

THRIVE DETROIT

LIVING IN DETROIT:

SPRING 2019 ISSUE

\$ **2** Thrive Detroit provides a zero-barrier-to-entry income opportunity to low-income, vulnerably housed, or un-housed residents in Detroit. Your purchase directly supports them.

PHOTO BY ZACHARY NIMBACH



TABLE OF CONTENTS

pg.2 2019 Summer Events
by Jourdan Taylor

Editorial &
Infographic
pg.9-10

The Misnomer of Affordable
Housing
by Delphia Simmons

pg.3 Building the Foundation for Optimal
Health One Step at a Time
by Denise Ervin

pg.11 Detroit Startup Scene: Gathering Coffee Co.
by Tash Moore

pg.4 Father Time, Undefeated?
by Daniel B. Simmons

pg.12 Detroit Pop-up Midwifery Clinic
Wants to Get Neighbors Talking
about Birthing Options
by Melinda Clynes

pg.5 How the Exodus of Youth Can
Change Detroit
by Sydney Ford

pg.13 Once a National Model, Utah
Struggles with Homelessness
by Gregory Scruggs

pg.6 Being the Change
by Tori Hart

pg.14 The Strike
by Holly McCall

pg.7 Same Old, Same Old Tax Returns?
NOT!
by Ina Fernandez

pg.15 Barry, Baldwin & Beale Street
by Keva York

pg.8 Uber* Tales: Insights from an
Outsider
by Eric Williams

pg.16 Can New and Long-time Detroiters
Get Along Better by Making Better
Arguments?
by Melinda Clynes

2019 Summer Events

by Jourdan Taylor,
Senior High School Writer, Artist, Activist

Ford Fireworks

This always happens near the end of June and is a super-fun, family-friendly event! There are several food trucks and restaurants nearby and plenty of things to do while waiting for the fireworks to begin. It's usually an all-day event and ends around 10 p.m.

Detroit Riverdays: Another fun family event that happens in early June to kick off the summer! There are rides, food trucks, and more along the River Walk. It's a great place to meet friends!

Detroit Kite Festival

Located on Belle Isle, this a great activity for younger kids.

New Center Park Summer Entertainment Series: This is one of my favorite activities. Movies play in New Center Park and it's free and open to the public! Bring food and a blanket, and relax and enjoy!

Chene Park Movie Series: This is pretty similar to the previous one but located in Chene Park and held every Friday!

Great Lakes Food, Art & Music Festival

This festival is a three-day, family-friendly event that takes place in Campus Martius in July. There are activities for all ages.

Garden Party at the Whitney:

I just learned about this last summer. It's a really nice summer party held at the Whitney every Thursday. It's a great excuse to dress up, hang out, and enjoy the historic house.



Summer is almost here, and that means fun awaits! No one wants to be stuck in the house with no plans. So, I thought, why not give a list of places you can visit to make the most of warm weather and longer days? This list is made up of activities around metro Detroit and won't disappoint. There's so much to do, you won't have time to think about being bored for the rest of the summer! So let's dive in.



Detroit Startup Week:

For all of my entrepreneurs out there, this business conference happens in June and is an informative, week-long event with sessions on starting up your business and networking. The event is for all ages and I highly recommend!

African World Festival:

The best cultural event of the summer. It happens outside of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and celebrates African culture and history with tons of great food, music, and vendors. This is a "do-not-miss" event... trust me!

DIY Street Fair:

This event is located in Ferndale and celebrates the "doers" and creatives in the art and music world! You might not want to miss this one either.

Mo Pop Festival:

I have to say this is my absolute favorite festival in Detroit! It's a music festival that takes place over the course of two days, with various local and national artists performing on different stages. The riverfront view is perfect, the music is good, and your friends will thank you!

These are a few of my favorite events that I had to share. There are so many more, like the Detroit International Jazz Festival, the Corktown Farmers Market, Dally in the Alley, Murals in the Market, MOCAD events, and, of course, just hanging out with friends. Make sure to do your own summer activity search. I promise that with this list, you'll have a summer you won't forget. Have fun!

Building the Foundation for Optimal Health One Step at a Time

by Denise Ervin, RN BSN, NC-BC Board Certified Integrative Nurse Coach

When you think about your overall health and well-being, or self-care as health care, what comes to your mind, first and foremost?

As a Registered Nurse for nearly 20 years, business owner, and board-certified Health and Wellness Nurse Coach, I want to share with you some tools for building the foundation for optimal health. When we think about our health, we typically think about physical aspects like blood pressure, cholesterol, and body weight. However, I invite you to imagine that health is much more than just our physical body. Our mind and heart also play a significant part our well-being--not just the physical heart, but the spirit of the heart. This manifestation of the heart includes self-compassion and self-love. Dr. Kristin Neff has defined self-compassion as being composed of three main parts: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Our mental, emotional, and spiritual health make up our inner health. Our physical body makes up our outer health. Most diseases, or what some people call “dis-eases,” stem from our inner health, not from our physical health.

We often make health-care choices based on our feelings or beliefs, versus creating mindful intentions or determining our solid ingredients or tools. Have you ever felt stressed and unintentionally grabbed a comforting food that reminded you of your childhood? Instead of quickly snatching up your favorite childhood treat, take a mindful pause. During that pause, consider some other options such as a conversation with a friend, some quiet “me time,” or enjoying a favorite pastime or hobby. Another way we make health-care choice based on feelings or beliefs is stopping a fitness or wellness plan before reaching our goal. Others may reach their goals but the fall back into old behaviors, sabotaging their achieved outcome. These unconscious actions are often based on fear, desire for worthiness and/or acceptance, or stressors in our lives. This is very common, and the key is to create mindfulness or awareness of our health-care choices.

Are you ready to learn how to build the foundation of your own health and transform your own life?

What are you waiting for?

No one is going to do it for you--not a pill, or another health care program that doesn't embody your beliefs and your wholeness.

Image for a minute that building a foundation for health is similar to building the foundation of a building or house. Your body is your

house and your internal and external health is your foundation. There are many ingredients needed to build a strong foundation. The ingredients that make up your foundation are your mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health. The most undervalued ingredients are your mental and emotional health, which include your thoughts, your beliefs, and how you handle stressors. Your spiritual health includes your presence, your purpose, and your creativity. Quality sleep, joyful activities, mindful eating, and time spent with yourself and others embody your physical health. These are the essential foundations of your internal health.

Now that you know the key ingredients to building your foundation, let's take a look at the steps you can follow in order to reach your goal of creating optimal health. Step one is determining which of the four stages of change you are in. The initial stage is precontemplation. In this stage, you are unaware of your beliefs or thoughts and how they are connected to your health-care actions. The second stage is contemplation, in which you are aware of what you want, but you either choose to do nothing about it, or you are lacking the necessary tools to change your actions. Many people spend a large portion of their time in this stage. Some of the thoughts that accompany this stage are, “I am too busy to exercise.” “Eating healthier costs too much money.” “I don't have time to prepare healthy meals.” “This is too hard!” Do any of these thoughts sound familiar to you? This is how or why people often get stuck in this stage. It's like a hamster on a wheel. The third stage is preparation, which is where you begin to create a plan for change, research your options, or reach out to others for support. The fourth stage is where you put your plan into action. Once you have determined the stage of change that you are in, you are ready for step two.

Step two involves defining what health and well-being mean to you. It is important to remember that your definition may not be the same as your neighbor's, your spouse's, your coworkers', or your healthcare provider's definition. You need to embrace and internalize your definition of health and well-being make it your own! Close your eyes and imagine yourself after reaching your goal. Sit back and ask yourself these questions: What does healthy feel like? What does it look like? What does it smell like? What does it taste like? What does it sound like? Use this information to create your own health mission statement. According

to Webster's dictionary, the definition of “mission” is “a concise statement outlining the purpose of a unit, program, course, or activity.” It is important that you write down your health mission statement to serve as a reminder of the purpose and intention of your plan. Putting your health mission statement on your mirror or in an area where you will see it every day will provide a gentle reminder to help you stay focused on your well-being.

