents. Without a doubt, this document could have easily become a 300-page manuscript. Thinking back to the wise words of my friend, however, "if it's not accessible then it's not radical". I am lucky enough to have had help editing this thesis, most importantly, from participants themselves. I know that I will need to do better, to be more radical, and make these stories more accessible, especially for those who do not read. I have a few ideas about how that might look, but for now, all I can ask is that those of us who read these stories might share them.

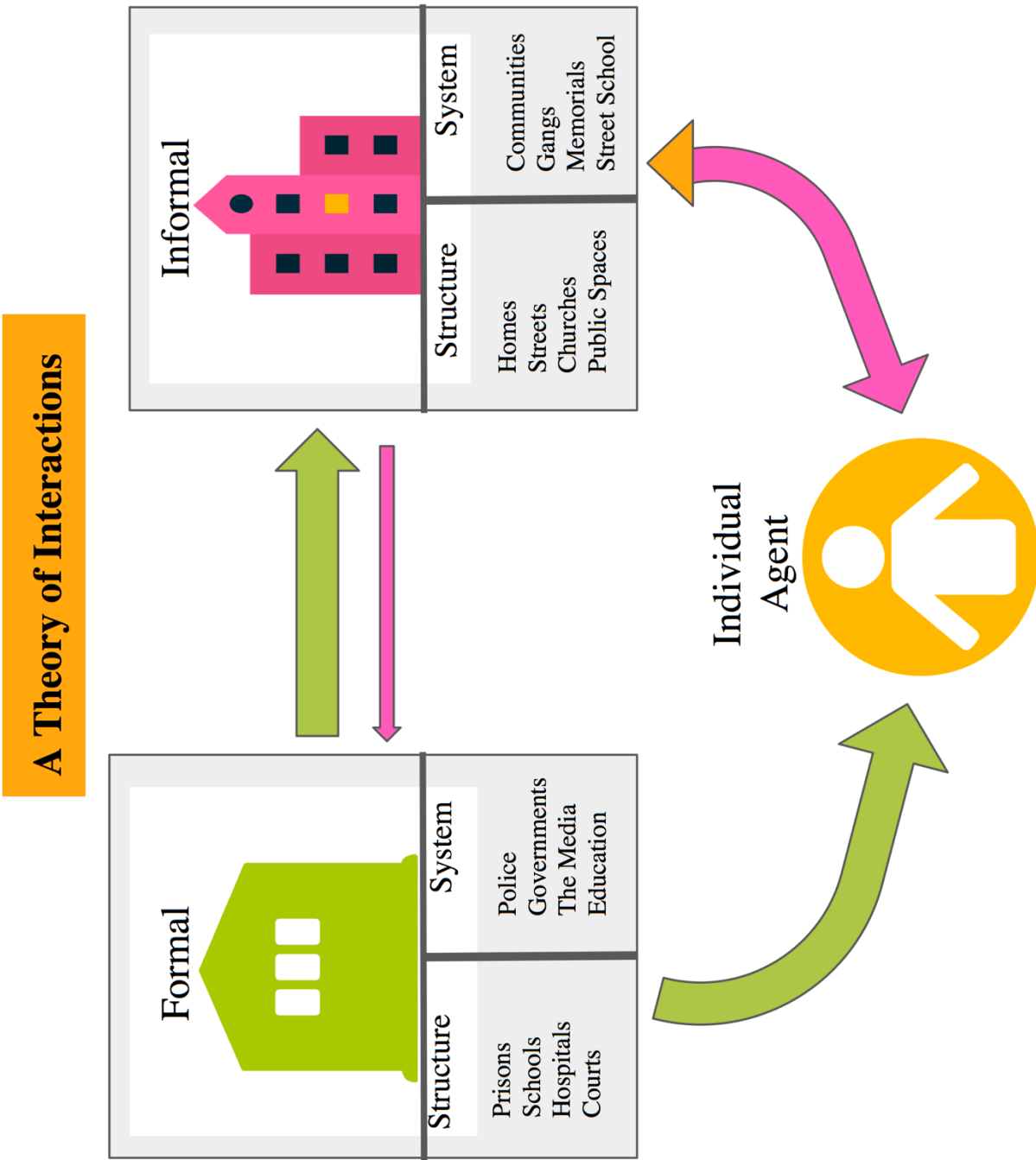


Figure 1.0

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Please use the following list as a reference:

Al: I had the amazing opportunity to meet Al for lunch one day at a local shopping center in Kigali. He was one of the first participants I interviewed for this project and was wonderfully patient with me as I struggled to work with a translator. We met during comemoration period when most of Rwanda was shut down and grieving. He was about 13 years old during the genocide and is the only survivor from his family. His father was killed in front of him and thrown into a nearby river. His mother and seven sisters were also killed and thrown into a mass grave. Al speaks about the grief process, burial, formal structures, and reconcilliation. He is a pastor at a local church and dreams of one day visiting the United States.

Amir: Was born in Butare but now lives outside of Kigali. He fled to Burundi during genocide and found his whole family, dead, when he returned to Rwanda. Amir and I became fast friends and he brought me to his village to see where his family members were buried. Amir speaks about formal authorities, burial practices, and his grief journey.

Arthur: Lives and works as a professor in Kigali. He is a very religious man who believes in the power of reconciliation. He speaks about his grief experience and the role of culture in establishing traditions.

Bill: I was introduced to Bill as a sophomore in college by one of my professors. He has become a dear friend and mentor to me over the past couple of years. We spend hours at a time simply talking about the intricacies of life and loss that he, as a chaplain and reverend, knows intimately. Bill speaks about grief, coping, meaning-making, and religion. He is an open container of wisdom and compassion that extends farther than I knew was possible.

Bosco: Lives and works in Kigali and is now 36 years old. He was 14 during the genocide. His mother is alive but his father was killed in front of him. Bosco speaks about revenge, justice, and punishment.

Bruno: I was introduced to Bruno through a community of survivors I had begun to spend a lot of time with. Bruno is the eldest member of this community and is very highly respected. His wife and six out of eight children were killed during the genocide. He joined the Rwandan Patriotic Front and helped to end the genocide. He speaks about burial, formal structures, police, and disenfranchised grief.

Didi: Towards the end of my time in Rwanda I met with Didi, a 51 year old genocide survivor who lives and works on the outskirts of Kigali. She grew up in a very conservative, Christian family and was one of nine children. Growing up, she was denied a proper education and was forced to live in partial hiding throughout her young adulthood. Didi's husband was drowned and tortured in the Nyabugogo river in 1994. She was pregnant with her second child during the genocide and went back into hiding. She speaks about formal structures and the slow escalation of genocide.

Fistón: I met Fistón through my dear friend and translator when he came over for dinner. Fistón is 25 years old and is from the eastern province of Rwanda. He lives alone but his sister and mother survived the genocide. His father was killed by one of his half-brothers during the genocide and his remains have never been located or buried. Fistón has many memories of hiding during the genocide and speaks about formal structures, anger and revenge, memory, and resources that are available to survivors.

Happy: At only 35 years old, Happy manages one of Rwanda's largest and most visited genocide memorials. He lost many of his family members to genocide and treats employees of the genocide memorial like family. He and I met multiple times to discuss memorialization, burial, and grief. Happy also speaks about reconciliation and formal structures.

Judge: Although we never spoke about his own experiences with grief and loss, Judge has taught me a lot about the circumstances that contribute to Baltimore city's grief. He spent many years as a substance abuse counsellor and now works with at-risk youth in Baltimore. He is an amazing mentor and I feel lucky to have spent time with him during my fieldwork. Judge speaks about formal and informal structures, internalized genocide ideology, rhetoric, education, and more. He works tirelessly to support children who have lost one or both parents to homicide.

Lily: An anthropology student from Philadelphia who attends Goucher College. She is having a hard time writing in the third person but feels blessed to include herself amongst the wisdom of survivors listed both above and below her name. Lily is 22 years old and her favorite color is pink. When she was nine, her friend Mecca was shot and killed at the age of fourteen in a triple-homicide that has yet to be solved. She has also grieved for the loss of two art mentors, Todd and Bob, who took their own lives within a year of each other. She lives and works in Baltimore with children who have lost loved ones to homicide at Roberta's House and teaches supplementary science.

Linda: Works for survivors of homicide in Baltimore City and is in her late fifties. She has been working with grieving people for over 20 years and considers her work to be part of God's plan. Linda's grandfather was robbed and murdered when she was in middle school. Her cousin, who was more like a sister to Linda was murdered almost a decade later. Shortly after the murder of her first cousin, another cousin was shot and killed. Linda speaks about the value of funerals, the impact of law enforcement on her community, and the violent ways society stigmatizes homicide.

Marcus: Born in New York City, Marcus moved to Baltimore when he was a teenager. He is currently in his mid twenties. He loves chess and is well versed in Baltimore city's violent drug culture. He was imprisoned for attempted murder but has since left what he calls "the street life". Marcus is currently attending college in Maryland and hopes to finish his Bachelor's degree very soon. He speaks about formal and informal justice, guns, grief, and police.

Phyllis: Lives with many dependant family members in Baltimore and is currently 55 years old. She is an extremely faith-driven person who has had powerful experiences with God and her deceased loved ones. Her son, Malcolm, was killed in prison when he was only 19 years old. Phyllis works with other mothers whose children were murdered and is determined to bring justice back to her community. She speaks about formal and informal structures and perpetuate violence, her experiences with the criminal justice system, funerals, burials, and just about everything that needs to be said.

