

*Article*

# Power to the People:

Documenting Police Violence in Cleveland

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## ABSTRACT

Archivists have long recognized the inherent historical and social mandate in preserving stories of those who endured violence at the hands of the state. Examples of this responsibility include archivists who recorded public tribunals in post-apartheid South Africa, documented stories of Japanese Americans forced into internment camps during World War II, and acquired collections of 1960s civil rights activists who experienced military intervention while fighting to end segregation. These endeavors align with the historian Howard Zinn's call for archivists to "compile a whole new world of documentary material" about the lived experiences of marginalized populations and communities. Drawing upon Zinn's charge as well as scholarly literature around community archives, social justice, and human rights, this article describes the joint effort of community organizers and professional archivists who collaborated to establish a community archive for victims of police violence in Cleveland, Ohio. The archive, A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland, provides a sustainable, autonomous means for Cleveland residents to share their first-hand accounts of police violence in the region. The authors will narrate the archive's conception and development as well as advance the archive as a post-custodial model for other grassroots organizations protesting various forms of state violence.

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## INTRODUCTION

On February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a black teenager, was shot and killed by a white Hispanic neighborhood watch volunteer while returning home to his Sanford, Florida, subdivision. Martin possessed no weapon, yet weeks passed before local law enforcement officials arrested his assailant, George Zimmerman. After considerable social media outreach by his parents, the story gained national traction and generated protests around the country advocating for Martin and his family. A year went by before the trial concluded, with a verdict of not guilty for Zimmerman. Polls taken in 2013 by the Pew Research Center indicated that Martin's murder signified a moment of awakening for many African Americans—a realization that many black people in this country are still at risk from being victims of the same kind of racial violence that was prevalent during Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Movement,<sup>1</sup> violence that American law enforcement institutions legally enforced.<sup>2</sup>

Heightened awareness of such racialized killings continued for the next three years following 2012, as news outlets broadcast more killings of unarmed African-Americans in a loop on television and set to autoplay on social media. The rise of portable technology that facilitates the creation and storage of video was critical to documenting, distributing, and even reporting the images, either in the hands of citizen journalists or sent directly to mainstream media.<sup>3</sup> In response to the Martin killing, Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi founded Black Lives Matter, an organization that coalesced to protest these killings and other forms of state violence against African Americans, and also sparked a national civil rights movement.<sup>4</sup> The trio formed the organization after Zimmerman's acquittal, though it grew nationally after a police officer killed 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014. Black Lives Matter and its various chapters protested in cities where police shootings of unarmed African Americans occurred, in an effort to draw attention to their stories and demand changes at local and institutional levels in regard to policing procedures and systemic racism.

Because the majority of the killings happened at the hands of law enforcement officials, protestors and other anti-racist advocates framed the murders as examples of

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<sup>1</sup> Sha'Kema Blackmon and Anita Thomas, "African Americans and Trayvon Martin: Black Racial Identity Profiles and Emotional Responding," *Journal of African American Studies* 19 (2015): 279-297, doi: 10.1007/s12111-015-9306-0.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Kato, "The Tragic Legality of Racial Violence: Reconstruction, Race and Emergency," *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical & Democratic Theory* 22, no. 2 (2015): 199-217, doi: 10.1111/1467-8675.12151.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Drier, "Racism on Camera," *American Prospect*, July 30, 2015, <http://prospect.org/article/racism-camera>.

<sup>4</sup> "About the Black Lives Matter Network," *Black Lives Matter*, accessed November 13, 2015. <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

state violence. State violence, as defined in this article, is based on sociologist Max Weber's definition of "a state:" "A human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."<sup>5</sup> Weber's components of this human community include territoriality, legitimacy, and violence. When applying this definition to killings of unarmed people of color by law enforcement, the state—the U.S. government, including municipal or local agencies, the judicial system and the military—has for decades used racial fear and resentment to legitimize violence against African Americans. From black codes and Jim Crow to "Stop and Frisk" and "Stand Your Ground," fear of black people and their assumed criminality under any circumstances has been used by both law enforcement and white citizens to justify overly aggressive forms of profiling, policing and punishment since before the Civil War.

It is paramount that archivists take an interest in how the state enforces its legitimacy, through what means, and how the state inflicts violence upon its citizenry. The documentation describing this violence is vast because so much of it happens within the legal system. In many instances the state attempted to use the record as a means to erase or distort events so that the documentation matched with its version of the story, such as in the Walter Scott killing in South Carolina, in which the officer insisted in an official police statement that Mr. Scott tried to grab the officer's Taser, whereas a bystander filmed Scott actually fleeing the officer before the officer shot eight rounds at his back, killing him.<sup>6</sup> Another example of the ways in which police records are obfuscated is how police department records were destroyed or altered to hide the police shootings of unarmed black citizens on the Danziger Bridge in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.<sup>7</sup> This official documentation privileges the narratives of those already in power and archivists, as collectors of these narratives and not collectors of alternative narratives, tend to uphold the status quo version of events without challenging them by collecting materials with alternative and subaltern versions of events. Minimally, archivists can "use the power of archives to promote accountability, open government, diversity, and social justice," according to archivist Randall Jimerson in a 2006 address to members of the Society of American Archivists.<sup>8</sup> However, without an intentionally radical praxis upon which to base our professional actions, archivists "maintain the

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<sup>5</sup> Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Garth and C. W. Mills (New York: Macmillan, 1946).

<sup>6</sup> Michael S. Schmidt and Apuzzo, Matt, "South Carolina Officer Is Charged with Murder of Walter Scott," *New York Times*, April 7, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/us/south-carolina-officer-is-charged-with-murder-in-black-mans-death.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Jarrett M. Drake, "Insurgent Citizens: The Manufacture of Police Records in post-Katrina New Orleans and its Implications on Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 2 (2014): 365-380.

