

# The Hartford Catholic Worker



St. Martin De Porres House  
St. Brigid House

“You shall love strangers as yourself” -*Leviticus 19:34*



*James gleans*

*Brian Kavanagh*

*This is a prayer,  
a prayer for the can  
men,  
who walk our street,  
with holy feet,  
a heavenly reminder,  
that some things  
ought not be thrown  
away.*

*Ammon Allen-Douçot*

Fall 2016

## The Hartford Catholic Worker

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*The Hartford Catholic Worker* is usually published bimonthly by the St. Martin De Porres Catholic Worker community. We are a lay community of Catholics and like minded friends, living in the north end of Hartford, working and praying for an end to violence and poverty. We are a 501c3 tax exempt organization. We do not seek or accept state or federal funding. Our ability to house the homeless, feed the hungry, and work with the children depends on contributions from our readers. We can be reached at: 18 Clark St., Hartford CT 06120; (860) 724-7066, purplehousecw@gmail.com and www.hartfordcatholicworker.org We are: Brian Kavanagh, Baby Beth Donovan, Anneliese Baer, Caleb Beachy, Dwight Teal Jr., Jacqueline, Christopher, and Ammon Allen-Doucot.

**D**ear friends, readers, and (hopefully) supporters,

Our work of planting seeds of justice while also performing works of mercy are not possible without your support. If you want to support our efforts to work and pray for peace with justice, justice with mercy and life with dignity for all of God's children please share your blessings with us by giving of your time, talent or treasure. Join us as we try to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God". **(Micah 6:8)**

- Donations can be sent to 18 Clark St. Hartford, CT 06120.
- If you are interested in helping to cook for our Saturday program send an email to: purplehousecw@gmail.com
- If you want to received weekly email updates please contact us by email.
- If you want to pray with us join us on the First Tuesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM at 18 Clark St.
- If you happen to drop extra fresh fruit in your shopping cart you can bring it by and it will be devoured by some grateful children!

### Changes

by David Bowie

*I still don't know what I was waiting for  
And my time was running wild  
A million dead-end streets  
Every time I thought I'd got it made  
It seemed the taste was not so sweet  
So I turned myself to face me  
But I've never caught a glimpse  
Of how the others must see the faker  
I'm much too fast to take that test*

*Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes (Turn and face the  
strange)*

*Turn and face the strain*

*Ch-ch-Changes*

*Don't have to be a richer man*

*Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes*

*Ch-ch-Changes (Turn and face the strange)*

*Don't want to be a better man*

*Time may change me*

*But I can't trace time*

*I watch the ripples change their size  
But never leave the stream*

*Of warm impermanence and  
So the days float through my eyes  
But the days still seem the same  
And these children that you spit on  
As they try to change their worlds  
Are immune to your consultations  
They're quite aware of what they're going  
through*

*Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes*

*Where's your shame*

*You've left us up to our necks in it*

*Time may change me*

*But you can't trace time*

*Strange fascination, fascinating me*

*Changes are taking the pace I'm going thru*

*Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes*

*Time may change me*

*But I can't trace time*

*I said that time may change me*

*But I can't trace time*

### No Innocent Bystanders: Becoming an Ally in the Struggle for Justice

by Shannon Craigo-Snell, Ph.D  
and Christopher J. Doucot

will soon be published by  
[Westminster John Knox Press.](#)

If you're interested in a copy let  
us know.



SEE



STEP UP



ACT

*There are no innocent bystanders...  
what are they doing there in the first  
place?*

*William S. Burroughs*

*Christopher J. Douçot*

I love Autumn in New England so much that if I could change the seasons I would have 50 weeks of fall, and a week each of summer and winter. I don't much care for spring- too muddy and messy with melting snow revealing months of litter. I'll take mornings where I can see my breath and afternoons in short sleeves; the maple trees are aflame while the ash wear a royal purple hue. A particularly good fall will find apples still on our tree, beets waiting to be picked, plenty of trout chasing down my #4 Mepps spinner in orange, yellow and green and nine men in Boston chasing a penant. Fall is also a time of change and plenty of change is happening here at the Catholic Worker.

I'm not going to bury the lead- by the time you read this our co-founder, and my lovely wife, will be esconced on her sabattical. Despite scriptural encouragements for us to take every seventh year as a time to heal Jackie has waited twenty-four years to take this time. Please pray that her spritual well, from which she has drawn healing compassion for those many people in her life who are suffering, will be replenished in the coming months. We will greatly miss her.

