

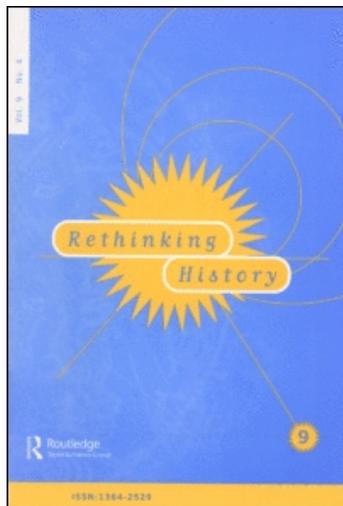
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Knowledge and indifference in the New York City race riot of 1900: an argument in search of a story

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New York University

On a street corner in New York City in the summer of 1900, an encounter between a white man, a black woman and a black man ended in the murder of the white man; soon thereafter, days and nights of white-on-black violence erupted in the neighborhood. When it was over, news of the riot spread across the city, the nation and beyond, and yet no justice was done to the victims, ever. This essay begins to reconstruct the story of the New York City race riot of 1900 and offers the beginnings of an argument about the circulation of knowledge, before pondering questions about storytelling and argument in the face of voices that have been erased and silenced in the archives.

Keywords: New York City; race riot; 1900; violence; archives; erasure; silence; storytelling; argument

On the corner, May waited for Kid in front of a saloon. Two o'clock in the morning, hot, the air getting hotter, Kid had gone to get cigarettes. It was summer in New York City, Saturday night turning into Sunday morning, and when Kid came back outside with the cigarettes, a white man was bothering May. Whatever Kid said or did next, the white man clubbed him, which made Kid reach for his knife and stab at his assailant. It was 12 August 1900, on the corner of 41st Street and Eighth Avenue, and a heat wave had overtaken the city.¹

The white man was Robert Thorpe, patrolling in plain clothes that night. To Officer Thorpe, a black woman on the street in the middle of the night meant trouble. He'd been trying to arrest her for prostitution when a black man killed him. The night before Thorpe's funeral, a crowd gathered outside his tenement boarding house on West 49th Street to pay their respects. The air was still hot, and Thomas Healy, who was white, got into a fight with Spencer Walters, who was black. That's how the two-day riot started,

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engulfing the neighborhood called 'The Tenderloin' or sometimes 'Hell's Kitchen.' On Wednesday and Thursday, 15 and 16 August, thousands of white New Yorkers turned on black New Yorkers, and the mostly Irish American police force did not stop anybody. In fact, the police joined in with all their might. Late on Wednesday night and into Thursday morning it rained, but the violence picked up again when the skies dried out.²

No one was killed, but the horrific brutality prompted meetings, speeches, organizing, testimony, and demands for investigation. Yet in the end, not a single member of the police force suffered any consequence whatsoever, and after that the riot was either forgotten, or people put it out of their minds. A few months later, the president of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief noted that the past year had been filled with matters 'to demand our serious attention'; he listed US foreign policy in the Philippines and China, the disenfranchisement of black men in the South, and 'the recent race-riot in our own City' which 'demanded our severest condemnation.' But that was all. 'In spite, however, of these discouragements,' he concluded, 'I believe the future is full of hope.' Years later, a Brooklyn school principal recalled only 'some race friction' and 'a monster mass meeting' at which she herself had spoken. But her main memory did not concern the riot. 'I was amused,' she wrote, 'to overhear an audible comment by a white clergyman of prominence who ejaculated: "Did you listen to that colored woman? Why, she speaks as good English as I do."' The protests had failed, and there was no more to be said.³

What came to be called the New York City race riot of 1900 was an event of terrible violence that echoed across the nation and beyond, yet changed almost nothing, maybe nothing at all.

