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The Road to Becoming a Neutral: Working in the Interest of Human Needs

By Homer C. La Rue



I have been invited to write an autobiography like this several times but have been unable to identify why I should. My CV shows considerable accomplishments, and I think that a White person might well wonder why I have not considered my story worth telling.

The answer is rooted in history. For centuries, people of color and women have been told, through the spoken and unspoken words and behavior of every person of authority

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who touched their lives, that we are not even on the scale of “worthiness.” Why then, would my story be worth telling?

This past spring, the American Bar Association’s Dispute Resolution Section honored me with the D’Alemberte-Raven Award, the section’s highest tribute, for outstanding service in dispute resolution. Being so honored has allowed me to trust that I am safe to speak on my behalf and on behalf of those unrecognized who came before me, that there may be value in telling the story of an African American who had the audacity to dream that he might make a difference by learning how to help others resolve their disputes.

The theme of my story is that I am (and have always been) in search of community and that this search has led me to work to understand and address human needs. Community, beyond my family, was unavailable for me as a child, especially during my formal education, and I longed to understand how to generate connection in a world filled with explicit and implicit messages that no one was interested in connection with me, a Black man—and that because of the explicit and pervasive cultural messaging about Black men, most people were actually afraid of me, my height at 5’ 6” notwithstanding. My separateness somehow inspired me to trust that our vast human diversity would be a source of learning and growth that can arise only from a deeper, truer understanding—and ultimately, a reconciliation—of our outrageously, wonderfully diverse views, behaviors, cultures, beliefs, and interests.

Ultimately, I came to appreciate that understanding the resolution of conflict is an integral part of our search for true community. Community means for me, in part, the resolution of differences toward understanding and finding a better way of being. This better way of being, however, is not static. Inherent in it are the seeds for the next conflict, the next competition of seemingly different interests. That

threat, however, also provides an opportunity for the next finding of a better way of being. To me, this dialectical process is the way to understand the world and how to act in it.

The Beginning of the Search

My journey began in a small Midwestern town that was approximately 80 percent White and 15 percent Black and near no major city. My family was working-class, but as those who know the history of labor from World War II through the 1960s understand, in those decades America's working class became its middle class. And even working-class African Americans, who did not share equally in the gains of that period, had the opportunity to raise a family that did not live on the edge of poverty. People like my parents worked hard in the factory, in health care, or similar jobs, sent their kids to college, and retired after years of labor and sacrifice with relative economic security and dignity.¹

In my little town in the Midwest, my family was my father, who was a GM factory worker and UAW member for 38 years. My mother, who was a registered nurse, was the first African American nurse supervisor in the local hospital. I was the middle child with two sisters. This was the first community that I knew.

As a result of the Great Migration of Blacks from the rural South to cities in the North and West,² my hometown consisted of a relatively large number of African Americans. As in most Midwest cities and towns of the time, we lived and worshipped in communities separate from Whites.³

My paternal great-grandfather had moved to my hometown ahead of the Great Migration, settling there sometime around the early 1900s. The family story is that my great-grandfather, who was never without a pistol in his belt and Bowie knife in the side of his boot, signed up to

fight in the Spanish American War. After leaving the service, he worked in a mining camp in Georgia where he got into a fight with a White supervisor and had to flee. As the story is told, he wanted to get as far from Georgia as possible and was determined to cross the Ohio River to be out of reach of the racist justice of the South. He settled in Anderson, Indiana, marrying and raising one of the first Black families.

My mother, born and raised in Louisville, Kentucky, was a devout Catholic. Her ancestors, still enslaved at the time, had been brought to Louisville by White Catholic slave owners, many from Maryland. The archbishop of Baltimore ordered the organization of a parish for Black Catholics in Louisville in 1868, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Louisville connection remained a strong one for my mother. Every year, my parents loaded up the Buick, packed us three kids into the back seat, and drove non-stop from Anderson to Louisville for my mother's family reunion. We could never figure out why our father refused to stop for bathroom breaks or snacks once we crossed the Ohio River and headed south, and it was only years later that we understood that this was his way of protecting his family from racism that could end in tragedy—and the pain and degradation that he must have felt being powerless to alter this system. On the Sunday of the reunion, Louisville's St. Augustine church was filled with Black Catholics, many of whom were my mother's family and extended family members. I understood then that my mother had found more than religion in St. Augustine. She had found community, and perhaps for me, it was the birthplace of my own quest.