<sup>8</sup> Randall Jimerson, "Archives for All: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice," *American Archivist* 70, no. 2 (2007): 252-281, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17723/aarc.70.2.5n20760751v643m7>.

existing social order by perpetuating its values, by legitimizing its priorities, by justifying its wars, perpetuating its prejudices, contributing to its xenophobia, and apologizing for its class order,” according to historian Howard Zinn’s comments to a group of archivists in 1977.<sup>9</sup> We perpetuate those values through collection development policies that favor privileged groups; ableist access policies that make it hard for people who are physically impaired to walk into our buildings or for those who lack broadband infrastructure to view our collections online; and through cataloging and classification schemas based in colonialist or racist terms that do direct harm to individuals.<sup>10</sup>

Zinn’s challenge to archivists in that address resonates undeniably in light of the current documentation of state violence and how it captures all of the actors involved. He challenged archivists to open all government documents to the public and simultaneously to document the lives of ordinary people as “keeping with the spirit of democracy.” It was with that challenge in mind that a group of community activists and archivists came together—first on social media, then in real life—to document through oral history the lives of Cleveland, Ohio, residents who had experienced state violence in their interactions with the police and to build a sustainable, post-custodial model that will allow people to learn and share stories with each other in the years to come.

## APPROACHES TO DOCUMENTING STATE VIOLENCE

History shows that some archivists have answered Zinn’s call of opening public records throughout the years, and notably as they pertain to documenting instances of state violence all over the world. South African archivist Verne Harris, who has contributed considerable scholarship to the ideas of social justice and transparency in archives work, played a key role in documenting and exposing state violence perpetuated by the white ruling class against black and Asian South Africans during the mid-20th century. Harris worked for South Africa’s State Archives Service from 1985 through 2001, a critical time period in which he had access to records created during and before the fall of apartheid in 1995, and he was intimately acquainted with the ways in which the SAS attempted to destroy those records before the transition to a democratic government when state officials knew they would be forced to account via tribunals or other

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<sup>9</sup> Howard Zinn, “Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest,” *Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 14-27. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1793/44118>.

<sup>10</sup> Jasmine Aguilera, “Another Word for Illegal Alien at the Library of Congress: Contentious,” *New York Times*, July 22, 2016. [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/23/us/another-word-for-illegal-alien-at-the-library-of-congress-contentious.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/23/us/another-word-for-illegal-alien-at-the-library-of-congress-contentious.html?_r=0)

internationally-sponsored legal action for human rights violations committed during that time.<sup>11</sup>

Ironically, for records that were never meant to be transparent to the public, Harris points out that the South African government devoted an almost “pathological attention to detail” to records documenting the interlocking systems of apartheid and how they functioned at micro and macro levels across the country. This included the identification systems assigning racial categories that then determined a person’s ability to travel across the country, marry whom they wanted, own property or receive an education. Law enforcement records frequently held surveillance information on people, and citizens—notably anti-apartheid activists—could physically “disappear” without any official information on their whereabouts for families or attorneys for years.<sup>12</sup>

Before the government transitioned, Harris said he began leaking information about the destruction of state records to members of the African National Congress to try and stave off what he later called a “state-sponsored amnesia” that allowed South Africa to forget its collective history of racial oppression and human rights violations because the official records were hidden or destroyed. Harris’s work and the later work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a restorative justice organization that was convened in 1995, played a role in forcing South Africans to face the past and legacy of its brutal regime by investigating and piecing together some of the more egregious crimes committed by the South African government.<sup>13</sup> This was largely done through a series of videotaped public hearings that allowed survivors of violence and injustice under apartheid to address or accuse perpetrators. The restorative justice approach was not without critics, notably for the fact that the hearings allowed alleged perpetrators of violence to request amnesty for their actions. The TRC’s final report, issued in 2015, outlined some of the lessons learned and conclusions of investigations that government officials undertook as a result of the hearings, and the report served as a summary for the documentation of some, but certainly not all, of the state violence that occurred during the apartheid state in South Africa.

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<sup>11</sup> Verne Harris, “‘They Should Have Destroyed More’: The Destruction of Public Records by the South African State in the Final Years of Apartheid, 1990-1994,” in *Archives and the Public Good*, ed. Richard J. Cox and David Wallace (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 2002), 205-228.

<sup>12</sup> See: Justine van der Leun, “The Odd Couple: Why an Apartheid Activist Joined Forces with an Anti-Apartheid Murderer,” *The Guardian*, June 6, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global/2015/jun/06/odd-couple-apartheid-activist-madeleine-fullard-convicted-policeman-eugene-de-kock>; Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 63-86, doi: 10.1007/BF02435631.

<sup>13</sup> “Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development of the Republic of South Africa*, accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>.

In a nearly concurrent time period during the mid-20th century, after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the United States, ordered by President Franklin Roosevelt, enacted an order that placed up to 120,000 Pacific Coast-residing Japanese-American citizens in concentration camps, branding them all as enemies of the state. Executive Order 9066, issued February 19, 1942, authorized these citizens' deportation and internment by declaring much of the West Coast a military area, from which other citizens could be "excluded."<sup>14</sup> Exclusion meant removing those citizens from those areas and also included freezing their assets and enacting local curfews that forbade Japanese Americans from being out on the streets at certain hours.

Many of the deportations were forcible, as U.S. military personnel took people from their homes by gunpoint or threat of violence. It could be argued that even calling the camps "internment camps"—as though the Japanese-American citizens were not being held against their will as prisoners of war and presumed guilty spies—is an act of historical violence, an example of Harris's so-called state-sponsored amnesia that allows people to interpret the imprisonment as being of a mild or acceptable nature. Families lived in drafty wooden shacks surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards, and some died of inadequate healthcare and poor nutrition. Guards killed seven people during the time of imprisonment, which lasted from 1942 until 1946.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the attempt to rename the camps as being less harsh than they truly were, documents drafted by various branches of the federal government and archived with the National Archives and Records Administration revealed much of their true nature. The U.S. military and newly enacted departments within, such as the Wartime Civil Control Administration and the War Relocation Authority, in addition to the State Department, Justice Department, and Immigration and Naturalization Services documented much of the policy and infrastructure built to support this imprisonment. The Supreme Court even upheld Executive Order 9066 in a 1944 decision that validated the legitimacy of exclusion from the military area but ignored the issue of imprisonment without due process.<sup>16</sup> Justice Hugo Black's decision in *Korematsu v. the United States* stated, "Korematsu was not excluded from the Military Area because of hostility to him or his race. He was excluded... because Congress, reposing its confidence in this time of war in our military leaders — as inevitably it must — determined that they should have

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<sup>14</sup> "World War II Enemy Alien Control Program Overview," *U.S. National Archives and Records Administration*, accessed January 11, 2016. <http://www.archives.gov/research/immigration/enemy-aliens-overview.html>. These documents include State, Defense, and Justice department records and Immigration and Naturalization Service records.