Arthur Harris

When Kid Harris's mother wrote him a letter in June, she called him 'Arthur: My Son.' She was glad to have heard from him, for, as she told him, 'I had once thought that you had forsaken me entirely.' She was writing from her boarding house on E Street Southeast, in Washington, DC. Too unwell to work through the winter, and living on charity, she hoped Arthur could help. He had recently asked his mother to pray for him, and she assured him that she was doing so. 'I also hope that we may meet each other face to face one more time,' she pleaded.⁴

Arthur Harris was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1879, and raised in Washington, DC. He worked different jobs in the capital city: for a man named Mr. Edith, for another named Colonel Decker, and in some menial capacity for a Democratic Congressman from Illinois. At 16 or 17, he left for New York, first living far uptown, then in Brooklyn, then in New Jersey, working as a cook, a barber, a carpenter. In Newark, he met May Enoch, and began to share living quarters with her in 1898 or 1899. In August 1900,

when he was 22 years old, he came back to New York and moved, with Enoch, into the top floor of a tenement at 241 West 41st Street.⁵

The night Kid Harris killed the policeman, he and May Enoch had left their apartment to get something to eat over at Dobbins Restaurant – it was too hot to cook at home – but Harris wanted a cigar first, and a glass of ginger ale; everybody knew Kid Harris didn't drink. He thought it was about one in the morning when he'd stopped in at McBride's, the saloon on the corner of 41st and Eighth. When he came out again, he saw a white man 'hunching' Enoch, pushing her in the street.

'What are you doing, what is the matter with you?' Harris was at Enoch's side. 'Who are you, what is the trouble, what are you abusing her or assaulting her in this way for?'

The white man talked back. 'It is none of your business. What's the matter? What is it to you? Don't you like it?'

Harris talked back, too. 'No' – and at that, the white man turned around and hit Harris over the head with a jack or a club, knocking him down. When Harris got up, the white man knocked him down again, and the next time he got up, the white man grabbed him by his coat and pummeled him. Harris was feeling weaker and weaker – he had to hold on to the white man just to stand up, and that's when he remembered that he had his penknife with him. It had cost him ten or fifteen cents, and the blade was only a couple of inches long, but maybe it would scare his attacker away. Harris lunged, but the knife ended up in the white man's coat and maybe cut his shoulder, so Harris ran.

Kid Harris was bleeding so much that he thought about going to the hospital – started to, in fact – but then saw that he might get into trouble, maybe even get arrested, for the fight. He'd just gotten into trouble in Newark, in another fight with a knife – self defense (the other fellow stabbed him first), so he'd been acquitted, but he'd been locked up before, and he knew how long it took to get a trial if you didn't have any money, or anyone to bail you out. That was it, though. He'd never been in any other trouble. And his mother was sick – she was dying – and he'd promised to go see her, and now he thought *he* might die first.

There was blood all over his coat, so before he turned east and boarded the El on Sixth Avenue, heading downtown, Harris washed some of it off with a handkerchief and water, then threw away the bloody cloth. Anyway, it was dark, and the coat was dark-colored. He also changed his hat in New York, and his shirt in Newark, and somewhere between New York and Philadelphia, he threw the penknife away. He was on his way to Washington to see his mother.⁶

May Enoch

At some point, May Enoch had made the journey from her native Virginia to the North, too. She had lived in Newark, married to a black day laborer

named John, with their two-year-old daughter, Bessie. But something had gone wrong, and now, at the age of 21 or 22, she lived on the west side of Manhattan, with Kid Harris – sometimes she called him Arthur. That night, on the street corner, the white man didn't say a word to her, just took hold of her. Then, just as soon as the officer put his hands on her, Harris was there.

'What are you doing that for?' he asked the white man. 'She ain't done anything.'

That was when the man let go of Enoch and grabbed Harris, and that was when their neighbor George Bettell, a black man who had been hanging around, advised Enoch to go home. (Either she got a black eye in the scuffle or she already had one that night.) The last thing Enoch heard the white man say to Harris was, 'I will take you.'

May Enoch didn't see anything more, but twenty minutes later two policemen came upstairs, Officer Duane and another man, and told Enoch that the white man – the police officer with whom Harris had argued – was injured. She was going to be taken to the station house, and when they asked if she thought Arthur Harris had done it, she said yes because he had defended her – 'because he was the only one there with him and the only one that would be interested in me.' She added, 'I know once before he used a knife.' The officers took her to the house of detention.⁷

Witnesses

Kid Harris had stopped to get a shoeshine at the stand in front of Glennon's Saloon, on a different corner of 41st and Eighth, but he couldn't pay Edward Smith, and Smith was mad. 'Don't you see that flatty?' he threatened, pointing to the foot-patrol officer, Robert Thorpe.