My mother pushed my father to agree to rear us kids as Catholic. This might not have been a heavy lift for my mother. My father was not particularly religious when

I was growing up, although as he aged he became more Catholic than those born into the faith. Over the almost 50 years of his marriage to my mother, I think that my mother's devotion simply won him over, that he saw the comfort that belief and ritual brought her.

My sisters and I were the only African American kids in an all-White Irish-Catholic school. School was not always a pitched battle, but each day had the potential for emphasizing the differences between us and our classmates.

Black children learn quickly, from everything said (and implied), that the world outside their home is not safe and that they must be cautious not to call undue attention to themselves. To some extent, this was reinforced by some of the teachings of the Catholic Church. "Pride goes before destruction," Proverbs 16:18 warns. "And a haughty spirit before stumbling." Combine this with the family caution, and a young Black child learned the lesson of unwarranted meekness, a lesson that battles with the desire to speak one's worth and to take joy in that worth and in speaking it. I understood early on that I was smart, worked hard, and had a "way with people." I did not want to be meek, however, because I had something to contribute, so early on I began to learn to listen deeply, to "read the room" carefully and accurately. But I still understood that stepping up and speaking out carried the real risk of being rejected—or perhaps even worse, of being treated as if I were invisible. My sisters and I knew that we were different and perceived as lesser than the White children. We knew we had to work harder, and I knew I had to protect my sisters. Thus, without recognizing it, I began my mediation training.

The irony of my early story is that by all accounts, I was quite successful at managing all of this. I got very good grades. I was president of my class from my sophomore year to my senior year, when I also was the student council president. I learned to wear what author Frantz Fanon

calls the “White mask” (Fanon, 1952).⁴ But I struggled to understand the implicit and explicit bias generated by my sisters’ and my skin color and the contradictions fostered by these differences. As I look back, I recognize that I had no concepts, no words, to articulate those differences.

The social justice component of some segments of Catholicism was not part of my Catholic school teaching, where the emphasis was on following the rules. There was little discussion of the need for Catholics to seek to right the injustices being highlighted by the civil rights movement. Some did name them: I recall that one teacher in my high school, a sister of the Holy Cross who was younger than her cohort, did raise in class from time to time the ideas that dogs should not be let loose on peaceful demonstrators and that all children should be safe in their church. But I also recall the unchallenged response of one of my classmates: if “those people” were not in the streets demonstrating, there would be no need to use the dogs.

The textbooks of the day made no mention of the many achievements and contributions of Black Americans. If these were included at all, they were in passing comments about slavery at some point in America’s past and about Black people being slaves who were freed by Abraham Lincoln. Sometimes I tried to point out that someone was trying to make my difference a liability, an example of something “less.” At other times, I quickly grasped the absurdity of the contradiction and chose not to engage.

As I reflect back, I understand that I was beginning to develop one of the skills required of every mediator—discerning what is not being said and understanding how that silence impacts the resolution of the conflict. Without a doubt, I did not always then (maybe do not always now) make the correct choice about how the conflict could or should be resolved. I think now, however, that I was on the road to recognizing how much we can learn from our

life experiences—if only we are open to learning, not being “one who already knows.”

The Other Community—Learning about Social Justice

Growing up, I was acutely aware of the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* segregation of the communities and most of the schools in my hometown, an awareness that became even more poignant when my family was the first to buy a house in an all-White area of my hometown. I will always recall, with admiration and fondness, the couple who lived next door to my family’s new house. “Good people are good people,” one of them told my mother and father. “We’re staying.” In a little less than a year, my block and several others in the area became nearly all-Black. The folks next door remained.

