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Community Voice Magazine - Putting Pressure on Wounds; How to Help and Restore Hope in Turbulent Times

East Tennessee State University, Office of Equity and Inclusion

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COMMUNITY VOICES

Helping People Hear Each Other...
One Story at a Time



Title: Putting Pressure on Wounds;
How to Help and Restore Hope
in Turbulent Times

**Publication
Date:** April, 2023

Read Inside:

MMIWG...Step up and correct this long term social epidemic-protect indigenous women and girls!

This Means War...read about our local LGBTQ+ neighbors who are staring down the barrels of erasure and genocide.

Control is the Goal...Learn about the troubling and racialized history of the police in the United States.

Volume One
Issue Four

A woman in traditional Cherokee dress, including a beaded necklace and a patterned shawl, stands against a dark background. The image is semi-transparent, serving as a background for the text.

Land Acknowledgement:

ETSU is a community of educators and learners residing on the ancestral homeland of the Cherokee, also known as the Tsalagi people.

The Cherokee constituted one of the largest politically integrated tribes at the time of European colonization of the Americas.

At the time of their forced removal, the Cherokee numbered some 50,000 individuals who controlled 40,000 square miles of the Appalachian Mountains, in parts of present-day Georgia, east Tennessee, western North and South Carolina, and northeast Alabama.

Over the years, the tribe lost many of its people to wars and to diseases brought by the settlers. Many of the Cherokee people walked the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma. And those who stayed here, now reside in western North Carolina, and are known as the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

Our hope is that this acknowledgment serves as a reminder to all of us to recognize how we came to be here today, and to honor those who were here before us.

And it is a call to action for us to care for the land on which our campus resides.

Consistent with our commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, understanding the historical and current experiences of people who are Indigenous to this land, which many call Turtle Island, will help inform the work we do.

Written by,

Dr. Adrianna Guram & Dr. Deti Thibeault

This issue is dedicated to anyone forced to live in fear of: erasure, death, or even worse things. We love you. We will protect and cherish you!



A note from The Editor:



Dear Reader,

Welcome back to our fourth issue of Community Voices!

If you have been with us since our first publication last May, then thank you for staying!

If you are new to the initiative, then we are so very glad you are here!

During production last year we learned about systemic problems that have shaped our society into a terrifying place to live...a place which visibly, often ostentatiously, fails to serve, cherish or protect millions of marginalized people.

And as we learn about the flaws in our systems, we can begin to understand how profoundly being Christian, being white, and being a heterosexual male are the main qualities our culture was specially designed to serve.

Our society is exclusionary by design to anyone who does not fit the Christian, white, straight, male demographic.

However, this understanding is not an indictment of the founders and architects of our nation. Instead, this understanding can function as a beginning to long term problem solving in the United States.

And I hope you will work to understand exactly what white privilege is and has always been for us here.

In short, a white person in our system cannot experience being misplaced because of their race. But they can struggle enormously because of other factors that might intersect to compromise them such as gender and poverty.

And it's time to unpack all of that.

Our neighbors need our help. It's time to change our thinking about what a calm, safe, well-functioning society is. We cannot build such a place for ourselves on foundations of bigotry, hate, fear; or by using religion as a weapon.

Our stories have the power to soothe and save us. And we need your voice! Please contact me with story ideas or any concerns or questions at cloyde@etsu.edu

Thank you for reading!

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Strong Cloyd
Managing Editor

Contributing Authors:



Mildred F. Perreault

Mildred F. “Mimi” Perreault (Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor of Media and Communication at East Tennessee State University. Perreault teaches media and communication courses at the undergraduate level, and graduate students in the Brand and Media Strategy Program. Perreault has researched public relations practitioners, local journalists, and citizen scientists as both stakeholders and disaster communicators. After working as a journalist and public relations professional in Washington, DC, and South Florida she sees the role of the local journalist during a natural disaster as one that can engage community response and build community resilience. Perreault has published numerous books chapters and academic articles in *Disasters*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Health Communication*, *Journalism Practice*, *Games and Culture*, *Communication Studies*, and *Journalism Education*. Perreault has a M.A. in Communication Culture and Technology from Georgetown University, and a B.A. in Journalism and Public Relations from Baylor University.

Daryl A. Carter

Daryl A Carter (Ph.D.) is Associate Dean for Equity and Inclusion in the College of Arts & Sciences, Director of the Black American Studies program, and a tenured, Full Professor of History at East Tennessee State University. He has been at ETSU since 2008. Dr. Carter is a political historian. He examines the intersection of politics, race, gender, and class. Dr. Carter’s first book is *Brother Bill: President Clinton and The Politics of Race and Class*, published by the University of Arkansas Press in 2016. Dr. Carter holds a B.S. in Political Science and M.A. in History from East Tennessee State University. He earned his Ph.D. in American history at The University of Memphis.



