

## CA☆ FORUM ON PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY

**Blood in the Rust Belt****Mourning and Memorialization in the Context of Community Violence**

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This paper examines the use by those living in impoverished neighborhoods of color in Syracuse, NY, of artifacts and rituals of memorialization in response to intense ongoing violence. This work is part of a longitudinal, community-university action anthropology collaboration on trauma due to neighborhood violence. This Rust Belt city of 145,000 residents had 30 murders in 2016, the highest murder rate in New York State and one of the highest nationwide. Since at least 2009, the majority of Syracuse's homicides resulted from neighborhood violence in which adolescent and young adult members from competing turf areas carry out ongoing feuds. Neighbors, coworkers, family members, and friends of murder victims face trauma, including emotional and somatic symptoms. There is little public recognition of the deep pain and grief experienced by community members. In response, community memorialization takes place through a process of acknowledging key events with symbols, folk art, martyrdom, and language. These artifacts express shared values, even when those values are contrary to and in resistance to values of the larger society. We compare these practices to those seen in civil conflict areas to suggest that such memorialization may unfortunately fuel ongoing violence through processes of social contagion.

In late 2015, a 15-year-old high school sophomore was killed in a drive-by shooting as he was sitting on a porch in the early evening. Around his neck, he wore the laminated photographs of his three good friends who had all previously been murdered (House 2015). The young man literally carried his memories of his friends with him, honoring their lives. The shooting prompted the lockdown of the Syracuse University campus a mile and a half away (Pucci 2015), yet to our knowledge, neither this murder victim nor his deceased friends have been commemorated in their own school; there have been no scholarships, no plaques, no statues erected in their memory, and no minute of silence. In the comments section in the local news-

paper, many of the writers blamed the decedent and his parents for his death, while a community member noted, "If a kid dies in a car crash, runs into a tree, drunk driving in another school district, they'll stop, offer counseling, right, to anyone who that needs, and then only resume curriculum after that." In this article, we examine the memorialization of friends, family, and compatriots in the context of profound poverty and ongoing neighborhood violence. We see the social practices that we describe in this article as preserving and extending the social identities of the deceased (Unruh 1983; Walter 2015) and as strategies through which people who often find themselves marginalized can shape the social life of their communities to give

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meaning and continuity to their experiences (Connerton 1989; Halbwach 1992). We begin by exploring the experience of deep loss in the context of inequality, of children growing up without social recognition, and families destroyed by vastly disproportionate incarceration. We then describe the material and linguistic expressions of grief—tattoos, wristbands, memorial shrines with teddy bears, music, funeral home videos—as symbolic efforts to express loss. These are the bodily and social rituals through which collective memory is constructed (Connerton 1989:74). We interpret the ethnographic materials presented in this article as illustrating a form of “social contagion,” which “involves the mutual influence of individuals within social networks who turn to each other for cues and behavioral tools that reflect the contingencies of specific situations” (Fagan, Wilkinson, and Davies 2007:689). It also contributes to the understanding of structural racism and echoes analyses of mourning and loss in the African American community (Taylor 2013; Williams 2016).

This study, conducted in Syracuse, New York, is part of an ongoing community-university collaboration between faculty and students of Syracuse University, the Street Addiction Institute, and the Trauma Response Team (Jennings-Bey et al. 2015). The two lead authors are Syracuse University faculty who have conducted participant observation, ethnographic research, public health analysis, and advocacy for two decades in Syracuse communities suffering from structural racism and health inequities, using a model of action anthropology research called Community Action Research and Education (CARE). The CARE model includes partnerships with community members, who request Syracuse University faculty assistance in addressing problems; CARE also involves students in each project, explicitly framing the project as both research and pedagogy. Our current work aims to understand and reduce the incidence of the trauma of residents living in extremely violent communities (Bergen-Cico et al. 2015; Lane et al. 2017a). Part of this research addresses the cultural context in which ever-younger perpetrators kill their peers. We formalized this aspect of our university-community partnership as the Syracuse Neighborhood Violence Research Collaboration. Together we have developed interventions, written grants, and published peer-reviewed articles (Bergen-Cico et al. 2015; Jennings-Bey et al. 2015; Keefe et al. 2017; Lane et al. 2017a; Larsen et al. 2017). The impetus for this article on unaddressed grief, memory, and future retaliation emerged from this earlier work. In meeting with, talking to, and observing young community members and their concerned parents and elders, we could see that the youth drew on their grief to create memorials, rituals, language, and artifacts to commemorate their lost friends. They do so in the near absence of official recognition of their loss in schools or by city leaders.

Adolescents and young adults who have grown up in communities where random gunshots and early death are common create the artifacts, language, and rituals of mourning. The creative attention employed in making and disseminating the

memorials provide a focus for grieving, a way to psychologically manage the unremitting and unpredictable death, and a way of avoiding social death by keeping the deceased’s social identity present (Walter 2015), perhaps even extending their social agency long after their physical death (Klass, Silverman, and Nickman 1996). It also provides a vehicle for community members to celebrate the lives of those who had often not had public recognition while they were alive. Finally, we discuss the unfortunate potential for the enactment of grief, in the context of continuing murder, to fuel the resentment that leads to subsequent acts of violence. In this regard, we compare Syracuse, New York, to Belfast and Lebanon, where folk art such as billboards, badges, and the like commemorate martyrs in ways that seem to inspire youth to continue the violence. The martyrs have achieved a kind of immortality and deep respect in death that they likely lacked in life; they have escaped social death. The memorialization of murdered charismatic heroes in Syracuse can be viewed as social contagion, elevating the risk of future violence. We begin, however, by briefly placing the CARE model in broader context.

### CARE and Anthropological Practice

Using the CARE model means adhering to a number of epistemological and value commitments, which expand on those identified by Sol Tax and his collaborators as they shaped action anthropology (Gearing, Netting, and Peattie 1960; Rubinstein 1986, forthcoming; Smith 2015). These include working on questions raised as important by the community and working as equals with community members to conceptualize the research approach, collect data, analyze that material, copublish, and disseminate the findings within and beyond the community. We follow Tax’s view that anthropologists have a role in helping communities better understand their situations and options for actions. As Tax advised, “people have the right to make mistakes”; thus our role is not directive (cf. Gearing, Netting, and Peattie 1960). As Howard (1961:413) put it, action anthropologists try to aid the community “in defining their goals and then working toward their achievement. This, to me, is the essence of Action Anthropology, and the essential difference between this approach and the host of others.”

During the two decades in which this model has been applied in Syracuse, there have been opportunities to present this work in a variety of forums, some anthropological, some public health, and some political science and policy studies. Academic colleagues have variously labeled this work as a form of applied anthropology, engaged anthropology, advocacy anthropology, public anthropology, or community-based participatory research. Although this work shares elements of those approaches, none of them capture fully the nature of the approach used in CARE, as each implies a different set of commitments (Maida and Beck 2017; Rubinstein 1987).

A full discussion of the nuances and differences involved in distinguishing CARE work from each of these areas is be-

yond the scope of this paper and has been discussed in other publications (Lane et al. 2011, 2017a, 2017b). Nonetheless, it is worth highlighting one of these differences: the commitment that the action anthropology model makes to equality among researchers and community members, what some have described as “decolonizing” anthropological knowledge (e.g., Smith 2015).