Remi: In her early twenties, Remi was born and raised in Baltimore. She grew up in and out of the foster care system and can navigate MTA busses better than anyone I have ever met. Her cousin and best friend, Sean, was shot and killed when Remi was in middle school. She has lived with her Godparents for the past few years. Remi speaks about the importance of memory, stereotypes, formal and informal justice systems, as well her journey as a survivor of violent loss. She is currently attending college in Maryland.

Roger: Born, raised, and not going anywhere, Roger is a true Baltimorean. He is 66 years old and worked for the Department of Juvenile Services for almost 40 years. He spent a short period of his life teaching middle school and is currently retired. His older brother was murdered on Christmas in 1962. The brother closest to him in age was also killed while riding his motorcycle in 1979. Roger's nephew was tragically shot and killed this past year in January. He speaks about everything from formal justice procedures and structures, to funerals, and church. Roger has used his experience as a survivor of homicide to help other adults, mostly men, learn to express their grief in healthy ways.

Ruth: As a young person living in Kigali, Ruth is incredibly mature. She has worked as an archivist for one of Rwandas' genocide memorials since 2011. She and I only met briefly, but she shared some amazing insights about burial practices and culturally specific mourning practices in Rwanda. She also speaks about the power of memory and meaning-making after genocide.

Shirley: Currently 45 years old, Shirley lives in Baltimore and works in a surrounding suburb. She is a proud mother and the youngest of her siblings. She lost her two cousins, Nunu and Joey, her son's brother, Eugene, her close friend, Taz, her sister, and her mother's boyfriend. She says she is constantly going back and forth to the hospital and dreads picking up the phone late at night. Her experiences with violent death have made her incredibly resilient, and she is a caretaker to everyone who crosses her path. Shirley is an amazing chef, meaning that she is always surrounded by friends and family. She speaks about the criminal justice system, media, informal structures, revenge, and the fond memories she has of her deceased loved ones.

Y: Although he is alphabetically last, Y is the reason that this project came to be. He is in his late twenties and hails from Baltimore City. We have been friends for the past few years and have spent many long nights having deep discussions about everything from race and class, to fraternity culture and produce suppliers. Y is a proud father of two amazing kids who he endlessly encourages and supports. He has lost countless friends and family members to Baltimore city's streets and grieves for each loss differently. Y speaks about his life experiences openly and candidly as a way to introduce the hidden side of humanity and inhumanity that young Black folk in Baltimore face on a daily basis. It is thanks to Y's encouragement that I have been able to engage with questions that move far beyond myself.

Part One

May 5th, 2017

To whom it may concern,

I do not wish to alarm you
but I hope you are listening:

There have been 11 documented homicides
in Baltimore this week, and 34 last month, and
I don't know how many there will be this year.

Sincerely,

Concerned

May 6th, 2017

To whom it may concern,

For every homicide victim, an average of 10 people are directly and deeply impacted. They are also victims.

There are 110 new victims in Baltimore this week, and 340 new victims from last month, and I don't know how many more there will be this year.

Sincerely,

Deeply Concerned

May 7th, 2017

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your concern. I cannot tell you how to make it better, or what will make it better, and I cannot tell you that I will make it better, but may I persuade you to listen?

Please listen to the concerns of these Baltimoreans who are surviving and have survived the horrific robbery of life that so concerns you.

Sincerely,

Hope That You Listen

PART ONE: DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

On flat white paper lying before you are the stories of three-dimensional people of color who are much closer to reality than their material presence. They are not abstractions or examples; they do not “represent” a set of metadata and they do not wish to be members of a population drawn from the shared experience of tragedy. They are real people whose real lives have been impacted by violent loss and it is their courageous choice to share their realities with those of us who share our concern.

The following words collect the courage, resilience, vulnerability, and collaboration of community participants who have consistently challenged and changed the essence of this project, from one of simply research to one of art, exploration, and exposure of stories about living with loss. While participants are referred to by pseudonym, their stories refer to an unapologetic and striking reality. As you read, I invite you to listen to the way your heart responds to their heartbreaks. Despite the difficulty of the content, be careful not to lose sight of the inalienable hope that many of these stories illuminate.

I was introduced to this project in Baltimore by a dear friend and firebrand, who I will refer to as “Y”. One of the most intelligent and well-read people I have ever had the privilege of befriending, he is “Baltimore born-and-raised.” While loyal to his city, Y aches to travel the world, refusing call anywhere home until he has explored all of his options. Originally, I had wanted to interview him about his experience in mortuary science school. He first challenged me to think beyond my immediate interests. I met with him to talk about the death care industry, in order to see whether or not I could interview and observe a number of his colleagues. He entertained me briefly, but then he asked if I might be willing to help him

answer a few questions of his own. Y asked one I had not heard before: “Why do you think the funeral industry always has business around here?”

Perched between two porches on a long one-way block, I scanned the streets, intersections and mailboxes for answers. “I guess there are always dead people, right?” I offered.

Y shook his head and asked it in a different way: “Why do people die in Baltimore?”

I quickly answered his question in my head by flipping through mental rolodexes of headlines— “Gang Shootout” and “Drug Dealer Found Dead” and “14 Year-Old Caught in Crossfire”—until Y interrupted my thoughts with an answer: “People don’t die in Baltimore, they get killed.”

I nodded, thinking I had the “correct” answer.

Y started pointing in different directions telling me which of his family members and friends had been killed where, who had killed them, and then who had been killed in return. I swiveled my head trying desperately to make a mental map of each name, street, block number, and circumstance. “Stop trying to map it out,” said Y. “I’m just telling you that it happens.”

I exhaled, thinking I was off the hook. I hoped to change the subject back to mortuary school, until Y asked me another question: “Why do we keep killing each other?”

I held my breath and froze. Shaking my head and looking at my hands, I responded, “How could I know even the slightest thing about that, Y? Why are you asking a white girl from Philadelphia why people die...I mean get killed in Baltimore?” In a futile effort to hide behind my own privilege, I simply “played dumb.” Y was not going to take that as an answer.

“That’s why I asked you,” he said. “You go to college! It’s your people that always tell us things are the way they are. That’s why you are in college, right? To find out all the answers and tell us why shit is the way it is and then say you gona go fix it because it’s all a matter of understanding, so you gona have an answer to this one too!”

I was frozen again. I couldn’t deny it—both historically and personally, white folk like myself have had access to the kinds of knowledge and institutions of power that stake their claims in social research. These studies profess to “better the communities” of their research subjects by finding out what “really” causes violence, what “really” creates poverty. Rarely do these studies note what “really” lurks behind the coded and state-funded racist language that feeds these dialogues: that these studies are stuffed back into the mouths of hierarchical higher education in order for other academic professionals to further swallow, digest, absorb, and shit out onto another pile of purported truth. Most is left to rot in the stuffy halls of colleges. The digested information rarely if ever reaches the communities who provided such “valuable information,” unless the smell is bad enough to waft down from the ivory tower. Mostly, the recycled rot is just left to fester. I felt like crying. I hated college, I hated my whiteness, I hated my audacity to even come downtown, and I certainly didn’t want to answer any more questions¹².

Knowing that I wanted to change the subject, but not letting me off the hook, Y asked me if I had ever heard of “a place called Rwanda.”

I shrugged and said something along the lines of “Yes, I have heard of it. No, I will not pretend like I know anything about anything anymore.” Y smiled, eager to lay out his next set of questions as I prayed he wouldn’t ask any more.

He explained, "Lily, there was a genocide in Rwanda that ended the year you were born. Black brothers and sisters killed each other and destroyed communities..." I looked down and nodded in reverence for a tragedy kept firmly in my peripheral vision. "...right here in Baltimore, there is something going on. Black brothers and sisters are killing each other and communities are getting destroyed and no one has time to heal."

I looked up at him, confused but still listening. He got up and went inside for a moment while I sat, perched between two porches, waiting for my brain to connect the dots.

When he came back outside he told me more about what was going on in Baltimore. He told me about going to too many funerals. He told me about the anger and irrationality that caused friends to take each others lives. He told me about the fear that spread between mothers who no longer let their children play outside, and I asked him if he ever cried. He said no. He said that there was nothing to cry about because there was always something else to cry about. I told him about two of my mentors; both artists, both tortured by their illnesses and addictions, and both driven to commit suicide, one in quick succession of the other leaving me broken and bereaved. Y asked me how long it took before I was done mourning. I told him I didn't know, that I would never really be "done," and that everyone was different. Y looked at me and told me I was brave.

He was right. I was brave to feel the darkness and depth of grief that struck me in those moments. I was brave to cry, and I am still brave, when sometimes, I still cry. At this point I realized that the dots from our earlier conversation, could not connect. What had differed between Rwandese genocide survivors and homicide survivors in Baltimore was not obvious, but it screamed for attention. Granted, there are huge differences between the two countries,

their histories, and their cultures, but what they had in common, as Y pointed out, was the utter devastation experienced by both communities in the wake of violent loss. What, then, accounted for Rwanda's unprecedented success in post-genocide reconciliation in contrast to Baltimore's continued failure to heal communities that are still plagued by violence?

Knowing once again, that I had only connected some of the dots, Y had a few more questions. He knew that my college required all students to spend time abroad. Knowing that I had yet to travel abroad, Y asked me where I was thinking of going.

I smiled, "Rwanda, I guess?"

He smiled approvingly, knowing that his questions led me to the right answer; go to a place where there are answers to these questions. So I did. Two weeks later I texted Y and told him I had submitted my study-abroad application to a program in Rwanda.