Now that you have the blueprints ready for your new home, or improved health, you are ready to build the structure. You will not want to build this structure alone. You will need to include a solid team of health-care professionals that align with your beliefs. The act of taking responsibility for your own health and well-being is itself a key component to your health.

Everyone has it within themselves to make a positive change in their health. Start now by creating a micro step, one that will improve the area that you wish to change. Commit to



it and implement it within the next three days. Share your step with your support team and remember to align it with your health mission statement.

One of the greatest sources of motivation and change is seeing your own progress. If you find yourself veering away from your mission, stop and look closer at your goal.

Have you created a goal that is too big of a step? Have you found yourself back in the contemplation stage? Remember that your goal is not perfection, it is a direction. You wouldn't start building a house without a plan, and the work would not be completed without mishaps. Don't let bumps in the process of building the healthiest you stop you from continuing your journey. Visualize your endpoint, follow your health mission statement, and enjoy the journey to a new, healthier you.

Father Time, Undefeated?

by Daniel B. Simmons, BCS Writer, Software Engineer

Father Time is undefeated. As an avid sports fan, I've heard this phrase many a time over the past year, first referring to Tom Brady—who, at 41 years old, defied all odds by leading the Patriots to yet another Superbowl win—then to LeBron James, who in his 17th season continues to display feats of athleticism normally reserved for players half his age. Although both men seemingly defy the laws of physics year in and year out, the consensus is that very soon, one or both will fall off the proverbial “cliff,” the point of no return where their superhuman gifts give way to looking more and more like the rest of us. The wear and tear of over two decades of competing, running, jumping, and throwing is bound to catch up to them. Father Time is undefeated.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, we all have our own personal “cliff” to contend with. Whether it be mental or physical, we'd all like to stave it off as long as a LeBron or Brady, but eventually there will come a time when we must gracefully accept the inevitable. Father Time is undefeated... for now, at least.

There is a growing group of scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs who believe that it is well within our power to gain the upper hand in the fight against our perennial patriarch. Their confidence comes from recent advances in our understanding of the aging process at a cellular level, as well as promising developments in pharmaceutical research showing increases both lifespan and quality of life.

The second point is a rather important one. As we age, our susceptibility to a number of physical and mental ailments increases with each revolution around the sun. Increasing longevity without addressing chronic illnesses like heart disease, cancer, and dementia would be a mere consolation prize at best. This has given rise to a new phrase among age researchers, “healthspan.” Instead of merely increasing the number of calendar years we have here on earth, researchers with organizations like Age X Therapeutics and Google Calico seek to increase the number of healthy, active years a person can expect to have in their lifetime. The World Health Organization has created the Health Life Expectancy index (HALE) to measure just that.

So, what does the new-fangled research tell us about how to increase our HALE? First, let's get the obvious out of the way. Diet, exercise, and living an overall healthy lifestyle are still three of the biggest predictors

of increased healthspan. After this, in a close second, comes stress. Yes, ruminating on life's challenges can have real physical consequences, and being chronically stressed has been correlated with the onset of many age-related illnesses. So, taking time to relax, meditate, and focus on the positive will not only make you feel better mentally, but also physically.

But it turns out that there are some stresses our body likes, like the physical stress that comes with being in a calorie-deprived state, or fasting.

To explain why fasting can be good for you and can actually slow the aging process, let start with a brief primer on what aging does to us on a cellular level. As we all learned in biology class, the cells in our body are constantly dividing and replicating themselves. They are able to do this because our DNA gives each cell a blueprint and instruction set on how and when to create copies of itself. As we age, subsequent copies of a cell become less and less accurate, and the DNA in the cells themselves can become damaged and begin to unravel due to the shortening of telomeres, the protective ends on strands of DNA that keep them intact.

Once this DNA damage reaches a certain point, the cells containing them become senescent, or unable to effectively replicate. These senescent cells become susceptible to inflammation, and their accumulation is correlated with many age-related disorders. Enter autophagy, the phenomenon by which our body actually recycles the material of these dysfunctional senescent cells and puts them to good use. Biologist Yoshinori Ohsumi was awarded the 2016 Nobel prize for his work describing this process. Turns out one of the best ways to kick off autophagy is by putting your body in a nutrient-deprived state, or fasting. These benefits can even be seen during intermittent fasting, whereby



you reduce caloric intake and limit eating to a 2- to 6-hour window during the day.

So now that we know the molecular process behind aging, is it possible to slow this process pharmaceutically?

Is there a magic pill you can take to increase your life and healthspan?

No doctor worth his salt would make such a claim, but there is promising evidence in the form of two drugs, Metformin and Rapamycin. The former has been around for decades as a treatment for type 2 diabetes and has just recently been understood to have benefits in increasing lifespan and slowing the aging process. In the United Kingdom Prospective Diabetes Study (UKPDS), patients on Metformin were shown to have increased lifespan over their counterparts who used other drugs to treat their type 2 diabetes. They also showed statistically significant reductions in the occurrence of cancer and cardiovascular disease, two of the biggest age-related disorders.

Rapamycin is a drug that actually has been used to suppress the immune system of organ transplant patients. So how does suppressing the immune system translate into an increase in healthspan? The short answer is we don't really know. Regardless, Rapamycin has been studied and proven to have anti-aging benefits in many species including mice, nematodes, and fruit flies. Long-term studies on its effect on human healthspan are a little more challenging, but so far, its effect on other mammals looks promising.

So, is Father Time still undefeated? Probably, but with our increased knowledge and understanding of his methods, we've given ourselves a few more tools in our arsenal to even the odds.

How the Exodus of Youth Can Change Detroit

by Sydney Ford

Home. It's where the heart is, a space you're always able to return to with the promise of open arms and familiar faces. I moved from Detroit to New York over a year ago, and I can say that when I visit home, it is anything but familiar—for both better and worse.

Being from Southfield, my time spent in Detroit was limited to holidays when I would hang out with family, and of course the occasional baseball game with my coaches. I shied away from the city that I'd always been reminded is littered with dilapidated buildings and neglect. It wasn't until my teens that I found the city to be rich with hidden gems in its people and culture. I was able to fall in love with Detroit, and I'm not the only one. The city is now teeming with people from all walks of life. From the outside looking in, it is returning to the metropolis that it once was. I just have to wonder, how much has really changed?

The Migration

Detroit was once among America's crown jewels. In 1930, the city streets buzzed with traffic brought by the auto industry, theatres, industrial buildings, and hotels. We were also elevated following Motown's success. Detroit quickly became one of the country's largest cities. But in 2013, the Motor City suffered through one of its darker hours when it became the largest city to file for bankruptcy. Add in the slow decline that washed in with the recession in 2007 and the rejuvenation of Detroit would prove no easy feat. The decline led to a steady migration of a large part of the black community, including many of its youth. I also joined that exodus.

I find that most of the former D-town residents that I encounter have the same reason for moving: the lack of opportunity. Coming from a generation of independent-thinking peoples, we yearn for opportunities to bridge the gap between our dreams and reality. The thought of sitting behind a desk doesn't appeal to us as it would to generations before. We refuse to settle because we are fueled by a sense of creativity and autonomy. I didn't see Detroit as having the necessary connections that I needed to prosper. Detroiters have the same hustle mentality and boundless dreams that can be found in The Big Apple; all that we are missing is a vehicle of resources to make it happen.

New Growth Isn't All Good

Standing behind new leadership, the city entered the early stages of recovery by capitalizing on the interests of tourists. As exciting as change may be, the improvements seem to be limited to the downtown area, which is a very small portion of the city as a whole. The buildings have grown just tall enough to cast a shadow on the seemingly forgotten parts of the city that are not able to benefit from the alluring glamour of retail and entertainment arenas. Those shining new structures increase the value of the housing in the area. The increased rent is causing an even higher rate of displacement of longtime residents. This flood leaves residents wading between being unable to afford the surging cost of living downtown and the just out-of-reach cost of living in nearby suburbia. The city seems to have widened the divide between privilege and poverty.