<sup>15</sup> Tetsuden Kashima, "Homicide in Camp," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed January 13, 2016. <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Homicide%20in%20camp/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Korematsu v. the United States* 323 U.S. 214 (1944), *Justia U.S. Supreme Court Center*, accessed January 13, 2016. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/323/214>.

the power to do just this.” One drawback to Supreme Court documentation is that the justices’ papers are not currently mandated for accession or processing with any archival repository of the federal government. Justices are allowed to keep their notes and papers, which can obscure nuance or details made during critical Supreme Court decisions.<sup>17</sup>

The widespread acquisition of materials related to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement represents a more contemporary example of documenting state violence. As a nationwide movement that influenced many groups and created notable figures, the Civil Rights Movement generated materials such as photographs, oral histories, marginalia and book collections, audiovisual recordings, and manuscripts that researchers can find in repositories in all fifty states. State-sponsored violence is documented throughout such materials: for example, the seminal “Eyes on the Prize” documentary by PBS—that stitched together news coverage and videotaped interviews with Freedom Marchers and other key players during the Civil Rights Movement—has footage of police officers attacking nonviolent protestors with vicious dogs and fire hoses. Washington University in St. Louis is currently preserving that series with a federal grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.<sup>18</sup>

In these three examples, gathering archival materials based on first-person experiences and compiled by community organizations formed a significant part of documenting state violence. The TRC hearings, convened by the South African government were first-person testimonies, recorded and archived as evidence of the wide-ranging impact of apartheid on all of South Africa’s citizens. Groups such as the Japanese Americans Citizens League, or Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project captured the human side of the Japanese-American concentration camps, which contradicted the often sterile and technically-worded federal documents, via oral histories, manuscript or photograph collections. Repositories documenting state violence in the U.S. civil rights movement have acquired materials from individuals like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who has papers at the King Center in Atlanta, Morehouse University and Boston University, and from groups comprising various churches and organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

These documentation efforts offer an alternate avenue of accountability for documenting contemporary state violence in the U.S. The authors note that different groups may seek other forms of accountability outside of the legal system. The nature of state violence as defined for the purposes of this article precludes the ability of marginalized and oppressed groups of people to seek legal recourse as a means of

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<sup>17</sup> Jill Lepore, “The Supreme Paper Caper,” *The New Yorker*. December 1, 2014.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/01/great-paper-caper>.

<sup>18</sup> “National Archives Awards \$3.1 Million in Grants,” *U.S. National Archives*, June 4, 2015.  
<https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2015/nr15-83.html>.

accountability or justice. Some examples of this include the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials, which issued a call for artists to submit proposals to erect memorials to honor survivors tortured under the administration of Chicago Police Department Commander Jon Burge, and also conducted teach-ins, roundtables and other outreach events to further the project's goals. Other means of seeking accountability were offered by the Guatemalan National Police Archives, whose collection of hidden police documents allowed for prosecution of war crimes during the country's 36-year-long civil war, which ended in 1996. A third accountability effort is We Charge Genocide, a community-based organization meant to privilege marginalized groups' narratives around police brutality in Chicago, specifically those of young people. The following case study documenting police violence in Cleveland explains such an accountability effort in an American city, and the case begins by briefly contextualizing that city's historical trajectory of state and police violence during the twentieth century.

## CASE STUDY: DOCUMENTING POLICE VIOLENCE IN CLEVELAND, OHIO, USA

### Context

Black veterans returning to American cities and towns from the battlefields of World War II brought with them the same level optimism they brought following World War I. Surely, they hoped, their performance of patriotism in Paris and Poland proved that they deserved equal and full enfranchisement into American society. But much like the response they received after World War I, so too did the response of white Americans stateside greet them with seemingly more embitterment, disenfranchisement, and racial violence than before they departed. The upper Midwestern city of Cleveland, Ohio, was no different. Euclid Beach Park, on the shores of Lake Erie, stood as one of the starkest reminders of racial segregation in the city. Park management imposed an informal policy of allowing black residents to the park only on certain days, as an attempt to assuage white fears of black equality. Black WWII veterans and non-veterans alike began to protest this policy in the summer of 1946, each time resulting in their eviction from the park. One protest on the evening of August 23, 1946, turned violent when park police cornered and beat city transit worker Albert Luster so severely that the attack left Luster with a fractured skull, three stitches in his lower lip, and head lacerations.<sup>19</sup> Editors at the *Cleveland Call and Post*, the city's weekly black newspaper, wrote that, "The operators of Euclid Beach Park seem to be the most determined group in Cleveland in insisting racial

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<sup>19</sup> "Clevelander Beaten, Evicted, by Private Police at Euclid Beach," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 31, 1946, 1A. "Reveal Man Suffers Skull Fracture in Attack by Euclid Beach Police," *Cleveland Call and Post*, September 7, 1946, 1A.

segregation...The Gestapo methods of Euclid Beach Park police are nothing short of disgraceful."<sup>20</sup>

The article's allusion to Nazi Germany and the world war that was waged to stop it demonstrated the direct connection between racial apartheid, policing, and public space, a connection that became more evident as more black migrants arrived from the Deep South to Cleveland. Almost twenty years after the police attack on protesters in Euclid Beach Park, one such migrant recounted her interaction with Cleveland police as such:

Mrs. BAILEY: Yes. We called the police. I had no trouble getting them. They came, they questioned us, they wanted to talk to the other people...The officer proceeded to pat me on the hand, I suppose in a way of explanation. And I told him, 'Don't touch me. Don't ever pat me.' He told me that he would call the lieutenant. I told him 'I don't give a damn who you call...'

Mr. TAYLOR: Mrs. Bailey, do you have any opinion about why you did not get the kind of service from the police that you might have expected in this case?

Mrs. BAILEY: I have an opinion, yes.

Mr. TAYLOR: Would you care to tell us?