Production and *Support Staff:*

Dr. Keith Johnson,

Vice President, ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion

Dr. Chassidy Cooper,

Coordinator, ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion

Kim Maturo,

Office Coordinator, ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion

Photographer

Ron Campbell, ETSU graduate and ETSU, UMC photographer

Graphic Designer

Maheen Pulak, Graduate assistant, ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion

Managing Editor

Elizabeth Cloyd, Writer, editor, adjunct instructor, and Office of Equity & Inclusion
Volunteer

Web Coordinator

Sherry Martinez, Web Technology Services, ETSU

Cover Art contributed by,

Starr Sario, [@Starr Sario Photography](https://www.instagram.com/Starr_Sario_Photography)

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**MMIWG- Missing
and Murdered
Indigenous
Women and Girls,
is a deadly and
silent epidemic;
learn what
some regional,
indigenous activists
and true-crime
podcasters are
doing to help**

Written by,
Elizabeth Clouyd



From left to right: Sheyahshe Littledave, Maggie Jackson, and Ahli-sha Stephens

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“We are three indigenous women who have full time jobs elsewhere, who are full time moms, and we have spouses. And we dedicate our spare time to amplify the voices of these MIW cases,” Jackson explained. “We feel like it’s our responsibility to tell these stories as indigenous women so that we can help raise awareness.”

Since the dawn of time, indigenous women and girls have been hyper-sexualized, tokenized and taken from their homes and families. And most of them are never found, never saved, never seen, never heard and never held... ever again.

MMIWG is a worldwide problem.

Here in the United States the loss of these stolen sisters continues to cause inconsolable grief. And this multi-generational trauma passes on its immeasurable pain to all indigenous people.

Indigenous women may also suffer the ordeal of domestic violence. And they routinely experience enormously disproportionately lower access to social resources and services compared to their black, brown or white counterparts in society.



While living in a culture designed to erase them, indigenous women and girls are forced to find a way to cope with the fact that many men will be their predator. This lethal predilection has a long history and it is an epidemic that has remained practically invisible...until now.

Three members of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians are working hard to raise awareness of this long-term and profoundly complex social problem. Maggie Jackson, Sheyahshe Littledave, and Ahli-sha "Osh" Stephens all co-host a true-crime podcast entirely dedicated to MMIWG called, "We are Resilient."

And there is a profound lack of data available on these crimes. "That's part of the issues that we cover is that there is no tracking system for just how many cases are out there," Jackson explained. "So, the United States Department of Justice passed legislation to create a task force. However, that task force has never been implemented."

And the effort to correct this information deficit is on a painfully slow roll. "The 2016 report done by the Department

of Justice reported around 5,716 cases, but that did not encompass a lot of the cases due to racial misclassification, lack of reporting, and jurisdictional issues. So that report was not entirely accurate. And that report has not been repeated since," Jackson said.

Jackson and Littledave both explained how some stand alone agencies do more data collection on their own. But it's just grass roots efforts to try to determine the numbers of the issue. More help is needed.

However, help may be on the way. "And what we have read a lot of is that individual states are trying to put together these task forces just to get an idea of how prevalent MMIW cases are in their state. So there's information out there, but it's a lot of digging and a lot of research," Littledave explained.

MMIW is a daunting and long term problem. But you can push back against this epidemic right now. Start by getting the real scoop on the situation. "I think the first thing that would be helpful for people to realize is how prevalent it is. A lot of people don't realize how many cases are out there," Jackson explained.

Next, do the learning and inner work as a colonizer to humanize your indigenous neighbors. "The biggest thing society could do to raise awareness and potentially eliminate this problem is to humanize indigenous people in our society. And give them the voice that they give everyone else."

And speak up. Normalize open and continuous conversations about these stolen sisters. "Most of the time when we do presentations talking about MMIW we do get asked a lot what people can do to help. And we always say, 'Start the conversation because the reason this is a silent epidemic is because people don't talk about it,'" Littledave recalled.

You can also help reverse this terrible trend by looking realistically at intersectionality and the many ways systemic racism contributes to these tragedies. "I think it's important to see the disparities between when a person of color goes missing compared to when a not-colored person goes missing," Littledave clarified.

"So we prioritize that when we do presentations because a lot of times they don't hear about the numerous cases that are out there. But if we name two or three cases of a non-native woman they're very familiar with it."

Littledave and Jackson explained how labor camps out west are largely populated by male workers for fracking or pipeline work. "These rural poverty ridden areas, where Indigenous women and girls become targets, have seen higher rates of sexual violence and human trafficking," they said.

And definitely don't play dress up. "I think when it comes to hyper-sexualization that always makes me think of Halloween with people dressing up in sexy Indian maiden costumes," Jackson said. "That is not how you would appreciate a culture. Turning our culture into a costume is just tokenizing who we are and a part of colonization."



From left to right: Sheyash Little, Maggie Jackson, and Ahli-sha Stephens

Indigenous men may also be the object of this purient point of view. "It's still prevalent today because it doesn't just happen to indigenous women and girls; it happens to men too," said Little. "There's a debate going on right now about Jason Mamo who is wearing traditional native Hawaiian dress."

And do your homework to better understand how much where MMIW crimes occur directly affects how they are processed and prioritized.

"With the podcast we are able to bring awareness to those jurisdictional issues because in the majority of the cases we cover there is always some kind of barrier there," Jackson clarified. "But a non-indigenous person committing a crime on a reservation is a completely different story and a different jurisdictional issue, so that is also a contributing factor to a lot of cases."

One case that has been waiting years for justice is the murder of Marie Walkingstick Pheasant. She was a member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians. She was killed on tribal land and her body was found in a burning vehicle. The brutality and severity of the case enlisted the involvement of the FBI.