Taking strides to truly rebuild the stubbornly impoverished outskirts of the city's core would mean rebuilding in a way that works not only for a herd of newcomers, but for the people that are already existing there. Providing affordable housing, reconstructing the crumbling homes that line the streets, the restitution of parks, installing citywide gardens, meeting the foundational needs of the people, and drawing business back into destitute areas would only be the beginning of a true rehabilitation of the city.



Being a Part of the Change

One of the most impactful things that I've noticed in Brooklyn is so many people of color that peacefully coexist and have the mindset to put in their own work uplifting their communities. It's like nothing that I'd ever seen in Detroit. Obviously, most problems need attention from government figures, but I would love to see the people of Detroit pouring back into themselves. Small things like caring about how their neighborhoods look, creating opportunities for everyone to get involved in the revitalization process, and those with means offering their resources to educate and motivate can send out impactful vibrations. There is a way for every single person to be a part of improvements and change. I hope that, like myself, many of my peers plan take what they have learned and loved in other cities and bring it back home to be a part of the new Detroit.

Being the Change

by **Tori Hart**



This 23 year-old student, entrepreneur, and community organizer didn't just overcome homelessness — he is on a mission to end it.

Byron Brooks was without family support when he chose higher education over factory work and became homeless for his first 1 ½ years of college. The difficulty of attending school and just surviving without food, shelter, or support weighed heavily on him, especially because he carried this burden hidden from plain view. He recalled some painful memories: “I had several instances where I had to defend myself and I have scars from a few of those instances that will forever be with me.” It wasn't just the lack of security and resources for basic needs, but “dealing with the mental, physical, and emotional stress” that was the most difficult for him to endure.

Thankfully, Byron found allies at the college and was connected with food and resources for a car, and, once they became aware of his plight, his godparents and church helped him secure housing and continue his pursuit of education. One of his friends from school, Darius Jones, recognized the dire situation and began bringing Byron bagged lunches to school every day. Byron also gives thanks to Daniel Burgess, the Mobley Family, Deacon Josh, and Sis. “The day they found out about my situation, they immediately took me in, clothed, fed and cared for me,” he said.

Though Byron is blessed to have this community support, other students are not as fortunate.

Too many college students across the nation are housing or food insecure, and there are

not enough formal resources for students facing these life-threatening challenges. Byron was a student, and working part time, but it was not enough to get by. His attempts to get assistance were frustrating. “Because I was a student,” he said, “shelters would turn me away because I would still be in class at their cut-off time.” He was also denied food stamps because he was just five hours short of the work requirement, which of course was also because he was in class. “I feel it is not fair to those who are homeless and are trying to better themselves,” he said.

Byron is not alone in his experience. According to one of the largest recent national surveys conducted by Wisconsin HOPE Lab, 36% of university students are food insecure, and for community-college students, that increases to 56%. The percentage of housing-insecure students is similar, at 36% for university and 51% for community college. The study also notes that despite receiving Pell Grants and public assistance, the unmet needs of these students are significant. During his time at Henry Ford College, especially as the student body president, Byron became increasingly aware of the magnitude of the problems of housing and food-insecure students: “It's a bigger epidemic than people realize”

Despite the difficulty of those times, he thanks God for providing him direction. “I feel that God allowed me to go through what I went through to mold me into the person that I am today,” he said. Byron's pursuits and achievements at only 23 years old are admirable, irrespective of his history. Now 23, a transfer student in Ferris State's Music and Entertainment Business program, and founder of the 501(c)(3) nonprofit From the Hood for the Hood, he is giving back to greater Detroit communities in huge ways. Through From the Hood for the Hood, Byron has raised funds, organized donations of bottled water to Flint residents, fed the homeless across Michigan, organized adopt-a-child Christmas gift drives, and donated clothing and supplies (especially winter survival kits), and he plans many more outreach campaigns in the future. You can witness his frequent advocacy discussions and support From the Hood for the Hood on Facebook (@ForTheHood313). His next goals are establishing need-based scholarships for college students and creating a program to educate and assist felons and ex-offenders about voting rights and registration, and his big dream is to raise \$100,000 to establish a “life readiness shelter”

which would provide housing and training resources for employment.

Byron also hopes to spread awareness and empathy, noting that many people take things for granted. “Life can hit anybody,” he said. “As a society, we must be considerate of that ... because in the blink of an eye, you can be in the same predicament.” The most notable obstacle is the stigmatization of people who are homeless or in poverty, and he is not shy about challenging common negative stereotypes that homeless people are “drug addicts” or “too lazy” to get out of their situations. Byron is fighting that narrative. “I can personally testify that it is not an easy task to seek out resources and, sadly, sometimes it can be discouraging,” he said. Michigan, and Detroit especially, is known for having large homeless populations, and he explains that those seeking help are often met with a “lack of empathy” from case workers, and these negative experiences can permanently deter someone from seeing help.

Through these challenges and successes, Byron has remained as humble as he is inspiring. He is undoubtedly a force for solidarity and change in the greater Detroit area, and attributes his passionate pursuit of the ministry of social justice/change to his faith: “As a man of God, it is my obligation to spread the love of Jesus Christ to my brothers and sisters within the world.” His many touching experiences with people grateful for his outreach push him to do more:

“Sometimes, all people need is the satisfaction of knowing that someone cares about them ... I feel that I not only owe it to the people that showed me love, to show that same love to society, but I also owe it to myself.”

One such person, a fellowship at Our Brother's Keeper shelter, told Byron that he was “proof that there are people in the world that care” and gave him a winning lottery ticket in gratitude; Byron has kept the ticket in his memory book as a touching memory and reminder of the lesson within it. Byron has also been formally recognized for his activism; he was recently nominated for the 6th Annual African American Leadership Award. “I am truly grateful for the nomination,” he said. “I don't do what I do to be recognized, I do it because it needs to be done and that's my Christian duty.”

Same Old, Same Old Tax Returns? NOT!

by Ina Fernandez, CPA - President & CEO, Fern Capital Inc.

With Tax Time just around the corner, you may find yourself sympathizing with the Beatles in “Taxman”:

“There’s one for you, nineteen for me.”

In reality, the significant changes made to the tax laws affecting the 2018 tax year may hold a few pleasant surprises for most of us. Here is a sampling:



TAX BRACKETS:

Tax brackets have changed for 2018. There are still 7 brackets, but the intention of these changes was to reduce taxes paid at lower income brackets. So expect good news in general in this category.

STANDARD DEDUCTIONS:

The standard deduction almost doubled from 2017 to 2018. For singles, it is now \$12,000 (versus \$6,350 in 2017). For married couples filing jointly, it is now \$24,000 (versus \$12,700). This was an attempt to simplify tax returns for the majority of taxpayers who may now be better off taking the standard deduction rather than itemizing as they have in the past.

CHILD TAX CREDIT:

The new laws eliminated the personal exemption altogether. However, parents can now claim a credit of \$2,000 per dependent child under 17 and \$500 for other dependents. Further, qualified child-care expenses are still deductible.

STATE AND LOCAL TAXES (SALT):

“Should five percent appear too small, be thankful I don’t take it all.” A point of great chagrin was the capping of the deduction for SALT to \$5,000 for singles and \$10,000 for couples. So Michiganders should count their blessings with a state income tax rate at 4.25%, versus the significantly higher tax rates paid in states on each coast. Keep in mind that in addition to state income tax, property and city taxes are included under the cap, too.

So why am I not getting a bigger refund? This is a question commonly asked by people who have already filed their 2018 taxes. Refunds from returns filed through February 1, 2019 are down 8% compared to prior years. Instead of the refund they are used to getting, some may find they owe this year. Blame the withholding tables. The law was signed on December 22, 2017 and went into effect January 1, 2018. Many of the rules related to the law had yet to be written, so it is understandable that the withholding tables took a while to compile.