The local union that represented workers in the car plants, which employed almost everyone in my hometown and surrounding areas, also attempted to build community by holding picnics in the summers, on holidays and sometimes just to get union members’ families together. “Together” meant that African American and White families would gather at the local state park, which had been rented for the day by the local union, but the African American families stayed in one part of the park, while the White families assembled their picnics in an adjacent but separate area. What is now termed “Midwest nice,”⁵ the idea that Midwesterners are generally agreeable but tend to avoid discussing differences, was most assuredly at work during those gatherings. People would wave, even smile, and wish one another well, but Black and White stayed separate. These limitations notwithstanding, the gatherings struck me, as a young person, as an attempt, however flawed, to create a community.

When their working lives were threatened, however, the union members were definitely ready to form a real community. My father, who had a high school education, was a member of the local union for his entire working life. For a short time he was a committeeman, a shop steward whom fellow workers turned to when they had a problem in the workplace, and in that role helped fellow workers decide whether to file a grievance. For most of his time in the factory, however, he was a rank-and-file bargaining unit member who went to work every day, walked the picket line when called upon, and voted to ratify a new contract when it was put to the bargaining unit for a vote.

The local union went on strike three times during my years in junior high and high school. These strikes were over issues affecting the local company and union, since the master agreement between the UAW and GM had been agreed upon. My father understood how collective action impacted his personal ability to work and earn a living wage, and no matter how much he complained about what the union was not doing, he understood the need for solidarity on the picket line once the union called for a strike. Black and White workers literally stood side-by-side on cold days and nights or huddled together around makeshift fires to keep warm against Indiana's cold winter winds. I do not know whether deep friendships were formed on those picket lines, but I remember my father occasionally saying that this or that "White guy" he met on the picket line turned out to be a "pretty good fella." I do know that none of those relationships resulted in any invitations to other people's homes.

The Path to Community in College

My college years began in 1966 at Purdue University. As a resident of Indiana, I was able to attend this land-grant university at a cost that was a challenge for a working-class

family but doable. My first choice would have been Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, because I was fascinated by its progressive programs, but its cost was far beyond my family's reach. So to Purdue I went.

To say that Purdue was not a welcoming environment in 1966 is an understatement. I later learned of the story of A. Leon Higginbotham Jr., the African American civil rights advocate, author, and federal court judge ⁶ who attended Purdue for a short time in 1944, and I was surprised to find how little had changed between his college days and mine.

Higginbotham enrolled in Purdue in West Lafayette, Indiana, in 1944 at the age of 16. Purdue was (and is) known as an engineering school, Higginbotham wanted to be an engineer, and the school offered tuition discounts for good academic performance. At the time, the student body included approximately 6,000 White and 12 Black students. Black students were not permitted to live in the dormitories, so Higginbotham and the other 11 Black students were placed in a building called International House, the only building where Blacks could live in West Lafayette and where they slept in an unheated attic. When Higginbotham met with the university president, Edward C. Elliott, and asked whether the students could sleep in a section of one of the heated dormitories, Higginbotham later recalled, Elliott said, "Higginbotham, the law doesn't require us to let colored students in the dorm, and we will never do it," and he told him to accept things as they were or leave the university that day. Higginbotham transferred to Antioch College in 1945 but later said this encounter led him to abandon engineering and turn to the study of law (Lewis, 1991).

My strong sense in 1966 was that the university's approximately 130 African American students—out of the total student population of approximately 20,000—still were not being treated fairly or equitably. As a sophomore,

I teamed up with a brilliant young Black woman, Linda Jo Mitchel, a junior who was majoring in English Literature. Together, during February, Black History Month, under the name the Negro History Study Group, Linda and I organized Purdue's first Black Student Organization and arranged the first student demonstration for equitable treatment ever held at the West Lafayette campus.⁷

In a 2009 ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of the Black Students Organization's founding,⁸ I described the protest.

. . . [We] knew that a takeover of a building, which had been done at Columbia University, would end in disaster for Black students at Purdue. In an article in the [*New York Times Magazine*], which covered the takeover of the Columbia University campus by student activists, Purdue, by way of contrast, was noted as a "Hotbed of Rest."