And more helpful advice for future allies is as follows:

Learn more! “Maybe just educate yourself on all of the cases that you can. You know... hearing these women’s names and understanding their stories, learning who they were as people and why they were so important to their families and their culture and their community,” Jackson explained.

Be open to small steps having a huge impact. Increasing awareness of the issue is crucial to eventually resolving the problem. “We need people to talk about it because if people don’t understand the very core of the issue that we’re facing how do they get behind it?” Jackson queried.

“So, it’s just a lot of having conversations. It seems very minor, like there should be bigger steps happening. But I don’t think it’s (allyship) going to have as much impact unless people really feel and understand what indigenous women face today.”

Sit with the flaws in our system and be willing to unpack the bigotry that helped to create barriers for so many people. “Even in our society today people still skirt around the topic of systemic racism but it is still really prevalent today,” Littledave explained.

“And it’s not just (affecting) indigenous people. So I think that’s still a taboo topic and a lot of people like to pretend that it doesn’t exist in today’s society...but it does. And understanding that is a big piece to understanding why this happens to indigenous women.”

Online Resources:

<https://war-podcast.com/>

<https://mmiwn.com/missing%2Fmurdered-database/f/marie-walkingstick-pheasant>

“The FBI actually became involved and took over the investigation. So our local agency pretty much has no effect on the outcome,” Jackson clarified. “And due to the FBI investigating her case it has to be prosecuted by the Federal Attorney General.”

The Walkingstick case is suspected to be a domestic violence situation. And there is an official person of interest believed to be responsible for the crimes. But the podcasters are left with the strong the impression that until a confession is made by her killer no progress will occur.

The “We are Resilient” podcast will celebrate two years this summer. Both Jackson and Littledave remember deciding to create the platform in May of 2021 on the international day of MMIWG memorial, May 5.

“In just seeing the prevalence of these cases and us being true-crime podcast fans, we were questioning why there wasn’t a resource out there dedicated to all these cases,” they both said. “And instead of waiting for someone else to do it we said, ‘why don’t we do it?’” And that’s how it was born.”


The need for this project has paid itself back in full and the initiative continues to grow. “We are 60 episodes in and we have not even scratched the surface. So that just tells us how necessary this podcast was,” Jackson said.

#MMIW

National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women:

May 5th

Action Calling for justice!



**ARCH-
Appalachian
Regional Coalition
on Homelessness:
Point of view:
A discussion on
diversity and
intake from two
ETSU students
who are ARCH,
AmeriCorps
workers**

Written by,
Elizabeth Cloyd



From left to right: Laura Peapenburg and Bailey Norris

”

“ARCH is the lead agency for all of the providers that administer the homeless program. And our role as that lead is that we are tasked with implementing and carrying out a coordinated entry system; with the idea that we have to make it accessible to all and at every location,” explained Director, Anne Cooper.

In any town or city in this country you will see homeless people sitting on corners, sleeping in stairwells and alleys, hunkering under highway overpasses, or carrying their belongings to a safer, dryer, place.

We respond to the homeless in our towns in a myriad of ways from compassion to annoyance to disdain. But the number of people everywhere with housing insecurity is growing. And homelessness is a long term problem that requires complex, long term solutions.

This year, in 2023, the Appalachian Regional Coalition on Homelessness, ARCH is marking twenty years working in our region to help marginalized and displaced people find stability and permanent housing.

Aside from local churches, ARCH typically provides the first people and resources folks in this area encounter when they present with housing insecurity, food insecurity, unmet medical and mental health care needs, domestic violence crises and much more.

“ARCH is the lead agency for all of the providers that administer the homeless program. And our role as that lead is that we are tasked with implementing and carrying out a coordinated entry system; with the idea that we have to make it accessible to all and at every location,” explained Director, Anne Cooper.

For ARCH, diversity has always been a big part of the conversation while serving eight counties in our part of Appalachia. And practicing inclusivity is crucial in connecting displaced people with resources they need.

“We connect them with the benefits that are necessary to stabilize. We also connect them with mainstream benefits; those are benefits that you don’t have to be homeless to get. Those are things like food stamps, and social security and TennCare,” Cooper said.

Taking them in

Two AmeriCorps workers at ARCH who are also current ETSU students, Laura Peapenburg and Bailey Norris, shared some of their observations on the coordinated entry system that works like an emotionally sensitive survey during client intake.

“The intake actual process for us is more so a survey to figure out their current situation. And asking, ‘what are you comfortable telling us?’ What should we know to help you get the best help that you need?’ as well as answering questions that are required by (Housing and Urban Development) HUD,” Peapenburg explained.



Laura Peapenburg

Laura Peapenburg is pursuing Masters of Public Health with concentration in community health with focus on LGBTQ and HIV populations.

This intake process is typically brief. But many sensitive subjects can come up during the exchange. “Surveys can take at minimum 10 minutes per person; more so if they have a lot that they need to tell us, So, I’ve had interviews go like 10 minutes or a whole 30 minutes, and we have another 30 minutes of data entry afterward,” Peapenburg said.

“So if someone is unfamiliar with the intake process it takes a little bit longer. But if they have done intake before with one of our other community partners in the continuum of care they kind of know what we need to hear. You don’t want people to have to rehash their trauma over and over again during this intake.”