Also, the IRS appears to have erred on the side of under-withholding. So we have enjoyed the lower rates with higher net paychecks all year, and now the bill comes due. Personally, I prefer to owe rather than get a refund, but some see the refund as getting a chunk of cash to do something meaningful with, rather than spending it on daily expenses all year round.

It’s not too late: You may still be able to increase that refund or reduce your taxes due. You have until April 15 to make a tax-deductible contribution of \$5,500 (\$6,500 if

you are over 50) to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) for 2018. If you are eligible to participate in a company retirement plan, you may have some income considerations to address. Even if you don’t qualify for the deduction, putting money away for retirement is a good habit. But that is a subject for a different article.

Uber* Tales: Insights from an Outsider

by Eric Williams

originally posted on www.60us393.wordpress.com (9/15/2015)

By day, I'm a law professor in Detroit. The pay is decent, but I'm also the father of a daughter in (a very expensive) college. So, after work I'm an Uber driver. Have you ever wondered what kind of things you see and hear driving around metro Detroit? Well...

Pick up location: Detroit Yacht Club, Belle Isle, Detroit, MI

Drop Off: Detroit Metro Airport, MI

Passenger(s): 1 white male, late-sixties.

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes."

— Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"

I know a lot of people in Detroit. I grew up here. I work, live, and socialize in Detroit. It's my favorite place to be. At some point, I expect to pick up someone I know. After all, I routinely bump into students and former students at clubs, parties, and restaurants. (The former students seem to revel in saying, "Yo, El" when they see me out.) Anyway, I know it's going to happen eventually. But until it happens, one of the best things about driving strangers around is that I can be who ever I want to be. Anybody.

The Detroit Yacht Club is an interesting place. At least in theory. I've never been inside. But really, how cool is it that Detroit has a yacht club? (Not to be confused with the Detroit Boat Club.) I regularly pass it as I bike around Belle Isle. It's a beautiful old building built on an island attached to

Belle Isle. Like I said, I've never been inside, but in my imagination it's full of people who sound like Thurston Howell III, from Gilligan's Island.

The passenger seemed like a nice guy. Sat up front rather than in the back. He was from Montana. Since there are only a million people in Montana it's a rarity to meet one. Seriously. Have you ever met anyone from Montana? He was in Detroit for a software conference and some of the meetings were at the Yacht Club. He was impressed with the City's recent growth. Since his client base included the Big Three, he'd been to Detroit a lot over the years. He was also a Republican.

I'm not exactly sure what prompted him to disclose his political affiliation. We were talking about his youth in the Marines, his business, and his impending retirement. Nothing political. I mentioned that my entire family had served in the military. Suddenly he asked me, "So, what do you think of Ben Carson?"

"Pardon?"

"Ben Carson. He's looks real good, better even than Trump."

What on earth would make him think I'd care about Ben Carson? Let's get this straight, Black Republicans are about as rare as Montanans. I mean this. In 2012, Romney got 1,068,780 votes from African-Americans.*** There are 1,023,579 people in Montana. So really, what are the chances he got picked up by one of the 3 black Republicans in Michigan?

Of course, I picked up a guy from Montana, so anything is possible. But anyone who knows me knows what I think about the GOP in general and this coming election's crop of GOP dingleberries in particular. I think Ben Carson is an idiot. [Confession: When my kids were young I gave them each a copy of Carson's "Gifted Hands." I hope Child Services doesn't read this and come take my kids away.] But you don't get tips for saying stuff like that. Plus, where's the fun in arguing?

"Smart guy," I said.

"Exactly. And he's not a politician. He says what he thinks."

Ok, have you actually read or heard any of the stuff that Ben Carson "thinks?" It hurts my brain to think he could be President.

"You're right," I said. "I really feel him on healthcare. And Gitmo. If Obama had his way, he'd let all the terrorist out of Gitmo and send them somewhere with free healthcare."

He thought that was hilarious. When he stopped laughing he asked, "Do you think he's got a chance?"

I really think that was what he wanted to know. I think he was wondering if race would trump party. After all, the Republican theory is that Black people only voted for Obama because he was Black. So why can't Carson be the GOP Obama? Since I'm accustomed at work to speaking on behalf of all Black people (and literally for all the Black male faculty) I decided to answer.

"Yeah, he's got a chance! More than a chance. Probably half my church is going to vote for him. I wouldn't be surprised if he carried Michigan, with Detroit leading the way."

He nodded, a jumpy kind of serenity all over his face as we pulled up to the McNamara Terminal. I got his bag out of the trunk and set it on the sidewalk. He gave me a warm handshake before he left, still smiling.

I drove away, picturing him in a window seat, looking out at the clouds and dreaming about our next Black President.

Fare: \$33.26



DETROIT

The Misnomer of Affordable Housing

Editorial by Delphia Simmons

I cringe when I read or hear the “A-word” uttered in Detroit these days, especially in relationship to housing.

As a city, I think we’ve almost forgotten that affordable housing for all is as important to the life of a truly thriving city as shiny new restaurants and shops, perhaps even more so. I wish I could say I believe that Detroit understands this fact. But much of what I hear is easy lip service and background noise. The reality is clearer each day: We are losing housing that is affordable for most residents of Detroit at a pace that is not keeping up with replacement or even the proclamations of new developments with 20% “affordable” units. Adding to the problem is the fact that units being proclaimed affordable are out of reach for the same income brackets experiencing the steady loss of affordable units. Sometimes the new “affordable” units are in the same location as previously truly affordable units.

We’re all using the same words, but we are not speaking the same language. Worst of all, we’re pretending that questions of affordability in Detroit will magically go away instead of balloon.

Thriving cities know and do better. They start by getting honest about the problem and the opportunity.

We need agreement in Detroit and in the region, about what the “A-word” means and how it must become more of a strategy. While some decision-makers and those elected to represent our best interest as residents of Detroit (and Michigan) seem to be on the same page, others are using a different playbook altogether.

Years of the highest property-tax rates of any major U.S. city; the regular auction of inhabited and non-inhabited homes, often for an amount less than delinquent property taxes owed; and the city’s ownership and possession of tens of thousands of vacant foreclosed homes are just a few indicators of the dissonance and glaring disconnect on the meaning of affordability. Until we’re willing to take an honest look at our own practices and our deep need for clear and common language, the term “affordable housing” will only be a trope and a threat to Detroit’s ability to thrive.

Some of our own city tax, land, and housing practices create a pipeline to loss of housing and lack of affordability. Here’s an example. Eighty percent area median income (AMI) is the implied metric of affordability for the average Detroit resident. But the practice of using the AMI for Wayne County in order to determine affordability in Detroit will continue to leave units developed in better-resourced and desirable areas of the city out of reach for about half of Detroit’s population.

There have been some encouraging efforts and strategies to ensure inclusionary housing that may still leave affordable housing off the table for Detroiters with low and very low incomes. The Detroit Housing Development and Preservation Fund is part of a new inclusionary zoning policy. It comes with the requirement that not less than 70% of the funding serve households at or below 30% AMI. The city’s Multi-Family Affordable Housing Strategy also has some ambitious goals to preserve and produce more affordable housing. Catching up and keeping pace with the need must happen quickly. Requiring development to also include units affordable to most Detroiters can fill some of the affordability gaps.

