

*Statements from the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report
(Consequences and the relevance of Nov. 3, 1979, to today)*

Elijah Andrews, resident of Morningside Homes on Nov. 3, 1979, who experienced depression afterwards: It put me into a state of mind, like I just don't want to be bothered with anybody, because it made me feel like I was just useless there, due to the fact I'd seen what went on. I was already going through a lot, through the projects, and when I seen that, I just lost all hope. ... It just hurt me a whole lot, seeing this happen.⁶

Marty Nathan, widow of Michael Nathan: I went to bed every night unable to sleep, fearing that my small family's house would be fire-bombed or the windows would be shot into. We had chosen this house with these huge picture windows because we loved light; boy did I regret that. I lived off of Mike's social security as I worked with Dale, Signe, Floris, Nelson, Joyce and many others in the newly formed Greensboro Justice Fund to defend the indicted demonstrators and get justice for Mike, César, Bill, Jim and Sandi.¹⁵

Virgil Griffin, Grand Dragon of the Cleveland Knights Ku Klux Klan (CKKKK) in 1979; Imperial Wizard since 1985; in Klan/Nazi caravan on Nov. 3, 1979: I was released on \$100,000 bond, and I was put on federal probation for one year before the trial even started. They wanted to put me under house arrest, but they didn't. I couldn't leave Gaston County except to go to Camden, South Carolina. My mother was up in age and she had heart trouble and didn't drive, I could go to her house. But I had to go a certain road, I couldn't get off that road, go into no town, if the car broke down somebody else had to go. Go to her house only, I couldn't go to none of my sisters or my brothers or no house, just her house, had to come back that way. I could work, and stay in the county. I couldn't speak to no one in the Klan for a year. They told me if I seen a Klansman walking down the street, better cross over the street and go to the other side. Except for my wife, she was the only one in the Klan I could speak to, couldn't make me leave my wife. No other Klansmen, my best friends couldn't come to my house, I couldn't go to their house for a year, and things. And when I was tried, I's found not guilty.

Jean Chapman, close friend and colleague of CWP members who recalled the funeral march and political organizing in North Carolina after Nov. 3, 1979: I've come to realize that November 3rd was the seminal event of my adult life. The work I did with the CWP was among some of the most intense, vibrant times of my life. This event has also shaped the rest of my life. I have two daughters. One of them was named for Sandi Smith and the other was named after Joyce Johnson.

Labor organizer who recalled impact of shootings: After November 3rd things really began to fall apart. We all needed a little bit of breathing space and it took us a couple of years. I went to Winston-Salem for three years. I had to kind of process all of this. I needed time to step back and take a look ... Tension was too high. I had young children. I wanted to step away from it a little bit ... We had to figure out where we were going to put our energies.

Willena Cannon, former CWP member, longtime community activist and current employee of the Greensboro Housing Coalition who was arrested on Nov. 3, 1979, and recalled her son Kwame's reaction upon her release later that day after the shooting:

[Kwame] was terrified. He was scared. He grabbed me like he had seen heaven. He didn't know if I was dead or alive when he saw me... People I'd been knowing since the late 60s, early 70s... were scared not of me, but of being associated with me... People would say to my kids, 'your mama helped get people killed'... so it did affect the children at school... they wanted me to get away from that, from the pain. It wasn't like they didn't believe me, but they didn't want to deal with it and didn't want me to deal with it... I started to leave Greensboro, NC, but I guess to me that would be letting them get away with [what they've done to me].

Nelson Johnson, former CWP leader: It got to a point, in my work, where the police literally followed me around, everywhere I went. That's the kind of scrutiny I was under... (they) said that I was the most militant person in Greensboro ... I was viewed this way by the white community, and in a different capacity as clergy by the black community ... I felt the pressure of that statement, is one of many examples. My identity jumped from that of '69 to '79. ... there was no mention of the other work I was doing. Within months of the assassinations in 1979, the sitting mayor said publicly that I was the most dangerous person in Greensboro.²²

Leah Nathan, daughter of Michael and Marty Nathan who was an infant on Nov. 3, 1979, yet finds her decisions affected by the tragedy: I've sort of found myself seeking really "normal" people, not as complicated people, people that aren't carrying the weight of the world. ... At the same time, having this be so much a part of my identity (I feel) like I have to live up to something. I couldn't go through my life being trivial – I at least need to talk about important things. If not, then I've wasted a father, and I've wasted his dreams and aspirations for me. ... It makes me feel conflicted. I think I tend to seek out people who I don't feel that pressure with, but at the same time, I find myself being angry at myself, angry at the people I'm spending time with for not getting it. At the same time, when I am around people who are so dedicated, I also get uncomfortable. But it's part of my DNA, activism, it's second nature to me, at the same time it stresses me out. I think it's because I know the potential for letdown, disappointed, heartbroken. Because you're so passionate about it ... fighting the fight is so hard. I worry that people will disappear, or also that I'll disappoint them ... It's like a death complex.

Rev. Mazie Ferguson, president of the Pulpit Forum of Greensboro and Vicinity ministerial alliance: And people say there is no need for us to be going back and pull up all this old stuff and reopen all of these old wounds and I am saddened by that sentiment. The wounds are not old, the wounds are still here. The wounds are quite present. The wounds walk up and down our streets. The wounds go by the names of homelessness. The wounds go by the name of the unemployed. The wounds are still with us. The wounds are still known by the name of racism, and it is still rearing its ugly head.