Mrs. BAILEY: Definitely, because I am a Negro and live in the Hough area.<sup>21</sup>

Nona Bailey's testimony in April of 1966 before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights echoed and forecasted decades of police violence—and resistance to that violence—that black residents of Cleveland endured and would later endure. Bailey, a housewife who migrated to Cleveland's mostly black Hough neighborhood from Winona, Mississippi, described to the commission her experience with Cleveland Police Department officers after she called them to report that her neighbor fired four shots at her son, grazing him on the knee. In addition to encapsulating the frustrations black Cleveland residents felt about the Department's lack of response to the safety of black residents, the interaction also typified the tensions between police and black communities in Cleveland. A little more than three months after the hearings, the Hough neighborhood erupted amidst the Hough Rebellion, a multi-day pogrom that left four black people dead of gunshot wounds and more than two dozen people with serious injuries, facilitated in many ways by willful inaction on the part of Cleveland police to intervene and protect black lives.<sup>22</sup> The 1960s ushered in repeated racial and police

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<sup>20</sup> "Gestapo Methods at Euclid Beach," *Cleveland Call and Post*, August 31, 1946, 4B.

<sup>21</sup> "Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights: hearing held in Cleveland, Ohio, April 1-7, 1966," *United States Commission on Civil Rights*, accessed January 20, 2016, p 520-521. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015050624421>.

<sup>22</sup> Todd M. Michney, "Race, Violence, and Urban Territoriality: Cleveland's Little Italy and the 1966 Hough Uprising," *Journal of Urban History* 32, no. 3 (2006): 414-417, doi:

violence on the community, including the shooting of two teenage boys by Cleveland officers, a savage beating of a black truck driver by a plainclothes officer that left the victim with a broken jaw and ribs (plus a charge for resisting arrest), and the forcible extraction by officers of a couple hundred peaceful protesters at the city's Board of Education headquarters.<sup>23</sup>

The police violence in Cleveland that spiked following World War II persisted well into the 1960s and after the civil rights movement. The late 1990s saw the focus of this violence shift from explicit racial subjugation to ensuring certain public spaces—chiefly downtown near Public Square and Tower City—showed no signs of the city's growing homeless population, which was disproportionately black. The city's response, as in decades past, was to deploy police officers to achieve political and racial ends by illegally picking up homeless persons from downtown and driving them to the city's outskirts, miles away from their shelters and sleeping grounds. This practice, known as "dumping," accelerated in the early 1990s and resulted in a class-action lawsuit that banned the practice.<sup>24</sup>

The lineage of police violence in the City of Cleveland does not outpace the lineage of resistance to that violence. At every turn or outbreak, city residents and organizers responded by leading protests, sharing testimony, and pursuing litigation. The 2000s and 2010s would continue this resistance and soon bring it to the world's attention.

## Call to Action

While the ongoing issue of police violence in black communities of Cleveland was well-documented locally, the epidemic in Cleveland gained global coverage in November 2014 after city officer Timothy Loehmann shot and killed twelve year-old Tamir Rice as he played with a toy gun across from the Cudell Recreation Center on the city's west side.<sup>25</sup> The shooting, which was captured on closed-circuit video and ruled a homicide by the county coroner, led to protests throughout the city and country demanding accountability for the killing of yet another black child at the hands of police. As the months following Rice's murder brought no accountability, developments emerged pertaining to an even older instance of police violence in Cleveland: the November 29, 2012, shooting death of Malissa Williams and Timothy Russell by Cleveland officers, in which the shooters fired 137 shots into the pair's car. Only one of the officers involved, Iraq War veteran Michael

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10.1177/0096144205282573. Marc E. Lackritz, "The Hough Riots of 1966," (senior thesis, Princeton University, 1968), 101-110.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel R. Kerr, *Derelict Paradise: Homelessness and Urban Development in Cleveland, Ohio* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), p. 156.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 226-229.

<sup>25</sup> "Tamir Rice: US police kill boy, 12, carrying replica gun," *BBC*, November 24, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30172433>.

Brelo, faced criminal charges of manslaughter due to the fact that officer Brelo jumped onto the hood the car and fired forty-nine shots directly through the windshield. Despite these facts, on May 23, 2015, a Cuyahoga County judge acquitted Brelo of all criminal charges.<sup>26</sup>

Protests to the outcome of the Brelo verdict started immediately after the judge announced the ruling. In addition to the direct actions that organizers led in Cleveland, concerned citizens across the country expressed their outrage via Twitter, including the co-authors of this article. The Annual Meeting of Society of American Archivists (SAA), scheduled to take place in Cleveland later that summer, provided the pretense for a call to action because of the conference's history of sponsoring service projects in the host cities of the meeting:

Twitter User: #saa15 should have a service project for the families of victims of police brutality in Cleveland. Let's focus on their needs. #BreloVerdict

This service project should proceed thru active listening and empowering of the voices of the marginalized. #saa15 #BreloTrial

Let us be of service to them however they need us; offer ourselves up to them and their concerns #saa15 #BreloVerdict

And if those families of victims reject us thats OK too. They are under no obligation to engage our (overwhelmingly white) profession #saa15<sup>27</sup>

The archivists who responded to the organizing tweet agreed that such a project would have the greatest chance of success if developed and executed independently of SAA, to avoid anticipated politics and inertia from the organization that many among the organizing group feared would arise.

The first thing the project needed was the input and collaboration from local community organizers and advocates who had already been combatting police violence in Cleveland. The informal team of archivists reached out to local activist groups to gauge their interest in such a collaboration. One group, Puncture the Silence-Stop Mass Incarceration (PTS), responded with intrigue but also a reasonable dose of skepticism. What are archivists and what do they care about police violence in Cleveland? How can they be trusted? What are their true motivations? PTS, originated on April 5, 2014, as a

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<sup>26</sup> Mitch Smith and Ashley Southall, "Cleveland Police Officer Acquitted of Manslaughter in 2012 Deaths," *New York Times*, May 23, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/us/michael-brelo-cleveland-police-officer-acquitted-of-manslaughter-in-2012-deaths.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Twitter User, "Service Project," *Twitter* (blog), May 23, 2015 (11:04 a.m.), <https://twitter.com/jmddrake/status/602128479203758080>.

local chapter of the national organization Stop Mass Incarceration Network, states as its purpose to “End Mass Incarceration and the New Jim Crow,” a reference to legal scholar Michelle Alexander’s 2010 widely read book *The New Jim Crow*.<sup>28</sup>

PTS engaged in conversation with the archivists primarily because on April 11, 2015, it hosted a People’s Tribunal of Police Brutality in Cleveland. PTS recorded the hours-long tribunal in a high-definition camera, resulting in close to fifty gigabytes of born-digital video, the size of which not only prevented the group from publishing the videos to its website and other common video platforms, but which also prevented the group from even sharing the videos among themselves. As such, an utmost priority for PTS was to make the videos accessible to the public. Secondly, the archivists proposed another collection of testimony that would take place once the archivists arrived to Cleveland. But instead of hosting another tribunal, which PTS had already successfully done, the archivists instead proposed the idea of collecting oral histories using StoryCorps’s mobile application, a beta version of which the organization released in March of 2015.<sup>29</sup> From these initial phone conversations between the archivists and PTS in June, two distinct but related tasks emerged: the accessibility of the tribunal videos on a website, and the gathering of oral histories in August that would occur in different locations throughout the city.