I lived and studied abroad in Rwanda for about 5 months. During my in time in Rwanda I did not rest. Because my time was limited, I spent every available moment seeking answers to the growing questions Y had planted in me earlier that year. I worked tirelessly to learn a culture, a language, and a lifestyle that was greatly different from what I knew, but at once became familiar, exciting, and reminiscent of a budding friendship. My conversation with Y and the questions he asked prompted me to begin this project. His questions are extremely important and no doubt, difficult to answer. This project, however, cannot attempt to answer these questions in a meaningful way. I have tried to answer Y's questions but only uncovered more questions of my own. Although I cannot answer these questions, I hope that this project illuminates just how deeply important they are.

This project does not provide a simple comparison between Baltimore and Rwanda. I do not wish to sensationalize the violence that occurs in Baltimore, nor is it appropriate to minimize the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. The human experiences of grief, as a result of both homicide and genocide, bear striking resemblances to one another. While I was there, I introduced people, mostly genocide survivors, to Y's story. The responses I got were powerful and urgent. Knowing that the state of Maryland is roughly the same size as the nation of Rwanda, and that Baltimore and Kigali have almost identical populations, Rwandese people were struck by the simple statistics that I shared with them. When I said that five people were killed in Baltimore last week they asked me who killed them. I told them that their neighbors killed them. When they asked me why, I didn't have an answer. On more than one occasion my friends in Rwanda cried when I told them Y's story. They were not crying because the violence surprised or overwhelmed them, but rather, it reminded them of a familiar time in their lives when neighbors took each others lives.

I was slowly introduced to the wisdom of experience that Rwandese people had gleaned from having lived through a genocide. Having lived through genocide, it was easy for Rwandans to observe and recognize the signs and symptoms of what they called "genocide ideology."³ The word, "genocide" is a strong one, and should not be misused or taken lightly. Although there are many different definitions, genocide⁴ is almost always motivated by a government or system that has decided to remove a specific population or group from the national community⁵. Genocides are highly organized, targeted, intentional, and violent. The term "ideology" refers to the science of ideas, or the specific ways that people are taught to think and learn to teach. Ideologies might seem abstract, but they have very real consequences. They

are used to create and frame identities; they give people meaning and purpose. “Ideologies tell people what is right and what is wrong” and people behave accordingly. When an ideology is genocidal, violent ideas can quickly turn into violent actions.

In this project I use the term “genocide ideology” to call out specifically violent ideas, actions, and inactions on the part of individuals, communities, states, and countries. In other words, I look at the ways that formal structures/systems, informal structures/systems, and individuals/agents are contributing to or affected by genocide ideology.

This project *does not* claim that there is a genocide taking place in Baltimore. It *does* claim, however, based on the expert wisdom of Rwandese genocide survivors and the personal testimonies of Baltimoreans affected by homicide, that there are pervasive examples of *genocide ideology* in Baltimore city. I am choosing to use this phrase because I have been warned by Rwandese genocide survivors about what happens when we don’t call genocide by its name. I sincerely hope that those who read this will also feel the urgency of being warned and might decide to add genocide ideology to their own vocabularies.

¹ Other scholars like Vine Deloria and Tuhewai Smith have criticized traditional research methods. Deloria, Vine. 1988. *Custer died for your sins: an Indian manifesto ; with new preface*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press.
Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2012. *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed.

² It is important to note that not all scholarly work, especially in Anthropology and Sociology is guilty of these criticisms. Contemporary scholars such as Laurence Ralph and Lila Abu-Lughod have written deeply moving ethnographies that are unapologetically human and focused on the words of participants. Ethnographies like these are part of academia’s changing history, pioneered in part by public intellectuals such as Pierre Bourdieu who expressed a dramatic change-of-heart late in his academic career. Although he initially disavowed anthropology/sociology that made politically active statements, he eventually became known as a founding father of critically engaged social sciences, and even organized political demonstrations and rallies. Bourdieu studied complex systems of inequality and upheld the value of cultural reflexivity as an example of

humanistic social research that has been maintained by scholars like Ralph and Abu-Lughod. I highly recommend the following readings:

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2009. *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2006. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Priscilla Parkhurst. Ferguson. 2012. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living Through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

³ Kinyarwanda is the national language of Rwanda. There is no Kinyarwanda word for “genocide ideology”. When speaking about it in Rwanda, the English phrase “genocide ideology” is embedded within conversations held in Kinyarwanda.

⁴ Ervin Staub is one of the premier researchers on this subject. I strongly recommend his book, *The Roots of Evil-The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* to anyone interested in the scholarship surrounding this subject.

Staub, Ervin. 2006. *The roots of evil: the origins of genocide and other group violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Odora, Obote. 2007. “*Understanding and Fighting Genocide Ideology*.” The 13th Commemoration of Rwanda Genocide at African Union Headquarters.

⁵ Alvarez, Alex. 2008. “*Destructive Beliefs: Genocide and the Role of Ideology*.” in *Towards a Criminology of International Crimes*. Intersentia.

PART TWO: WE'VE BEEN WARNED

One of the first connections I made between Rwanda and Baltimore struck within the first month of living in Rwanda. While taking an introductory class on the basics of how genocide occurred we watched a BBC documentary entitled “Rwanda’s Untold Story”. The film was wrought with manipulated interviews and misinformation that ultimately minimized and denied the Genocide Against the Tutsi. Instead of producing any form of accurate documentary journalism, the BBC framed Rwanda’s own President, Paul Kagame, and accused him of inciting and initiating genocidal violence in 1994¹. The film introduced me to the feeling of betrayal, of mistrust, and of being blatantly lied to. After viewing the film I began to do my own research. I was still angry, but committed to uncovering the truth about how genocide began, I scoured news sources and other forms of archived media that mentioned Rwanda in the months leading up to genocide.

I found a number of articles from North American and International news sources that each gave me the same sickening feeling of being lied to. On February 23, 1994, The Guardian published an article, claiming that “the conflict in Rwanda is primarily tribal”². It warned that “a new wave of tribal killings in Rwanda rose after gunmen shot dead a government minister and vengeful mobs killed the leader of a hardline Hutu party”. Later that year in April, The New York Times published the following headline: “Tribes battle for Rwandan Capital; New Massacres Reported”³. From Nairobi, reports of “gangs of youths armed with machetes roamed the streets of Kigali” and “tens of thousands of people are estimated to have died in a week of fighting rooted in the centuries-old feud between Rwanda’s majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups”⁴.

What made me furious about these headlines and news articles was their rhetoric. Instead of telling the world about an ongoing genocide, media sources referred to the violence as “tribal killings”. Instead of reporting the truth about the perpetrators, most of whom were government-trained, adult civilians, the world listened to a story about “gangs of youths” running freely as they massacred members of the “other tribe”⁵.

As long as the killing could be chalked up to ethnicity or what the media called “tribal warfare”, larger governments like the United States, France, and Germany could easily distance themselves from the actual violence that was destroying Rwanda⁶. These countries had no stake in preserving Rwanda because the land itself was not particularly valuable (there wasn’t much oil to extract or minerals to mine). Because the global community didn’t bother to intervene, the media also distanced themselves from the realities of genocide that were occurring in 1994. We are all witnesses and bystanders to this atrocity. We stood by and watched as one million people were killed in a preventable act of genocide that we were too afraid to call by its name⁷.

Looking through the pages of daily newspapers like the Baltimore Sun and The New York Times I can’t help but think about myself as a bystander to a new language that is used to speak about violence in Black urban communities across the United States. We hear things like “gang violence” and “Black on Black crime” being used to describe any and all murders that involve Black bodies. Worse still, murder victims are dehumanized and stripped of their identity by media sources that refer to them by numbers. Instead of using their names or any other mention of humanity, Black homicide victims are almost exclusively referred to by number; 7th

homicide victim this week; Baltimore's 100th homicide; Two dead on Pimlico Road; Death toll in Baltimore rises with 44 murders this month; the list goes on. This type of dehumanizing rhetoric is a rung on the ladder of genocide ideology. It works to build up people's belief in a society that criminalizes and trivializes Black murder victims, making people who have the privilege of distancing themselves (like me) just separate enough to accept their murders as "consequences" or "byproducts" of distant ways of life.

This process is so widespread in Baltimore, that murder has become the new "normal". Roger, a 66 year old Baltimorean who lost most of his siblings to homicide recounted the following:

"Well you say 'this is how these people are. This is what they do and so we really don't need to do anything about it' and look, drugs [for instance], none of the people who are being prosecuted in the city of Baltimore, the state of Maryland, bring drugs into the City of Baltimore or the state of Maryland. None of these people"

Roger's is speaking about himself when he says "these people". Accordingly, "these people" are guilty in the eyes of the public, but innocent to those who know the truth about their city. On another late night of rapid-fire discussion, Y told me that "people believe in it [the rhetoric of genocide ideology]. People believe in it without believing in it, and that's the hard part about this shit. A lot of people have a reality where everything is done with their eyes wide shut". Y and Roger have both gotten a bird's-eye view of the lies being told about their communities.

Formal systems like newspapers, radio hosts, and politicians are speaking for cities that they do not always live in. Assuming that people will trust them, these formal systems are capable of creating, spreading, and perpetuating lies that disguise genocide ideology. They blame victims of homicide for their own deaths and spread lies about the circumstances that led to their death. A survivor of the genocide in Rwanda named Amir warned me that “the one-sided, unbalanced authorities cause this [cycle of violence] when they do not stand in the middle to tell the truth”. From my what I have witnessed, observed, and listened to, nobody has stood in the middle to tell the truth for a long time. A friend of mine who participated in this project told me that she thinks “systems need to be accountable, kind of recognizing how systems sometimes are contributing to the cycle of violence”. I couldn’t agree more.