'To hell with him,' Harris said, but he soon found a nickel and gave it up. Later, the shoeshine man and Kid Harris, together with some others, went drinking at Glennon's, then hung around on the street corner. That's when Sam Palmatte pointed.

'Look, there is a man got your woman.' He was talking to Harris.

'Come on fellows.' Harris started off, and Ed Smith heard him say, 'What are you doing with this woman?' and then, 'Now, you done hit me.' Smith saw that Harris started to turn away, then turned back. Harris's hands moved toward the white man twice, and then the white man fell down, right on his face, into the gutter. Now May Enoch was running down 41st Street, east toward Seventh Avenue, then a policeman's whistle blew, then another white man caught up with Enoch and brought her back to the scene. The officer, Robert Thorpe, was still prostrate on the ground.⁸

Annie Johnson also lived at 241, with her husband, Henry (both were white), in an apartment on the top floor, the same as Kid Harris and May Enoch. She'd often seen Harris leaving the building with a long knife that he kept on a table. His door must have been open that night, because Johnson looked in and saw that the knife was missing.

'The Kid and a policeman are fighting,' May Enoch said, when she came home.⁹

*

Anthony Bolden, a black laborer who lived in Newark and hung out in the west forties, saw Harris at McBride's saloon that night, then later saw Robert Thorpe lying in the street, with a crowd gathering around. Kid Harris was nowhere to be seen, but Bolden ran into him later, on the Jersey side of the Cortlandt Street ferry. Harris wouldn't even look at him when Bolden said hello.

'What are you doing over there?' Bolden pressed on.

'Didn't you see that?' Harris asked.

'What?'

'You saw that he had my woman.'

'No.'

'I fixed the son-of-a-bitch, didn't I?'

'Fixed who?' Bolden was confused.

'That fellow what hit me.'

'I don't know anything about it.'

The men kept talking, and, looking back, Bolden didn't think there were any marks of a fight on Harris. They boarded the same streetcar to Newark, while Harris talked about getting to Washington, until he said again, 'I fixed the son-of-a-bitch. He tried to lock up my woman.'¹⁰

*

William Scales ran into Kid Harris on Sunday morning, at the depot in Cranford, New Jersey. Harris needed to get to Asbury Park and was asking around for money. That was where his stepmother had told him he could find his father, who would give him money to get to Washington. He could ride a freight as far as Philadelphia and change his name. Trouble was, his stepmother had refused to recognize him, even though he felt sure about who his father was.

Scales gave Harris ten cents, and a bunch of other black guys gave him some coins, too. Harris showed Scales the spot where the policeman had clubbed his head. As the two men breakfasted at a nearby blacksmith's

shop, Harris said he was satisfied that he'd hurt the officer badly, in return. He was reading a newspaper and couldn't find any reports of the fight. 'I'm going to my mother's in Washington,' Harris said, then added, 'I'll give that officer a lesson for beating colored people in New York.' The inference was that New York was not Virginia or even Washington. It was the North.¹¹

Robert Thorpe

Robert Thorpe had just left the Twentieth Precinct on Seventh Avenue. Fifteen minutes later, Officer John Duane heard a whistle blow. Duane ran toward the sound, then saw Thorpe on the ground at the corner of 41st and Eighth, with a crowd forming. Someone had seen a woman run up to 241, and a man right after her, so Duane followed. That's where he found May Enoch. Duane took her back to the scene of the fight where she named Arthur Harris as the assailant.¹²

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Herbert Small (he was identified as 'colored' in his statement) lived on the same block as Kid Harris and May Enoch, and went for a drink at McBride's just before 2 a.m. When he came out of the bar, there was Officer Thorpe and Kid Harris – Small recognized Harris from around the neighborhood. It seemed Thorpe was trying to make an arrest, but Harris grabbed him.