Linda and I concocted a scheme to bring attention to the issues that Black students faced at Purdue and to do so in a way that would minimize the negative impact on the participants. We knew that many of the 130 Black students on Purdue's campus were on scholarship or were working to put themselves through school. . . .

. . . Each student was instructed to find a brick and to appear in front of the student union the next morning with that brick. They also were told to conceal the brick until they got to the steps of the student union. Many carried their bricks in brown paper bags. We agreed that once assembled in front of the student union, no Black stu-

dent would speak to anyone—not one word. At a signal from Linda and me, everyone revealed their brick and began to march to the administration building. At the steps of the building, the students formed orderly rows brandishing their bricks but speaking not a word.

There was a brief meeting between Linda, me, and a third leader of the march with the dean of students for the university. A set of nine demands were given to him . . .⁹

At the end of the meeting, we went outside to the steps of the administration building where the Black students were still standing in absolute silence. By this time, a crowd had gathered at the administration building, including a number of police, both from the campus and from Lafayette, Indiana. At my signal, the Black students stacked their bricks into two columns on the steps of the administration building. Once all of the bricks were stacked, two of the students unfurled a banner which had been prepared the night before . . . It read “THE FIRE NEXT TIME.” The students then dispersed . . . in silence.

In the weeks and months that followed, the administration began to make changes but never acknowledged that the changes were the result of 130 Black students demonstrating at the steps of the administration building. (La Rue, 2009)

Not long ago, Purdue University's Development Office asked me for a financial contribution. In declining to send money, I tried to explain the continuing dissonance between my wanting an apology from the university and realizing that I had moved on. "After all of these years," I wrote, "I do not recall my time at Purdue with a great deal of fondness. I was 18 years of age, and I took on the responsibility to persuade the university to embrace that which it should have, in my opinion, come to embrace through its own reflection as an institution of higher education. . . . I graduated on time, and I have had a good life, in part because of the education that I received at Purdue. During the time that I attended Purdue, however, the institution was not certain that I belonged there, nor did it recognize my sacrifices while I was there."

The Study of Law—and Interest in Arbitration

As I moved toward graduation, I was possessed with an intense interest to understand politics and social movements. I also had a burning desire to do more than understand the world; I wanted to have an impact on it. I began my graduate education in 1970 in the PhD program in political theory at Cornell. Before the year was out, however, I was convinced that law provided a better path.

Upon starting to study law, I was certain of only one thing. I was most satisfied professionally and personally if I could help solve problems by bringing people together. Working together meant trying to understand the underlying interests of those involved in conflict, even when I disagreed with someone's position.

Near the end of the second semester of my first year of my Contracts course, we were given an arbitration decision to read. The professor noted that the contract dispute that was the subject of the arbitration had arisen out of a collective bargaining agreement. A collective bargaining

agreement, he explained, is a contract. Unlike the contract disputes that we had studied all year, the professor said, disputes between the parties about a collective bargaining agreement were not resolved in court but in arbitration. He explained the role of the arbitrator and the rules of the process, including the fact that both parties agreed that the arbitrator's decision would be final and binding. There was no right to appeal.

I was intrigued to imagine that I could reach a position in which people would trust me to make a decision about a matter of such significance to them, and I decided right then that I wanted to work as an arbitrator. I began to understand that the role of an arbitrator, unlike that of a public court judge, is dependent upon two primary factors. An effective arbitrator must be able to provide a fair and efficient hearing of the issues—and must be able to render a well-reasoned decision and award.

Before working as an arbitrator, however, I spent a number of years working as a mediator in public-sector labor disputes in the New York metropolitan area, where I learned, in the trenches, about the possibilities and limitations of being a mediator. One of the principal advantages of mediation is the possibility of helping disputing parties find a solution to their problem that meets both their interests, at least in part. The parties learn, in the moment, to think beyond their positions and identify their own and then their mutual interests—which creates the possibility of community, even if it's only temporary.