¹ Paul Kagame, the current President of Rwanda has accused the BBC of ‘genocide denial’. Genocide denial is a criminal offense in Rwanda and in other parts of the world. Baird, Dugald. 2015. “BBC should face criminal action over Rwanda documentary, says inquiry.” *TheGuardian*. Retrieved May 5, 2017 (<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/mar/02/bbc-rwanda-documentary-inquiry>).

² Kigali, Rwanda Lindsey Hilsum in. “*Rwanda tribal rampage feared after two politicians are killed.*” *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 23 Feb. 1994. Web. 06 May 2017.

³ April 15, 1994. “*Tribes Battle for Rwandan Capital; New Massacres Reported.*” *The New York Times*.

⁵ To be clear, calling “Hutus” and “Tutsis” “tribes” is inaccurate. Long before Rwanda was colonized by foreigners, the words Hutu and Tutsi were used to describe different jobs. Hutus were farmers who tilled the land and Tutsis were cow herders who grazed the plains. There was always marriage between the two groups and they lived peacefully, speaking the same language, on the same land, under the same sun. It wasn’t until years later after decades of colonial flip-flopping that the terms “Hutu” and “Tutsi” became polarized and tied to ethnicity.

Hintjens, H. M. 2001. “*When Identity Becomes a Knife: Reflecting on the Genocide in Rwanda.*” *Ethnicities* 1(1): 25-55. Web.

Lemarchand, René. 1999. “*Coming to Terms with the Past: The Politics of Memory in Post-Genocide Rwanda.*” *Unpublished Paper*.

⁶ Bodley, John H. 2000. “*Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism: Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism.*” *American Anthropologist* 102(1): 271-73. Web.

⁷ Bodley, John H. 2000. *"Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism: Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism."* American Anthropologist 102(1):271–73. Web.

PART THREE: FORMALLY SANCTIONED DEATH

The Baltimore City Police Department, or BPD's mission statement claims that it "is dedicated to fostering trust with community members, safeguarding life and property, and promoting public safety through enforcing the law in a fair and impartial manner"¹.

In 2016 there were 316 reported homicides in Baltimore city; that is almost one death per day. 291 of these homicide victims were Black and among them 273 of the victims were male². Although formal systems in the United States like the BPD are not personally committing acts of murder, they keep their hands tied behind their backs and allow for certain people to be murdered. "Government sanctioned death", as it could be called, is a direct function of genocide ideology. It prioritizes the lives of some bodies, in this case White bodies and seeks to "destroy in part or in whole" a specific group of people. Although passive, this genocide ideology is fatal. When police officers who are supposed to "safeguard life" do not care about the lives they safeguard, passive genocide ideology unweaves into webs of violence that are almost too thick to see through.

Judge, who has worked within the Department of Juvenile Justice in Baltimore for years has had a lot of experience working with police officers and other parts of the formal justice system.

"My thinking about the police with these homicides is they think they are above the law and they don't give a shit. They don't give a shit about homicide and then they are not held accountable for their mistakes".

Part of being held accountable means that police officers include the citizens they “protect and serve” in the formation and execution of policies. Judge told me to “look at the board where there are supposed to be civilians. The police don’t want civilians on this board, they never did, because they think that their way of fighting crime is the way to do it. As you know, what the Attorney General and the Feds came out with, and how racial, and racist the BCPD is, they still want to continue with that racist ass mentality.” Judge has tried multiple times to get the BPD to invite him and other “frontline community members” to a civilian board. Each time they tried they were shut down by a new excuse.

Government sanctioned murder is easier to execute behind closed doors. The “tough on crime” rhetoric used in national campaigns to increase the amount of power given to police³ doesn’t make sense when it is placed next to the goal of “fostering trust with community members”. Judge remembers a time when police officers were part of the communities they served.

“I knew my officers, they used to come to the schools, we used to have police officer day, you go to the police league, you play police basketball....They’re not the same officers as 20 years ago. They don’t have that neighborhood community gathering; none of that shit.”

Police officers are increasingly visible in Black communities across Baltimore and often occupy residential neighborhoods in large groups.

When police officers are not travelling in huge groups of armed, uniformed, and mostly white men, “they stay in their car and they’re scared. They are so scared that most of them comes from places where they never been around Black people” says Judge. When there is something that police can respond to they often do so without foresight and with force.

“They think they can do anything they want to do but they’re not doing shit that needs to be done. They not infiltrating jack. They are doing more harm by doing what they’re doing which is absolutely nothing. There is no community policing anymore”.

The lack of community police engagement does not match up with the number of police officers stationed in communities.

Police that function “above the law” are working under genocide ideology. They are given absolute power over citizens, many of whom are ignored. Police officers end up picking and choosing which communities should be under police control and which communities police officers will protect. Using their formal authority, they can take action against individuals who they would otherwise choose to ignore. When individuals reach out to these formal systems, their concerns are ignored and their problems are neglected.

I met with Didi in April of 2016 in a remote part of Kigali. She was worried that we would be seen or overheard during our conversation, so it was important that we could speak in an isolated location. Her fear was based on the fact that many of her family members had been “disappeared” or killed without any record from local authorities.

“People could be killed and the authorities would do nothing...no cases were filed. They could just see something happen and drive away just like that without anything!”

Even before the genocide, Didi felt as if her days were numbered. Although she was being watched constantly, she could not go to any of the authorities for help. Roadblocks and police barracks kept her from visiting her family members in other parts of the country. She was always asked to present her ID. Even as she was pregnant and going into labor, local authorities took their time checking her ID and stalling as she was “carrying a baby alone”.

The culture of government sanctioned death in Rwanda became so pervasive that, as Didi said, “by that time you could just hear that someone was picked and killed. They called them collaborators. So many collaborators were taken to Nyabugogo stadium (a soccer stadium) and killed”. The law that had initially done nothing to stop violence now began taking action and actively participating in the violence they had already sanctioned. In Baltimore, authorities are keeping their hands clean from blood, yet their collective conscious is blood-soaked. As we have learned from Rwanda, *silence is violence*. Just because the formal authorities and governments of Maryland will not *commit* murder does not mean they won’t *allow* it. And according to a number of Baltimoreans, the government of Maryland (and maybe the United States more widely) actually plans for it.

Judge “noticed that the judicial system looks at kids, our kids, with third grade reading levels, grades, and that so called determines why they build prisons and jails. And Baltimore County prisons, the inmates, most of them, have not completed the ninth grade”. When people are

incarcerated they are surrounded, literally, by a formal government structure. Within those walls individuals have no agency or ability to change their situation. In the 1970s Rwandese prisons were in worse condition than most animal shelters. Bruno was chased away from his job as a construction worker and went to the authorities to complain. He was arrested and imprisoned for two months during which time “many people were beaten and died”. When Bruno got out of jail he couldn’t get a job because he had a criminal record.

Both of these cases show how much planning is involved in executing a genocide. It begins small, by affecting the lives of individual people like Bruno and keeping them under conditions of poverty and unemployment. From that point, generations of children like the ones Judge is talking about, struggle to find their way through formal education systems.

“Baltimore city public schools”, says Judge,

“actually make a direct link to Baltimore City jails. Push em through, they don’t learn shit, they can’t fill out a job application because they never learned, they don’t know how to read or write because they were supposed to have learned that in school but they got kicked out, there is no critical thinking, no critical writing, no resources, so we push you through. We know you are going to fuck up, you either want to sell drugs or you going to take something and you wind up going to jail, and that’s why we built the prison and we got a place for you”.

Judge paused and looked at me. He glanced down at his hands and softly said,

“And we are building another one.”⁴

So then, who is living inside of all these prisons and what is going on behind their walls?

Miss Phyllis, who lost her son Malcolm, thinks that the Cumberland prison system, where Malcolm was incarcerated and killed, has a code of silence that has been going on for too long.

“The thing about Cumberland is that they think you’re scared of them. They think of the prison as they own community and somebody needs to break the silence. Nobody seems to want to challenge Cumberland when it comes down to homicides or injuries inside the prison”

As prisoners, individuals have their rights taken away. Even though they are still protected from “cruel and unusual punishment”, prison guards “have tasers, they have sticks, and they have guns”. Despite the prison’s commitment to keeping communities safe and free of crime, the prison community is dangerous, unfair, and full of crime and corruption.

During my conversations with Shirley, who lost her brother, two cousins, her son’s brother, and her sister, we got to talking about the Baltimore City jails. She watches the news because she wants to “know what’s going on and then you never know when somebody in your family is going to get hurt”. She told me about some of the more recent gang activity that the BGF, or Black Gorilla Family, had been up to.

“That gang is so huge, you had a guy that was running stuff from the jail. He had a BMW, a Lexus, a hundred thousand dollars...who has a hundred thousand dollars in jail? He had four

female guards pregnant. He had already had babies by two of em. If he wanted something to happen to somebody, he was ordering hits from the jail, on the street.”

The fact that people who are in government facilities are still able to engage in violence says something powerful about the strength of looking the other way. As Shirley put it, “if I’m on the street and you are ordering somebody to kill me from the jail, that’s called pull. That mean you got power”. After this news came out, “they closed that whole jail down. They moved him all the way out to the Eastern Shore” where it would be harder to order hits, but more importantly, it would be harder for media sources to report on the failed systems of protection.