Recently, for example, one of the authors (SDL) attended a meeting for the development of community-based participatory research at a local university. The meeting involved colleagues from several disciplines who focused on developing a database of community members who might be kept at the ready and used in various kinds of studies. The idea was that keeping such a roster would facilitate research “in the community” rather than in the laboratory or classroom. Clearly, the epistemological commitments involved in this plan were different than those in the CARE model. What was called community-based research, as proposed at the meeting, recreates and reifies the power distance between researchers and community members, to which we object. It clearly creates a colonial relationship between researcher and community (cf. Lope-rena 2016).

There is another approach to public anthropology which encourages anthropologists to write in ways that bring anthropological research to broader audiences. Edmunds and Skidmore summarize this genre of public anthropology as

distinguished by three key characteristics: the broader application of ethnography to urgent and political social issues in a way that shows the profoundly relational nature of current crises to historical, political and local events and forces; a focus on this approach as a central aspect of training, particularly at the postgraduate level; and an active and accessible engagement in public discussion and debate. (Edmunds and Skidmore 2007:107–108)

This approach is reflected in the University of California Press series on Public Anthropology edited by Robert Borofsky. Some using this approach focus on strengthening the discipline and its training of professional anthropologists, some of whom may, in their professional lives, seek to work with communities directly (Hyland and Bennett 2013). Others focus on using anthropology to pronounce *ex cathedra* on policy and other social issues (e.g., Besteman and Gusterson 2005).

There is a lot of conceptual room between knowledge and community colonizing projects, those that seek to make anthropology generally accessible to lay audiences, and approaches like the CARE model, that seek to decolonize knowledge (which also makes anthropology accessible to broader audiences). The CARE model is explicitly pedagogical. Faculty, students, and community members participate as they are able to devote time to a project, working jointly and teaching one another about the areas in which they have expertise. Thus, in this model of action anthropology, problem definition, conceptualization, and research cannot be neatly packaged into service learning expe-

riences or semester-based research classes, or perhaps even into applied anthropology graduate programs. In contrast to the CARE approach, many models of service learning burden the community without providing reciprocal benefits.

The CARE model is one of several approaches that have been inspired by action anthropology and elaborate on it. These programs share, to some degree, epistemological and value commitments. Perhaps the most significant and sustained of these efforts has been the work of Jean and Steven Schensul and their collaborators in Hartford, Connecticut (e.g., Schensul 2005). These efforts have been very productive in what Tax saw as coordinate goals for anthropology: developing new knowledge and solving practical problems (Rubinstein 1986; Tax 1952).

### Inequality and Homicide in Syracuse

Once a prosperous commercial and manufacturing center, Syracuse, New York is now part of the so-called Rust Belt of northeastern cities, which are experiencing a declining economic base and decreasing population (Hagedorn 2007). Located in Onondaga County, Central New York’s hub, Syracuse had a population of just over 145,000 in 2010. One-third of all Syracuse residents live below the Federal poverty level, and among families with children under 18 years of age, 43% are below the poverty level. Nearly half of Syracuse residents are ethnic minorities: 30% are African American, 5.5% are Asian, 1.1% are Native American, and 8.3% are Hispanic. Syracuse has the unwelcome distinction of having “the highest level of poverty concentration among blacks and Hispanics of the one hundred largest metropolitan areas” (Jargowsky 2015:8).

A 2007 report documented Onondaga County as having the second highest racial disparity (of counties over 250,000 residents) of drug-related crime sentencing to correctional institutions (Beatty, Petteruti, and Ziedenberg 2007:24). In that analysis, based on 2006 data, the per capita rate of sentencing for drug-related offenses in Onondaga County was 224.9 sentences per 100,000 African American residents and 2.3 sentences per 100,000 white residents. The African American rate was therefore 99 times the white rate (see also Lane et al. 2017a). Keefe et al. (2017) found that the disproportionate incarceration of men of color was one of the key reasons for female-headed households in that group. While racial inequality in incarceration affects women, the vast majority of individuals sentenced are men, many of whom are the fathers of the youth and young adults experiencing the murders of friends and family members. As described in depth by Alexander (2012), the structural racism in such disproportionate incarceration is a root cause of neighborhood devastation and the context in which gun violence and homicides have become daily realities.

In Syracuse, poor communities and communities of color largely overlap. Life in these communities became increasingly challenging as economic opportunities decreased, services like fire fighting response became uneven, and supermarkets and

other aspects of the social safety net failed to serve members of these communities (Lane 2008). As in other cities affected by the Rust Belt phenomenon (cf. Fullilove 2004; Lübbers 2007), members of these communities express a sense of being marginalized in the city.

In 2016, Syracuse, New York, had the highest murder rate (20.69 murders per 100,000 population) in New York State and one of the highest murder rates nationwide (Dessa Bergen-Cico, David A. Larsen, Najah Salaam, Anthony Panasci, Timothy Jennings-Bey, Arnett Haygood-El, Robert A. Rubinstein, and Sandra D. Lane, unpublished manuscript). The majority of the murders were due to community young people (15 to 29 years of age) shooting members of rival neighborhoods in a feuding pattern. The communities of color in Syracuse have been divided into over 15 neighborhood-turf areas by youth residing in each area, with names such as Bricktown, 110, and Brighton Brigade.

According to data provided to us by the Syracuse Police Department in 2015, since before 2009, police have documented an average of 325 yearly gunshot episodes (more than one bullet was fired in each episode), which are tightly clustered in 11 census tracts in impoverished neighborhoods where residents of color are the majority. In 2015, we conducted interviews at public sentinel locations, where minority residents would be in attendance, such as the Juneteenth celebration, Pop Warner football games, and the waiting areas of braiding hair salons. A total of 96 respondents answered our question about the number of murder victims they knew. Several who did not answer that question said that it was too painful to answer. Only seven respondents said that they did not know anyone who had been murdered; over half knew 10 or more homicide victims (range, 1–101 victims), although two individuals were not able to give precise numbers, responding instead, “too many to count” (Lane et al. 2017a:454). In our discussions, community members estimate that for each neighborhood murder, up to 200 people are affected. An earlier analysis found that neighborhood violence in Syracuse appears to function like feuding, promoted by unresolved trauma of noncombatants whose simmering anger and resentment promote retaliatory violence (Jennings-Bey et al. 2015).

One community member called attention to the near-complete lack of support for, or even recognition of, grief. Tearing up, he compared the response to neighborhood violence with the way in which, in the nearby suburb of Manlius (which in 2015 was 86.9% white with an estimated median per capita income of \$74,624; City-Data.com 2017), the whole community came together when someone crushed the incubating eggs of their local prized swans (Doran 2012). Yet in a poor, segregated, largely African American community in Syracuse, when an 18-month-old baby was killed in crossfire between rival shooters, there was no similar outcry. “You know, in the suburb they set up 24 hours surveillance for the swans, you had people volunteering, staying the night with the swans. But [in the Syracuse community hard hit by violence] you’re talking about a baby, an 18-month-old human being, a child, there was nothing.”