By the time a leaf flutters to the ground below it has spent its existence nourishing the limbs and branches from which new buds will bulge, unfurl, and soak in the energy of our star until they too begin to blush in anticipation of their voyage from sky to soil. Shortly they will feed the roots that nourish the buds that become the leaves that sustain the tree. Our son Ammon, home since Spring, has been awesome with the neighborhood kids- one of whom asked him what he did for us to have sent him away for four years!

Later this week two of Ammon's classmates from Goshen, Anneliese

Baer and Caleb Beachy, will arrive for a year of nourishing and nourishment as interns at the Hartford Catholic Worker. We are grateful for their arriving just as Jackie is sabattical-ing. Providence; it's not just



a city (that refused to pilfer a minor league baseball team from a sister with a publicly financed stadium...)

This Fall also finds our little

buddy Lilly living a life long dream- four years is a long time when you're four!- as she will be boarding a school bus with her sister Desteni five days a week on her way to kindergarten. It has been a boundless blessing to have her spend half of every week living with us since we brought her home. I'm gonna be beside myself with neither her or Jackie around. If you're relaxing on your back deck some crisp evening in the coming weeks and hear an echo of a distant whimper it will not be the cacophony of our neighbor's dogs howling with every passing siren; nope, it will be me. It's a good thing I don't like country music; songs about my truck breaking down, my wife leaving me and my dog dying would put me over the edge right about now.

Over the summer we had Passion for a week. As fall approaches we are eager to see Passion again. Passion is more than a feeling, she is the adorable niece of P.J. a young man in his thirties who was the first kid we met in the neighborhood. P.J.'s parents died when he was still a child and so he calls Jackie and I "mom" and "dad" nearly every Friday morning as he hops off the back of the city truck to gather our garbage. Truly, it was Passion's mom who raised P.J. and her other siblings. More leaves, more beauty, more buds, more hope.

Though all of us here have tasted some of the bitter fruits of life: the anxious feeling of abandonment when someone close dies, the burning rage when a friend is killed, the betrayal that becomes disappointment after being stolen from, or the questioning of our adequacy as parents, as neighbors, as persons when someone we love is hurt. The canopy of the tree we've planted here is heavy with the fruit of love and generous with the shade of welcome it casts on all of us who spend time in this neighborhood.Ω

Linda Poland

While attending a conference today on dismantling systemic racism, I listened as a participant asked the keynote speaker how do we deal with the fact that today he was, in effect, “preaching to the choir” and that the attendees at the conference already “get it.” This was the same question I asked myself as I picked up Christopher Edmin’s *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y’all Too; Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education*. After all, it is not likely that a white teacher who doesn’t at least try to “get it” would bother picking up this book. But the title intrigued me, and I looked forward to whatever advice Edmin could give this white, middle aged teacher.

I was quickly challenged by a major premise of Edmin’s book. In the Introduction Edmin describes the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, founded in 1879 to “help” Indigenous Americans assimilate to the white way of life. He explains that its founder Richard Henry Pratt and its white teachers believed they were indeed helping their students when in fact they were devaluing and erasing their culture. The [Carlisle School](#) would become a model school in replacing the cultures (ie language, dress, religion, and even hair length) of Native Americans with that of European descended Americans (similar church run schools did the same think in [Canada](#), Australia and New Zealand).

Within thirty years’ of its establishment nearly 500 similar schools would

open in the United States, the vast majority run by the Roman Catholic Church. Edmin then compares the experience of Native Americans and other Indigenous peoples to that of contemporary urban communities of color. For the remainder of the book he refers to the students and their families as the neoindigenous. He

both instances, I imagined that it would be difficult for me to make this argument without it sounding like I was treating my students like some exotic “other.” And this somehow felt wrong.

But I read on, and I am glad I did.

I feel Edmin was at his best when he described his own difficulties as a first and second year teacher and how he gradually grew and improved as an educator. Edmin is a Black man who grew up in a neighborhood much like the one where he found his first teaching job. But before the first school bell rang, he began to buy into the narrative that his students were angry and violent and didn’t want to learn. He writes of being a first year teacher and being warned by veteran teachers not



**Michael, Jamariah, Elisa and Passion**

explains that similar to the indigenous cultures, the neoindigenous have their own clothing, speech, music, and other customs, and that it is the responsibility of those who teach them to not only understand this but to use these aspects of the students’ culture to engage them in their education.