Tom Clark, former CWP member who was wounded on Nov. 3, 1979: My pain was emotional and social ... There was not a lot of physical pain but I was thinking of my friends that I had just seen get killed. That was what was painful. ... I named my son Cesar in (Cesar Cauce's) honor.⁹

Signe Waller, widow of Dr. Jim Waller, killed on Nov. 3, 1979: One consequence of the enabling and complicit role played by the police, the FBI and the BATF was my sudden widowhood. That was just one consequence. I was severed forever from the man I truly loved, the man with whom I had enjoyed two years of married life, the man who had married me taking on the responsibility of being a father to a 9-year-old and a 12-year-old. Immediately after November 3rd, the media lies and vilification of Jim and of the other four who were my friends dug into my heart. It is indescribable how wounding this was on top of the devastating loss itself. My life energy was completely consumed in practical matters of survival, in the struggle to obtain justice for the killings, and in daily efforts to publicly expose what had happened and why it had happened. I was part of a larger effort in the early 1980s to build a united people's movement to fight back against the increasing repression of civil and human rights for which November 3rd was a defining moment.

Tammy Tutt, a community activist who was a child living in Morningside Homes on Nov. 3, 1979: Even as a child I felt so much anger and frustration... People knew about it and they were so disempowered that they could not join together to bring about a change. ...

Cesar Weston, son of Larry Weston and Floris Weston, who on Nov. 3, 1979, was newly wed to César Cauce: I came into the world wearing the name of a martyr, into the physical and emotional wreckage the state sanctioned murder put down to resistance. ... I am continually moved by an unquiet past. I hated talking about what moved me in front of others because I did not want to trivialize the past and wanted to keep something of mine for myself. I suspected that folk would be interested in me as a person only for that past. I hoped and prayed that I would not gain notoriety, good or bad, because of the work my parents and predecessors had done before me.

Alex Goldstein, son of Signe Waller and stepson of Jim Waller: There was a period where there were safety and other concerns focused on legal stuff. The way people were attacked in the media and misunderstood. Right after November 3rd our house became sort of a headquarters for things. For a while, as I understand it, the FBI had the house bugged. It was very chaotic, but the community spirit was just incredible.

Elijah Andrews, speaking of his attitude and that of other Morningside youth: It just put no faith into the justice at all, period. Because the police is not going to do anything, so what's the use? ... I was young at the time, and that's all I knew how to do was to try to survive. Because I didn't have no kind of protection around here, and I had to try to protect myself. That's all what we knew how to do was to figure out how to try to protect ourselves.⁴⁰

T. Diane Bellamy-Small, city councilwoman and police officer prior to Nov. 3, 1979: I had just left the police department the year before. I had been a police officer for two years. I had a very difficult time when I was with the police department; I was harassed constantly as a woman, a female, and African American. I eventually left the department. I used to feel that if I had been still in the department at the time they probably would have set me up to be in the middle of that thing (because that was the way I had been treated when I was a police officer).⁴⁶

Virginia Turner, Greensboro native who worked in the White Oak mill from 1979-1990: I don't want to feel prejudice, but I do feel like the Klan has always wiggled their way out of everything. So when they were not found guilty it did not surprise me.

Richard Bowling: When you don't want to solve a problem then how you gonna get at the truth? You can't get at the truth when the people at the top with the power control everything that's being done, don't want the truth to come up. Look at the real, underlying motive as to why they didn't want these workers bringing attention to the working conditions of the poor people ... The powers that be don't want that coming out ... And they will do everything they can do within their power to keep you from getting at the truth... The key is to camouflage the truth.

Ray Eurquhart, Durham labor and community organizer: We learned...It could have been the Progressive Labor Party, could have been the Socialist Worker Party. It just happened to be the CWP. It was us, when they shot all those folks. It was us. That target included everybody out there trying to change ... The Klan and the "powers that be" had to make some examples. They had to beat back this political groundswell that was transforming the workers movement. Any target would have been OK for them.⁵

Gloria Rankin, president of the Smith Homes Community Association: I wasn't actively engaged in the community at that time. That time, it made me become involved, after November the 3rd. That event made me become more active in the community ... It really bothered me, I knew where I come from the Klan was really active, but I didn't think they were that active in Greensboro.⁵⁷

Richard Koritz, representative of the Letter Carriers Union to the AFL-CIO and managing partner of a small multicultural publishing company: Working class people in this community, union and non-union, as well as black people in general were really pushed back by the events of November 3rd and subsequently, the negative verdicts from the point of view of justice. Most working people and most black people in this community, that I observed, were afraid to get involved because of what had happened to these very dedicated folks in November of '79. And the subsequent lack of punishment for the murders of these people.

George "Mac" McGuire, labor historian: The (local) government disturbed me more. There was an immediate denial of wrongdoing, a denial of mishandling. That is a typical political response ... A lot of finger-pointing occurred. The thing that got me most was the federal government's involvement, in the sense that they had an occasional informant, a member of the Klan, involved in this.

Brown lung activist: The CWP was supposed to be friends of brown lung but they could not be trusted because they were too zealous about their own cause. They always had their own agenda. The CWP was bent on convincing working class white people that they were racist. The CWP was naïve and opportunistic. They were rich kids going to med school who didn't understand what the real dynamics were like. They were so far removed from the victims of brown lung that they really couldn't understand what was happening. By the time of November 3rd, the CWP was isolated and not an effective group. Anyone at the time should know that holding a "Death to the Klan" rally was asking for trouble. I was horrified by November 3rd. The CWP didn't deserve it but they were so stupid because they didn't understand what they were up against.⁸

Mab Segrest: ... what connects me most to November 3rd is its aftermath – a sharp upsurge in far right activity and hate violence and my own decision when I was 34 to take an active role in opposing it, which had a profound affect on the course of my life.