By the time I started teaching in 1983 as one of the founding faculty at the City University of New York's law school, I was thoroughly committed to building community by trying to address our disparate human needs. As a teacher of civil procedure, I began to incorporate the growing body of literature about what became known as alternative dispute resolution while teaching law students the

rules for formal litigation. In my practice as a mediator and before then as a union-side attorney, I had seen the injuries done to effective problem-solving when the only tool the lawyers had was a hammer, so with various experiential exercises in classes and discussions, I learned to ask students a fundamental question: “What might have been an alternative way to attempt to solve the client’s problem?”

Professor Howard Lesnick, then academic dean at CUNY Law School, was an inspiration as a law teacher and a shining example of how creative lawyering can serve human needs. More than any other person, he influenced me to explore alternative ways to think about the incorporation of ADR in the teaching of civil procedure. Howard, who died in April 2020, is the person who taught me how to become a lawyer, a law teacher, and a better human being. He helped me start on my journey of discovering what it means to always be “becoming.” It is a journey—not easy and certainly not a path with a straight line.

A common theme for Howard, and I believe for me as well, is in the Talmudic saying: “Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly now, love mercy now, walk humbly now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.” Like Howard, I struggle to understand and accept my own obligation, to further, rather than to complete, the work of addressing and relieving, to some extent, humanity’s grief. Far too often, I am overwhelmed with the frustration that I will not complete the work.

In 1983, I also began to incorporate arbitration into my neutral practice. Much of my arbitration practice has been in labor and employment, with a few commercial cases. In the years since, I have continued to explore ways to make the practice of arbitration and mediation serve the interest of fair and efficient ways to resolve disputes. In this era of arbitration-bashing (often for good reason), linking

arbitration with notions of fairness in the resolution of disputes might seem strange. But as an active member of the dispute resolution legal community, I have challenged the use of arbitration in individual employment cases in the non-union sector and in consumer disputes. The courts have been too quick to determine that the arbitral forum is suitable for virtually all disputes. There has been a judicial mis-reliance on the principles set forth in the *Steelworkers Trilogy*¹⁰ to argue that arbitration simply means a change of forum rather than a very fundamental access-to-justice issue.

Working for Diversity

People in conflict are willing to accept the outcome as fair if they believe they have been truly heard, and in both arbitration and mediation, that in part means that the neutral is someone whom the parties believe has a connection to their own life experiences. The dispute resolution field has for too long ignored the importance of diversity based on race, gender, and ethnicity, and a big focus of my work has been aimed at changing that.

For many years, I have focused on what I call the “front-end” issues of diversity and inclusion. How do we increase the number of people of color and women who are arbitrators, mediators, and in other neutral dispute-resolution roles? There have been modest gains on the “front end,” at least with regard to gender diversity. More recently, I have focused on the “back-end” problem, the fact that those who select arbitrators and mediators, particularly for high-stakes disputes, do not select people of color. The “gatekeepers,”¹¹ who are almost always White lawyers, select neutrals whom they know—and who look like them. As a result, the final slates of candidates seldom include people of color (La Rue and Symonette, 2020).

I recently developed a program called the Ray Corollary Initiative™ (RCI™) that seeks to change the way arbitrators and mediators are selected. This initiative is named for Charlotte Ray, the first Black female lawyer (Howard Law) in the United States. The RCI seeks a demonstrable commitment from all areas of the conflict resolution community that every final group of candidates for an arbitration or a mediation will include 30 percent people of color, both female and male. (Empirical studies have shown that the 30 percent metric significantly increases the probability that a person of color will be selected (La Rue and Symonette, 2020).) The RCI, modeled after the Rooney Rule in professional football and the Mansfield Rule in “Big Law”¹² is designed to increase the selection of neutrals of color in arbitration and mediation.