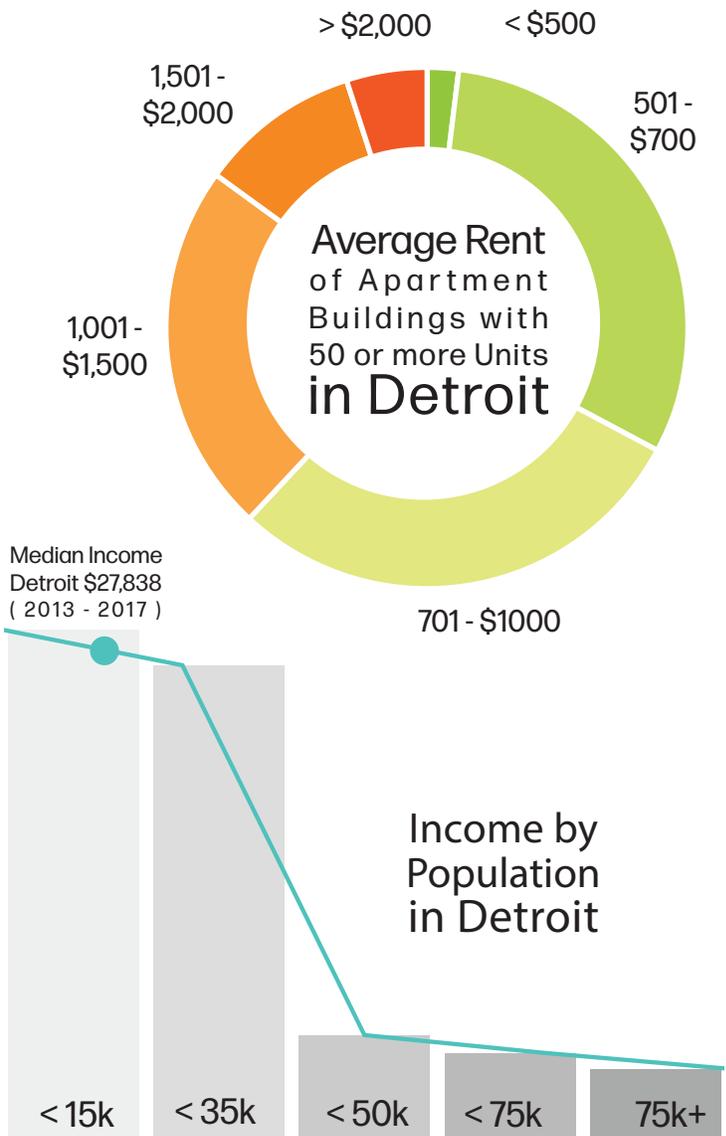
The strategy to attract new residents above or near the median income bracket for Wayne County is clear and important. What’s not so clear is the strategy for bringing enough units of affordable housing online to accommodate almost half of those who are already here.



1 in 2

Detroit Residents are spending over 30% of their income on housing.

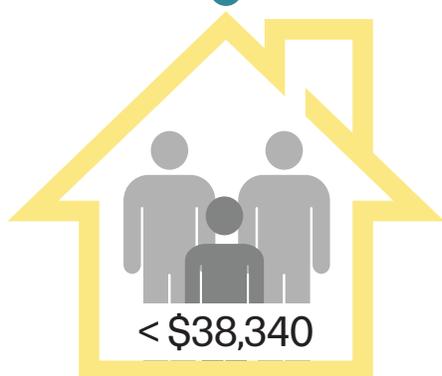
	Detroit	Wayne County
Owner-Occupied Homes	48.1%	62.2%
Median Home Value	\$42,800	\$92,400
Population Poverty Rate	37.9%	22.6%



Low-Income Households

Max Rent

Detroit



\$746

\$852

\$959

\$25,764
Median
Household
Income

\$747
Median Rent

2.65
Avg size of
Household

Low income housing qualifications per household size based on Wayne County AMI (Area Median Income)

Affordable rent based on 30% of income

Detroit comparison

Detroit Startup Scene: Gathering Coffee Co.

by Tash Moore

Tash Moore, entrepreneurial writer and founder of social media agency Catch-313, recently sat down with Emily Steffen, founder of Gathering Coffee Co., a new shop opening in the North End offering community with a side of espresso.

Tash Moore: What drew you to the coffee industry?

Emily Steffen: The opportunities it presented for me to serve people in a non-traditional way, a way that's more personal. I realized, after my first couple of years in the industry, just how many people find their baristas one of the only forms of consistency in their day-to-day lives. I don't take that responsibility lightly. My job goes far beyond making a product; it's about creating an atmosphere, an experience, and an opportunity to show people they are valued. I also find myself on the receiving end of this. I can't think of an industry I'm more passionate about.

TM: Welcome to the North End. What drew you to the area versus other supposedly hip parts of town?

ES: The needs the North End had and the way [the area] embraced the arts. I knew going into this project that I wanted to be placed in a lower-income area, one where we could fill a need and create accessibility, too. Sustainability is, of course, an extremely important part of running a business--you can't uphold your mission if you don't exist--but my heart has always been that the story of this business would be the stories of those we are serving, not the other way around. The North End doesn't have enough gathering spaces for its community; coffee is scarce and, for some of our residents, not accessible--I wanted to be a part of changing that, by creating a space where important conversations could be had, community could grow and develop, and stories could be told.



Photos courtesy of Emily Steffen

TM: How do you intend to make your coffee space a welcoming place in the neighborhood?

ES: Two ways: first, I believe creating a welcoming atmosphere begins before your doors are open. That being said, creating this type of atmosphere means you have to know what creates a sense of "welcoming" or "home" for others, and you can't know if you don't ask. Each Wednesday over the next 5-6 months, myself and one other team member will be intentionally going door-to-door to 2,100 [homes] within our one-mile radius to start asking those questions and listening to the stories, and to introduce ourselves to those in the neighborhood.

I want to be respectful to those who are already there. I'm not looking to just come into the neighborhood out of nowhere; I want to slowly introduce this to the residents and understand the needs that we can meet through this type of business model.

The other way is through accessibility. I understand that there is a certain percentage of people who live in our neighborhood who wouldn't normally be able to buy a coffee or an espresso-based drink, which is why we've crafted a give-back drink option and a minimal pay-what-you-want menu. Our traditional menu will have a variety of coffee, tea, and espresso-based beverages at a price you may see at other shops in town, but our pay-it-forward drink option allows anyone who comes in to be able to buy a coffee for someone else. On our wall, it will show our count, and if a resident who financially may not be able to afford a coffee comes in--[such as] someone who is home-free, a customer who forgets their wallet, etc.--if we have even one number up there, we are able to give the coffee away for free.

Let's say there isn't a number on the board, then we pull out our small pay-what-you-want menu for times like this; it will have a couple of drink options from a tea to hot chocolate that we will sell at cost, ranging from \$0.25-\$0.75. That menu won't be out on the wall, but it will be available for our staff to pull out and offer.



TM: You've discussed inclusiveness in integrating into the North End versus colonizing the space. How are you working to ensure some of the baristas behind the counter look like the customers you want to bring to the counter?

ES: It's important to me that our team is diversely represented and has an inclusive and service-oriented mindset. It is my intention to have at least one of our baristas be specifically from the neighborhood, and after opening, as the team grows, to continue to hire from the neighborhood and/or always specifically the city.

TM: Where do you see Detroit's coffee scene evolving in the next few years?

ES: Detroit's coffee scene is really special, because it's still relatively new and the shops that are already here have done coffee extremely well. I see there being an already existing standard for coffee and atmosphere, along with the strive for creating impact and community as something that overall the city's coffee scene will continue to evolve into. My hope is that over the next years that the coffee industry in Detroit will become known for its accessibility and inclusivity in all the shops' neighborhoods. I see this shift already taking place and feel privileged to be amongst the incredible shops that are already here.

Tash Moore has covered the startup scene in Detroit for the past 5+ years. When she's not looking for a good cup of decaf, she's photographing, exploring, admiring architecture, or writing at the Room Project in the North End.

Detroit Pop-up Midwifery Clinic Wants to Get Neighbors Talking about Birthing Options

by **Melinda Clynes**

originally posted on Modeldmedia.com. Melinda Clynes is a freelance writer and regular contributor to Model D

Birthing parents and babies do not have the best odds on their side in Detroit.