The Syracuse Police Department struggles to respond to each act of violence, but at times police officers misinterpret expressions of grief as escalating violence. African American mothers or female kin waiting outside of the emergency department for word of the survival or death of the sons or brothers who have been shot at times wail in anguish. This cry of deep pain, while culturally appropriate (Laurie and Neimeyer 2008), has been perceived by police as a threat to the social order and something that needs to be controlled. Jennings-Bey, Director of the Trauma Response Team, a community coalition that responds to each neighborhood murder to help assure the safety of first responders and to reduce potential conflict among rivals at the scene, describes such a situation.

I remember one time I responded to a murder at the emergency department. The murdered woman was at a memorial for another homicide victim and someone snuck up behind her and shot her. Her sisters—she had a lot of sisters and a lot of female cousins—were outside crying like women in our community do. And the police came to remove the women violently, with knockout gloves on, ready for battle. So, I had to intervene in that situation. And I told the police officer, “it’s a real problem when our grieving becomes a disturbance to you. Crying is illegal?” Like God put this in me, to cry out. People are hurting.

African American cultural expressions of grief, similar to Irish keening, are robust outpourings of anguish that police, teachers and other authorities often view as incitements to violence or even as the beginning of violent behavior by the grief-stricken themselves. One of the Trauma Response Team (Jennings-Bey et al. 2015) members explained, “I have worked in school situations when a teenager was killed the night before. And you have all of these teenagers erupting with these emotions in the hallway. You’ll see all the school administrators like, ‘Whoa, this not the place for that, you’ll have to pipe that down or you’ll have to leave.’” The police and teachers realize that such upheavals of pain can inspire others to act out, at times violently, which may be at least in part why they try to clamp down on any loud crying. Police and teachers have also experienced their own indirect trauma from responding to unremitting gunshots and murders. The result, however, means that community members may be threatened with arrest for wailing in pain when a family member is murdered, or a student may be threatened with suspension from school for a similar outpouring of grief. This punitive response of police and teachers to cries of human pain serves to silence the bereaved. A community member explains:

Grief, joy, are different art forms that comes from cultures, every culture has the way that they express themselves in the world through the doorway of humanity. With us, like I said, because of the historical context ours is suppressed, and in that suppression you can’t cry the way you want to, you can’t laugh the way you want to. This goes back to the Black codes, where we couldn’t laugh in public, all of that stuff.

People in authority—police and teachers, for example—appear most comfortable with Africans Americans who are utterly controlled in their behavior; such behavioral self-control can be seen as an expectation of subordination. The memorialization materials created by young people in this context are a way to grieve symbolically with artifacts in plain sight, with meanings known to community members but obscured from others.

### Symbolic Artifacts of Grief and Memory

In the neighborhoods in Syracuse that experience the gun violence and murders, community members participate in a number of memory work practices that help them to weave the symbolic meanings that enable individuals to feel as though they are participating in something greater than themselves. These practices are directed toward creating legacies of and communicating meaning for the lives of those who have been killed. They are precisely the kinds of prosaic activities through which the community forms its historical self-understanding and to which Comaroff and Comaroff (1992:38) refer when they say that “history involves the sedimentation of micropractices into macroprocesses.”

As one community member described, “That’s just a way to honor the dead, I guess. That’s probably the neighborhood culture that makes you feel—you want to put on public display that I had some type of feeling or connection to this individual, and I’m hurt.” The series of practices undertaken by neighborhood members moves from those that stay relatively closely to the biographical story of the individual’s life, through those that intensify that biographical memory and invest it with community-wide meaning. For some of the deceased, this is a journey from memory to martyrdom.

Figure 1 shows a young man who is wearing wristbands with the names of deceased friends. The wristbands are made by and sold to community members beginning at the calling hours and funeral of the homicide victim. Thus, both an eco-



Figure 1. Community-created memorial wristbands. A color version of this figure is available online.

nomic and moral economy grows up around the production, distribution, and wearing of these commemorative items. A person would only wear the commemorative bands of deceased residents of his neighborhood turf area. Those close to the victim are expected to wear the bands; to remove them is to disrespect the dead. The wristbands are also a way to identify which neighborhood-turf an individual belongs to; youth shopping at the mall, for example, can recognize rivals just by glancing at the wristbands they wear, which can lead to conflict.

Two additional types of artifacts that depict the deceased person’s face are placards and T-shirts, with the date of death and often the letters RIP (rest in peace or rest in paradise). The placards are news clippings with photographs of the deceased, laminated and usually worn around an individual’s neck. The young homicide victim described at the beginning of the article wore laminated placards with the faces of three of his friends who had recently been murdered. Similarly, one of the neighborhood community centers features a commemorative memorial wall depicting those who have died; the wall was created by youth themselves, at times over the objections of older staff members.

Another type of memorialization is the brochures given to mourners at calling hours and funerals, shown in figure 2. Young community members often have 10 or more such memorial cards that they carry with them to help them remember each decedent.

Death is so frequent an experience that the cards become a way to keep track of lost friends and loved ones. In addition to cards, the funeral homes produce a commemorative video of each decedent, which is posted online. Both the brochures and the videos depict the deceased person in somewhat idealized, even epic, ways. These brochures and videos stick to the biography of the individual, noting for example their “sunrise” (birth) and “sunset” (death). One community member describes making several such memorial videos. “What I would do to memorialize a person is make a video to show during the memorial service with some nice instrumental music and pictures of the individual or whatever the family can gather up from young pictures as they progress through life, you know just flashing in and out.” After a funeral, friends of the deceased create small shrines at the grave or the site of the decedent’s death. The shrines include teddy bears, flowers, and other items representative of the decedent’s life. The friends who gather pour liquor on the grave, smoke marijuana or spice (synthetic marijuana), and reminisce. Unfortunately, this group memorialization at such a shrine can lead to retaliation against the person or against the family members and friends of the person believed to have caused the death.

### From Memory to Martyrdom

Some of the deceased travel further along the sociopsychological road from memory to martyrdom, thus avoiding social death by being present even years after their death (Klass,



Figure 2. Memorial brochures. A color version of this figure is available online.

Silverman, and Nickman 1996). After the deaths of such individuals, their memory is memorialized in commemorative acts and artifacts; but the commemoration intensifies over time, leading to them taking on the image of a lost hero. Murdered charismatic heroes are commemorated by wristbands, placards, and funeral cards and videos. As with other decedents, the commemorative objects reproduce social relations and reinforce social ties. Other acts of commemoration move further along the path from the biographical details of the murder victim to their memory becoming part of the collective memory the community, in which some individuals take on an outsized significance. For these individuals, the biographical details of their lives take on epic aspects, while they enter into the day-to-day life of the community. These individuals achieve martyr status. That is, they are recognized as someone who has died while representing and in some way advocating for their community (Laurie and Neimeyer 2008; Mitchell 2012).

Not everyone achieves the status. It seems that those who do were possessed of considerable personal charisma or engaged in activities that are perceived as having been in the service of protecting the neighborhood. As Connerton (1989) notes, emphasizing the acts and characteristics of these individuals allows those who feel outside the protection of the state to construct for themselves coherent, meaningful, and self-affirming collective memories. Thus, for example, an individual who was killed decades ago might be woven into the linguistic practices of the community. For instance, the names of some deceased individuals get incorporated into a kind of oath: “worda’ \_\_\_\_\_,” in which, much like the idiomatic expression

“I swear to God,” the formula is used to indicate sincerity. So one might hear a person who is seeking to reassure their interlocutor that they are being truthful say, “worda’ Josh.” In doing so, they shift linguistic registers from speech that might be heard in official settings to a language recognized in the neighborhood.