### Building a People’s Archive

The intervening months before the SAA annual meeting included the exchange of hundreds of emails, dozens of conference calls and Google Hangout meetings, and thousands of tracked changes in Google Docs. Along the way, the project--still nameless and intentionally unaffiliated with an institution--picked up an additional community organizer from Cleveland whose experience and knowledge of the city would prove to be invaluable as the collaborators identified locations to conduct the oral history interviews. The effort, from its inception, sought to be explicitly anti-oppressive and anti-hierarchical, as the goal had been to afford local organizers the agency to own this project over time. This mode of organizing work and distributing tasks emanated organically but also relied heavily on the Anti-Oppression Principles adopted by the Center for Story-Based Strategy.<sup>30</sup> These anti-oppression principles, along with five principles outlined in

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<sup>28</sup> “puncture the silence – CLE,” *Puncture the Silence*, accessed January 20, 2016. <https://puncturethesilencecle.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> “Jonah Bromwich, “Collecting Human Voices with a StoryCorps App,” *New York Times*, March 27, 2015. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/nyregion/collecting-human-voices-with-a-storycorps-app.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/nyregion/collecting-human-voices-with-a-storycorps-app.html?_r=0).

<sup>30</sup> “Anti-Oppression Principles,” *Center for Story-Based Strategy*, accessed January 24, 2016. <http://www.storybasedstrategy.org/anti-oppression-principles.html>.

Michelle Caswell's discourse of human rights archives and community archives,<sup>31</sup> informed the foundation for how the project would develop and progress.

In this spirit, the team of archivists concentrated a significant portion of the planning to the website that would make accessible the tribunal videos and possibly other content. The archivists conducted user interviews with the Cleveland organizers to answer core questions about the site, including its desired content, audience, and functionality. Several community archives that developed around social justice issues—welfare rights<sup>32</sup>, civil rights<sup>33</sup>, and forced disappearances after the events of September 11, 2001<sup>34</sup>—provided concrete examples for the archivists to share with the organizers. Concerns about privacy of contributors' content to the website took precedence over any other consideration. Ensuring that the archivists' actions did no harm to the very people most impacted by police violence became the focal point of the website's technical development. Specific pitfalls the archivists sought to avoid included defamation lawsuits by police officers against victims, retaliation or reprisal by law enforcement based on the nature of the content, or surveillance and tracking information that might be requested via a subpoena. Thus, the approach diverged sharply from that of a traditional archival project in that this effort wanted to collect as little donor information as possible. While the archivists and organizers understood that this anonymity could pose a risk to the perceived truth value of the records collected, all parties involved agreed that the benefit of protecting vulnerable populations outweighed this perceived risk. The argument that anonymous records might inherently be less truthful than non-anonymous records failed to persuade the team, especially when taking into consideration the documented falsities and normative scripts laced throughout records of police violence produced by police

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<sup>31</sup> Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives: Lessons from Community-Based Archives," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 310-315, doi: 10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6.

<sup>32</sup> Cynthia Tobar, "Documenting the Untold Stories of Feminist Activists at Welfare Rights Initiative: A Digital Oral History Archive Project," in *Informed Agitation: Library and Information Skills in Social Justice Movements and Beyond*, ed. Melissa Morrone (Sacramento, CA, USA: Library Juice Press, 2014), 11-22. Explore the archive at <http://wri-voices.org/>.

<sup>33</sup> Sonia Yaco, Ann Jimerson, Laura Caldwell Anderson, and Chanda Temple, "A Web-based Community-building Archives Project: A Case Study of Kids in Birmingham 1963," *Archival Science* 15, no. 4 (2015): 399-427, doi 10.1007/s10502-015-9246-4. Explore the archive at <http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/>.

<sup>34</sup> Alice Royer, "Warming Up Records: Archives, Memory, Power and Index of the Disappeared," *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies* 6, no. 1 (2010): 1-11. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/5j76z82c>. Explore the archive at <http://www.kabul-reconstructions.net/disappeared/>.

agencies.<sup>35</sup> To draft a clear set of terms for contributors and participants for the website, archivists consulted criminal lawyers and completed a literature review of oral history case studies that posed legal risks similar to the ones faced by the Cleveland project participants, notably studying the details of the Irish Republican Army oral history collection at Boston College for insight.<sup>36</sup>

The selections for the website's content management system (CMS) were reduced to Omeka, Drupal, and WordPress. With time constraints for the website's public launch at less than a month away, and the fact that two similarly-themed websites used the CMS<sup>37</sup>, Omeka emerged as the obvious choice for initial implementation with the option of later migration to a different CMS. Omeka afforded the archivists a straightforward template and the ability to accept contributions of content from the public, which was an important feature request given that the organizers expressed a desire that the archive continue to collect materials once the two projects concluded. Omeka also enabled easy implementation of Dublin Core metadata for managing digital objects, a consideration the archivists advanced for maintaining intellectual control of the content over time. The conversations about the site's content, audience, and function also birthed the project's name and mission: *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*, whose mission was to collect, preserve, and provide access to the stories, memories, and accounts of police violence as experienced or observed by Cleveland citizens. Equally important as the name and mission were the archive's three principles: participation, perspective, and power. With the framework for the website decided, the organizers and archivists unveiled the site just days before the SAA annual meeting and launched a successful online fundraising campaign to seed the archive's initial development and storage costs.