One of the biggest challenges to homelessness is the extreme shortage of affordable housing here. “I think there is a list of 450 people currently trying to find housing in one of our eight counties that we know of,” Norris explained. There’s a clear difference in our ability to find housing and (the number of) people that need housing in this area.”

Poverty is another severe challenge for the populations served by ARCH and AmeriCorps. The math is stark and simple. “The majority of the people who we see on any given day fall under the 30 percent of the average median income for the area; we’re seeing less than 15,000 dollars a year and even...most of them have no income at all,” Peapenburg explained

The continuum of care and resources ARCH connects people with also offers a program for homelessness prevention. “It focuses on making sure that people aren’t evicted or able to pay utility bills because it can happen so quickly-especially if you are in section eight housing because if you fall out of (paying) a utility bill and your electricity get’s turned off (then) you get kicked out immediately,” Peapenburg explained.



Bailey Norris

Bailey Norris currently an honors history student at ETSU, they are pursuing a Masters in social work at the University of Buffalo this fall.

And it takes more than brick and mortar to make a house a home. “Like our older folks want to stay in some sort of housing where they can have their animals and have their grandkids come over,” Norris clarified. “But that is not something we have readily available, specifically in Johnson City that’s affordable. “

Norris and Peapenburg explained how increasing awareness of ARCH is crucial in allowing them to succeed as a point of entry to access the wide variety of resources people may need.

“I know we are in quite a few resource packets, but also specifically at the department of human services they do mention us by name and give our contact information,” they said. “And we do the same during intake because we’re not able to give them money on the spot or apply them for these services.”

Cooper, Norris and Peapenburg all agreed on the need for more first-hand information on the homeless experience. They hope

to circulate more surveys for data collection and attract board members who have lived through homelessness themselves.

“Personally I have never experienced homelessness. I could be on a board but it’s not going to give all that information and experience that we need. We need all of this data to be able to understand and help without speaking for the people who are experiencing it,” Peapenburg said.

We also discussed how profoundly COVID has changed the world, especially for marginalized people. “The world is not the same anymore. Transit is not the same. Healthcare is not the same. The availability of housing is not the same, job availability is not the same; it’s all a different world post COVID,” Norris said.

Job loss during the pandemic caused many people to lose their homes. And the isolation and uncertainty during lockdown created spikes in tension and violence...especially on the streets. “So you want to get them off the streets and we’re specifically doing intakes of people fleeing domestic violence and a lot of times even shelters in this area aren’t a good place for them to be,” said Norris.



Empathy and sensitivity are greatly needed to better serve the traumatized and compromised. “I’ve had a few intakes where women and some men even will say that they have been sexually assaulted while they were living on the street. So it’s also making sure that you are gentle with taking in that information and knowing that in this post COVID world their healthcare may never be the same,” Norris clarified.

Working at ARCH offers emotionally satisfying, feel good moments. But it can also be a bittersweet experience when someone’s problems can’t be fixed. “So, you hear a lot of very difficult stories going through this service and asking people to describe what happened. You feel for them...a lot,” said Peapenburg.

“We recently had an elderly man who had lost his wife and then was facing homelessness. So it’s heartbreaking and you want to do everything you can to help. But at the same time knowing there is actually only so much that you can do makes this work difficult sometimes.”

How you can help

Funding and financial assistance are always welcome. But powerful parts of the homelessness problem rest in our society and how we think about this issue.

“We are able to take donations. I think it becomes more and more complicated because these are systemic issues and systemic problems,” said Peapenburg. “Having funding does not necessarily fix the larger problem. The help is nice. The funding is great. But these larger systemic issues will continue to happen unless we face them.”

Become more aware of this issue in your community. Look for ways you might help people in this region change the way they think about homelessness as a first major step in solving this sweeping, societal problem. Our neighbors need our empathy and understanding.

“And oftentimes the reality is that most people are two paychecks away from being homeless at any given moment,” Norris said.

The importance of diversity at ARCH cannot be overstated. “So in this work it is not appropriate to choose who you help based on demographics,” Peapenburg explained. “And we want to focus on that the people we are trying to help are represented in our office as well because that matters.”

Cooper, Peapenburg, Norris emphasized how the way a person thinks about this work greatly affects how well they can do it. “So it’s really important going through this work that we lead with diversity, equity and inclusion because you leave people behind otherwise. I’m not going to push someone aside because they need a little help,” they said

So, open your mind and tell people about ARCH wherever you can. “And making sure that people know that we are here is one of the first steps to actually being able to help people,” said Peapenburg.