There are two examples of this linguistic formula in current use, each representing a rival neighborhood, commemorating individuals whose deaths occurred some two decades ago. One community member explains:

For us to cope, we created our own language where we would say “worda’\_\_\_\_\_.” And saying that was our bonding process, so if something was going wrong in the neighborhood or in my life personally, I would say “worda’\_\_\_\_\_ such and such had happened,” and it caught on throughout the city like wildfire. And other people in other neighborhoods wanted something similar to identify with, so “worda’\_\_\_\_\_” was kind of like the first thing. Then we had people pick it up who didn’t even know [the decedent], but they would still say “worda’\_\_\_\_\_ such and such.” They thought it was cool, it sounded cool because they see me and my peer group— that was our bonding process, and so it caught on throughout the city like wildfire. So now that thing has tentacles and spread out. Now young people who weren’t even born when \_\_\_\_\_ was killed, they’ll be saying worda’\_\_\_\_\_.” African refugees, who just arrived from a whole ‘nother country have started saying worda’\_\_\_\_\_ now because they are in that network of that community or that neighborhood.

Another community member notes the effects of this register shift when it is overheard by a party who was not the intended communicative target.

Throughout the city, you could be in the mall. We could be having a conversation and I say “worda’face, you playing’ too much,” (snap) other peoples’, “enemies,” antennas will go up and say, “there they go.” Never had to meet me, we never had any conflict, never had no personal rife with each other, but now automatically because of that language, it is a doorway to conflict.

Other memorializing artifacts create similar opportunities for perpetuating local conflicts. Sometimes, for instance, a decedent is memorialized by the creation of a kind of praise song created by other young people from their neighborhood. As in other contexts (e.g., Tamari 2007), these songs describe the decedent in highly evocative ways, praising their lives and contributions to their neighborhoods and sometimes speaking ill of other areas in the city. Some of these songs are performed and deposited on YouTube, where they remain available for years after a person’s death. Some become popular. On some occasions, the songs have been converted into ring tones that neighborhood people load on their mobile telephones. As with the “worda” phenomenon, conflicts have resulted when such a ringtone has gone off in the midst of groups from other neighborhoods.

As Lübbers (2007:150) notes, “Because of their public performative nature, these testaments to rage and grief are witnessed by others. The act of remembering and the production of memorials are therefore both public performances and contested arenas where conflicts over the meaning of each death and the legitimacy of forms of remembrance are enacted.” They are also the practices through which residents construct a sense of control and meaning in their neighborhoods.

These various practices describe the path through which the excruciating pain of such frequent death of neighbors and kin is made visible. Through these and other practices in the neighborhood, young people create a narrative about the nature of their social world, shaped by the stories they hear at the funerals of those murdered, worn daily on wrists, and echoed in language. The commemoration of the dead through T-shirts, wristbands, and other such material practices shares the narrative with community members. For some, the transformation from being alive to being shot and bleeding on the street to being a fallen hero and martyr results in their idealization and a kind of immortality. Unfortunately, the possibility of achieving such martyrdom may create the sense that death and martyrdom could provide the recognition not found in life.

### Memorialization and Violence as Social Contagion

The patterning of memorization and the transition of some to martyrdom in Syracuse is similar to processes in other communities where members may feel marginal to the state. Without commenting on the specific dynamics of the settings from

which they are drawn, we think it is useful to see the parallel processes of memorialization and martyrdom at work in Belfast and Lebanon, two places of complex conflict where deaths in part result from conflict over turf (e.g., Fitzduff 2002; Norton 2007). Thus, for example, in both Belfast and Lebanon, artifacts commemorating dead heroes have served as inspiration for future acts of violence. In 1989, Brian Robinson, a militant Ulster Volunteer Force Loyalist (Protestant) member was killed by British military personnel. Robinson, who was born in the Shankill area of Belfast, had been active in the Catholic-Protestant “troubles,” the armed conflict from 1968 to 1998. Embroidered badges with Robinson’s name and the term “Shankill Star” have been worn by participants in militant Protestant marches for over two decades since. The sectarian parades have been occasions for ongoing eruptions of militant conflict (Barnes 2013).

Similarly, in Southern Lebanon, murals commemorating *Shaheed* (martyrs) provide instruction for youth about the type of courage and acts that lead to community-recognized hero status. In some cases, such commemorations extend also to popular culture through songs, movies, and graphic novels. For example, figure 3 shows a photograph taken in 2012 of a billboard in Tyre, Lebanon, celebrating the actions of Ahmad Qasir, who carried out a suicide bombing attack on an Israeli occupation outpost and who is often noted as the first Hezbollah suicide bomber (Norton 2007), and whose actions have been commemorated in film and song.

For youth in Syracuse, for marchers in Belfast, and for people in south Lebanon, commemorations play an important role in increasing group solidarity. As Browne (2013) notes in his comparative study of commemoration events in Belfast and Palestine, such practices are tools for people who feel themselves marginalized to reaffirm their individual self-worth while, at the same time, creating a sense of solidarity with their community. These practices become essential tools for managing personal grief and for transforming that grief into action.

Gary Slutkin, an infectious disease specialist, identified neighborhood gun violence as acting like a communicable disease and called for epidemiological approaches to its elimination (Slutkin 2012). While this is an intriguing idea, it has at times been difficult to effectively develop the metaphor of violence acting as does a microbial pathogen. We suggest that one key pathway for violence to become contagious is through commemoration of fallen heroes. The homicide victims in Syracuse, especially those whose charismatic images become enshrined in language, may inspire youth living in impoverished neighborhoods with few prospects to succeed. One community member described the situation as follows:

The young teenagers see that, in death, some people get a certain amount of glory that they don’t get. . . . [At one of the recent funerals] there were people coming from [other cities]. The highway was backed up. Five hundred, six hundred people at the funeral. And my question was, why couldn’t there be one hundred of these people that surrounded him



Figure 3. Billboard commemorating martyr Ahmad Qasir, Tyre, Lebanon, 2012. A color version of this figure is available online.

to stop him from getting shot in the head? And at the same time and you know, like some of the young people see this. Right as in subconsciously thinking, “I want this attention too.” It’s the attention [the young men want], they want the attention. It’s the draw. This person in this casket is 15 years old. I’m sitting here and I have no identity. People don’t know me from a hole in the wall, they don’t know that I’m suffering. I see all these placards, T-shirts . . . People crying. . . all these girls falling out crying, all of these teddy bears, people pouring out liquor, smoking marijuana, smoking spice . . . and for a young man observing this. . . That’s rock star status. They see women kissing [the deceased in the casket]. They’ll have lipstick all over him. And, if I’m a young guy and I’m growing up seeing that and I have no identity. That’s a draw for me subconsciously.

We suggest that a type of social contagion may fuel the ongoing violence in Syracuse. Charismatic heroes, whose deaths are commemorated by many people, may unfortunately inspire youth who see the enormous respect and near adulation of the dead, especially in the context of their own lives of pain and loss. Two episodes support the contention that such memorials can become the locus of subsequent shooting.

In 2014, a woman was setting up a memorial to her son who had been killed by gunfire the year before. Just as she was completing the shrine, two 16 year-old boys within 100 feet

of the memorial were shot. The two shooting victims were transported to the emergency department (Sturtz 2014).