The 2018 Kids Count in Michigan Data Book puts the city's infant mortality rate at 13.5 per thousand, almost double the rate of Michigan (6.9 per thousand). The figure for less-than-adequate prenatal care is nearly 47 percent, also higher than the statewide statistics.

So why the poor outlook when there are a number of pregnancy, birthing, and postpartum supports available for parents in the city? It would appear many young families are not taking advantage of them.

That's what the five founders of Detroit Pop-up Midwifery Clinic hope to change. Jahmanna Selassie, Heather Robinson, Athena Hall, Nicole Marie White, and Elon Geffard are bringing education and resources right into Detroit neighborhoods so parents and parents-to-be can learn about options for maternity care, giving birth, and caring for newborns.

"We want to talk about choices and knowing your rights. So if you go into the hospital, you know that you can ask for help and ask for more time," says Nicole White. "And we want to talk about nutrition and breastfeeding and just let folks know about all the incredible things that are happening in this city, like Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association and other initiatives like Detroit Mama Hub that can be resources."

The group chose locations for their first four pop-up clinics by identifying neighborhoods with the highest infant mortality rates, some with rates up to 24 per thousand.

In the case of Detroit Pop-up Midwifery, "clinic" does not mean that clinical and diagnostic care is provided to women, but, rather, the clinic will educate women on how their medical experiences can be better, how they can be more equipped to enter their pregnancies not completely dependent on the medical system, and why they should have a say in their care.

The founders want the community to drive the discussions and content presented in each neighborhood.

"Since this is our first iteration and this is a pilot process, we want to go into communities and ask folks what they want," says White. "We don't want to make assumptions that people want us

[as midwives, doulas and community educators] to do clinical care, but we want to hear where the gaps are."

As they discover what is missing from peoples' pregnancy, birth, and postpartum care, they are looking to uncover what they can do as midwives on the ground to help support parents' visions.

"We all do home birth, and that's not for everybody, but we do think that midwives are the answer, and that's regardless of setting," says White. They would like to see more midwives attending to births in hospitals, at birthing centers, and in homes.

While the use of midwives is a driving force behind the clinic's mission, it's not just any midwife.

"We are ramping up visualization of midwives of color because oftentimes people want their care providers to have some kind of similar background, maybe even look like them, so there's more of a connection," says Heather Robinson.

The community-based midwifery approach aims to impact the disparities that exist in maternal health across the United States that impact black families and people of color. U.S. infant mortality rates for non-Hispanic blacks are higher than for other races, and neonatal mortality (deaths that occur less than 28 days after birth) for that group is twice the rate of whites.

Detroit Midwifery plans to use current networks for outreach and to spread the word about the pop-ups. Organizations like Metro Detroit Midwives of Color, SisterFriends Detroit, Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association, Michigan Midwives Association, and the community host sites will help build awareness. Over time, the founders believe word of mouth will also be key.

The clinic will be popping up in different neighborhoods each month, with once-a-week sessions taking place three weeks in a row. In March, Mama Hub (northwest Detroit) will host a visit by Detroit Pop-up Midwifery Clinic. Future locations include Matrix Human Services (Osborn neighborhood in northeast Detroit) in April; FREC (Ford Resource and Engagement Center) on Bagley in southwest Detroit in May; and Crowell Recreation Center (Brightmoor neighborhood in northwest Detroit) in June.

The founders believe that each meeting's

content and traction will depend on who's in the room on any given day. "I think that's what's essential," says White. "It's going to be led by the community, and the midwives are there just to hold space and to help facilitate whatever the group wants."

What's most important, says Robinson, is that women and families know that different kinds of care exist so they can seek out what it is that they need for themselves. "Because, by default, many people just receive what they think is the only option for them, or the only doctor's office, or the only hospital. And there are many options," says Robinson.

That doesn't mean the clinic midwives are pushing natural birthing methods; they understand some people want to have their baby in a hospital with an epidural. "And that's fine," says Robinson. "We just want folks being empowered with education and choices and opportunities to really make those decisions for themselves."

It's also not about turning people into consumers of midwifery care, because a family member can be a midwife. "It's a way in which you care for someone," says Robinson. The approach is about building relationships beyond brief doctor visits, caring for both mom and baby, and fostering a feeling of accountability for birthing parents in how they care for themselves.

This empowering philosophy has the potential to improve outcomes for babies and young families in Detroit – and that's what Detroit Pop-up Midwifery Clinic is all about.



Photos by Nick Hagen.

Once a National Model, Utah Struggles with Homelessness

by Gregory Scruggs

Courtesy of Reuters / Thomson Reuters Foundation / INSP.ngo

Homelessness is on the rise in the United States for the second year in a row, and the increase has been particularly noticeable in Utah. The city was once lauded as a leader among U.S. cities struggling to relieve homelessness. Many believe the spike is down to the fact a radical Housing First policy is no longer receiving sufficient funding.

Once lauded as a leader among U.S. cities struggling to relieve homelessness, the number of people sleeping rough in Utah's capital has spiked in the past two years, as funding for its ground-breaking housing programme dried up.

Homelessness is on the rise in the United States for the second year in a row according to a December report (www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2018-AHAR-Part-1.pdf) by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The increase has been particularly noticeable in Utah, which had reduced chronic homelessness by 91 per cent over the decade up to 2015, according to the state's annual homelessness report (jobs.utah.gov/housing/scso/documents/homelessness2015.pdf).

Experts attributed the drop to a "Housing First" policy, adopted by the state in 2005, which focused on getting people into housing, regardless of mental illness or substance abuse problems that could be treated after accommodation was secured.

"The only thing I've ever seen that really worked in terms of reducing the number of people on the street was the Housing First policy," said Glenn Bailey, who directs Crossroads Urban Center, a Salt Lake City food pantry.

"The mistake we made was stopping."

Utah's 2018 report (jobs.utah.gov/housing/scso/documents/homelessness2018.pdf) said that the number of people sleeping outdoors in the state has nearly doubled since 2016.

State officials cite a combination of factors for the backwards slide, including rising land and housing costs in booming U.S. cities, stagnant wage growth, and a nationwide opioid epidemic.



No money

One of those who benefited from Housing First was Steve Rader.

Addicted to methamphetamine he slept outdoors and bounced between homeless shelters across Utah for 16 years until he was settled in 2011 in Palmer Court, an apartment building in the heart of Salt Lake City that opened in 2009.

"This is a place for me to settle down. I pay rent every month. I feel great," said Rader, 63, sitting in the lobby as children played nearby.

"When I was using a lot, I didn't have enough money to pay for my drugs - to hell with the rent."

These days, he doesn't ingest illegal drugs or alcohol and an on-site caseworker helps him navigate social services and the healthcare system, so he can receive treatment for lung cancer and Hepatitis C.

His subsidised rent is \$250 a month for a two-bedroom flat that he shares with his university-bound daughter.

Palmer Court is home to 201 of the 2,626 flats in Utah - most in greater Salt Lake City - that are reserved for individuals or families who have been homeless for more than a year and have a disability preventing them from earning a regular wage.

The three-storey building surrounds a courtyard and playground. On-site amenities include a gym and library, while there are also spaces for groups like book clubs and art classes for kids and adults.

"You can solve your poverty-related issues that tend to cause homelessness a lot better in housing than you can on the streets or in emergency shelter," said Utah's housing director Jonathan Hardy.

Despite official support for initiatives like Palmer Court, Utah has not built any new permanent supportive housing since 2010.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that Utah has a deficit of over 47,000 housing units for its poorest residents.

Bailey, of the Crossroads Urban Center, likened housing for the poor to other forms of municipal infrastructure that require upkeep.

"As long as people drink water, you're going to have to figure out a way to supply it. As long as our economic system creates homelessness, we're going to have to figure out a way to respond," he said.

"You need to build more places like Palmer Court and not stop for 10 years."

Hardy countered that the money for financing such initiatives has all but disappeared, unlike a decade ago during an economic recession when landlords willingly took in tenants facing homelessness and land for development was cheap.