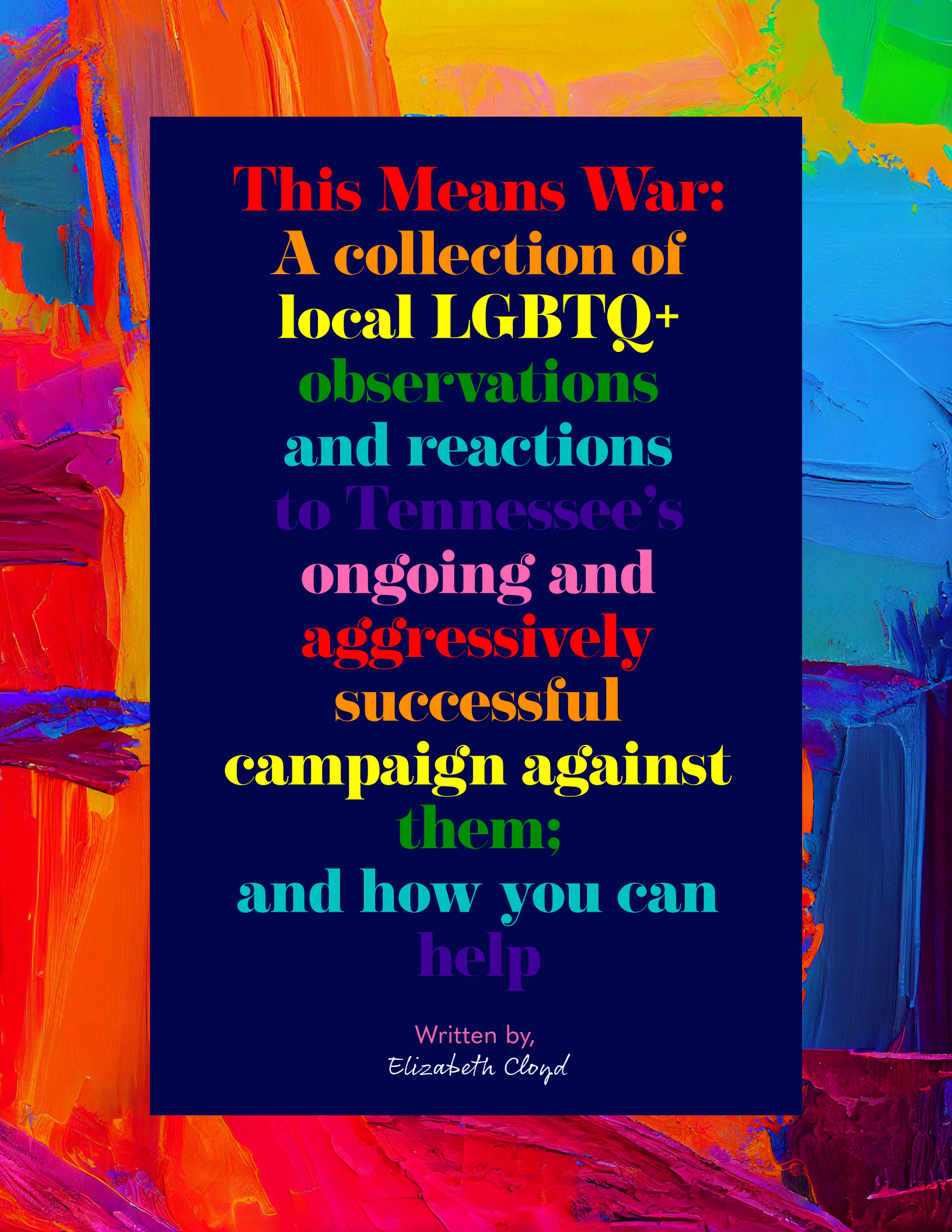
Laura Peapenburg is pursuing Masters of Public Health with concentration in community health with focus on LGBTQ and HIV populations.

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Learn more at:

Facebook- [ARCHjohnsoncitytn](#)

Website- www.archjctn.org



This Means War:
A collection of
local LGBTQ+
observations
and reactions
to Tennessee's
ongoing and
aggressively
successful
campaign against
them;
and how you can
help

Written by,
Elizabeth Cloyd



In the last few years and most especially during the first few months of 2023, LGBTQ+ communities in Tennessee have been experiencing new and steadily increasing legal restrictions. And all that legal activity has made daily living much more stressful and much more difficult for these already marginalized people.

“From my personal daily perspective it does make it hard waking up every day wondering what new laws are going to be put in place and how I have to navigate them,” explained Bethanie Dye, Coordinator of the ETSU Pride Center.

These new laws represent an enormous amount of hatred and fear in their ultra-conservative clapback. “There are reactionary laws where violence against us can be legal. And that’s scary. And seeing that there is so much support for that kind of violence is scary,” Dye said.

And the stresses and threats these legal changes create vary widely among different LGBTQ+ people’s experiences. But everyone in these communities is now significantly more unsafe in our society.

“And even I, as a pansexual, non-binary person- there’s a lot of privilege that I have,” Dye explained. “So, even though I am in the community they (restrictions) don’t hit as hard as they do for other people.”

Dye further discussed how their marriage and appearance could definitely allow them to pass as a wife in a white hetero-normative couple. And sadly, this misperception often works to keep them safe.

“And even though it’s an incorrect perception it does protect me. And knowing on days I do present as less feminine- you always have to be very aware in every aspect of your day to day life because your safety is in question,” they explained.

And the data as well as the science behind these reactionary laws are flawed or quite literally non-existent. “There’s a lot of misinformation about the community out there that a lot of people take as truth. Like the potential harm that trans people can have on small children,” said Dye.

But we certainly see plenty of harm and violence directed toward LGBTQ+ folks. “And sometimes that can be very hard to digest,” Dye explained. “We are not a threat to anybody inherently because we are trans, but because we are part of the LGBTQ+ community we are perceived as a threat.”

And the conservative push back is often very tough for LGBTQ+ educators in daily interactions. “I’ve had family members, and community members because of misinformation say some very unkind things because of the work that I do,” Dye recalled.

“I’ve been called a predator. I have been called a groomer. I’ve been called a pervert.”