In a second killing, described above, a woman was sitting in front of a sidewalk memorial for her loved one, who had been killed 3 days previously. A man walked up to her and shot her in the back, causing her death (O’Toole 2013).

After concerned community members spoke to city officials about their fears that such memorials could lead to additional violence, the city-cleaning crews began removing the shrines in the middle of the night. In many cases, family members and friends recreate the memorials, in part because they have no other focus for their grief.

People living in neighborhoods hard hit by violence use these artifacts and actions to remember and give meaning to the loss of their friends and loved ones to unremitting gunshots and murders. These process of creating, wearing, and honoring the dead through artifacts and language create models that give community members, especially younger children, a sense of purpose and inclusion in something larger than themselves. The striving for affiliation, especially affiliation in the face of death, is often commented on as a basic human intra- and interpsychic power. For people in the neighborhoods of Syracuse that experienced such unrelenting violence, these practices also provide a way of understanding a complex but uncontrollable world.



## Comments

### Brendan Ciarán Browne

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Processes of memorialization, such as those revealed in this important analysis of mourning in the context of community violence, highlight the fact that these acts serve more than a remembering function. Public memorials and their negotiated construction play an important role in shining light on the current nature of the commemorating society (Connerton 1989; Etzioni 2000). From evocative displays of fallen martyrs in occupied Palestine (Khalili 2007) to the wearing of commemorative wrist bands in Syracuse, public memorialization processes in their various forms serve many purposes, including, as the authors reveal, the generation of social cohesion and solidarity among marginalized and victimized groups in society. The invocation of the memories of the past, including the image of those slain during rival gangland violence, transforms their memory into a present-day issue of import.

This insightful article is one laden with tragedy, with its focus on the shocking homicide rate among those living in the “impoverished neighborhoods of color in Syracuse, New York.” The authors, through impressive first-hand qualitative examination, encompassing ethnographic analysis of urban spaces and interviews with respondents who have suffered at the hands of intergang violence, have provided an analysis of the powerful role that public displays of memorialization assume in generating a sense of collective identity and cohesion among those left behind. In the absence of public recognition from the state for the victims of the ongoing violent feuds that have blighted this community, family and members who remain have taken to expressing their grief in the public sphere through recourse to a variety of cultural constructs, including folk song, alternate attire, and public posters.

In emphasizing the multivocal role of the public display of memorialization, the authors reveal how the wearing of wristbands to commemorate fallen friends is not only an act of personal remembrance but also a way to delineate gang allegiance. Similarly, in referencing the pioneering work of Paul Connerton (1989), the authors emphasize the view that multiple public memorials and commemorative practices allow for the generation of “meaningful and self-affirming collective memories” that are beyond the control of the state. This form of memorialization is about, among other things, sending a message to the state for its failings to look after the wellbeing of those who remain on the margins in Syracuse. Such a view has been emphasized in other studies, including those mentioned by the authors themselves (Browne 2013, 2016).

An area of interest for those wishing to take the analysis of memorial practices one step further would be a consideration of the internal group negotiations that take place when seeking to develop a memorial practice or when designating a specific

area as a “*lieux de mémoire*” (Nora 1989). Initiating public memorials commemorating any given incident or individual is an exercise in negotiation between engaged memory stakeholders. It is a process that ultimately involves political wrangling between rival groups who realize the benefit in exercising control over symbolically resonant images of the past (Browne 2013, 2016). As Pfaff and Yang (2001:542) have noted, “political rituals render relations of power transparent and rely on enactments of social domination. As a result, official political rituals have a double edged character that reinforces relations of domination while simultaneously providing aggrieved actors with opportunities for dissension.” In addition, choosing to forget rather than publicly remember and memorialize is equally a decision that reveals the nature of society in the present day (Ross 2007, 2009; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz, 1991). While such a view has been espoused by scholars examining issues pertaining to the role of commemorative practices on a macro level—particularly when engaged in the politics of nation building—it is hard to imagine that power struggles of such a type do not equally manifest themselves at the micro level, as in the current context.

The violent experiences referenced throughout the piece culminate in the revelation that even public spaces of memorialization have become areas where violent acts occur. Moreover, there is a suggestion made by the authors that persistent exposure to public memorialization spaces serves the process of perpetuating the cycle of violence. A “type of social contagion” is generated whereby young people are inspired to emulate their slain friends on the basis that they will receive an almost mythical status among their peers who remain. As a result of this explosive boom in memorialization across Syracuse, the authors suggest a correlation between persistent exposure to memorial spaces and a glorification of the deceased. Such a view has been espoused by others who have worked on similar issues, particularly Khalili (2007), as referenced above. Determining a link between the exposure to such memorial practices and becoming empowered to seek martyrdom in one’s own right requires further interdisciplinary research to be more authoritative.

This piece reinforces the established view that memorialization practices occurring in both public and private spaces serve a purpose beyond simply remembrance. Memorialization is an inherently political act that involves negotiated construction and careful consideration of the role which the public act of memory making can assume in the present day. It is a process whereby disparate communities, those who are ravaged by attempts to divide and disintegrate, come together to present a unified image and to appear socially cohesive. Often, as Jarman (1997) has suggested, the past is used as a means of justifying what is happening in the present day. In Syracuse, public memorials assume a multiplicity of roles. They send a message not solely to rival gangs but to government officials and to the community that has suffered loss. They act as public reminders of the ongoing challenges, particularly those surrounding gangland homicide, that impact one of the most impoverished areas of New York State.

As Kertzer (1988) has noted, rituals (such as the memorial practices discussed throughout this article) have long been used as a way of expressing and reinforcing intergroup hostilities. Their existence, Kertzer asserts, can often be responsible for keeping lingering tensions alive. While for some the memorialization processes outlined in this article could be viewed as an act of cathartic healing, it would equally be interesting to interrogate the extent to which the presence of these memorials in the public arena ultimately fuels the fire of intergroup hostility that continues to impact the communities living in Syracuse.

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### Rik Pinxten

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The action anthropology of Rubinstein and his coworkers through CARE is a good example of outstanding interdisciplinary work in an extremely difficult context. As a European anthropologist in a university city of the same size (Ghent, Belgium), I appreciate the likenesses and differences between these cases. Moreover, my engagement with local authorities and citizen groups often finds me wondering about a more general, transnational trend in contemporary Western societies.

This paper highlights several aspects of the decay in urban contexts of the United States, specifically documenting the cultural and racial differences between groups of citizens and the continuous drifting apart of cultural and racial communities. As indicated, the white people are mostly middle class and are shown to be almost free of drug addiction and the accompanying criminal and life-threatening aspects thereof. The black half of Syracuse lives in another world: high addiction numbers, poverty, and crime ending in an endless series of murders is their lot. The dividing line, whether one likes it or not, is ethnic-cultural difference together with social and economic opportunities. This cluster of economic, political, and cultural dimensions seems extremely difficult for authorities to manage. A very similar analysis can be made in the predominantly or traditionally “white” context of European societies today. In the latter case, it is not blacks but Muslims who are now the focus of attention. Obviously, Muslims are only a tiny minority in the United States, whereas some of the older city centers (like Syracuse) show a large number of blacks. In Europe, the cultural mix of cities is higher: Amsterdam has citizens who originate from 220 different non-European countries today, which is more than New York City or Washington, DC, for example. But recently the larger Muslim minorities have found some shared identity in light of the wars in and Islamist movements emanating from some Muslim countries. My suggestion is to look at Rubinstein et al.’s analysis against the background of Islamist revolts and terrorism in Europe.