Now I have to admit that at this point in the book I began to really struggle with identifying my students (in my mind) as neoindigenous. I imagined trying to have a conversation with white friends and colleagues in which I explained to them how I engage my neoindigenous students differently because they come from a different culture than I do. And I tried to imagine having that same conversation with my black and brown friends and colleagues. In

to smile until November, to maintain strict standards of discipline even if that meant frequently yelling at students, and to employ teaching tactics that he admits would not have worked on his own teenage self. He understands the pressure that all public school teachers are under today. He writes that “the current landscape of urban education, which holds teachers accountable for student outcomes while failing to equip teachers with the tools to meet these outcomes is paralyzing.” And he continues that the “entire system of urban education is failing youth of color.” He describes a vicious cycle of poor teaching practices that lead to negative behaviors on the part of students, that

**(Please see: *Teaching*, p6)**

Nathan Orr

My name is Nathan Orr. I am an Accounting major heading into my senior year at Goshen College. By April 2017, I'll be graduating with my Bachelor's degree. Graduating college is already an amazing accomplishment for any person who decides to attend, but when a Black male graduates college it is a colossal achievement. Black students deal with high tuition costs but also inadequate schooling prior to college and an absence of support during school. This article is not an attempt to overshadow college graduates of other genders or races, but I want to take the opportunity to emphasize just how significant it is for a Black man, especially one from one of the poorest neighborhoods in America, to be a college graduate in today's society.

College did not seem like an accessible option for me. For those that did not already know, college is not cheap. Even after completing FAFSA and receiving a financial aid package, a normal family living in the inner city still cannot afford the several thousand dollars that still needs to be paid. I was fortunate to have some scholarship assistance from the Hartford Catholic Worker. The cost of attending college is a common issue that a great amount of Black families face. According to the debt demographics, 81% of Black students graduating college will do so with debt. The average [amount of debt](#) for Black students is \$46,200. By the time I graduate, I will [have \\$50,000](#)

of debt. To cover tuition along with room and board, I have been working at least two jobs every summer since 2012.

Starting college does not guarantee smooth sailing to graduation.

approximately \$25,000. As a result of a 12.49% unemployment rate in Hartford, and the scarcity of high paying jobs, most families coming from this urban setting can barely afford to make ends meet to pay

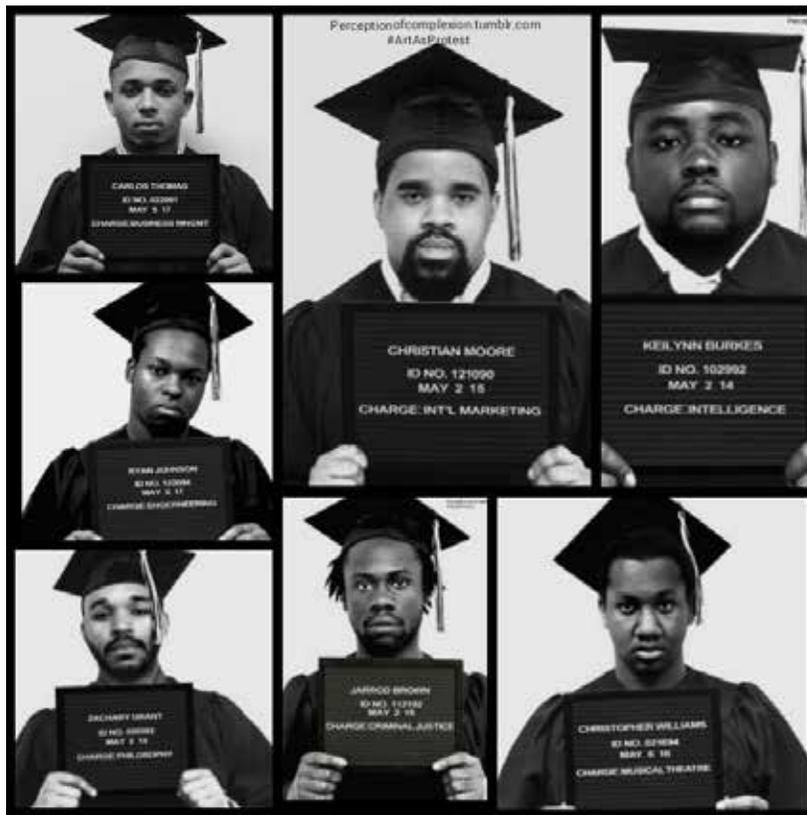
for rent or mortgage and utilities. Only those that are athletically or academically gifted enough to receive a scholarship, or Black families that have the money are able to overcome the financial obligations of college.