'Look out!' Thorpe cried before he fell to the ground, then let out an 'Oh God.' It seemed Kid Harris had lunged at him with something: a knife, or maybe a razor or a dirk. Harris ran.¹³

*

Edward Rounds, who was white, worked as nightwatchman at the American Theater and considered himself unofficially on look-out for the neighborhood. The theater's side door opened onto 41st Street and, at perhaps a quarter to two, he saw a woman – it was May Enoch, he knew her from around – running fast, into 241. Then he saw a man running, too, and saw someone throw a cane in an effort to trip up the runner. Rounds pushed his way into the crowd and saw his friend Robert Thorpe lying on the ground.

'Rob, who done this?'

'Oh, don't ask me now.' Thorpe could barely speak. 'I am pretty well done up.'

'John,' Rounds said, turning to Officer Duane, 'you run up to 241 and get a colored girl – she has got a black eye – and bring her down here and I guess she knows all about this.'

When Duane came back, he had Enoch and another girl with him.

‘Ed, which one of the two is it?’ Duane asked.

‘It is the light one,’ Rounds decided.

‘Rob,’ Duane now addressed his friend lying on the ground, ‘look at the girl; which was the cause of the trouble?’

‘That is the one – the light one,’ Thorpe managed.

But the watchman also told a different story about May Enoch – that he’d grabbed her arm. ‘You know what this trouble is about, well, you might as well clear yourself,’ he told her. ‘Who killed this officer?’

‘Arthur,’ she said.

‘Arthur who?’

‘Arthur Harris.’¹⁴

*

The ambulance took Robert Thorpe to Roosevelt Hospital, on 58th and Ninth, just after two o’clock in the morning on Sunday, 12 August. He was conscious, but suffering from stab wounds in his chest and stomach, and losing blood rapidly. The doctors washed and closed the wounds, but Thorpe died seven hours later. The cause was homicide, though more technically Thorpe had died of post-operative shock, septic pneumonia, septic peritonitis, and hemorrhage following a penetrating stab wound of the lungs and stomach, ‘by a Knife in the hands of Arthur (alias “Kid”) Harris.’¹⁵

Alice Thorpe identified her brother’s body. Though their parents were natives of England, Robert had been born in the United States. He was 26 years old and engaged to be married to Lizzie Murray. The next day, the papers reported that Thorpe had been wounded ‘by negro men and women, who rescued a woman prisoner whom Thorpe was taking to the police station.’¹⁶

Washington, DC

When Arthur Harris was arrested in Washington, all he could keep saying was that he hadn’t known the fellow was a policeman. Tipped off by a ‘wanted’ poster circulated to the DC force, the detectives had come for him at his mother’s home after Harris asked someone for help locating her. As it turned out, Harris was known in Washington. One detective said Harris had been charged with assault to kill, three years before, but had fled and escaped arrest. Another, who claimed to have known Harris since he was born, said Harris had told him he’d once been convicted of attempted rape in New Jersey.

‘I’ll get out of this scrape all right,’ Harris now told the authorities in Washington.

‘This is more serious than you think,’ the sergeant replied.¹⁷

'You were over in New York last Saturday?' Detective Weller asked, questioning Harris at the Fifth Precinct Station House on E Street, just a few blocks from the boarding house where Harris's mother rented a room.

'Yes, sir.'

And over and over again: 'I didn't know he was an officer . . . If I had known he was an officer I would not have interfered . . . If I had known this man was a police officer I would have had no trouble that night, if he had said he was an officer, if he had said, "I am an officer, I am putting this woman under arrest," I would not have said anything.' But Harris also made clear that the white man had struck him first.¹⁸

On 24 August, Arthur Harris would return to New York, by rail, handcuffed to a detective the whole way. That autumn, a grand jury indicted him on charges of first-degree murder. He pleaded not guilty, but was ultimately convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to life in the state prison at Sing Sing. 'Perjury formed a considerable ingredient of his volubility on the witness stand,' the District Attorney concluded.¹⁹

The riot

At 9:30 on Wednesday morning, 15 August, W.H. Cooper walked from his home on West 41st Street to the post office on Eighth Avenue. Passing a group of white men and boys, he listened, then lingered behind a bicycle pump around the corner, pretending to look in a window, while he listened some more.

'We are going to get back at the niggers tonight.'

'Is that true? Is there going to be a riot tonight?'

'Yes.'

'Have they buried Thorpe yet?'