"The cost of producing housing has gone up significantly in this state," he said. "We're struggling to keep up."

Return to housing first?

With development costs so high, state officials are looking at ways to rejig the money they have at their disposal, including reorganising the shelter system and going after drug dealers. In August 2017, the state launched a \$67-million effort to stem illicit drug activity outside Salt Lake City's downtown shelter, the state's largest, which had become an interstate hub for heroin trafficked by international cartels.

The 1,062-capacity shelter is slated to close on 30 June and will be replaced by three "resource centers" with a combined maximum capacity of 700 people.

"We only want to spend the minimum amount on a shelter response, so that we can maximise our investment on more effective solutions," Hardy said.

"We don't want to indefinitely build shelter beds to deal with the homelessness issue if we can really focus in on housing creation and meet the demand that way."

Bailey said the move is a step backwards.

"They're going to cut capacity while we have this problem with people living on the street," he said. "Our fear is that we're going

continued on page 14

The Strike

by Holly McCall

Courtesy of The Contributor / INSP.ngo

to spend millions of dollars to reform the system and make it worse.”

But others take a more optimistic stance, noting that city plans call for the creation of 65 additional units of permanent supportive housing.

“We’re on the cusp of a renaissance,” said Matthew Minkevitch, who runs The Road Home, a charity that operates the downtown shelter and Palmer Court.

It is not clear, however, that authorities are returning to the Housing First strategy.

Utah’s state legislators last year established a commission to look into housing affordability, but they failed to pass a \$100 million bond to build new housing.



CLEOPHUS SMITH, LEFT. PHOTO BY RICHARD L. COPLEY

A 1968 sanitation workers’ strike brought Martin Luther King to Memphis and changed history. Fifty years later, Cleophus Smith, a striker, recalls the events leading to King’s death.

Cleophus Smith remembers the night of 4 April, 1968, like it was yesterday.

“I was trying to get some rest, when I heard commotion and screaming outside, and my wife came and woke me up,” says Smith, known to friends as “Cleo.”

“She said, ‘Dr. King has been shot.’ he recalls. “All hope is lost,’ I said to myself.”

Smith, 75, was one of the Memphis Sanitation Department workers striking for better working conditions when Martin Luther King traveled to Memphis that April as part of his Poor People’s Campaign to support the strikers. The strike began after two sanitation workers were crushed in a malfunctioning city trash truck on 1 February, 1968. The subsequent walk-out was sanitation workers’ third attempt to strike.

“In both ’65 and ’66, the men walked out, but at the time, the workers were mostly older,” Smith says. “They were threatened with losing their jobs or going to jail, so they went back. It was like they got out on a limb, then the limb got sawed off.”

Two years made a difference: Smith, then 24, was hired 15 April, 1967, as part of a hiring wave that resulted in a demographic change in the department. Soon he and

some of the other young Turks, including labor organizer T.O. Jones, decided it was time to make change.

“One of the older men said to about 30 of us, ‘You young men are going to mess our jobs up,’ recounts Smith. “We said, ‘with respect, sir, we’re trying to make situations better for you and for us.’”

King was in town on 28 March to join strikers for what was supposed to be a non-violent march. “I got close enough to shake his hand,” Smith says.

History shows the march became violent when protesters who weren’t employees of the sanitation department used the opportunity to break windows and vandalize downtown Memphis businesses. In an all-too-familiar scene from the Civil Rights Era, police responded in kind.

“I got sprayed with mace and got a dog sicced on [set upon] me,” says Smith. “I hit that German Shepherd on the nose and it went down. The cop standing there unsnapped his holster and said to me, ‘hit him again.’”

Smith recounts how he took off running to his mother’s house, which was near Clayborn Temple AME Church, itself a safe haven for those in the Civil Rights movement.

“I ran into my mother’s house and she said, ‘Son, you look like you seen a ghost,’ he says. “I said, ‘Mama – I almost became a

ghost!’” King returned to Memphis 3 April and was assassinated by James Earl Ray the next day.

Smith credits Jones, Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and Jesse Epps of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) for leading the strike to a successful conclusion a few weeks after King’s death.

“We really thought things were over (after King’s death,) but two or three weeks later, the Mayor (Henry Loeb) signed the labor agreement,” Smith says.

For 30 years after Memphis signed an agreement with AFSCME, conditions greatly improved for sanitation workers, according to Smith. But the last 20 years, it’s gone “haywire,” he says, with renewed racial discord coming from both blacks and whites.

“I think if Dr. King were alive today, it would kill him from grief to see how things are going,” Smith says.

And that, he says, is why 51 years after he started his career with the Memphis Department of Sanitation and 50 years after a strike brought King to the city, and to his fate, he’s still on the job.

“Last year, a friend asked me when I was going to retire, and I said: ‘There’s justice to be done. If you see something is wrong, you do what you can to make it right.’

“I just try to get this job done.”

Barry, Baldwin & Beale Street

by Keva York

Courtesy of The Big Issue Australia / INSP.ngo

Barry Jenkins' much-awaited film takes a James Baldwin novel about race relations in the US and turns it into cinema (and potentially Oscars) gold.

In the summer of 2013, Barry Jenkins wrote two screenplays. The first was based on Tarell Alvin McCraney's play *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*. From it, Jenkins made *Moonlight* (2016), which would go on to win the Oscar for Best Picture. The second was an adaptation of *If Beale Street Could Talk*, the 1974 James Baldwin novel. Now, this has been brought to life, as Jenkins' latest film.

"They were kind of companion pieces in my mind," he says over the phone from Los Angeles, "so it was always going to be this film" – *Beale Street* – "that was the next project."

Jenkins has long been a fan of Baldwin, a writer and public intellectual remembered for his searing eloquence on the topic of race relations in 20th-century America. The director was introduced to his work by a college girlfriend. "She was just a really impressive person," he enthuses. "She was more intellectual than me, more attractive, more talented" – he says this with a self-effacing grace – "and so, of course, she eventually broke up with me. And when she broke up with me, she did so by recommending I read James Baldwin.

"She gave me a copy of *Giovanni's Room* and *The Fire Next Time*," Jenkins continues. "I saw the power in Baldwin that she had described, so I went and read whatever I could find. I basically read everything except *If Beale Street Could Talk*," he recalls.

One of Baldwin's lesser-known works, *Beale Street* is the story of Tish and Fonny, a young couple from Harlem – black, broke and deeply in love. ("Soulmates," affirms Jenkins.) When Fonny is accused of a crime he did not commit, the newly pregnant Tish and her family throw themselves into clearing his name, determined to get him out of prison before the baby is born.

The book reveals something of the precariousness of being black in America, while testifying to love's persistence in the face of injustice.

Jenkins first read *Beale Street* about a decade into his Baldwin fandom, on the recommendation of a friend. "She thought the book was ripe for adaptation," he says, "and that I'd be the proper person to do



(l to r.) Teyonah Parris as Ernestine, KiKi Layne as Tish, and Regina King as Sharon star in Barry Jenkins' *IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK*, an Annapurna Pictures release.

it." Thankfully, the Baldwin estate agreed, granting him the rights on the strength of his debut, *Medicine for Melancholy* (2008).

Starring Stephan James and newcomer KiKi Layne, his *Beale Street* arrives at a time of renewed interest in Baldwin, sparked by the release of Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017). Based on Baldwin's unfinished memoir, the critically acclaimed documentary demonstrated the continued relevance of his commentary on the form and function of racism in America; how little has changed in the 30 years since his passing.

"I loved it," Jenkins says of *I Am Not Your Negro*. "I thought Raoul had done a wonderful job."

What's more, the timing was "very fortunate". "Through that documentary," he continues, "many people who maybe would not have known about James Baldwin learned who he was. It almost served as an introduction to him, at least through a cinematic prism."