The brief history of the Rooney Rule is that after decades of criticism of National Football League teams’ minority hiring practices, data in 2002 showed that while more than 60 percent of players were Black, only 6 percent of head coaches were. The rule, named after then-Pittsburgh Steelers Chairman Dan Rooney and adopted in 2003, requires teams to interview at least one minority candidate for each head coach vacancy (La Rue and Symonette, 2020). The Mansfield Rule, named for Arabella Mansfield, who became the first female attorney in the United States in 1869, is an outgrowth of the Rooney Rule and is aimed at increasing diversity in Big Law. The work began with 102 law firms becoming “Mansfield Certified,” which required each firm to demonstrate, with data, that the firm considered at least 30 percent diverse lawyers—women, people of color, LGBTQ+, and lawyers with disabilities—for all governance and leadership roles. The RCI has been adopted by the National Academy of Arbitrators as a nationwide initiative. While much work remains, the adoption of the RCI by a major conflict resolution orga-

nization is a source of great satisfaction and pride. I have not abandoned the good work, even if I might not see its completion.

One of my great pleasures in recent decades has been a new kind of community with The Guys, Daniel Bowling and David Hoffman, longtime friends and journey mates on the path to enlightenment who have helped me understand the beauty of how our human diversity nurtures our souls. Our relationships began with attempting to understand how our different experiences had brought us to pursue a life in conflict resolution. In the beginning, we went on weekend trips, retreats of a sort, with ever-deepening conversations about race and its role in all our lives. Those conversations continue today. The relationship is as close as I have ever come to reaching true community, one where difference has become the source of deeper understanding and greater self-enlightenment. I'm befuddled that I have found one kind of community with two White men, one a Jew and the other a Buddhist.

My community with "the guys" complements the fundamental importance of my relationship with my wife of more than 35 years. The fact that we have shared values has deepened our love and respect for each other over the years. We certainly don't agree on everything: she, too, is a labor neutral, now retired, who can be quite articulate and forceful in presenting her viewpoint. But our differences are always underpinned with the full confidence that each of us will use the present difference as a path to a deeper understanding of the other, of ourselves, and of what it means to be in a relationship.

My understanding of my pursuit of community has been deepened by learning to communicate skillfully with my adult children. One of my sons, for example, has a view about Blacks and guns that is firmly grounded in his well-studied understanding of the history of the tenuous state

of Black life in America and is very different from my own pertaining to guns in America today. Neither of us has convinced the other to switch his view of the Second Amendment, but our discussions always bring us closer as father and son.

My other son, a gay Black man, has taught me much about my own limitations about gender identity and sexuality. My ability to learn what he has had to teach me began when he was in college and came out to his mother and me. My embrace of him as my son, whom I love and respect, has allowed me to appreciate our difference and the power of diversity as a means to enlightenment.

Another family member reminds me that my work of understanding, accepting, and appreciating difference is incomplete. My wife and I live with our adult daughter, whom we adopted when she was very young and who is schizophrenic. Schizophrenia affects the way a person thinks, acts, expresses emotions, and relates to others, and I continue to struggle to act, with any semblance of skill, on my belief that difference can lead to a deepening of relationship with another. My daughter's inability to relate to me in a way that assures me of some connection to me as her father forces me to struggle mightily.

I end this story with a tribute to my loving family. The COVID-19 pandemic made an in-person ceremony for the D'Alemberte-Raven Award last April impossible, so my wife and the rest of my family held a surprise Zoom celebration for me, which touched me deeply. In the virtual award ceremony itself, I closed my statement with a picture of my family and the video-recorded congratulatory words of our two grandsons, Tommy and Jackie. Thank you to you all.

Notes

¹ This story of America's postwar working class is brilliantly told by Steven Greenhouse in his book *Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past, Present, and Future of American Labor* (Greenhouse, 2019).

² This was the widespread migration of African Americans in the 20th century from rural communities in the South to large cities in the North and West. At the turn of the 20th century, the vast majority of Black Americans lived in the Southern states. From 1916 to 1970, during this Great Migration, it is estimated that some six million Black Southerners relocated to urban areas in the North and West. Isabel Wilkerson has described the Great Migration thoroughly and thoughtfully in her book *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (Wilkerson, 2010).