Y’s father was imprisoned for most of his childhood. “They hopped him around. He went from supermax prisons to Hagerstown to Jessup, my father was all around Maryland. Of course he was all around Maryland being that he was a Marylander and that’s how they gona get they free money out of the crime he committed. That’s really how that went; he pay his debt to the state kind of thing”. But Y got used to the idea of prison. Every weekend his grandfather took him to different prisons across Maryland to see his father.

“I used to come up on the porch and people be like, ‘where you going?’ and I would be like ‘well it’s my father in jail’. And I was proud of that shit! I was actually proud to go see him. I thought I was gona be a prisoner. I fucking thought, like I actually was like, was going to live in jail one day.”

Going to jail had become so normal in Y's community that he looked forward to following in his dad's footsteps. When Judge "asked a couple of kids in the past, and these were kids that were from the department of juvenile justice services, teens, some of them who already been locked up in the system, they don't think they gonna live past 21. And they'll tell you. Because of their environment, it's what they see".

In a weekly grief group for kids who have lost loved ones to homicide, I asked seven-year old Samuel what he wanted to be when he grew up.

He responded casually with, "it doesn't matter".

I asked him again and told him it did matter.

He said, "no, it doesn't matter because Imma be dead".

I was shocked by his answer and didn't know how to respond. I asked him for a plan B: "what about if you're not dead? Then what would you want to be?"

Sam thought for a moment and told me, "It still don't matter because Imma be in jail like everybody else".

Think about this response for a moment.

Think about this seven-year-old boy who is planning for his life to end before he grows up. The way that formal systems like the BPD and state governments act in the lives of adults affects entire generations. During one of our late-night conversations, Y told me about growing up during the Crack era in Baltimore.

“For them [the government] to do a whole fucking group of people like that, that you already left in limbo with not being able to read, not being able to educate, laws against em, and then you kill some of the world’s best leaders and then you feed em crack cocaine right behind it...that was the most amazing fucking thing I’ve ever seen. So like, when it comes down to it a lot of the kids or people that grew up in the crack era, how can they raise a generation?”

He raises a good point. Not only did crack destroy communities, Y said, “that shit killed families, man...and it killed the whole base of Black empowerment”.

When Y was growing up in school, he started to notice “small things and it was like, I’m not becoming no fucking doctor coming from this shit!” He laughed.

“We was broke. You know what I mean, we ain’t got no fuckin money how the fuck you going to become a doctor when you ain’t got no fuckin money. And maybe I stopped believing, maybe I lost hope, but I know what the one that was, and that was reality. Reality was, it’s not going to get out of this shit that we got. And that’s when life started changing a lot; I wasn’t never the toughest one, never the baddest, but I don’t think I was ever the smartest neither, but I knew I was going to survive because people that were older than me were teaching me how to survive out there on the streets.”

If there are no leaders left as examples and the rest of the world has invested in your failure, at some point, children will begin to internalize this ideology for themselves. Genocide ideology is not abstract and it does not lie dormant. It teaches people what is right and what is wrong,

what people will accept or not accept, and ultimately, which lives have value. When people internalize these ideologies, it can become impossible to see the forest through the trees.

Bodies become containers for violence and violence becomes normal, even expected, to certain bodies.

¹ This information was found on their website.

Anon. n.d. *"Baltimore Police Department."* About The Department | Baltimore Police Department. Retrieved May 6, 2017 (<https://www.baltimorepolice.org/about-department>).

² The *Baltimore Sun* has an interactive data mapping feature on their website where anyone can track the rates of homicide from 2007 to the present day. You can also narrow your search by "race", "age", "gender", and more.

Anon. n.d. *"Interactive map: Baltimore homicides."* The Baltimore Sun. Retrieved May 6, 2017 (<http://data.baltimoresun.com/news/police/homicides/>).

³ Wacquant, Loïc. 2009. *The body, the ghetto and the penal state*. Qualitative Sociology. 32(1): 101-129.

⁴ The cycle that Judge is explaining has been given a name by academics and scholars. It has studied extensively and is called the "School to Prison Pipeline". For further reading on this subject and other forms of structural violence I suggest the following:

Alexander, Michelle. 2016. *"New jim crow: mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness"*. Place of publication not identified: New Press.

Meiners, Erica R. 2007. *"Right to be hostile: schools, prisons, and the making of public enemies"*. New York: Routledge.

PART FOUR: INFORMALLY SANCTIONED DEATH

One of the most terrifying products of genocide ideology in the United States is the way that communities themselves will take life into their own hands. Some of this genocide ideology has been internalized and passed on from generation to generation. Just like Y, who wanted to go to jail and follow in the footsteps of his father, Marcus says “we are all poems...products of our environment”. Marcus grew up in New York City and then moved to Baltimore. “In order to prove yourself in Baltimore”, he says, “you have to do a lot of things. First you have to fight someone”. This wasn’t hard for Marcus who had grown up fighting. “Then you had to pistol whip someone”. This is a small step up from fighting, but “it escalates. You have to solidify your respect in the community”. Not long after Marcus moved to Baltimore he “was locked up on attempted murder”. He went on to explain that “you have to do some crazy shit for people to respect my mind”. These milestones; having to fight, then pistol whip, sometimes rob, and eventually murder somebody are all informally sanctioned, or allowed.

The types of informally sanctioned activities that Marcus is talking about are seen as traditions. They are part of everyday life for many young men in Baltimore, and are crucial in establishing your respect and position within a community. From a distance these traditions seem violent and unnecessary. Up close, however, they are almost impossible to avoid. When Y lost hope of ever becoming a doctor he started to learn the “rules of the street”. Arthur, who is a genocide survivor told me that “traditions are very superficial, very manipulative; traditions create an identity but they do not create unity”. Judge talked about “the ideology of some younger and older Black men to take a life just for probably a couple hundred dollars, or just to have an award or to get a medal, or just trying to show somebody what you are capable of. It’s

pathetic". Regardless of how "pathetic" or unnecessary these traditions may seem, Marcus says that if "you want that street life you need to take it all on. Everything that comes with it, you can't just pick and chose." According to him, "if you take it on, you take it all on".

Shirley told me she was concerned and confused as to why people take each other's lives.

"It's like they get out here and are like, 'oh this is my corner. Why are you standing on my corner?'...."

She rolled her eyes, "I didn't know you paid rent for that corner? And 'this is my turf' well, where do you live at? In that house? Well you paying rent for everybody in this neighborhood? Tell me so I will know! Because nowadays, if you beefing with somebody and they can't get to you, they'll get the person next to you, that's closest to you...and that's how people think now and I have seen it done."

She feels that "people don't have no morals when it comes to people's life no more. When it comes down to your life, they don't care about nobody life".

When the State of Maryland is actively proving that they don't care about the lives of Black folk in Baltimore and Baltimoreans themselves are internalizing this hatred, it comes as no surprise that the death toll would be so high.

When Remi's cousin Sean was killed Remi was told that "this girl set him up". She told me that "he was like messing with this girl, well, he liked her a lot, but she was like also messing with this other guy who was in another gang...but this girl like set him up and he went to her or something like that, or she called him, and he went there and he just got shot". Judge says that

“the phenomenon now in 2017 is more gang related. You don’t have that many deaths just because...a lot of these gangs have a lot to do with drugs and turf or girls, but not all of them have to do with gang mentality”. I asked Judge about a phrase I had been hearing a lot of in Baltimore during my fieldwork: “If you kill my brother I kill yours”. Judge told me that “there could be so much anger with a person that they go out and kill another person after their loved one has been killed...Retaliation”.

Remi told me that after Sean was killed some of her friends wanted to take revenge on Sean’s killer. “I don’t think I could bring myself to actually hurt other people, like even though I wanted to. Like I really did want to...Like I really fucking wanted to”. Remi didn’t plan to hurt anybody but she thought about it often. “It was just something that crossed my mind a lot”.

Shirley also remembers feeling “total resentment” after her cousin was shot and killed over \$700 dollars.

“My cousin wanted his money, so to keep from paying him his money, he just decided to shoot him. I had family members that was actually talking about doing something to him. We sit down and talk about stuff like this all the time. Especially my grandmother. She is ready to be 83 years old and she’s angry! She done lost a lot of her grandkids to the streets.”

Shirley told her family members that taking his life wasn’t worth it.

“At the end of the day, if you take his life, you got to live with with that regret of taking another person’s life. Even though he didn’t show no remorse for my cousin, but I can’t see nobody

doing spite for spite, and that's basically what it is. That makes you just as evil as the other person, the person that did it".

For folks that do in fact want to seek revenge, however, Roger says retaliation is easy.

"One thing I don't hear much about is in order to shoot someone, someone must have a gun.

These are supposed to be controlled items, well, there appears to be no control whatsoever. It has become a problem solving strategy to some people, that when you have a disagreement with somebody, you get angry and then you shoot or you stab them."

Before moving to Baltimore Marcus had never even touched a gun. "After two years of living here I had 6 guns", he said. "The fact that I have a history of using a gun means that my first thought is gona be to use a gun. Because if I get in the car with anything, I'm gona use it".

Roger says that "the availability of guns is very very disturbing. In communities where guns aren't cheap, they're very expensive, but there's apparently a very active gun trade that's going on that you hear very little about. Roger told me a story that shed new light on the availability of guns in Baltimore:

"when I worked at DJS [the Department of Juvenile Services] a kid told me about 'the neighborhood gun'. That there was a place that you could go, if you needed a gun, where you could go and get one and the only thing you had to do, is if you used ammunition you had to supply for ammunition. But it appears as if this is a common and regular practice that I found

extremely disturbing. He wouldn't tell me where it was or anything of that type. But it's intensified and gotten worse."