The group CARE shows how anthropological research can deepen the understanding of this disaster we are experiencing

in our cities. In Europe, an ill-focused psychologizing is cornering the angry, suicidal Islamist youngsters: governments claim that their “radicalization” is the only real problem and hence invest in deradicalization programs, mostly run by commercial initiatives. So far, and predictably from the point of view of anthropologists, they are not successful. Slowly, some critique is now surfacing. An anthropological analysis like the one in Rubinstein et al. focuses on ethnic-cultural groups and on features of life expectancy, family traditions, styles of mourning, and so on, which recognize the victims and/or perpetrators as complex human beings in their contexts rather than seeing them as psychologically deranged individuals. Hence, the paper offers important insights into the actual processes that make grief and mourning difficult in the midst of cycles of violence such as those that the black community must live with in a city like Syracuse, New York. We get a perspective “from the inside out,” like anthropologists tend to do, and hence are capable of creating a more encompassing picture of the societal crisis as a whole. So, I applaud this approach and can only recommend that European authorities consider similar approaches on this side of the ocean instead of the repressive psychologizing going on now.

However, some recommendations may still be voiced. First, notwithstanding the obvious interdisciplinary approach of the study, a more deliberate urban studies angle would be useful. I think first and foremost of Bourdieu’s study on suburban decay in Paris, as it was superbly represented in the beautiful collection *La Misère du Monde* (Bourdieu et al. 1994). This reader lists series of studies on economic activities in decay, on failing juridical work, on disruption of educational processes in school and in the family, on the falling apart of community work and housing facilities since the years in which neoliberalism started in France (1980s). Ever since, the group of collaborators of this exquisite French research center gathered data and opinions from all possible layers of society, where the societal and the sharing processes were rapidly destroyed through decreasing jobs and declining investment, and through ethnic-cultural discrimination on all levels. The kind of interdisciplinary work done here and the social-cultural theory developed there are still exemplary. It is relevant to mention this study group, since their work can be used profitably by scholars working on very similar developments with a clearly urban aspect.

Finally, I hope it will be possible to join efforts for research on the issues treated in Rubinstein et al. on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. For example, to me, looking at the developments with Islamist groups in Europe (and, of course, in the Islamic countries), it looks obvious that the processes of slipping into a martyr culture described by the Syracuse study and those of several poor urban Islamists are very similar. Also, the way the communities (the mothers and the families) are studied by Rubinstein et al. looks like a very promising way to understand what is going on in older Western cities today and may be corroborated to a large extent by similar work in Europe. In that sense, Rubinstein et al. offer an exemplary road

to research, which can only benefit from joint and comparative studies in different parts of the world.

It remains to be seen whether policy makers will listen to such messages and thus recognize that anthropology is the study of all human beings and not exclusively of non-Westerners, as was claimed in the past. An encompassing and indeed decolonizing perspective on human beings is needed, and this study shows an intriguing path toward it.

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### James Quesada

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In this poignant account of community violence in Syracuse, New York, several dilemmas arise that are not fully addressed. The murderous feuding in predominantly African American neighborhoods inspires local practices of mourning and memorialization that the authors evoke as a double bind, in that memorialization provides a meaningful, communal way of dealing with grief and commemorating the fallen in the “near absence of official recognition of their loss” while concurrently operating as a form of social contagion that contributes to the reproduction of future violence. One dilemma has to do with the extent and efficacy of the CARE model and practice of action anthropology put forth by the authors. While a CARE approach appears to accurately diagnose the etiologies of and contributing factors to community violence, left unfinished is the stated goal of reducing the incidence of trauma and disseminating research findings within the affected communities. This is problematic in light of the stated aim of decolonizing anthropological knowledge. Another dilemma has to do with the clash of culturally varied modes of public grieving and commemoration, in which there appears to be little to no dialogue in understanding different collective ways of facing and accepting mortality except to insist on a hegemonic mode of exhibiting tolerable bereavement. And finally, an analytic turn to asserting a sociocultural dynamic that appears to metaphorically characterize the perduring nature of violence as a product of social contagion that is neither an emic category nor an explanatory model that extends beyond the obvious. I will begin with the latter point to underscore how the obvious biologic vitalism undergirding the notion of contagion overshadows socially and politically recognized social factors and structural forces contributing to urban inner-city violence in which the political-economic and the official neglect and lack of municipal political will is underplayed, while inflating cultural scripts as tragic ends-in-themselves.

Much like the inevitability of a killing in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *A Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1982), in which everyone in a small town knows of an impending murder yet are unable or unwilling to do anything to prevent it, the construction of memorials and symbolic expressions of grief, while

providing meaning and continuity to communities entangled in communal violence, also appear to promote unending violence according to the dynamics of social contagion. The memorials and associated material and linguistic commemorations of life after death are said to elevate the risk of future violence by fueling resentment and glorifying martyrs, inspiring youth to continue retaliatory feuding in the face of unresolved grief. The extent such understanding is shared by the affected communities is lightly hinted at when concerned community members speak to city officials about their fear that memorials lead to additional violence and is met by municipal dismantling of memorials in the dead of night. The official reaction is in keeping with the lack of public recognition of the deep pain and trauma these communities endure and the denigration of African American manifestations of grief as inappropriate cultural expressions.

There is little indication that the researchers elicited what community members thought about memorialization as contributing to continuing violence, or even exchanges regarding how cultural expressions of anguish are problematic. In light of the goals of their research model, CARE, which helps communities define their goals and work toward their achievement (Howard 1961:413; Lane et al. 2017a), the analysis of memorialization as contributing to continuing violence is an observation that is hardly discussed with members of the affected community. Political economic forces and structural racism are raised yet soft-pedaled in favor of underscoring the cultural shortcomings within and without the affected communities in forging effective ways of making sense and significance of rampant lethal violence.

The Rust Belt city of Syracuse, New York, has a population of 145,000 and has the highest murder rate in the state and one of highest for metropolitan cities its size in the nation. The violence is concentrated in impoverished city districts in which communities of color are tightly clustered in 11 census tracts and neighborhoods beset by endemic feuding. Homicide occurs mainly among adolescent and young African American adult males living in a hypersegregated area deemed as the ninth most racially segregated metropolitan area in the country (CNY Fair Housing 2014). In communities cut off from decent housing, good schools, and economic opportunities, violence operates in a moral universe framed by hostile state relations, official neglect, and socially organized economic scarcity. It is in this context that a variegated moral logic reigns in which codes of honor, obligation, and duty are used to negotiate the pervasive poverty and insecurity within the neighborhoods (Papa-christos 2009), while being popularly ostracized as demonized, decivilized neighborhoods that legitimize the policy of urban abandonment and punitive containment (Wacquant 2009).

There is great insight garnered from an understanding of memorialization and public mourning as contributory to unending violence, yet little discussion on how memorialization is also an outcome of municipal disdain and neglect. The affected communities are abandoned and left to their own means of honoring their dead, which are considered by city authorities

as incitements to violence. There do not appear to be official dialogues or exchange between the city and county officials and the affected communities. And rather than dealing with the broader social structural forces that marginalize these communities and generate perpetual violence, memorialization as one of the few means for the communities to publicly express their social suffering is ostracized and condemned as a perpetrator of communal violence. The cultural expressions of grief are left as a tragic conundrum, and it is hoped that the CARE model of action anthropology will go beyond acknowledging memorialization as problematic and prompt dialogues within and between the affected communities and with city officials and authorities to address “the origins of inequality of opportunity and housing [that] will require a serious commitment on the part of public officials in this community. It will require financial resources, time, and political will” (CNY Fair Housing 2014:66–67).

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Rubinstein et al.’s article uses a “model of action anthropology” they call “Community Action Research and Education” (CARE) to locate the ways and analyze the effects of how low-income black residents in Syracuse, New York, experience and process trauma in their communities. The authors find that the “social practices . . . preserving and extending the social identities of the deceased” also fuel further acts of terror and retaliation from rival gang members, keeping black Syracuse communities in a loop of grief, violence, and retribution. In what follows, I will organize my comment around three main points I see radiating from the authors’ investigation of the practices and risks of mourning in this particular community.

The first is that the article gives us insight into what it means to grieve in spaces marked by “slow death.” Typically, structural inequalities are based on sociological constructions that focus primarily on the spectacular events that clearly mark life and death. Slow death, however, offers another conceptual aperture to illumine and understand the quotidian nature of living through the effects of systemic deficits. Lauren Berlant summarizes slow death as “the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence” (Berlant 2007:754). The concept points us to the “ongoingness, getting by, and living on, where the structural inequalities are dispersed” and thus become chronic conditions (Berlant 2007:759). Using slow death to think about mourning among low-income black residents in Syracuse not only means that we isolate the actual acts of murder but enables us to identify the chronic conditions of marginalization and disenfranchisement that lead up to recurring acts of murder.

Connecting black mourning to chronic conditions made possible by the environment brings me to my second point: the surveillance and suspicion of black embodied grieving practices. Illustrated by the authors’ examples of police officers violently restraining and removing black women from a hospital room because their loud wails and screams were viewed “as escalating violence” and of teachers reprimanding students for emotional outbursts in school because institutions of education are “not the place for that,” black bodies, both children and adults, are systematically read through a prism of threat and improper excessiveness. Because they are affectively and physically constrained while alive, it makes sense that death becomes a freeing vehicle for them. Achieving a bigger-than-life status where one’s name constitutes an oath or having a regularly tended roadside memorial, the dead can circulate and exist—through actual memories and urban legend—in ways and places that the living cannot. Thus, “if I cannot get over now, I will in the next life,” becomes a prevailing principle where one is constantly denied any type of security—financially, emotionally, socially, and physically. This complex disenfranchisement plays a major role in the project of canonizing the dead. And I believe that the commitment to what happens to a loved one’s ghost partly explains how rival gang members use murder and intimidation to control and ensure that the memory of their loved one is honored. Unfortunately, this solves nothing, because, as the authors show, actors on behalf of the state (police and teachers) and rival gang members create a two-headed monster that attaches various risk to expressions of grief, thereby affecting how black people can mourn.

Nonetheless, as the authors show, black residents remain committed to the fullness of their mourning. This leads to my last point. I want to suggest that the symbolic practices of black grief are a type of archiving that supplements or even replaces the official records of violent deaths, typically indexed by coroner reports and news reportage. Instead, black Syracuse residents archive loved ones by tattooing their skin, making sartorial choices (T-shirts, lanyards, and wristbands), and employing names of the slain to make a promise or perform sincerity. In its transience and mobility, attending to black mourning as embodied and on the body illumines the systems and webs of grief that are not confined only to certain acts or scenes deemed “fit” for grieving.

Systems of grief and their archival traces make us think differently about black mourning in a deindustrialized city. For example, the authors state that approximately “200 people [are] affected by every murder.” Does this number include the people (related to the victim or not) who create and sell the T-shirts, wristbands, and lanyards dedicated to the slain? Does “200 people” include the business owners and manufactures from whom the materials are bought to create the wares of mourning? If not, I would argue that they should, because this alternate economy and marketplace connected to black grief and recurring murder is one site that illuminates how the affective volume of grief intersects with economic need among impoverished residents in a “Rust Belt” city.

Reading this article made me think more intently about rust—a natural, but preventable, decomposition process that happens when iron and its metal derivatives are exposed to oxygen and moisture over time. I believe this process provides a striking image to help us think about the slow-moving and sudden forms of violence that get enveloped in black grieving practices in Syracuse. I bring up rust because it forces us to attend to the environments and landscapes that create and signify meaning. Thus, I have proposed the analytic of slow death and the metaphor of rust as ways for the authors to rethink how the contagion of violence happens through commemorating the dead. In other words, I am still left to wonder how racial and political alienation and the political economy of Syracuse and other Rust Belt cities inform an embodied ethics of how residents—with different and competing affiliations—create, maintain, and protect postmortem landscapes for their loved ones.

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## Reply

We greatly appreciate the careful attention that our colleagues devoted to considering our paper. We especially value their constructive engagement with our work and the connections they draw between it and research done elsewhere and, importantly, outside of the United States. Placing our study of memorialization practices in the context of neighborhood violence into a more global framework is particularly welcome. Our paper has two main themes. First, we describe the neighborhood memorialization practices, their sociopolitical context, and the ways these practices create meaning for residents of Syracuse neighborhoods. Second, we review our CARE approach and the methodological and epistemological commitments it incorporates. Commenters discuss both these aspects of the paper, sometimes raising additional promising directions for research and conceptual development. At other times, the comments seem to require clarification of the essential points of the paper.

Browne's suggestion that the understanding of memorialization practices would be deepened by attention to the "internal group negotiations that take place when seeking to develop a memorial practice" seems to us a particularly fruitful avenue for further research. It is clear that not every person who is murdered achieves a kind of martyrdom, even if nearly all are subjects of some of the memorial practices that we describe. Our collaborators are able to articulate retrospectively what it was about those who have achieved martyr status that made them especially memorable and important to their neighborhoods. Yet we have not been able to get a clear prospective sense of what it is that selects an individual for martyred memory. Exploring the dynamics of internal group negotiations may well provide an avenue for understanding that pathway.

It seems to us that further exploring these internal conversations will provide an additional window to understand the ways in which community members view their relations to the state, which are actually more complex than Quesada suggests. Rather than just a dichotomous opposition between a hegemonic state and the community, there is a complex and layered set of shifting relationships, as we describe below. The community does experience the "slow death" described by Williams that results from a history of institutional racism in the city and the resulting structural violence experienced by the community, as our research group has documented during the past two decades (Lane 2008; Lane et al. 2008a, 2008b, 2011). Arrests and incarceration for drug crimes are only one disparity resulting from this history. Analysis shows that, in Onondaga County, which includes Syracuse, African Americans are 99 times more likely to be sentenced to a correctional facility for drug crimes than are whites, despite the fact that whites and African Americans in the county use drugs at the same rate (pace Pinxten).