A Black male graduating college is such a great achievement because many of us have been inadequately prepared for college. In my very own community, Weaver High School and Clark Elementary School are both currently shut down. Instead of investing in the quality of schools located in Hartford, more than \$50 million has been sapped into a baseball stadium that is not completed. The

lack of investment in the Hartford Public School system recently led to 200 teachers being laid off. This hits home for me especially because I am the product of an inner city community- I live two blocks away from the Hartford Catholic Worker.

When I return home from another year of college, my friends in the community ask me where I have been for such a long time. Each time I reveal that I've been in college, I get the same reaction: shock. This is followed by statements like, "Man, I wish I was in your shoes." Most of the Black or even minority men that are my age are not going to college. There are many examples of

**(Please see: *Being Black*, p7)**



*The Mugshot Series* by E.J. Brown

[37% of Black](#) men that enroll in college complete a four-year Bachelor's program within six years, adding cost as well as time. After my second year at Goshen College, I could not afford to attend the third year, and had to go to a local community college. Upon returning to Goshen the following school year, I had two jobs along with being a full time student with a 16 credit hour course load, and being a student athlete. Not only is tuition very expensive, but there are living expenses, travel expenses and textbooks to worry about.

It costs \$42,200 to be a full time undergraduate student living on campus at Goshen College. Attending a public in-state college in either Connecticut or Indiana costs

## Teaching in the 'hood, cont.

then trigger biases that teachers hold against students who don't look or act like them.

While he understands the struggles of public school teachers in general and white urban public school teachers in particular, he does not let us white teachers off the hook. Instead he challenges us to engage in the necessary self-reflection that allows us to recognize our biases, our baggage, and our fears. Only by doing this can we then move toward a new approach to teaching our urban students. Edmin calls this approach reality pedagogy.

The remainder of the book is composed of chapters such as "Chuuuuch," in which he encourages white teachers to become familiar with how pastors in black congregations speak to and lead their church communities so that they can employ a similar style in the classroom. Another chapter titled "Coteaching" suggests that neoindividual students may be better equipped to teach lessons effectively than white teachers. He describes giving his class over to his students to teach lessons. And "Clean" explores the importance of fashion to the neoindividual and suggests that white teachers understand this and keep this in mind when deciding how to dress for the urban classroom.

Some of Edmin's suggestions seemed geared more specifically to the high school level. Others made me question how realistic it was to expect teachers to spend their out of school hours in students' churches,

on the basketball courts, and in the bodegas and corner stores. But even when I wasn't necessarily agreeing with his suggestions, each suggestion made me reflect on my own practices with my students and question if there were areas where my blind spots, biases, or ignorance was getting in the way. And at the heart of all of Edmin's suggestions was the basic message that teachers need to truly get to know their students, let their students get to know them, and build relationships with them. While Edmin makes brief references to how our American bias towards all things white create a school system that is inherently biased against black and brown students, in this book he is speaking to the individual teacher. He currently works with pre-service teachers and as a trainer of teachers and he at times draws from conversa-



Michael

tions he has had with those teachers regarding their experiences in the urban classroom. His book is a challenge to teachers of all backgrounds to examine how their ignorance and biases may prevent black and brown students from thriving in school. And he offers a number of strategies for teachers to implement in their classrooms to better connect and engage with their students.

*(Linda Poland has been teaching in the public schools for twenty-five years at both the elementary and secondary level, in regular and special education, and in urban and suburban settings. She currently works as a special education teacher in Manchester, CT)*

[For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...and the Rest of Y'all Too—Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education.](#) Christopher Edmin. Beacon Press 2016.