Dye’s work is helping students find financial aid, helping them find mental health support, or helping them find a home or access to food. The Pride Center also offers parties and proms that validate students and staff who were unable to fully experience those celebratory moments because of anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes.

campaign isn't something Dye can skip because it's triggering. "Running the Pride Center and working with this demographic I have to stay up to date," they clarified. "I have to be aware of what is happening so I can help some of these students. And a lot of times that can be hard."

So fear is always a factor for an LGBTQ+ person. "I carry it personally having to be aware of even little thing like where I can travel to; where discrimination laws are in effect," Dye said. "I love to travel, but there are certain parts of the world where I can't."

Even traveling within the United States can pose serious threats to an LGBTQ+ person's emotional and physical safety. And if a person "passes" as cisgender and straight it doesn't guarantee their safety. "Because if you slip up there are repercussions," Dye warned.

And many LGBTQ+ people stand out and could not "pass" at all; nor do they want to. "So in my position personally and professionally I have to be aware of all of that when we are planning trips with the students, said Dye, "I have to ask 'are my students going to be allowed to go to the bathroom?' And that's a hard conversation."

The environment at the Pride Center fosters open dialogue and continued learning, and sometimes it's the only anchor an LGBTQ+ student may have. "They are usually the ones that may not have support at home or any kind of external support system," Dye explained.

Dye also clarified their belief that increasing rights for everyone brings us together. "And for me it's not a pie- having somebody else get more rights doesn't decrease your slice...it makes the pie bigger," they explained.

Look at marriage equality for example. It was a triumph for so many people and now it too is under threat, "And including other people in what marriage means in this country just means there is more love to go around," said Dye.

"And that's one reason I try to do a lot of education in The Pride Center because for me you can't have equality without education," Dye said. "And one the best ways to fight some of this misinformation that leads to this fear is with education."

Allies can be extremely effective in enlisting cultural change to better support this community, "My voice can only go certain places," Dye said. "And in my experience especially cisgender, heterosexual white men- their voices are very powerful and they will go places that our voices can't reach."

If you genuinely want to be an effective ally, then check your ego and open your mind. "And that's why ally education is so important," Dye clarified. "And sometimes well meaning allies can be the hardest to educate."

If you want to be helpful try to pace yourself. No one becomes an expert at anything all at once, "You don't have to have all encompassing knowledge, but you have to be open to learning always open to learning."

And the current resistance to more inclusive language for the LGBTQ+ community ignores the magical qualities of language, "Language is meant to convey a message and sometimes language has to evolve in order to articulate that message better. And that's the beautiful nature of language," Dye said.

In order to promote any social justice initiative you must respect other's lived experiences. And if you are in the LGBTQ+ community, then please realize that your experiences don't speak for everyone else, said Dye.

Also mind your manners and eschew morbid curiosity, "Not



everyone wants to be your educational moment," Dye clarified. "Just because you are an ally or just because you are in the community doesn't entitle you to know everything about that person, and their lives and their bodies and their experiences."

And remember that members of the LGBTQ+ community are not looking to convert anybody. "And our presence in life or in media isn't forcing anything on anyone," Dye said. "But representation does matter especially (for) people who don't typically see themselves reflected...it means the world to them."

And exposure to different types of people helps everyone grow, "Even if you don't agree with them. People do things all the time that I don't agree with," Dye clarified. "But I'm not out here trying to take their lives or their freedoms away."

It's also essential to accept that threats of erasure, violence or death occur constantly in this community, "In some

conversations there is still shock that our community sees violence; there's still shock because I have numerous homeless students because their families kicked them out and won't have anything to do with them anymore," said Dye.

"And that's the reality that a lot of people in our community face."

And every election cycle has the potential to supplant a queer person's life. "I go through every election cycle holding my breath to see 'Is my marriage still valid? Is my healthcare still available? Do I need to go back in the closet for my own safety? Am I going to be able to keep or adopt my children?'" Dye explained.

LGBTQ+ people merely ask to exist peacefully and safely. They do not seek to exclude anyone from those same rights,

"We are not saying anyone deserves to die or have their rights taken away or their beliefs demonized," said Dye. We're just trying to exist and wave a little rainbow flag while we do it."

"We are open to everyone because that's the point."

Addendum:

The acronym LGBTQ+, and the word community and the term queer are all used by Mx. Dye throughout this conversation to describe an entire collective of marginalized people, so they are acceptable here. Please don't assume your entitlement to use these terms. Please always ask which identifiers are acceptable to the LGBTQ+ person you are talking to. Lead with love and respect.

Learn more at:

<https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/breaking-tennessee-senate-passes-bill-to-codify-discrimination-against-lgbtq-people-into-law>

<https://www.etsu.edu/students/mcc/programs/lgbtq/>





A Discussion on Diversity in Media and Communication with ETSU Graduates

Written by,

Dr. Mimi Perreault

Listening is just as vital to communication as writing and speaking.

The engagement and solutions-based approaches to mass communication have become much more acceptable in the last five years in the field of media and communication. And as a professor of media and communication at ETSU, I see working to understand others as central to what students learn in journalism, public relations, advertising, broadcast, and film.

Stuart Hall, an early scholar of media and representation said that representation has to do with two different things, (1) what we understand something to mean, and (2) what it means in society. Our field is always changing, and the ways we interact with the media have changed a lot in the last decade.