Jenkins' Oscar-nominated screenplay adheres closely to the source material, save for its final scene (which I won't spoil for you). "We filmed the ending of the book as is," Jenkins says, "but what's satisfying on the page isn't necessarily what's satisfying when you're watching a film."

Crafting his own ending was a balancing act: "I was searching for a way to honour the aesthetic contract of the novel," he says, "and yet also pay due respect to the optimism and the hope that I found

in KiKi and Stephan's performance, and the resilience of Regina King's character, Sharon [Tish's mother]."

The film is a sensuous and atmospheric affair, thanks in large part to the cinematography of James Laxton, who also shot *Moonlight* and *Medicine for Melancholy*. He bathes Harlem in a golden light; the neighbourhood appears practically suspended in amber. The languorous visuals are tempered by a stirring score of brass and strings (also Oscar-nominated), composed by Nicholas Britell – another *Moonlight* alumnus.

Asked whether he felt intimidated by the idea of following up *Moonlight* – whose significance was augmented by its status as the first Best Picture winner with an entirely black cast, as well as being the first to explore LGBTIQ identity – Jenkins replies, surprisingly, in the negative.

"It was huge in a certain way," he explains, "but making *Moonlight* was much scarier, much more daunting, than making *Beale Street*, because so much time had passed between that film and my first."

Thanks to *Moonlight*'s success, Jenkins could approach his next film with confidence. "Going into *Beale Street*," he says, "I don't know, it just felt right." A reflective pause. "I wasn't questioning my place as a filmmaker, and I wasn't questioning the viability of my career."

I'd bet no-one else was either.

Can New and Long-time Detroiters Get Along Better by Making Better Arguments?

by **Melinda Clynes**

originally posted on Modeldmedia.com. Melinda Clynes is a freelance writer and regular contributor to Model D

Angry. Impatient. Frustrated. Excited. Non-trusting. Hopeful. Inspired. Enthusiastic. Betrayed. Tired.

These were some of the answers shouted from the 200-person crowd at Eastern Market during last Thursday's Better Arguments Project discussion when speaker Jennifer Jones-Clark asked, "How do you feel about changes happening in Detroit?"

Jones-Clark is a program consultant for the international nonprofit Facing History and Ourselves. It is partnering with the Aspen Institute and the Allstate Corporation to encourage Americans to engage in more productive dialogue about core American ideals through the Better Arguments program.

In the case of Detroit, the focus, driven by local partner Urban Consulate, was to delve thoughtfully into how participants felt about Detroit's evolution and to talk about the arguments they're hearing or having related to the place of newcomers and longtimers.

"Detroit is a great American city that embodies the opportunities, challenges, and arguments that shape civic life — especially the tensions between longtimers and newcomers," said Eric Liu, executive director of the Citizenship and American Identity Program at the Aspen Institute. "Those tensions are about race, class, place, and respect and because the style in Detroit is to get real. ... We thought it'd be a great location to invite people into better arguments."

The morning involved a structured program of remarks, including a spoken piece by writer and Detroitist Marsha Music and a panel discussion moderated by Liu that looked at stereotyping and how a better argument would be one in which we face history and ourselves. Liu asked panelists to weigh in on how to have a better argument.

African American panelist Lauren Hood, a longtime Detroit resident who heads up her consultancy Deep Dive Detroit, said, "Enter from a space of self-awareness. Be mindful of your own biases. You have to know yourself and not be afraid of what your biases are."

Jacob Evan Smith, a newcomer, said to not view people's skepticism personally. "Know there are legitimate reasons their guard is up." Coming from a light-skin Jew who is viewed as a white guy, even though he is part of a marginalized community,



Photos by Valaurian Waller, courtesy of the Aspen Institute.

his response was empathic.

Following the remarks and panel, a healthy chunk of the morning was carved out for guided table discussions. Here, sharing and listening, chances to offer advice or be corrected, were the focus.

But first, participants were schooled on the principles of a Better Argument:

- 1) take winning off the table,
- 2) be present and listen to learn,
- 3) connect and respect,
- 4) be honest and welcome honesty from others, and
- 5) make space for new ideas and room to transform.

Around tables, individuals shared the false narratives they hear from others about Detroit, like how now prospering neighborhoods are still seen as locations of rampant crime and unsavory activity or how whites are the only people who like craft cocktails or Shinola watches.

Still, there was a sense of hope for many. "I mostly feel excited when talking about how Detroit is changing because a majority of people, both newcomers and longtimers, have good intentions," says Smith.

Stereotypes are often perpetuated through stories, and many participants noted that they are still living those stories. Ian McCain, a young white man who works at TechTown Detroit, spoke of how a fellow resident at Lafayette Towers greeted him and noted that McCain was the one always walking in with Whole Foods bags. In reality, McCain frequents other local grocers more regularly. McCain said, "He thought, 'As a young white newcomer, of course you shop at Whole Foods.'"

A mixture of perceptions emerged about economic development, but it was clear that many believed that those with privilege and power have a responsibility to invite all to the table and find ways to share in

ownership and prosperity. "It's an injustice that change is happening that only serves a few when the poverty rate is approaching 40 percent," said Hood. "A lot of the rooms I go into, the people are somber. They've forgotten their self-worth."

Event participants, with their varying histories and emotions, were clearly engaged in better arguments, as attested by the growing din of the room.

"Everyone in this room of all ages and races and histories was willing to engage in arguments and discussions not in order to win but in order to understand," said Liu. "When you do that, a space for a new possible opens up. Trust begets trust, even if hard things are being said. I was surprised how readily people got to that honest but open place."

They not only spoke with passion at their table discussions and challenged each other, but also challenged the format of the event, and even the language used to present information. But in the end, the internal activists in many prevailed, and some left inspired to do more.

"It's time for conversations to reach out to everyday people, the people we don't normally see. We need to encourage more conversations with people who don't have a 'name' or access," said Aaron Foley, an African American man who works for the City of Detroit and is a longtime resident. "How do we open up the circle?"

Said Hood, "I came in thinking that people are tired of these conversations. I'm leaving thinking there is room to convene more people about these topics."

Laura Tavares from Facing History and Ourselves said that the Better Arguments Project had not done an event of this scale before (most are 20 people or so). "This is our first really large one, and Detroit was a perfect place to do this. There is an incredible level of engagement and involvement." Tavares lives in Boston.

"The 300-plus registration is a sign of how invested people in Detroit are in this conversation," said Tavares. "They were triggered by symbols, the Whole Foods bags, the Shinola watch, but it goes much deeper."

Previous Better Arguments have taken place in New York City; Dumas, Arkansas; and Anchorage, Alaska. A Denver event is planned for June.

THRIVE DETROIT

Thrive Detroit is Detroit's Street Paper joining more than 100 local street paper solutions, in 35 Countries, working together to alleviate homelessness and poverty across the world.

Stories and more at: thrivedetroit.org

Thrive Detroit Team:



DELPHIA SIMMONS
Editor



LAURIE FUNDUKIAN
Book Review



MARTTI PEEPLES
Writer



TORI HART
Layout/Design,
Writer



DANIEL B. SIMMONS
Tech Writer



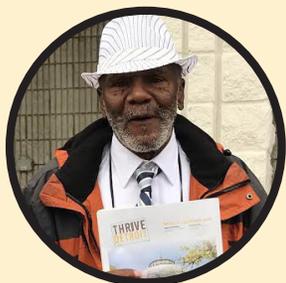
SAJJIAH PARKER
Writer



SARA CONSTANTAKIS
Copy Editor



JOURDAN TAYLOR
Writer



Top Vendor: Mr. G

Individuals like Mr. G who sell Thrive Detroit Street Paper are independent contractors, managing their own sales business.

New vendors can begin earning money right away by calling 313-473-9443 or emailing us at: thrivedetroit@gmail.com

The first 5-10 papers are provided at no cost so that the vendor can sell them for \$2 each and use that income to purchase more papers at .50 per copy. Vendors earn 75% (\$1.50) of the sale for each paper.

Supporters:

