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During the process of interviewing participants at the Urban League on Wednesday May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009, stories prevailed that dealt with the personal experiences of race or racial conflict in the participants' lives. Within these stories, as a group, we were able to identify themes that linked all the stories together. After defining common themes amongst the stories, we dug further and were able to clump these multiple themes into one. We were able to relate this one theme to almost all of the stories we heard in the story circles. The theme that will be discussed in this paper is race and community.

Our story circle was group number eight and we were comprised of four women and three men. Two of the women in the group were white and two were black. Of the three men, two were black and one was white. Story tellers two and six were the black females and story tellers four and five were the white women in our circle. Story teller number seven was the white man and teller's one and three were black. Unlike the other story circles that had almost all minorities in them, with the exception of the few wh

The story that story teller seven told before the one about buying a house was of how he grew up without thinking there was a problem when people are of different races.

movie. Story teller one said he was always curious why she came in on Tuesdays and he finally asked her during one of her weekly visits to the theater.

Another story that was able to be defined under the theme race and community was told by story person six. In this story she describes a situation from her youth that helped shape her into the person she is today. The story that she tells is about her youth in Alabama. Story teller six begins by saying that there wasn't much racial tension when she was young but there is one incident that has helped her become the important person she is today.

a community can come together, no matter what their race, and make change happen. In this case, that change was getting a bill passed that made all farmers get paid for their crops.

Story teller two had the next story that related to the theme of race and community quite well. Her story was about a previous coworker of hers that got into a verbal then physical disagreement with a neighbor. This was a more recent example of race and community and it is an all too often seen experience in today's society. A lot of the racial conflict that was seen in the past can still be seen in certain communities or neighborhoods today. Although racism is illegal, there seems to be a way around it that some people are able to find.

With a theme like race and community, it is easy to understand how this story fits into it. The white neighbor in the story was the one who started the disagreement and in the end the black coworker was the one who was in trouble. For a neighbor to come over to your house and start a physical fight is wrong in general, but not being able to stick up for yourself because you are black makes the situation even more intolerable. The community that these two ladies live in is affected by race and there is obvious racism in the neighborhood. When a community has racism in it, it becomes difficult to function as a society. Physical as well as verbal arguments can become a common factor in neighborhoods (that is, about place rather than race) such as this one because the power-poor situation of residents can increase despair. The white versus black difference creates a sense of tension that stays even after communities try to come together and eliminate racism. Knowing the whites have power, the African Americans in the community feel they will never be equal. This feeling is then reinforced when incidents such as the one with our speaker continue to occur.

The next story that I was able to include in the theme of race and community was

This story teller goes on to describe how her father's family did not like the idea of a black man coming to stay in their house. But at the time her father didn't know it would be that big of a deal for his military buddies to come home for a visit. This black friend of his was obviously a patriotic American and not a bad influence since he was in the military. He was willing to put his life on the line for his country. Her father was going to depend on this man if he ever got into trouble and his mother couldn't look past his skin.

After analyzing this story it is clear that it is a perfect example of how our views on race are linked to our place in a community.. The story teller's grandmother was raised in a time when it was acceptable to explicitly state that blacks were considered unwelcome in the home and they were seen as inferior to the white people. This is not how the father wanted his friends to be treated so he stood up to his mother and wouldn't stay at home for the little time he had off to be with his family, perhaps marking a small cultural transformation. The inability of the grandmother to see beyond race, and the soldiers unwillingness to deny his battlefield friendship on the basis of race, caused a sense of hostility amongst the family or the community that was supposed to be together for thanksgiving. Now if you look at story teller five she will tell you that she is the person she is today because of her father and this experience he went through at a very young age.

The final story that relates very well to the theme of race and community was told by story teller three. He was very quiet during his first story during the story circles but opened up more for round two. This story was from his second time around the circle and he really wanted to get this point across because he was more involved in the conversation and talked louder. He begins by discussing his time down at Ohio University as a college student. He grew up in a town that was predominantly black but played on sports teams that were half and half. So he thought he was confident in a racial sense of the word.

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<sup>10</sup> Story teller 5(a), 2009. This excerpt can be located in the document titled story person 5.

<sup>11</sup> Story teller 5 (b), 2009

<sup>12</sup> Story teller 5(c), 2009

This story teller was very inquisitive about telling how he feels about people and himself and how he thinks other people look at him. He never knew that people would look at him as wrong for dating a certain person. He thought he was completely okay with how he looked at himself and he thought he was secure within himself. After encountering a friend of his and listening to how he felt about himself, story teller three changed his mind on his insecurities. He then discussed how after walking in a parking lot one day he heard the clicking of locks and then started noticing girls grip their purses tighter to their shoulders.





thought behind story teller three's story about the women clicking their locks and clinching their purses tighter and closer. This idea still hasn't changed but I have expanded on it. I now think that yes it is true, but it is so wrong to think this way. I started paying attention to how I act when I am alone in comparison to when I am with other people and if someone is near me. I do act different when there is a man following me to closely even if is a fellow student after class. Most of the time I do not look back to see what the race is of the person who is around me, but I would admit that I do lock my locks when I am in a neighborhood that is said to be majority black. I now have a deeper understanding for why black men are