(ed. note: click here to read [High hopes and harsh realities: The real challenges to building a diverse teacher workforce](#) published by the Brookings Institute Aug.18, 2016)Ω

## alternate names for black boys

By [Danez Smith](#)

1. *smoke above the burning bush*
2. *archnemesiis of summer night*
3. *first son of soil*
4. *coal awaiting spark & wind*
5. *guilty until proven dead*
6. *oil heavy starlight*
7. *monster until proven ghost*
8. *gone*
9. *phoenix who forgets to un-ash*
10. *going, going, gone*
11. *gods of shovels & black veils*
12. *what once passed for kindling*
13. *fireworks at dawn*
14. *brilliant, shadow hued coral*
15. *(I thought to leave this blank but who am I to name us nothing?)*
16. *prayer who learned to bite & sprint*
17. *a mother's joy & clutched breath*

# The Average Black Family Would Need 228 Years to Build the Wealth of a White Family Today

Joshua Holland

If current economic trends continue, the average black household will need 228 years to accumulate as much wealth as their white counterparts hold today. For the average Latino family, it will take 84 years. Absent significant policy interventions...in the American economy, people of color will never close the gap... according to a new study of the racial wealth-gap... which looked at trends in household wealth from 1983 to 2013... The the average wealth of white households increased by 84 percent during those three decades, three times the gains African-American families saw...the wealthiest Americans...saw their net worths increase by 736 percent during that period...

If those trends persist for another 30 years, the average white family's net worth will grow by \$18,000 per year, but black and Hispanic households would only see theirs grow by \$750 and \$2,250 per year, respectively.

"[Economist] Thomas Picketty said that, left uninterrupted, we would move toward a hereditary aristocracy of wealth," says Chuck Collins, one of the study's authors. "What he didn't say is that in the United States, that would be almost entirely a white aristocracy of wealth..."

The median income for whites in 2011 was around 50 percent higher than it was for blacks and Latinos, but whites' median household wealth was around 16 times greater.

It took 400 years of slavery, segregation, and institutionalized discrimination in the labor and housing markets to build the wealth gap that we see today. For example, by the time the Fair Housing Act made discrimination in housing illegal in 1968, people of color had missed out on decades of robust growth in the housing markets (and much of the next generation missed out on that wealth building in the 20 years it took to fully implement the law). "The racial wealth divide is how

the past shows up in the present," says Chuck Collins. "We have a deep legacy of wealth inequality that undermines the whole idea that...there's an equal playing field."

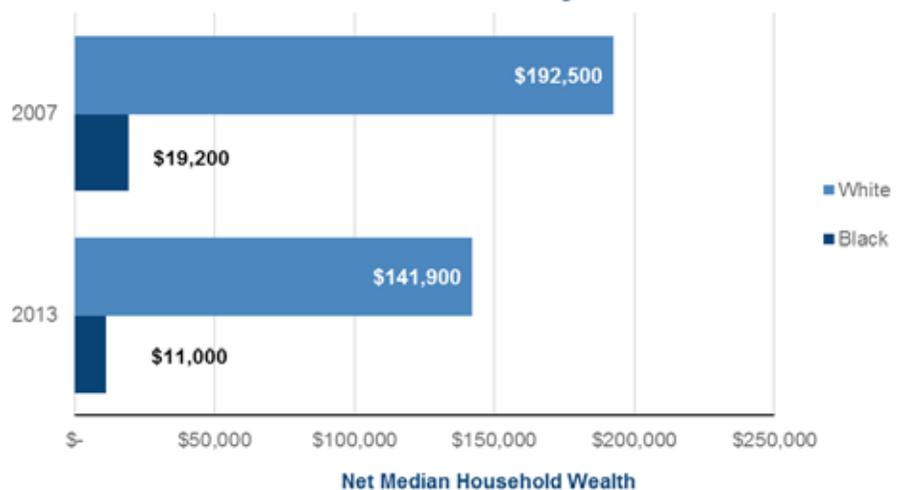
The racial wealth gap continues to grow not only because of income inequality—whites have more dollars to sock away—but because accumulated wealth is a mechanism for transmitting economic success from generation to generation. It's a vicious cycle—poor communities have limited tax bases to fund their public-school systems, which lead to sharp disparities in educational quality. A family with some assets can help their kids pay for an education or put a down payment on a first home or kick them some seed money to start a small business. All of those things help the next generation climb the economic ladder. Wealth also provides an important cushion against unexpected shocks—things like temporary job losses or unexpected medical bills. If you've got some wealth, you can weather the storm without getting over your head in debt.