After Y's cousin was killed, "when I was in 11th grade, I went and bought a gun. First gun I ever bought I bought myself". I asked him where he got the gun and he laughed, "the same way we got the crack...really it's like government handouts!". When Roger approached the government at the State's attorney's forum on homicide about this issue he submitted "a question about where all these handguns come from". Shaking his head he told me he "got the vaguest answer I think anybody could give. And I don't know if he had index cards or something that said 'vague answers' but I literally felt he told me *nothing*".

Guns are easy to get and easy to use. Guns have become just as normal as chewing gum in Baltimore, and if chewing gum leaves stains on the pavement, so do guns. The blood of neighbors that people use to mark their territory is part of a tradition. Like Arthur said, these traditions are manipulative. The normalization of guns has left Marcus feeling "cold and desensitized to when people die". He says he doesn't let it get him down. "It's normal to lose a family member to prison or the streets, but that loss gets brought back into the community". According to Remi, "Baltimore is a desensitized city... people get killed but there is no shock behind that statement...like this is just what happens. People get killed here".

PART 5: NO FORMAL JUSTICE, NO INFORMAL PEACE

In April of 2015, around the same time that Rwanda remembers and commemorates the Genocide, Baltimore took to the streets to protest Freddie Gray's murder at the hands of Baltimore City police officers. The protests and actions that took place in those weeks have become known as the Baltimore Uprising; appropriately named for the number of people who rose up against police brutality and shook the iron cages of bureaucracy that protected unlawful law enforcement. I vividly remember marching from my own college's campus to another school nearby chanting, "No justice, no peace. No justice, no peace". We chanted this for hours. This battle cry confronted the formal systems of "justice" that were failing the people of Baltimore. In Rwanda I learned about a traditional justice system called Gacaca (which translates to "grass" and is pronounced [Gah-cha-cha]). Gacaca courts were used in pre-colonial Rwanda and phased out during decades of German and Belgian colonial rule. It wasn't until after the genocide that Gacaca courts reappeared and were formally recognized as judicial branches of the temporary government.

To properly explain the Gacaca courts would take a very long time and many more pages than I am qualified to write¹. Most basically, however, Gacaca was based on a traditional justice system that was completely decentralized, or not attached to "big governments". Instead of relying on judges, lawyers, and outdated laws, Gacaca courts were made up of citizens; all citizens who were affected by or witnessed a crime were expected to show up for Gacaca court hearings. These hearings would take place on the grass (like the name) and in broad daylight. They were facilitated by Gacaca judges, or "inyangamugayo" who were chosen as local leaders to serve on the nine-person court councils. Gacaca was not only intended to

serve justice to victims, but it worked to begin the long and difficult process of reconciliation².

Other versions of restorative justice systems such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission served to establish reconciliation through formal systems. Instead of relying on the government to initiate reconciliation, Rwandans took it upon themselves to admit to their crimes, talk to each other about the consequences, and as a community, determine the best course of action for each victim and each perpetrator. Over and over again I was told that "reconciliation cannot happen without justice". I was told that "unity is hard to reach but it must be used".

I was told by Bruno, whose wife and six children were killed and dumped in a pit latrine that "there is no peace without justice". After hearing Bruno and other Rwandese survivors' (and a few perpetrators) stories I had to reflect on my country's own justice system. Having already established the fact that there is no peace in Baltimore, I began to ask about justice. Although not everyone had a story about justice, every single person who participated in this project was able to tell me about their experiences with injustice.

There is an entire branch of the United States government dedicated to serving up justice throughout the country. Despite being rooted next door in Washington DC, the branches of the judiciary system don't seem to reach as far as Baltimore. Since the Constitution of the United States of America was written, Black folk have been excluded, in whole and in part (such as the 3/5ths Compromise) from the elite list of formal justice priorities.

Like Judge said earlier, the police "don't give a shit about homicides...". Rather than addressing the violence that tears through Baltimore City, the formal systems that precede formal justice "are doing more harm by doing what they're doing which is absolutely nothing",

says Judge. Formal systems of government are already willing to ignore homicides in Baltimore City. That being said, it makes sense for formal justice systems to ignore the homicides as well. Like other forms of genocide ideology, interactions with formal justice systems start as small infractions: One participant, Marcus, said that after his house had been robbed four times “the police just came and walked around and touched stuff”. Not once did they find the entrance where the robbers had been breaking in. After four failed attempts to seek formal justice procedures, Marcus called upon his neighbor. His neighbor simply walked up to the side door of the house and broke in using a credit card. Marcus changed the locks himself and hasn’t been bothered since. Knowing that he cannot rely on formal justice systems has changed the way that Marcus interacts with police officers, courts, and other formal structures.

When Marcus’ friend was murdered in jail during what he called a “gang fight”, Marcus wanted to tell his friend’s family the truth about his murder. “But you gotta keep the code of silence”, he said, “It’s normal to lose a family member or a friend to prison but you have to keep it moving and don’t get involved”. More often than not, people in Baltimore learn to “mind their own business” rather than get the authorities involved. Remi reminded me that “there’s a huge no snitching culture in Baltimore and so, even if people did see what happened they wouldn’t really say anything, which I understand”. She went on to tell me about the repercussions for snitching in her family: “Like my dad beat my sister for telling and told her not to be a tattletale”. Her cousin’s murder was never brought to court, so it had no chance to be solved or resolved.

Even when a case *does* go to court the “no snitching” policy often leaves cases without any witnesses. Roger’s brother was killed accidentally by someone who he “knew very well”. In fact, Roger “knew his whole family” and some of his older siblings had been good friends.

“Our neighborhood guys witnessed this thing but wouldn’t go to court to testify about it so the guys that did it actually was never...well he went to court for it, he was arrested for it, but he was found not guilty and he moved to Arizona...He walked free.”

Remi’s cousin Sean was murdered a few years ago, but Roger’s brother was killed in 1962. The court systems have been segregated and unjust for a long time and they don’t appear to be changing. Roger told me that his brother’s killer came to court with an alibi.

“A fella that he worked for, a Caucasian gentleman said ‘well he couldn’t have done it because he was with me’ and that wasn’t the truth. But at that time...you had several other people to testify but the main witness, the guy he was shooting at, (not Roger’s brother) had a criminal record. And then you have this Caucasian gentleman come in and he testified, so it turned into a credibility issue and so they believed the Caucasian gentleman and the man walked free.”

Roger’s brother was killed in the crossfire of another attempted murder. Although his brother’s killer had witnesses testify against him, the main witness, who was White, got the last word. I waited while Roger scoured his memory for a follow up to his story: “Mohammed Ali used to say, ‘If you have the complexion you can make the connection to get the protection”.

But what would happen if you didn't "have the complexion...to get the protection"? Would you still be protected under the formal justice system? According to Shirley, engaging with formal justice systems is riskier than suffering through the consequences of a crime. "When it comes down to the police protection you, if you a witness or something, you be better off not saying anything...The government don't give you enough protection, so witness protection is not a place that you wanna be." Shirley has had friends under witness protection programs who have their names changed, whose addresses are changed, and yet, "at the end of the day your face is still the same".

As far as Shirley's testimony is concerned, Baltimore's unofficial "no snitching" policy makes a lot of sense.

"I'm not going to set myself up like that. I will let somebody else do it because I got to think about my life, and not only that but all those around me. I got to think about my family members and their lives too. So I can't set myself up for a situation that I know is going to jeopardize someone else."

Keeping the code of silence, as Marcus said, is not something arbitrary. The "no snitching" policy does not protect gang members or encourage illegal activity, rather it is a direct response to being threatened by the very systems that are supposed to protect you.

¹ Bromley, R. 2009. "After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?: Cultural Representations of Reconciliation in Rwanda." *French Cultural Studies* 20(2):181-97.

² Kanyangara, Patrick, Bernard Rimé, Pierre Philippot, and Vincent Yzerbyt. 2007. "Collective Rituals, Emotional Climate and Intergroup Perception: Participation in "Gacaca" Tribunals and Assimilation of the Rwandan Genocide." *Journal of Social Issues* 63(2):387–403.

PART SIX: REACTIONS TO VIOLENT DEATH

The violence that occurs in Baltimore and the violence that took place during genocide in Rwanda are not comparable. Although the rates of homicide in Baltimore are staggering and on the rise, they cannot be compared to the mass slaughter of the 1994 genocide. What strikes a chord between these two places, however, is the human experience of grief. Just like everyone who lives must die, everyone who survives them must grieve. In some ways, grief can be a unifying experience; bringing families and friends closer together as they cope with their loss. In other ways grief has the potential to separate families and friends in the frenzy of complex emotions following the death of a loved one¹. Grieving for murder victims and genocide victims each have their own set of unique challenges. The way that people find out that their loved one was killed and how the formal authorities respond to the death make a huge impact on the way people grieve². In the case of homicide, family members are often targeted by the police as the first suspects³. Many family members are also required to identify the body of their loved one at the morgue, as was the case for Roger:

“I went there in the morgue to identify his body, and uh, because they called and needed somebody to do it, and he was the brother that was next in age to me. I went there in the morgue, and I will never forget that, he was treated very badly. They had this guy down there eatin’ a sandwich and they had bodies all over the place. This guy he couldn’t find the body so he went from gurney to gurney, pulling up sheets and saying ‘is this him?, ‘is this him?’ and of course it wasn’t, so at that point, it gives you some hope that this is some kind of mistake, and so as I was leaving, I noticed his boot under one of the sheets and I said, ‘could you pull...could

you check this one?’ and then he pulled this sheet up, and it was him. And so then your hope that went up suddenly gets dashed back down.”