### Populating a People's Archive

Completing the framework for the Omeka repository allowed the archivists to turn their attention to adding content to the archive and making it accessible. The first collection that the archivists agreed to make accessible consisted of the seventeen video

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<sup>35</sup> Jarrett M. Drake, "Insurgent Citizens: The Manufacture of Police Records in Post-Katrina New Orleans and its Implications for Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 365-380, doi: 10.1007/s10502-014-9224-2.

<sup>36</sup> James Allison King, "Say nothing': Silenced Records and the Boston College Subpoenas," *Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 35, no. 1 (2014): 28-42, doi: 10.1080/23257962.2013.859573. For extended background on the Belfast Project, see The Belfast Project, Boston College, and a Sealed Subpoena. <https://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>37</sup> See *Documenting Ferguson*, <http://digital.wustl.edu/ferguson/>. See also *Preserve the Baltimore Uprising*, <http://www.baltimoreuprising2015.org/>.

files that PTS created as part of the tribunal it hosted in April. PTS volunteers had already transcribed the video, but the almost fifty gigabytes of footage remained inaccessible due to their large volume. The first step in making the videos available through the Omeka repository involved the archivists gaining custody of the materials, which one of the archivists' Google Drive account facilitated. Upon receiving access to the original files, the archivists noticed that two factors prevented them from being uploaded to the Omeka repository as is: the average size of each file, roughly three gigabytes, and the files' extension, MTS. Omeka repositories limit the file size to under 128 megabytes and MTS is not one of the video file extensions that the platform accepts. To combat these challenges, the archivists needed to convert the files into an acceptable format and shrink the average size of the videos.

The absence of the MTS file format from the Library of Congress' Sustainability of Digital Format category for moving images<sup>38</sup> and the United Kingdom National Archives' PRONOM registry<sup>39</sup> complicated the first task of converting the videos into a format suitable for digital preservation and acceptable to the Omeka CMS. However, searching the open web revealed that MTS files are container formats (MPEG transport stream<sup>40</sup>) packaged according to the specifications of the Advanced Video Coding High Definition (AVCHD) file format created by Sony and Panasonic and used in many contemporary consumer video cameras.<sup>41</sup> With this knowledge, the archivists deployed WinFF, an open-source software application that uses ffmpeg, a command-line program, to convert the videos into QuickTime movie files (see Figure 1). QuickTime's wide adoption and open documentation provided a level of assurance that the format was suitable for digital preservation in this case.<sup>42</sup> The conversion of the videos, a multi-hour feat in and of itself, did not shrink their size under the 128-megabyte constraint, however. To meet this

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<sup>38</sup> "Format Descriptions for Moving Images," *Library of Congress*, accessed January 22, 2016. [http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/fdd/video\\_fdd.shtml](http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/fdd/video_fdd.shtml).

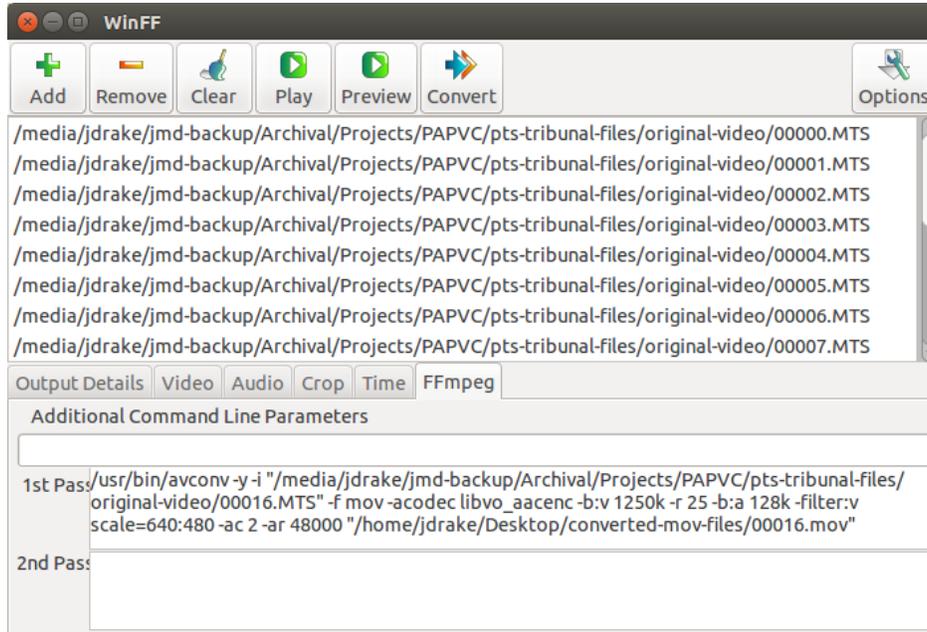
<sup>39</sup> "PRONOM," U.K. National Archives, accessed January 22, 2016. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRONOM/Default.aspx>.

<sup>40</sup> D. Hoffman, G. Fernando, V. Goyal, and M. Civanlar, "RTP Payload Format for MPEG1/MPEG2 Video," *The Internet Society*, January 1998. <http://www.cs.unc.edu/~kmp/comp832-s08/readings/rfc2250.txt>.

<sup>41</sup> "Panasonic and Sony Expand HD Digital Video Camera Recorder Format 'AVCHD' and Commence Joint Licensing," *AVCHD Format Co-Promoters*, July 13, 2006. <http://www.avchd-info.org/press/20060713.html>.

<sup>42</sup> "QuickTime File Format," Library of Congress, accessed January 22, 2016. <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats/fdd/fdd000052.shtml>. "Creating and Archiving Born Digital Video," *Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative*, December 2, 2014. [http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/FADGI\\_BDV\\_p2\\_20141202.pdf](http://www.digitizationguidelines.gov/guidelines/FADGI_BDV_p2_20141202.pdf). In particular, See the case study of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Exploration and Research, p. 12-16.

requirement, the archivists simply used the QuickTime Player application on a MacBook Pro to split the videos into smaller portions that the website would accept.



**Figure 1.** Screenshot view of WinFF showing the conversion of the MTS videos into QuickTime videos.

Organizers and archivists collaborated to create the second collection, oral history interviews about police violence in Cleveland, when the archivists traveled to Cleveland in August for the SAA annual meeting. The meeting’s location, the city’s convention center, failed to offer a convenient and accessible means for Cleveland residents to participate in the interviews, an effort that the organizers and archivists dubbed “Righting the Record.” The team concluded that the best way to gather the stories would be to identify locations in communities that generated considerable foot traffic and to post tables and signs about the mission of the archive and Righting the Record. The locations included, among others, two social service centers, a public library, and two recreation centers (see Figure 2).