According to Princeton University sociologist Dalton Conley, the wealth of a child's family is the single greatest predictor of that child's future economic prospects. Conley... found that even white households hovering around the poverty line have a net

worth of \$10,000 to \$15,000, but the typical black family at that income level will often [have] negative net worth. In many cases, that means turning to usurious predatory lenders to stay afloat—an added expense of being poor.

A truly perverse aspect of this story is that just as past public policies created the racial wealth gap, current policy continues to widen it. The federal government spends a fortune subsidizing wealth-building activities like paying for college, saving for retirement or buying a home, but most of those dollars go to people who already have wealth. Since 1994, government spending on wealth-building has more than tripled—from \$200 billion in 1994 to \$660 billion last year... The costliest of those subsidies is the home-mortgage tax deduction, and a 2013 study by the National Priorities Project found that 77 percent of those benefits go to households with annual incomes between \$75,000 and \$500,000. Similarly, an estimated two-thirds of all public subsidies for retirement savings go to those with incomes in the top 20 percent of the distribution. We're spending a fortune on wealth building, but very little of it ends up bolstering the net worths of poor people and people of color... (to read the full story [click here](#). to read the study behind this story [click here](#).)

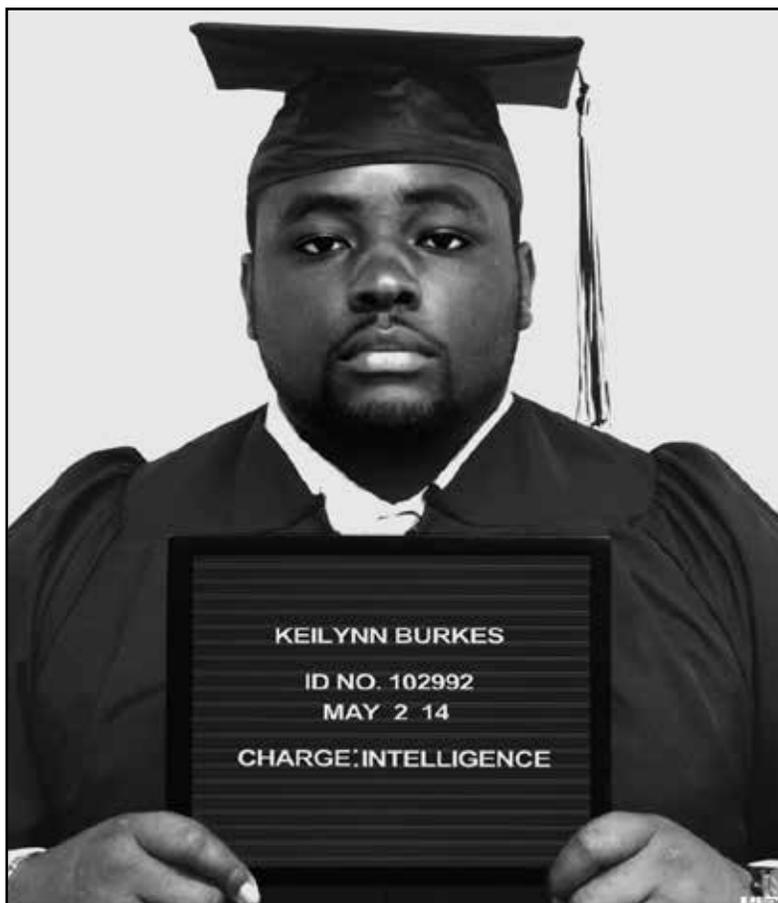
### Black Wealth Barely Exists



minority men that I've encountered who've claimed that high school inadequately prepared them for college. For instance, I did not learn how to properly construct a well-written essay with a thesis statement until my junior year of high school. I have heard many personal accounts of others asserting that the difficulty and quantity of the work given in high school were nowhere close to that of college. This is only a piece of what makes a Black male graduating college so significant.