This false hope is similar to the experience that Bruno had when he said that, “if you have not seen them killed you sometimes still think your people are alive.” Because Roger had not been there when his brother was killed he held onto the hope that he may have still been alive. The way that his brother’s body was treated has left permanent scars in Roger’s memory of his brother. His grief began suddenly and unexpectedly. As if to kick someone while they are down, his experience at the morgue struck yet another blow at Roger’s heart, and traumatizing him in ways that he “will never forget”.

“I never forget, I went and sat in the car, my other brother went with me and he decided he wanted to spend some time with his self and walk out, he was going to walk back home or he was going to catch the bus or whatever, and so I went out and sat in the car and I felt alright. And then suddenly, started to cry uncontrollably and I just couldn’t believe it. And I don’t know if I’ve ever gotten over that?”

Roger’s experience at the morgue was traumatic, to say the least. Survivors of homicide victims are often exposed to their loved one’s corpse at the morgue. On metal gurneys under fluorescent lighting, survivors are supposed to be able to look at their deceased loved one in the face and calmly respond with a “yes, this is my loved one” or “no, you have the wrong body”. Either way, these formal procedures of official identification are triggering and traumatic

experiences for many survivors. The image of their loved one transforms into the permanent and dehumanized state of cold dead flesh that they must look at directly. Grief stricken and shocked, this may be the last time a survivor sees their loved one.

Roger's grief experience with having to identify his brother's body in Baltimore is mirrored by Al's in Rwanda. To refresh our memories, Al had "a mom, dad, and seven sisters" who were all killed during the genocide. In 2014 the Rwandese government began exhuming bodies from a mass grave at the bottom of Akana, a large hill. The bodies were retrieved and identified by the clothing they were found with.

"The second I saw my mother's body, I ran like a madman down to the grave and was not really a person for about two hours. I couldn't know what was going on."

Al was so upset at the sight of his mother's body that he couldn't remember what four of his sisters had been wearing when they were killed. He tried desperately to remember but was paralyzed from the trauma he experienced after recognizing his mother's body. Among other survivors, Al washed his family's bones. They were buried the next day, this time, in dignity.

In the process of identifying their loved ones' remains both Roger and Al were overwhelmed by emotion. Their words sound like echo chambers of grief, bouncing off of experiences that we all hope to avoid. When it is impossible to avoid trauma, however, how do survivors cope with grief? In many ways, the extraordinary circumstances that lead to this type of death require extraordinary grief. The next section explores the ways in which individual people, formal, and informal structures each respond to violent death in Baltimore and

Rwanda. The process of grieving for a loved one's murder begins with trauma and is riddled with challenges that enforce stereotypes and perpetuate genocide ideology. Survivors are faced with a mountain of potentially traumatic events that postpone and work against their grief processes.

When someone is killed in Baltimore, the police are immediately notified. If it occurred publicly, they rush to the scene and block it off from spectators, media, and family members who might interfere with their investigation. The body is then brought to the hospital or morgue at which point family members are supposed to be notified. In certain cases, like Roger's, family members are required to make a positive identification of a body. These identifications take place in a morgue and can be incredibly traumatic. If the victim dies in the hospital, like Phyllis' son Malcolm, the State of Maryland may still retain the body for further investigation. When Phyllis first saw Malcolm at the hospital he was almost unrecognizable.

"That was just the most disgusting thing, I just didn't even know my own son...Because he was so swollen. His head was so swollen like somebody just actually took a brick and decided to hit him over top of his head...my son's teeth was kicked out his mouth. You could see where he was grabbing, where all his fingernails was broke off trying to defend himself. Malcolm nose was broke and this is kind of graphic, but people need to see this."

Phyllis brought out a folder filled with photographs of Malcolm's body. I sat quietly, mostly because I was frozen in my position on the couch.

“Now this is Malcolm’s autopsy report. So this is Malcolm, of course, this doesn’t look like him. Tell me this really looks like my son?”

I couldn’t tell her that.

Across the room and facing the sofa was a huge poster of Malcolm; smiling and handsome wearing a red shirt, he looked nothing like person in the autopsy photographs. Phyllis had been alone with Malcolm at the hospital for two days while he was in a coma.

“So he was there from the 26th and he passed on the 28th and my heart is sitting there having to bury my 19 year old son...I already knew I wasn’t going to make arrangements for Malcolm in a week because by it being happening in Cumberland (the prison) they had to do the investigation, then they put a flag on Malcolm to hold his body and it was just a mess...”

The hospital, the State of Maryland, and the police were all interested in investigating Malcolm’s death to make sure that they were not liable. They thoroughly ignored Phyllis and even tried to keep her away from her son as he was dying. She got angry when they began to investigate Malcolm’s body while he was technically still alive. Phyllis was almost made to believe that the hospital could keep her from being with Malcolm, but she stood up for herself.

“They tried to lock me up at the hospital but it didn’t work. Because I was gona let em. I was gona let ‘em lock me up because that’s what they was gona have to do.”

When Malcolm passed, Phyllis decided to donate his organs. Because his body had been so deformed, she was worried that she would need to have a closed-casket funeral. Luckily, a local funeral home director assured her that she would “get that swelling off of him” so that Malcolm could be presented in an open casket before his funeral.

“The morning of the funeral I was just; ‘I cannot go. I can’t do this. I can’t put down and bury my son.’ but I got it together and went.”

Although Phyllis refused to sit down for any part of Malcolm’s funeral, she says that the funeral home “really did a tremendous job on my son. He was open. Even though he had to wear a hat but he was open and it turned out pretty well”.

The cost of keeping Malcolm’s body flagged as evidence was paid for by the state, but Phyllis still had to wait for over a week to bring her son’s body to a funeral home. The emotional cost of postponing somebody’s grief process cannot be quantified, measured, or compared. In Rwanda, many people are still waiting to bury their loved ones. The response to prolonged grief in Rwanda has been addressed by the government⁴, who gives money to survivors so that they can bury their loved ones, no question asked, in dignity. The importance

of burial in both Rwanda and Baltimore speaks to the human need to grieve in culturally appropriate ways.

In Rwanda, the culture surrounding burials and funerals has changed in response to genocide. Happy, who is the manager of a genocide memorial says that “memorialization is a new concept to Rwanda. We learned through doing and we have had to set the standards for ourselves and also made some new standards.” Before genocide, funerals were more individualized. People were buried close to home and their family members were taken care of by the community. “Genocide has taken over the individual way of burying someone”, says Happy. “Individual grief is disappearing, which is positive for the current needs of people here right now, but it will revert back, it must.”

Happy knows firsthand about the value and importance of burial. He says that through burial, people begin to construct their own narratives about grief, “When you know something, the truth about it, you develop a behavior to help you with it. You have a straight way.” But what if you are not given the resources to make a “straight way”? With rising rates of homicide and rising rates of funeral costs⁵, many families are not able to provide their loved ones (or themselves) with culturally appropriate funerals.

While interviewing Remi about her cousin Sean’s funeral, she remembered how difficult it was for her family to pay for it. Even though she was in middle school, she did not have the luxury of ignoring her family’s financial situation. “I don’t remember it that well”, she says, “but it was like a cheap funeral. He didn’t have life insurance. People had to scrape together money to get the stuff”. They also had Sean’s funeral at her grandmother’s church, “but I don’t feel like he

would have liked that. I feel like we should have had an outside service or something like that because he like to take walks". Remi knew Sean better than anybody, and she is convinced that even though Sean was buried, he wasn't attended to or celebrated in a way that was respectful of his personality or identity. Remi told me that her "godmom says that sin is action without love". Sean's funeral certainly *happened*; the family took action to make sure that he was buried, but Remi is stuck with the painful feeling that action was taken without love. In some ways, having an improper or incomplete burial adds to the mountain of grief that survivors experience.

Phyllis, who works as an advocate and activist for Mothers of Murdered Sons (or MOMS) says that funeral expenses are one of the most difficult things to manage after a loved one is murdered.

"A lot of MOMS that's raising kids and they don't have no money to bury these kids. They don't have the money! And it's not because 'she poor', or 'she this', and 'she that'...people are struggling!"

Phyllis is right. The majority of homicide victims in Baltimore are Black men under the age of 35. When they are killed or incarcerated an average of 10 people are left to suffer directly from the loss⁶. Linda, who is a survivor and advocate says that "if it's a bread-winner that was killed then you are just putting people out of support". In communities all around the world, families are expected to honor the dead to the best of their ability. In Baltimore, where murders are featured on public television, funerals often become public knowledge. From

working with other MOMS, Phyllis knows that “if you got more than one [murder victim in the family], it’s just too much. So now you don’t have money to bury this kid and everybody going to talk bad about you”. The social cost of burying a murder victim often outweighs the financial burden that funerals put on families. Many families will go into extreme debt to pay for a decent burial, knowing that they would otherwise be gossiped about or cut off from critical community members.