'No, we expect to bury Thorpe today. We expect to have a hot time today when the funeral starts.' (In fact, Thorpe was to be buried the next day.)

'Have they got the nigger Harris yet?'

'Yes, they caught him down at Washington, and if we can get our hands on him we will tar and feather the bastard.'

Cooper mailed his letter, filled his pipe, and kept listening.

'Have they got the woman yet?'

'Yes, she is locked up.'

'Well, that is all tonight.'

When Cooper heard the words, 'There is a coon standing there now; you had better hush,' he went home and told his friends everything.²⁰

Robert Thorpe's funeral was 'the largest ever given to a policeman,' reported the *New York Times*. A priest presided in the tiny apartment of the dead man's brother and sister on Ninth Avenue in the Tenderloin. Thousands gathered in the neighborhood and more thronged the streets along the route of the hearse, which was preceded by three flower-laden carriages and followed by nearly a hundred more: west to Tenth Avenue, down to 36th and across to Fifth, and down Fifth to 23rd before a ferry took the body to Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery.

There was trouble near the tenement, though, with a black man riding by on a bicycle.

'Kill the coon! Lynch him! Do him up!' shouted a well-dressed white man. The crowd stirred.

'Shut up!' barked Police Chief William Devery – in civilian clothes, but armed with a hastily borrowed club. 'If you say another word I will shove this stick down your throat.'

Then an inebriated Irish woman 'set up a howl and began to recite the virtues of the dead policeman,' the *New York Tribune* reported, after which she 'began to call down all the curses she could muster on the negroes,' ending with, 'The black bastes ought to be kilt!' That's when the throng of mourners changed into a mob: 'Men and women poured by the hundred from the neighboring tenements. Negroes were set upon wherever they could be found and brutally beaten.' The *Times* recorded the start of the riot differently, though; its sub-headline had it as: 'Trouble Begins in Front of the Dead Patrolman's Home – Started by a Drunken Negro.'²¹

In the surrounding streets, residents white and black sat on their stoops, taking outdoor refuge from their smothering apartments as the temperature climbed. A few black neighbors suspected trouble. William Johnson, who lived on West 37th, for instance, stayed inside all day. But most didn't know what they were walking into when they went outside or alighted from the streetcars.²²

Acting Captain John Cooney told the story this way: On 37th and Ninth, a white man accused a black man of pointing a loaded revolver at him. The two, Thomas Healy (white) and Spencer Walters (black), began to fight. Walters broke free, fired a shot, and ran. Cooney heard the shot from a block away and saw a black man being chased. 'While Walters was being conveyed to this station, much excitement prevailed among the large crowd which had quickly gathered,' Cooney said, which was the direct cause of the riot – 'the disorder was rapidly spreading' and 'great masses of people had assembled.' It could all have been stopped, Cooney believed, except that almost every black man was armed (with a knife or a gun) and threatening everyone, which brought the crowds to 'a state of frenzy,' which spread block by block until 'vast crowds' were 'threatening violence to the colored people.' Black people, Cooney said, shot bullets from the windows of their

tenements onto the streets where the police were attempting to restore order, trying to disperse the crowds who would have killed all black people 'had not the Police promptly come to their rescue.' In fact, the injured were being brought to the station for medical assistance. Still, the black neighborhood residents continued to throw bricks, lamps and dishes from windows and rooftops, and by 11 p.m. the riot was fully under way.²³

The mob

A streetcar conductor said there was a riot in the neighborhood 'because of the death of the police officer' and that 'they were attacking every colored man that they caught.' Later, people recalled shouts from the mob.

'There's a nigger in the car; let's kill him!

'Give us a coon and we'll lynch him!'

'Lynch the nigger!'

'There's two on the car; go after them, get them; lynch the niggers!'

'There's another nigger! Kill him! Lynch him!'

'Look at the damned nigger wench looking out of the window. Shoot her! Shoot her!'

'Club every damned nigger you see; kill them; shoot them; be brave, the same as I was.'²⁴

The police

'A negro killed a policeman up there, and they can't be controlled,' said Chief Devery. In fact, Devery was in full view of everyone that night. 'He was in command,' two white men recalled. On that first night of violence, 'the police generally made no effort to disperse the crowds, but ran along with them.' When the mob set upon a black person, the police looked on or joined in. The violence took place both in the streets and at the station house. Officers and sergeants assaulted black men and women, hitting them with clubs and fists, on the head and in the face. Sometimes they spit at them, kicked and shoved them, tripped them so they fell forward, threw them down whole flights of stairs. Later, people recalled the words of the police.