Another obstacle for Black male students is the fact that colleges mostly contain white students and faculty members. Take for example my school, Goshen College. For the 2015 – 2016 academic year, there were approximately 700 undergraduate students enrolled. Of that 700, only 4% of them are Black (less than 30 students). Since my freshman year of college, I have only encountered three Black faculty/staff members, all female- one professor who was laid off, one who just recently started working in the financial aid office, and one who is currently a Peace and Social Justice/Religion professor. It is burdensome to adjust, learn, and thrive in an environment that lacks a single Black male to identify with. This feels like a lack of guidance in the right direction. Black men who do not play sports experience difficulties finding a social group that will accept them. Every school has cliques and because most people have peers that share the same race or religion as them, there are not many opportu-

nities for me to make friends that I share a culture with. This puts me in a position where I have to choose between assimilating with the white culture on campus, or have very few friends at college. I have to put up with hearing comments such as, "You aren't like most Black people," or, "You don't speak like most Black people." Having to cope with being the only Black person in all of my classes does take an emotional toll



because I feel isolated at times.

Black men graduating from college is a vital occurrence because inner city children that are Black need more positive role models that look like them. When more men of color graduate college, it makes way for more Black males in the following generations to attend college. I know when I graduate I want to mentor a small group of young Black boys, and see to it that they

one day have the chance to enroll in college and successfully graduate. It is imperative that Black college graduates encourage later generations of Black men to attend college not just to land a career and to work all day, but to expand and build upon their minds. With an increase of Black men graduating, we can have more leaders and role models to stand up and speak for us.

Issues such as gang violence, gun violence, high incarceration rates, unemployment, and low graduation rates within the Black community stem from the lack of opportunities. With there being more educated Black men to become future business owners, doctors, engineers, etc. more opportunities will be available. This is why it is significant for a Black male like myself to graduate college. An active attempt must be made to tackle the issues such as inability to finance college, poor college preparation, and the unavailability of Black role models in schools that limit Black males.

I'd like to wholeheartedly thank the Hartford Catholic Worker and every donor for extending a helping hand by providing me with multiple scholarships and donations. I am also appreciative that the Hartford Catholic Worker helped me travel to and from Indiana. As I go on to complete the final year of my college experience, I will keep all of the things that have been done for me dear to my heart. I will ensure that with my Bachelor's degree, I will become a contributing member to this community and a role model for Black students to further their education.Ω

## Notes, cont.

come and go and those who do not. The next step, of course, is working to dismantle that same power imbalance and systems of oppression. The work towards this goal is at the heart of the Green House and I've found that an essential first step is learning to respect and listen to the people who are denied fundamental rights. The most important thing that I have learned over my summer here is that it is a gift and honor to talk with the kids who attend the Green House program, to listen to them, and to come to a place of mutual trust.

During the time of transition towards summer program, we heard of the murder of Daylon Orr who was an alum of the Green House. The tragic news was a reminder of the important work that is done at the Catholic Worker and the violent conditions that many of the attending kids must face. Though I never had the privilege to personally meet Daylon, his death forced me to consider both the Green House and the kids who attend it with new respect. The level of kindness, beauty, and love that Green House kids have is remarkable in any situation and especially in an environment where shootings are commonplace, where violence is normal, and where those with power look down on them in disgust. I am always amazed by the power of children to provide light and healing into a world that is so broken. I am likewise humbled by the power of the Green House kids to do this so exceptionally, consistently, and passionately.

One testament to the power of the Green House kids is the graduation party which occurred about a week after the end of after school program. The celebration was complete with excess food, slide shows, and a bouncy house (which Lily enjoyed for over 3 consecutive hours). Those in attendance had the pleasure of honoring graduates of all levels as well as the Public Allies folks who have and will continue to help with the Green House program. All I can say is that whenever a Public Allies person walked through the door during any time this summer, we knew we were in good hands.

On that note, both Ammon and Floyd will be joining Public Allies in the coming school year and we wish them the best as they work towards justice within Hartford.

Ammon will be working at the Green House and as a teacher's aid in one of the local schools while Floyd has been interviewing with various organizations and has yet to lock down his placement. Both of them will be huge assets to their respective organizations in the fall and their work at the summer program was an example of their skill and leadership.

July meant the beginning of both summer program at the Green House and summer camp in Voluntown. Beth, Jackie, and Chris said goodbye to Hartford for the summer and headed to the lake with the counselors. Ammon, Dwight, Floyd, and I got ready to spend our days with those who were not attending the camp in any given week. We would work around the house in the morning as we tried to keep it clean and functioning for the kids



**Kerry and Cecil dunking... try to not notice the bench they are standing on.**

who arrived around noon. It was a pleasure to see them each day and greet them by name. I loved watching the faces of kids who would come in at the beginning often with hugs or high-fives. With only four adults most days, we had good times and, unavoidably, some more difficult and stressful times. It really made us appreciate the days when volunteers came and provided extra support.