The State of Maryland provides financial support to families of homicide victims, but only under very specific circumstances⁷. When I looked on the website for the State Attorney’s office it took me fifteen minutes and countless clicks to find the actual paperwork needed to file for the CICB (Criminal Injuries Compensation Board). Once I finally found the paperwork, I was disgusted by how many ways a victim could be deemed ineligible for compensation. In order to be eligible, the family member has to prove that CICB is their last resort. They suggest that “all other reimbursement options must be exhausted” before CICB pays anything. A family would be ineligible for compensation if the CICB thinks that “the victim contributed to their injury; the victim initiated, consented to, provoked, or failed to avoid a confrontation with the offender”. This means to say that if the murder victim could be blamed for their own death in any way, family members are not eligible for compensation. Applicants may also be ineligible if “the victim was participating in a crime or delinquent act” when they were killed. A “delinquent act” could be anything from trespassing, to loitering, to drug dealing. There is no way to fight against these “claims of ineligibility”, so many families are denied support from their last resort. As Linda, who works as a family advocate told me,

“If the victim contributed to his or her death in any way then the family would be denied funeral support for expenses. And it’s been my argument with that particular agency since I’ve been in the field for over 20 plus years, that it’s not the survivor’s fault and that we should not [blame them]. You know, the victim is dead, and it’s the survivors who are having to pick up and create these burials and urns and kind of stuff so I always feel it’s unfair that there is a line or a sentence in that law to be able to really reap benefits from that particular program.”

As I listened to Linda, who became angry and frustrated while telling me this, I too became angry and frustrated. It was hard to believe just how far the government agencies would go to deny victims of any support. Listening to Linda I tried to imagine seeking help from the government. It felt like going to the doctor for stitches only to be poked, prodded, and sent home bleeding. While interviewing Happy at the genocide memorial, he told me that “how you deal with grief depends on the value you give to the life of the victim”. From what I can tell, Baltimore doesn’t have a single penny to spare for people that grieve for homicide victims.

We continued talking and Linda told me that “there is still the stigma always attached to homicide; the blaming, you know how it’s always the victim’s fault that somehow they’re killed”. Thinking back to the newspapers I read everyday I remembered how many murder victims were lumped into categories of blame. Some were gang members, others were buying drugs, and sometimes, being in the wrong place at the wrong time is enough of an excuse to blame someone for their own murder. As Linda said, “that is what sometimes prevents people

from reaching out for support because they're embarrassed, you know, afraid that they're going to be attacked or blamed".

These attacks of blame come from formal structures like CICB as well as informal systems like neighborhood communities. Either way, word travels fast and reputations are much easier to ruin than repair. "Survivors, you know, sometimes feeling responsible even if their child was never out there doing something negative", said Linda, "feel it's a reflection on them, so you know, again, they are scared to reach out or feeling that 'I'm going to be judged because of what my child was doing'...I think too, the misconception is that sometimes people are in the wrong place at the wrong time; that they were not doing anything that contributed to their homicide but yet I think people tend to look for the negative first".

Some people would call this "disenfranchised grief", or telling someone both directly or indirectly that their loved one is not worth grieving for, that their grief is not valid, or that their pain is not acceptable to others⁸. Disenfranchised grief affects people who try to grieve for losses that society does not view as important. To this end, survivors of homicide victims often experience disenfranchised grief at the hands of formal structures, like CICB when they refuse to pay for funeral expenses, and through informal interactions with friends and family, like Remi's grandmother's response to Sean's murder.

When people aren't given the chance to grieve for the murder of a loved one, they may go through all kinds of complicated feelings. Remi said that after Sean's murder she felt weighed down by the grief she wasn't allowed to share.

“I guess the weight is anger, it’s regret, it’s...I don’t know, I feel like someone that’s killed, there’s just more negative emotions tied to that person’s death. It’s just more heavy. Heavy feelings”.

After Sean was shot “we didn’t really talk about it”, said Remi. Her words reminded me of Roger’s experience with grief and growing up in Baltimore. After Roger’s brother was killed, “people tell you just to get over it. And so you kind of pick up and that’s the way it is and you move on.” Years later, Roger is still struggling to make up for times when he “dealt with grief by not dealing with it, always moving on to the next obstacle, the next barrier, being strong for someone else, and a lot of times really neglecting [himself] in the process”.

When Marcus experiences loss, he always offers his support to others. He says he is “so used to death that it’s a coping mechanism not to let yourself really grieve”. I asked him how that was possible and considered the times in my own life when I would have rather not been grieving but couldn’t help it. His advice was to “never have that attachment. When I got the phone call from the guys who didn’t get shot I wasn’t surprised”. Marcus told me he feels “cold and desensitized to when people die...I don’t let it get me down. It makes me stronger but not as sensitive”.

Shirley, who has been through multiple homicides told me how important it was for her to move on with her life despite her grief. “If you don’t know how to move on then that pain and that hurt is gona eat you up and you gona spend the rest of your life in pain and in hurt. Because you walking around with all this anger and everything while you don’t have no control

over what people do on the streets". Shirley's point speaks to the fact that grief is *normal*, but it's not *normalized*. Baltimore is a grieving city, but not everyone in Baltimore knows what grief really is or how to handle it in healthy ways.

Marcus says that "people talk about their grief in a retaliatory tone...like 'we gona get them'. They grieve through the pain by honoring the deceased person through violence. It gets exhausting having to 'get this person' and 'do him like this', that and the third". Marcus wasn't the only person who spoke about retaliation and anger through grief. In fact, it seems like a pretty common response. Shirley said that "when you kill somebody you mark where you killed them at with blood, you making a statement. And they do that, like this is what we done. And most of the time when somebody does that, it's in retaliation".

To make more sense of this, I spoke with Judge. Having been born and raised in Baltimore, he has dedicated his life to teenagers whose parents, siblings, and other loved ones have been murdered.

"A lot of people are not familiar with and have never heard of grief and loss. They never knew that their grief and loss was tied to why they are isolated. They need to know why they are failing school at this time, they need to know why they are so angry, they need to know why certain things are not going to happen because they are not proactive at this time. If they are aware, it's called exposure, it will help. It's a hidden secret because nobody wants to talk about it, but not only that, they don't *know* anything about it. It's already normal, they're just not informed."

Just as we began thinking about this project, Y told me I was brave. He considered me brave because I was willing to learn about grief and feel it as opposed to being numb to it. Personally, I didn't feel brave at all. I couldn't help but feel these things and I was lucky enough to have been educated on some of the basics. Judge said that "some people will do certain things about their anger before they get the education part of grief and loss, so once they are informed, hopefully they can live from that information and not make the same mistakes about being so angry that they will have to kill another motherfucker".

People are angry for all kinds of reasons, and they are mostly very reasonable. But as Judge told me, "the cost of that loved one [being killed] might be a different anger...one through violence. The anger at the perpetrator and the way they got gone". Giving people the opportunity to understand their grief seems to be one of the only ways to reduce the risk of recidivism.

"You show them what the cycle is and how it is not beneficial for them, and you empower a family by doing that."

I nodded thinking back to Y's question: "Why do people in Baltimore kill each other?" I still couldn't answer his question, but Judge offered me this:

"You have to show them [survivors] what the resources are and how to break the cycle of violence and then you allow them to make the change. But you got to inform them, you got to

expose them, and you can't just tell them to go and break it. You got to show them a history, where it started, how they are fitting in, why they are living the way they are living, why your income is the way it is, the whole nine. You have to be able to hit the whole nine yards."

I hope that some of the folks who read these stories get the chance to see the history, where it all started, how they fit in, and ultimately, how they can help to break the cycles of violence.

Among his many teachings, Reverend Bill has shown me the power of witnessing. By listening deeply and being attentive to *people*, Bill brings to light an important possibility: Only when we connect with others and see them as *people* (more than just "victims", "perpetrators", "outsiders", etc.) are we able to change the ways we think about and interact with systems.

Maybe, just maybe, if more people understood "the whole nine", Judge wouldn't have as much explaining to do.

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PART SEVEN: NEVER AGAIN

Although April is rainy season in Rwanda, it is also genocide commemoration period. The theme or objective of each year's commemoration period (also called *Kwibuka*) changes, but maintains the goal for a unified vision of a world where genocide "never happens again". Kwibuka period is marked by the silver and grey ribbons people wear on their dresses and lapels throughout April. There are memorials and burials held throughout the country that commemorate specific regions affected by genocide. In Kigali, the capital city, you can purchase bracelets and t-shirts that read "Never Again". The mantra of "Never Again" is a powerful one. It acknowledges the past while encouraging people to actively participate in preventing a history that could easily repeat itself.

Earlier this year, at the end of February, I was invited to participate in a protest that was organized by M.O.M.S. (Mothers of Murdered Sons). I had two interviews that afternoon and was worried I wouldn't make it on time. Luckily, one of my interviewees had been planning to attend the protest herself, so Linda and I made sure we got there in time. We assembled on the steps of War Memorial Plaza in Downtown Baltimore and waited for people to show up. Initially, there were only a few people there. Some of the M.O.M.S. had t-shirts with pictures of their loved ones on them and other family members wore pins. There were signs written in red and black that read, "Enough is Enough".

As more and more people filled the steps of War Memorial Plaza, I began to feel the shiver of excitement that entices crowds and mobilizes collective action. The shiver grew and a cry rang out; one of the women shouted, "Enough is Enough" and looked at us knowingly. I swiveled my head and got goose bumps. Everyone who had gathered on the steps of the plaza

echoed her and began chanting, “Enough is Enough. Enough is Enough”. I got the courage to join in and blend my voice with the powerful wall of words we were creating. The media showed up and began to broadcast the demonstration. One of the leaders and speakers at the demonstration began to address the news crew. He talked about why we had organized the demonstration, and even used the word “genocide” to describe the urgency with which the city should respond. I have been introduced to a truth I cannot ignore; there is genocide ideology in Baltimore. In Rwanda, we say “Never Again”. In Baltimore, we shout “Enough is Enough”.

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