In addition, in his 1951 work, Hall argued that the rise of newspapers and television stations in the mid-to-late 1900s permanently changed the relationship between influences of power and authority in our lives. Even since then, we have seen the role of mass communication become more invasive and tailored as social media has become a more common way to distribute content.

Therefore, it is not surprising that students and alumni see understanding and empathy as central components of what they are doing and how they approach the field of media and communication.

Mediated communication forces us to see things we might not agree with or respect. It often shares experiences we would not otherwise be exposed to.

In the past few weeks, I took some time to interview some students and alumni about how they have used diversity and inclusion skills in their work and I asked what the most valuable skills are that they have learned at ETSU and beyond.

Many students discussed how journalism, broadcast, and public relations gave them qualms about interacting with strangers at first, but over time the skills they built through research, reporting, interviews, and networking brought them confidence and knowledge.

Here are some of their answers.

Shameika Rhymes

Mass Communications, 1999

Question: What is the most beneficial thing you learned about diversity, equity, and inclusion as an ETSU student?

Answer: As a student, I really learned that it's important to not judge a book by its cover and that it includes skin color. I learned about different cultures within my program as well as (by) living in the dorms. (That) helped me later to embrace and be comfortable around people that are different or have different backgrounds; which is a skill you need when working in the media. (ETSU) helped me to interact with a wider range of social groups versus staying within the small circle of people that I went to high school with.

Question: What is the most valuable DEI lesson you learned since you have entered the work force?

Answer: I've learned that having a sense of belonging and feeling seen and heard is imperative. Working in a newsroom that only saw you as a body and not a person, or (did not) respect aspects of your culture were the fastest things that (negatively) affected morale in my experience. Turnover rates stayed high, and nobody liked their job.

In my role at a non-profit (now), I have learned that everybody is different, and everyone has a story, so it's important to meet them where they are and have grace. Be present and try not to judge.

If you strike up a conversation, you may find that you have a lot of things in common whether it's music, sports, or some other trending topic. Ask them questions about themselves and have an open mind. Step out of your comfort zone and sit in the (moment) until you feel comfortable and confident.

Question: What is the most valuable thing you have learned from someone you considered to be different from you?

Answer: I used to always assume that people grew up in what I thought were normal households compared to my own, which was filled with domestic violence, alcohol, and drugs. I learned that the people that I made that assumption about experienced the same things if not worse. That taught me to not assume because everybody has their own journey and what they have been through, just because they are different doesn't mean they are exempt.



Ben Gilliam

Media and Communication, Spring 2021

Question: What is the most beneficial thing you learned about diversity, equity, and inclusion as an ETSU student?

Answer: I learned that not only does DEI bring new perspectives to the table, but it amplifies the existing perspectives that ring true for everyone.

I think the most valuable lesson I've learned is that people are rarely as different as they seem. You'll find something that encourages or annoys you both, and that's all you need to build something together.

Question: What is the most valuable DEI lesson you learned since you have entered the work force?

Answer: Since entering the workforce, I learned that people living in the same environment can be completely different in routine and values but still have commonalities that bind us together.

Question: What advice would you give to others who might be uncomfortable around people who do not look like them?

Answer: My advice would be to have a conversation without a goal in mind. Truly get to know someone and what they value, rather than trying to learn the best way to present your perspective to them.



Atlantis Warren

Media and Communication, Spring 2021



Question: What is the most beneficial thing you learned about diversity, equity, and inclusion as an ETSU student?

Answer: The most beneficial thing I've learned about DEI at ETSU is the importance of representation; but also the importance of representation in higher-up roles as well. It seems the higher up you go in position (the more) DEI loses its existence.

My internships gave me a great perspective on how representation doesn't just end at the race or gender of someone. But (it's also) the need for those to be in alignment with the same end goal; and bring forth different perspectives on getting there in order to provide for the target audience.

Question: What advice would you give to others who might be uncomfortable around people who do not look like them?

Answer: It's important to be confident in yourself above all, but also (to be) willing to learn different points of view from people who aren't like you. The most valuable thing I've learned is to convey the same message in different ways.

Everyone comes from different experiences and as a result, they may not understand where you are coming from. It's the attention to detail that allows me to better communicate with those around me.

Kayla Hackney

Media and Communication, Spring 2021



Question: What is the most beneficial thing you learned about diversity, equity and inclusion as an ETSU student?

Answer: My time at ETSU taught me a lot about how to see things from perspectives that are very different from my own. As a journalist, a big part of my job is trying to see issues from all sides so my reporting can be fair and accurate.

And being a student at ETSU allowed me to surround myself with people who are completely different than I am which has helped me grow both professionally and personally in the long run.

Question: What is the most beneficial thing you learned about DEI since you have entered the workforce?

Answer: It's so easy to stick to what you know, but it is so much more fun and fulfilling to step out of your comfort zone and meet people with different experiences than you.

Learning about new cultures and ideas makes you a better person, and the world is a better place when we understand each other a little bit better.

Question: What advice would you give to others who might be uncomfortable around people who do not look like them?

Answer: Representation matters and misrepresentation hurts. And one of the best ways to combat misrepresentation is to educate ourselves about people who are different than us. And the best way to do that is by getting to know more about them.