The daily program was always chaotic but also a lot of fun. Usually it was four adults in four respective zones trying to make sure almost 30 kids were all cared for and safe. Dwight took care of the second floor with amazing daily art projects which kids always completed enthusiastically and then often left lying around for weeks while Dwight patiently reminded them to take it home. Floyd played a ridiculous amount of basketball which ran from the moment the first kid walked in the door until the last left. I became well acquainted with the back playground and now have a remarkable tolerance for pushing swings, playing tag, and dealing with countless scraped knees and elbows. Ammon was left to handle everything else including answering doors and phones, dealing with conflicts, monitoring snack, and dominating games of Four-Square and Uno (to the displeasure of many of the kids).

I came to Hartford Catholic Worker two months ago with few expectations of my role. I anticipated learning on the job, doing what I could, and watching the people around me. While I definitely was able to learn from the community members at the Green House, there was even more offered from the kids who attended the daily program. I have come to love and respect them in a very short time and am excited for their current and future accomplishments. It has been a remarkable summer here in Hartford and I hope to come back many times to reconnect with the people here. I am thankful for the Green House, the people who make it everything it is, and the blessing that it is to the entire community. Ω

*(Dear Readers, in case you missed the byline this edition of Notes From De Porres House was not written by Jackie Allen-Doucot. Fret not friendly follower-Jackie is on a well deserved sabbatical and her musings will return to the back page before you know it. Rest well Jackie. We will miss you!)*

## Notes From De Porres House

### *Peter Paetkau*

Today as I sat on the beach at Misquamicut listening to the sounds of the ocean and enjoying the sun, Jackie reminded me (somewhat remorsefully) that there are only twenty days of summer left. Though it's a sad thought, in many ways I feel as though summer has already ended for me. Program at the Green House wrapped up last week as did bringing kids and counselors to Voluntown for camp and the process of cleaning up summer messes in attempt to prepare for the new school year has already begun. For me, the ending of summer program also means an end to my time as an intern at the Green House. Soon I will return to Goshen, Indiana (where I first heard about the Hartford Catholic Worker and met Ammon) to complete my final year of undergraduate studies.

Though the hundreds of papers, readings, and assignments that await are undoubtedly endless sources of joy (just ask Chris who will soon get to grade all this and more), it is also difficult to leave the people I have had the joy of getting to know over the last few months.

After arriving in Hartford two months ago, I spent a few weeks getting acquainted with life at the Green House before the summer program started in full swing. During this time, I was introduced to many of the kids who come to the Green House after school

which was still in session when I first arrived. I quickly learned that, while Floyd may have serious skill on the basketball court, my talents are much better suited to pushing swings, playing tag, and impersonating numerous monsters for the pleasure of the younger children. Life during the first couple weeks



***Michael, Amayah, Nini, Elisa and Peter***

also meant getting to know the maintenance and cleaning tasks that form an endless list of activities to be accomplished by Green House residents and volunteers. Though cleaning bathrooms and dealing with fifteen year old compost were some of the most fun, keeping the flower beds and gardens alive, weeding out overgrown patches, raking rocks back into the playground area, and washing dishes were also daily joys.

Soon it was time for both kids and volunteers to take a break from the Green House

while we got ready for summer program. It was during this time that I was able to ask questions, have conversations, and hear stories from the community members here about their experiences and visions for the work they are doing. I quickly noticed patterns in conversations with various people regarding the nature of the work here. One of the most important lessons was learning to widen the vision of who the Green House is serving. Yes it is a service to the neighborhood and yes it is about creating an alternative space for the kids who come but it is also a meeting place where volunteers can have genuine interactions with our kids.

The Green House is also a service to people like me who have lived in segregated situations removed from the violence and forced isolation that members of our community experience on a daily basis.

From the beginning of my time in Hartford, I realized that I was exercising a huge amount of power to both enter and leave the neighborhood at will. Now as I am preparing to go back to school, I am increasingly aware that leaving is simply not an option for Green House kids. Though it is difficult to reconcile, it is imperative that we recognize the imbalance of power that exists in the neighborhood between those who have the social advantages and economic resources to

**(Please see: Notes, p9)**