Quesada is wrong when he asserts that treating violence as contagion disregards structural and political forces in favor of elevating cultural scripts. Indeed, Quesada presents us with a false opposition, since structure and culture interact and are mutually constitutive. Neighborhood residents have cultural accounts of structural inequalities, and those inequalities are also shaped by historical cultural experiences. Moreover, treating violence as a contagion is not "a metaphor that has neither emic meaning nor explanatory power," as Quesada asserts. A considerable body of research has traced how violence is a contagion and has the "characteristics of contagious epidemics—clustering, geo-temporal spreading, and person to person transmission" (Slutkin, Ransford, and Zvetina 2018:18). All three of these characteristics are present in neighborhood violence in Syracuse (Larsen et al. 2017). Moreover, the categories that mark neighborhood residents as friend or foe are based on emic interpretations of who counts as legitimate targets and what reasons may legitimately lead to violence (Bergen-Cico et al. 2015).

Pinxten's suggestion of a connection to the work of Bourdieu and his colleagues is a welcome intervention. The product of Bourdieu et al.'s efforts is a magnificent and sobering compilation of information about the conditions of life for the marginalized residents of suburban Paris, and we hope that our work is as illuminating. Yet as revelatory as is the work of Bourdieu and his colleagues, it proceeds from an epistemological foundation that is very different from that which informs our CARE work. Bourdieu and his colleagues recognize the power dynamics and differentials that attend to the traditional sociological interview, saying "It is the investigator who starts the game and who sets up its rules: it is most often she who, unilaterally and without any preliminary negotiations, assigns to the interview its objectives and uses, and on occasion these may be poorly specified—at least for the respondent" (Bourdieu 1996:19). Keenly aware of these asymmetries, Bourdieu and his colleagues sought to reduce as much as possible the

distance between the researcher and their subject. To achieve this, they used a number of strategies that included “giving training in survey techniques to [community member] interviewers who could have access in a familiar way to certain categories of respondent we wished to reach” (Bourdieu 1996:21) and relaxing sampling parameters so that subjects could be selected on the basis of the researchers’ familiarity with them. The use of these strategies is intended to “reduce as much as possible the symbolic violence which is exerted” (Bourdieu 1996:19) through the structural and power asymmetries of the traditional interview setting. Although minimizing the social distance between interviewer and subject and establishing “a relationship of active and methodical listening” (Bourdieu 1996:19) is a methodological advance, epistemologically it preserves the prerogatives of the researcher vis-à-vis her subject, leaving the research questions, methods, and overall control of the research in the researcher’s hands.

In contrast, action anthropology generally and the CARE approach described in our paper explicitly reject the researchers’ total control of the research encounter. Instead of being selected solely by us, research topics are coconstructed through a collaborative process and arise from the concerns of community members. Rather than being treated as hired hands who might be more effective data collectors because of their personal characteristics, in CARE projects community members are fully enfranchised and essential members of the research team, including in the ownership of the data generated, and are coauthors of the papers that result. It is for this reason that Smith (2015) asserts that action anthropology decolonizes knowledge. Indeed, three of the eight authors of this memorialization paper are community members.

Perhaps because he is working with what is, for us, the anachronistic conception of researcher control and privilege (even one softened like that used by Bourdieu and his colleagues), Quesada is able to mistakenly assert “There is little indication that the researchers elicited what community members thought about memorialization as contributing to continuing violence, or even exchanges regarding how cultural expressions of anguish are problematic.” To the contrary, as we described, this entire research results from deep community collaboration.

In a similar vein, Quesada says, “left unfinished is the stated goal of reducing the incidence of trauma and disseminating research findings within the affected communities. This is problematic in light of the stated aim of decolonizing anthropological knowledge.” Again this assertion is mistaken. Not only does this research on memorialization emerge from the concerns of community members themselves, as with all of the CARE research, the results are jointly owned by community members and are disseminated widely through presentations at community centers, churches, schools, and other venues. Indeed, the dissemination of research findings within the community is an integral part of the CARE model, as is the use of the results to advocate with local and state government agencies.

For example, although full discussion is beyond the scope of this response, earlier CARE projects demonstrated that the

same neighborhoods affected by gun violence were food deserts and that they had a disproportionately high level of lead poisoning due to dilapidated rental homes. Because supermarkets left these neighborhoods some decades ago, neighborhood residents met many of their grocery needs by shopping at corner stores, which sold little fresh produce, meat, or low-fat dairy, preferring to sell canned foods, mentholated cigarettes, beer and malt liquor, prepared fried foods, blunts, and lotto tickets. Our research documented the ways in which lack of supermarket access led to dire health conditions for those living in the food deserts. These findings were widely disseminated within the community and to the city and county governments. This work sparked other research, which corroborated our findings, and led to efforts to reintroduce a supermarket to the area. This past year, the city subsidized the opening of a supermarket in the neighborhood. Similarly, the CARE lead project results were disseminated through community presentations and advocacy with government agencies at the city and county levels.

We said earlier that relations between the state and the neighborhoods could not be characterized as simply hegemony and resistance. For that reason, the idea that neighborhood residents are “abandoned and left to their own means of honoring their dead,” as Quesada would have it, oversimplifies the complex lived experiences of neighborhood residents. Rather, residents engage their school board, common council, county government, and city and county agencies, and they advocate for change. For example, the Trauma Response Team (TRT), a community-initiated effort to address the effects of gun violence by interrupting cycles of revenge shootings, creating safe spaces for first responders to aid shooting victims and their families, and deescalating community conflicts, does its work in cooperation with the Syracuse Police Department. In fact, the chief of the Syracuse Police Department and the department’s senior analyst are CARE collaborators and coauthors on earlier publications. This past year, the TRT ran a pilot project in the Syracuse School District working to address the trauma of children and teachers affected by the neighborhood gun violence (Dessa Bergen-Cico, David A. Larsen, Najah Salaam, Anthony Panasci, Timothy Jennings-Bey, Arnett Haygood-El, Robert A. Rubinstein, and Sandra D. Lane, unpublished manuscript).

Pinxten reasonably wonders whether policy makers will listen to the material developed by our CARE projects, like this study of memorialization. We have been conducting CARE projects in Syracuse for nearly two decades. The results of these studies have motivated community members and animated the work of some in government. We see small changes in the community, like the reintroduction of a supermarket to the neighborhood and the creation by CARE project community members of a 501c3 organization, the Street Addiction Institute, to address issues of gun violence and its consequences. Change is slow, but it happens. CARE collaborators now work for the city school system, consult with the county health department, and even serve in government. The most recent

elections brought CARE collaborators into government in the city's Common Council, including the position of council president, and on the mayor's senior staff. It is evident that it is thus not appropriate to think of the relations between the neighborhoods and the city and county in simple dichotomous, oppositional fashion. Yet as Pinxten says, it will take time to know what the effects of our research are as CARE collaborators move from advocacy to governance roles. We are confident, however, that because it is deeply collaborative by design and follows Tax's dictum that "community research is . . . justifiable only to the degree that results are imminently useful to the community" (Tax 1975:515), that the CARE approach will, in the long run, yield real and sustainable improvements in the lives of neighborhood residents.

—Robert A. Rubinstein, Sandra D. Lane,  
Lookman Mojeed, Shaundel Sanchez,  
Elise Catania, Timothy Jennings-Bey,  
Arnett Haygood-El, and Edward Mitchell Jr.

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