³ I do not recall any mosques or synagogues in my hometown when I was growing up.

⁴ French writer Frantz Fanon, combines autobiography, case study, philosophy, and psychoanalytic theory to describe and analyze the experience of Black men and women in white-controlled societies. Of the many books I read in college, this was the most revealing in helping me understand the development of my self-identity. Fanon F., *Black Skin, White Masks*. trans. Philcox, R. (New York: Grove Press. 1994).

⁵ "Midwest nice" has been the subject of many discussions, including one on National Public Radio by Andrew Meriwether. Meriwether, A. "What's the Deal with 'Midwest Nice?'" Recorded January 11, 2020. WBEZ NPR, 8:25. <https://www.wbez.org/stories/whats-the-deal-with-midwest-nice/601c44f7-643b-4075-a1a9-9605bbcd66a6>.

⁶ Aloyisus Leon Higginbotham Jr. (February 25, 1928 – December 14, 1998) was a prominent African American civil rights advocate, author, and federal court judge. Higginbotham was the seventh African American Article III judge appointed in the United States and the first African American United States District Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

⁷ The University's version of that history is told in a short film clip entitled Black Purdue University, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lMaQyMyQpDc>.

⁸ In 2009, Purdue University's Black Cultural Center, a department within the Division of Diversity and Inclusion, celebrated the 40th anniversary of its founding. The center is described on Purdue's webpage as follows: "Purdue University's Black Cultural Center is a vibrant element of University life, offering a wealth of programs and services for the entire campus community. We bring together the wonderful diversity of the Purdue family by nurturing and presenting the rich heritage of the African American experience through art, history, and cultural understanding. The center sponsors outstanding student performing arts ensembles in dance drama, choral music, and creative writing. We also house a special collections library, a computer lab, and student organization office and meeting space."

⁹ I still have an original version of the demands, written on a typewriter. The document, in all capital letters, reads:

LIST OF DEMANDS TO THE UNIVERSITY

WE DEMAND THAT THE UNIVERSITY PRESSURE ITS DEPARTMENTS TO RECRUIT QUALIFIED BLACK PROFESSORS FOR THE 1968-1969 SCHOOL YEAR.

WE DEMAND THAT THE PROFESSORS OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT INTEGRATE THEIR SEGREGATED, BIGOTED, AND INSULTING U.S. HISTORY COURSES.

WE DEMAND IMMEDIATE INTEGRATION OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS.

WE DEMAND COURSES DEALING WITH BLACK CULTURE.

WE DEMAND THAT BLACK ARTS BE INCORPORATED INTO THE MUSIC AND ART APPRECIATION COURSES.

WE DEMAND THAT THE UNIVERSITY COMPILE A LIST OF DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING AND MAKE THIS LIST PUBLIC

WE DEMAND MORE THAN A TOKEN INTEGRATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

WE DEMAND THAT THE UNIVERSITY SEE TO IT THAT BLACK PROFESSORS DO NOT MEET DISCRIMINATION IN PROCURING HOUSING.

WE DEMAND THAT A COURSE DEALING WITH DISTORTION BE INSTITUTED AS A GENERAL CORE REQUIREMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS.

OR

.... THE FIRE NEXT TIME

james baldwin

¹⁰ These are three US Supreme Court cases decided in 1960 that defined the nature of collective bargaining and the role of arbitration under US labor law: *United Steelworkers v. Warrior & Gulf Navigation Co.*, 363 U.S. 574 (1960); *United Steelworkers v. Warrior & Gulf Navigation Co.*, 363 U.S. 574 (1960); and *United Steelworkers of America v. Warrior & Gulf Navigation Co.*, 363 U.S. 574 (1960).

¹¹ Johnson, M. E. and H. C. La Rue. "The Gated Community: Risk Aversion, Race, and the Lack of Diversity in the Top Ranks," *Dispute Resolution Magazine* 15 (Spring 2009): 17.

¹² This is the nickname for the world's biggest law firms, most of which have headquarters in cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Dallas, Chicago, and Boston.

References

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