Control is the Goal: the troubling and racialized history of police in the United States

Written by,
Dr. Daryl A. Carter

In 2019, USA Today published reports detailing more than 85,000 police officers who had been investigated for various forms of misconduct over the previous ten years. A large number of officers were investigated for serious allegations including perjury, abuse, sexual crimes, and, of course, excessive force.

These types of allegations have generated tremendous amounts of attention. For example, cities such as Minneapolis, New York, Louisville, Oakland, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Ferguson, and Milwaukee, have experienced social upheaval following very serious allegations of murder and abuse of police power.

Allegations of police misconduct, however, are nothing new. In fact, for nearly two hundred years and counting there have been countless cases of misconduct against those who wear a badge.

And we may all benefit from a reminder that police are human beings, and they are flawed, and they will make mistakes. Police will commit errors; and have poor judgment. Sometimes police make egregious errors as a result of inexperience, fear, and lack of training.

Other times, though, humans make these errors because of bias, indifference, and cruelty. Sometimes politicians, elected officials, and bureaucrats, make decisions which have large consequences on society.

Throughout the centuries American law enforcement has had a troubling and racialized history. Remember that policing was born out of slave owners seeking more control over slaves who attempted to escape or otherwise push back against white tyranny. These slave overseers- both black and white- evolved into town watchmen- who then morphed into the police as we know them today.



AND TODAY LAW ENFORCEMENT FILLS A NUMBER OF ROLLS IN OUR COUNTRY:

- **First, it fights criminal activity by using human beings (officers) to target other individuals engaged in criminal behavior.**
- **Second, law enforcement ostensibly protects human life, property, and local, state, and federal governments.**
- **Third, police officers, by their very presence, are supposed to provide comfort to the public.**
- **Fourth, police officers are tasked with the responsibility of protecting the rights of the very people they are sworn to protect.**

Clearly, this does not always happen.

Since World War II law enforcement has gone through cycles of bust and reform. When things are going well, then police are highly regarded. Then something inevitably triggers a societal and legal desire to reform law enforcement to compensate for abuses of authority, power, etc.

This cycle reflects how law enforcement in the United States enjoys periods of highly positive visibility and while also living through other periods when they are viewed with intense anger and extreme criticism.

In Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and other major cities in recent decades police and sheriff departments have been found engaged in various, extremely serious crimes. While those crimes, such as murder, rape, assault, theft, drug-dealing, and corruption, are terrible; other misuses of law by law enforcement strike more closely at the heart of the democratic experience.

In the middle 1950s the American Civil Rights Movement developed momentum as the Supreme Court ruled segregation in education was unconstitutional. Within a few years, direct action and protest movements throughout the South and most of the United States were underway.

Civil Rights workers engaged in civil disobedience, marches, and sit-ins which generated considerable attention and news coverage. As one side fed the other, local and state authorities used their respective law enforcement divisions to curtail civil rights activities and punish the civil rights workers; subjecting them to arrests, beatings, imprisonment, and, sometimes, murder.

In Deep South states of Alabama and Mississippi and Georgia, police sicced dogs on protesters, beat protesters with clubs, and generally brutalized them. Along with white protesters angry about free speech rights being denied, the war in Vietnam, and the manipulations of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, the public's views on police took a hit. Many Americans watched as police abused American citizens for exercising their Constitutional rights. This occurred during a period of increasing division within American society.

From Richard Nixon's election in 1968 to the election of Joe Biden in 2020, the United States became increasingly divided by ideological, partisan, and philosophical concerns. Certain Americans were appalled by the high level of crime in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s.

Others were disturbed by the success of the Civil Rights Movement. Still more Americans came to see people unlike them as dangerous, un-American, and in need of surveillance and frequent brutal reminders of who holds power and who does not.

Police labor unions used rhetoric which pitted police against the communities they served. Local and state laws often allowed for officers to live outside the communities and cities they patrolled; making them strangers in the communities they served.

Some disgruntled white Americans were attracted to law enforcement jobs because of the power the officer held over citizens. Domestic extremist groups infiltrated both the Armed Forces and civilian law enforcement agencies. These groups were also attracted to the vast official power officers could exercise over citizens. Such developments and connections inevitably portend conflict and violence.

When George Floyd was **murdered** by a Minneapolis police officer in 2020 it was not a shocking development. What was shocking was that the entire brutal episode was caught on tape. It went to heart of what we have witnessed for the past seventy years: police being used as a bludgeon against communities of color as well as a weapon to control those communities.

Consequently, law enforcement has behaved in ways which further systemic racism. Throughout the last century and well into 2023 many people of color continue to have negative experiences when in overwhelmingly white neighborhoods and communities.

It must also be said that countless officers heroically protect our communities across the nation. But the notion there are only a few bad officers out there is contradicted by evidence, experience, and hard data.

The racialized nature of American law enforcement continues to be a problem. Recent discussions in cities across America about reform reflect what many instinctively know: we have a long-term problem that must be corrected with long-term solutions if we are going to live up to our Constitutional expectations.





EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF
Equity & Inclusion

Address: 109 Burgin E. Dossett Hall
P.O. Box 70705
Johnson City, TN 37614
Phone: 423-439-4445
Fax: 423-439-4543

Website: <https://www.etsu.edu/equity/>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/etsuequity/>
Instagram: [etsu_equity](#)
Twitter: [etsu_equity](#)

For questions and contributions contact:

Elizabeth Cloyd: cloyde@etsu.edu