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EJI Racial Justice Essay

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## Is Justice Blind?

Malcom X once said: “If you have a dog, I must have a dog. If you have a rifle, I must have a rifle. If you have a club, I must have a club. This is equality (Sagine Corrielus, 2021).” This quote represents the need of Blacks to be equal in all aspects of their lives and not be dehumanized by oppressive and discriminatory practices by whites. The act of the dehumanization of Blacks has set the stage for centuries allowing racial terror lynching, gentrification, an inadequate economy, and the deficiency of family dynamics. The repercussions of these actions have limited the livelihood and pursuit of happiness of an entire race of people, simply because of the color of their skin. While “slavery” has been abolished since 1865 (157 years), its effects still live on today.

On a hot sunny day in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, July 19, 1935, a young 29-year-old father, son, husband, and beloved friend named Rubin Stacy, was accosted by an angry mob from the Broward County Sheriff and hung from a pine tree until he succumbed to his injuries. His story begins with an all-too-common claim; a white woman claimed to have been attacked by him and he ran off after she screamed (Bryan Brooks, 1988). After he was located and arrested, he was

placed in the local jail. Rumors surfaced that an angry mob was planning on removing him from the jail and hanging him based on the word of a white woman with no trial, investigation, jury, or sentencing (Bryan Brooks, 1988). The Sheriff decided to transport Mr. Stacy to Miami where he would be safe until his trial. It is at this point that the mob ambushed the transport, took Mr. Stacy from the vehicle, and hung him from a tree until he took his last breath (Bryan Brooks, 1988). His death certificate states that his cause of death was a “broken neck and gunshot wounds through heart”. There was no funeral for his family to honor his life and legacy and he remains in an unmarked grave in Ft. Lauderdale in a Black only cemetery.

This story is not unique and has a sad resonance of too many before him and too many after him. Rubin Stacy was born in the small South Georgia town of Pavo. His mother Annise Gilley-Stacy and Father John Stacy were the parents to fourteen children. According to family history, his mother sent him from Georgia to South Florida for his safety. His safety was of great importance to his parents, the sacrifice to send him to Florida was an easy decision. I use the term ‘sacrifice’ because in those days, a son was considered a bread winner to the family and able to help with farming, livestock, and the well-being of the family unit. By the way, Rubin Stacy is my paternal great-great-uncle.

Uncle Rubin’s death left a substantial void in our family. His mother lost her son, his wife lost her husband, and his only child, Willie C., lost his father. The effects of his death reverberated a major loss in the entire family. His son, Willie C., was four years old at the time of his father’s death. He grew up without his biological father and with no connection to his father’s family. He lived a tumultuous life that we can only assume was partially connected to

the way he lost his father. Willie C. passed away in 2017 and never made a connection to his father's family. That eighty-seven-year gap since Uncle Rubin's death was finally closed this year, 2022.

On February 8, 2022, the City of Fort Lauderdale had a ceremony recognizing the injustice that was perpetrated upon Rubin Stacy and his family and memorialized him by adding his name to a stretch of Davie Blvd from Interstate 95 west to U.S. 441 as Rubin Stacy Memorial Blvd. There were many family members in attendance along with elected officials. However, it was this event that ultimately connected Rubin Stacy's direct descendants to his family.

When you think of lynching you may think lynching is something of the past. According to Bryan Stevenson, director of Equal Justice Initiative, "Racial terror lynchings are lethal violence directed at people because of their race in an effort to terrorize the entire community (Bryan Stevenson, 2019)." Some of the communities that were thriving and functioning independent of white influences, were ultimately burned to the ground such as The Rosewood Massacre and the Tulsa Race Massacre. Just a few miles from where I live, now known as the Town of Palm Beach, home of Mar-a-Lago, that area used to be called The Styx. Rumor has it that Henry Flagler had a party for the inhabitants of the island on the mainland and while they were in attendance, their homes and everything they owned was burned to the ground (Mc Clatchy News Service, 2012). An unknown woman said "Flagler tricked us. They got us out of there, invited us off the island, then burned our homes down (Rosy Sophia,2017)." Those that were affected moved to the mainland, near downtown West Palm Beach, in an area they named Pleasant City.

Life for black people has always been unjust, since the beginning of the United States' history. The effects of oppression and dehumanization caused and is still causing tribulations in the black community. These issues have continuously presented themselves over hundreds of years and because of that black people are facing violence like terror lynching, gentrification, economic issues, and the forceful absence of family. Equality and humanism are a part of the mentality and beliefs of many African Americans. By acknowledging and bringing awareness to the struggles and causes for black people systemically, being aware of the inequalities that has been perpetrated injustice can be overcome.

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