**RIGHTING THE RECORD:  
Sharing your Narrative  
about Police Violence**

**Document your story.** Activists and archivists are collaborating to gather the stories of Cleveland residents impacted by police violence. The stories will be recorded and deposited into *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*, which is an archive that collects, preserves, and provides access to stories, memories, and accounts of police violence as experienced or observed by Cleveland citizens. **Right your record** at the locations listed below.

Contribute your story or documents directly to the Archive at <http://archivingpoliceviolence.omeka.net>.  
 Contact Info: [PunctureTheSilenceCLE@gmail.com](mailto:PunctureTheSilenceCLE@gmail.com) | 216.932.3474 | 609.937.8714

TUESDAY, 8.18	WEDNESDAY, 8.19
<p><b>11AM-1PM</b>   William Cosgrove Center, 1736 Superior Ave.</p> <p><b>1PM-3PM</b>   Virgil E. Brown Neighborhood Family Service Center, 1641 Payne Ave.</p> <p><b>4PM-7PM</b>   <b>4 LOCATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St. Clair &amp; E 105<sup>th</sup> St.</li> <li>• Cudell Recreation Center, 1901 West Blvd.</li> <li>• Langston Hughes Library, 10200 Superior</li> <li>• Fairfax Recreation Center, 2335 E 82<sup>nd</sup> St.</li> </ul>	<p><b>11AM-1PM</b>   William Cosgrove Center, 1736 Superior Ave.</p> <p><b>1PM-3PM</b>   Virgil E. Brown Neighborhood Family Service Center, 1641 Payne Ave.</p> <p><b>5PM-7PM</b>   <b>4 LOCATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Euclid &amp; Forest Hills Blvd.</li> <li>• Cudell Recreation Center, 1901 West Blvd.</li> <li>• Langston Hughes Library, 10200 Superior</li> <li>• Fairfax Recreation Center, 2335 E 82<sup>nd</sup> St.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.** Flyer for Righting the Record Oral History Project<sup>43</sup>

The team knew that the total number of archivists who participated during the planning phase, roughly a dozen, would be insufficient to staff the various locations across Cleveland’s sprawling metropolitan hub. To combat this, the archivists posted open invitations via Twitter and email lists to solicit volunteers attending the annual meeting. The response to the invitation far surpassed the number of archivists originally involved; more than twenty additional archivists, and graduate students preparing for careers as archivists, joined the oral history project and agreed to help collect stories. One archivist was able to use a previous background in progressive journalism and employment with an institution known for its oral history initiatives to contribute to the interviewing process, and the archivists devised a consent form for interviewees as well as a standard set of questions to help facilitate the interviews. The archivists procured four Sony audio

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<sup>43</sup> Beras, Karina, “Righting the Record Flyer,” *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*, accessed January 22, 2016. <http://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/item/CLE.002.045>.

recording devices, two of which a local university loaned to the project, and took to the streets to listen to the voices of the unheard.

Yet the words of Vani Natarajan and Hannah Mermelstein, two librarians involved with the Librarians to Palestine initiative, offer a moment of pause for the oral history project itself and the archive writ large:

There are problems with witnessing as a form of activism. It's easy to forget that people who have been directly experiencing occupation, colonialism, and apartheid have been "witnessing" it all along. There is a danger in ascribing a special significance to the U.S. - or Europe-based, mostly white, non-Palestinian acts of witness. And this idea that injustices don't happen unless they are documented and observed with western eyes—why is that gaze given so much privilege? How do we make sure to center Palestinian expression, Palestinian narrative in our reporting back? And most importantly, how do we make the act of reporting back one that is accountable first and foremost to the Palestinians whose communities we visited?<sup>44</sup>

The words of Natarajan and Mermelstein reverberated throughout the two-day oral history collection. Indeed, an estimated seventy-five percent of the nearly 200 people approached declined to be interviewed. Their reasons for declining ranged from fear of retaliation and reprisal by local police to a feeling of hopelessness that telling their stories (to the archivists) would have no impact on the reality of police violence in the city. Others who declined did so under suspicion that the archivists coordinated this effort with law enforcement. Yet a few others refused due to pending litigation. A smaller number of residents wanted to talk, but declined to be recorded, which the archivists accepted. One particularly memorable account came from a local cab driver who recounted being harassed and threatened by city police for minor traffic violations and for "interfering" with the ability of officers to issue citations to people driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol by virtue of the cab driver's offer (indeed, job) to drive intoxicated persons to their locations safely.

The Cleveland residents who agreed to give an interview spoke not only of their direct experiences with police violence in and around the city, but also with the aftermath. LaShawwna Riley offers a vivid example of the particular violence black women suffer at the hands of police:

But as far as my personal experiences with the umm [police]... I had a couple of run-ins with my fiancé, and they have come out. They try to come out and talk to

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<sup>44</sup> Vani Natarajan and Hannah Mermelstein, "Knowledge, Access, and Resistance: A Conversation on Librarians and Archivists to Palestine," in *Informed Agitation*, 249.

you, you know, like you have no rights. They sent me to jail one day, in my panties and bra and my house phone and that was because they did not want to hear my side of the situation. They couldn't trust me enough to go and put on some clothes. This is coming from a person that... I have not made a habit of crime or nothing like that. But they wouldn't even let me put on clothes to be arrested. I am scared for my younger nephews and their future... I chose not to have children of my own and now I am glad I did because now I am not worried about them losing their life from somebody who is supposed to serve and protect.<sup>45</sup>

The organizers and archivists, many who had never met before, collected first-hand accounts of police violence from forty-five people in just under thirteen hours spread across two days. After uploading the audio files to the Omeka repository, the archivists tapped Twitter and email lists yet again to solicit volunteers to transcribe the interviews, a task completed collectively by another twenty people, many of whom did not attend the annual meeting and some of whom did not identify as archivists.

Hundreds of human hours produced the archive's first two collections. Between the initial gathering, conversion, and transcription of files, more than a hundred hands helped seed the repository with hours' worth of digital content in which residents of Cleveland narrate their lived experiences with police violence in the city. The undertaking of these monumental tasks—as well as the financial donations from the public—required that the organizers and archivists plan for the long-term management and direction of the archive, a task the team tackled the same way it tackled the previous tasks: collaboratively.

### Sustaining a People's Archive

From the initial conversations in June of 2015, the organizers and archivists began planning for the sustainability of the archive after the latter's departure in August. The project explicitly sought to maintain independence from an institution, citing legitimate concerns about administrative and political pressures within the city's power structures. This approach, while difficult to maintain, resembles closely an "independent community archive" by virtue of it functioning as a "collection[s] of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control."<sup>46</sup> Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the archive's launch, the

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<sup>45</sup> Riley, LaShawna, "Riley, LaShawna Oral History Interview," *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland*, accessed January 23, 2016, <http://www.archivingpoliceviolence.org/item/CLE.002.023>.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "Whose Memories, Whose Archives? Independent Community Archives, Autonomy, and the Mainstream," *Archival Science* 9 (2009): 73, doi: 10.1007/s10502-009-9105-2.

organizers and archivists discussed and decided on a structure to sustain the archive over time, leading to a team of citizen archivists and a team of advisory archivists. A critical point for the advisory archivists was ensuring sure that tasks were completed in such a way that allowed for full transfer and authority of the archive to the citizen archivists, without undue maintenance or burden on their end. The advisory archivists remained sensitive to the fact that many of the organizers work full-time jobs, some unrelated to even their community work, so the advisory archivists did not want to leave this team saddled with the kind of technical details that can take up an entire day's work for professional archivists. Thus, the citizen archivists, consisting of PTS members and also organizers from various groups in Cleveland, maintain responsibility over the management and direction of the archive, specifically as it pertains to the appraisal and outreach of the archive. The advisory archivists, consisting of professional archivists from different repositories across the U.S., maintain responsibility for supporting the technical maintenance of the website and provide guidance on the preservation of the digital content submitted by the public.

The advisory archivists, with the help of other archivists who volunteered in August, spent the months after the SAA meeting updating the website's contribution terms to read more coherently and transparently. Following this update, the citizen archivists requested other features for enhancing the archive's user experience, to which the advisory archivists responded by assembling a team of contract web designers to develop the site's features even further and make the archive a resource for the community as much as a record for the community. This functionality, still in development, will be funded through crowd-source funding initially but the archive will also pursue grant funding in the coming year to subsidize hosting fees, storage costs, and labor invested by designers, the latter of which addresses the oft-cited undervalued and uncompensated labor performed by archivists and others in service and activist professions.<sup>47</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS

Zinn's criticism—that contemporary archivists tend to perpetuate the same historical prejudices, biases and injustices found in the greater society—and his challenge of fully realized democracy for the profession continue to guide the advisory archivists in

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<sup>47</sup> Lance Stuchell, "Wanted, Free Labor: The Impact and Ethics of Unpaid Labor," *New Archivist* (blog), November 17, 2011. <http://newarchivist.com/2011/11/17/free-labor/>. The blog entry was an extended version of a presentation given by author Kate Theimer, Linda Sellars, Taffey Hall, and Laura Starratt at the 2011 Society of American Archivists' Annual Meeting titled "Pay it Forward: Interns, Volunteers, and the Development of New Archivists and the Archives Profession." Specific storage and location of data intentionally withheld for privacy concerns.

working with the citizen archivists in Cleveland and in considering the project as an example for other community archiving initiatives with a strong post-custodial focus. The advisory archivists and citizen archivists continue to question the existing approaches and any possible updates to make sure they remain accessible for those users with limited computer or broadband access, or those with sight or hearing disabilities that would make it harder for them to contribute oral histories or access them. Additionally, the advisory archivists have pushed to break down the gatekeeper mentality inherent in most archival repositories in order to be inclusive of the project's biggest stakeholders, who are not trained archivists. For instance, in January 2016, the advisory archivists asked for, and received, funds from the Digital Public Library of America to send a citizen archivist from Cleveland to its annual DPLAFest conference. The advisory archivists argued that it would be more beneficial for attendees to hear from a major stakeholder in the archive, someone for whom oral histories were a true expression of the democracy desired and needed, instead from another archivist who had translated the project into the same Eurocentric-based professional jargon rendered "objective," or acceptable in the eyes of the standard-setting organization SAA, but likely unacceptable to the people who desperately wanted their voices and experiences to be heard and witnessed. The advisory archivists hope that more archives-related organizations make themselves accessible to those whom Zinn called the "ordinary voices"—the people whose lives and perspectives are being acquired and preserved.

The story of the archive that emanated from a spontaneous digital dialogue has more chapters in its future than in its past. In many ways, the archive's challenges mirror those of traditional repositories: raising awareness, messaging the mission, and understanding users. In many other ways, however, the archive's challenges are unique yet empowering: independence, freedom, and autonomy. The Cleveland organizers continue to work with the advisory archivists and both groups are working to structure the website and administration in such a way that leaves the citizen activists with autonomy and in such a way that is also scalable for other community groups to adopt. Unfortunately, the need for these community archives may arise as instances of state-sponsored racial violence continue to rise and traditional archival repositories neglect to act and remain silent.

Yet one can argue that unprecedented and ubiquitous access to documentary tools means that the role of trained archivists must shift, given that marginalized communities now possess the sophistication *and* technology to document state violence on their own terms and ensure this evidence becomes part of an established historical record. It follows, then, that these communities need neither archivists nor their so-named good intentions. Instead, they deserve archivists' partnership, collaboration, and action. The terms on which archivists partner, collaborate, and act will differ based on the circumstance but must be rooted in questioning authority (especially that of the archivist), disrupting the status quo, and decolonizing the field's approach to records, information, and the technology designed to facilitate their management, lest archivists

replicate the very oppression currently reflected in traditional archival repositories and through traditional archival practices. So long as state violence persists, the professional obligation is on archivists to document that violence and resistance ethically, responsibly, and critically, for the chances of reducing it are slim if the records do not reflect the human toll incurred as a result of that violence. Far too frequently, the standard archival enterprise in Western nations weds itself to the power of the state and increasingly the power of the corporation in place of the state. But it is a people who comprise the state, and it is a people for whom archives should operate. *A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland* demonstrates that this approach to documentation—archives of the people, by the people, and for the people—does not have to remain the exception but can one day become the rule, and a powerful rule it will reign.

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