'We're going to make it hot for you niggers!'

'Run now, for your life!'

'What kind of a woman are you, to be harboring niggers?'

'Let's shoot the damned nigger.'

'Stop! Here is a damned nigger; kill him!'

'You damned black son-of-a-bitch, if you move I will shoot you like a dog!'

'You black son-of-a-bitch, just move or say a word, and I will shoot you like a cur.'

'I will teach you damned niggers to club white people. We will kill half of you.'

'God damn you; open this door, or I'll kill every damned nigger in the house.'

'You God damn black bitch, get back where you belong, or I'll club the brains out of you.'

'Club as hard as you can; this is a damned hard head.'

And rarely, in between:

'Don't hit this man!'

'Don't hit this man any more.'²⁵

The victims

Any black person would do that night, and the next. The men were waiters, messengers, cigar-makers, longshoremen, dockworkers, carpet-cleaners, stablemen, horse-and-dog clippers, chimney-sweeps. They worked at Flannery's drugstore, in a Coney Island saloon, for the Metropolitan Street Railway Company, as an elevator operator at Macy's, as a clerk at the *New York Herald*, as a Pullman porter, as a porter at Standard Oil, as a second pantryman with the Montauk Steamboat Company, as a messenger for New York Congressman Daniel Sickles, as a butler in the Vermont summer home of Civil War General Oliver O. Howard. The women mostly did housecleaning, washing and ironing. Later, they recalled their pleas to the police and the mob.

'For God's sake don't kill me, I have a wife and children.'

'Don't beat my husband.'

'Officer, I have done nothing; why do you strike me?'

'Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Don't hit me! Don't hit me!'

'Don't kill me!'

'For God's sake, take a gun and blow out my brains! If you have got to take a life, take mine, and don't murder me this way!'

'For God's sake kill me and be done with it; don't beat me in this manner.'

And: 'Devery did it! Devery did it! Here they come!' – spoken in delirium, at Bellevue Hospital.²⁶

*

Looking back, some people recalled antagonistic and frightening exchanges with the police, in the midst of the uncontrollable violence:

'Officer, will you please see me home?'

'Where do you live?'

'414 West 39th Street.'

'What are you doing on the street at this time of night?'

'Going home from work.'

'Where do you work?'

'I am employed by Bernard Brennan, saloon keeper at 49th Street and Broadway.'

'Have you got a gun or a razor?'

'I have neither' – then, remembering, as the policeman began to search him, 'I have a razor in a case in my outside coat pocket.'

'You black son of a bitch!' (Clubs man across back of neck and head.)

'I come over to you for protection, and this is what I get.'

'Shut up!' (Takes man to station house; kicked by officers and locked up.)

And:

'Nettie, I'm shot!'

'Get your revolver out!'

'What's the matter?'

'Where's that man?'

'I don't know.'

'Who is the man?'

'He's my stepfather.'

'She's got blood on her; take her; she's a prisoner.'

'You are not going to take me without any clothes on?'

'You don't need any clothes.'

'Black bitch.' (Officers punch her, spit on her, jab her in eye.)

'Shut up, you're a whore, the same as the rest of them.'

And:

'Arrest him; he has just broken a showcase.'

'I did not. I was shoved through it.'

'Shut up, or I'll shove this stick down your throat.'²⁷

William Elliott

William Elliott lived on West 35th Street and had worked at the Hotel Imperial on 32nd and Broadway for two years. He was 26 years old, attended Florida State Normal College for two semesters, and was an apprentice in the druggist business, rising to become a prescriptionist at the C.K. Harris Beach Pharmacy in Atlantic City. He was now working to earn money for pharmaceutical classes. On his way to work the second day of the riot, Elliott heard people shouting, 'There's a damned nigger!' and 'There's a nigger! There's a nigger! Catch him!' Afraid, he ran back home, where a neighbor insisted he take a .22-caliber revolver for his second attempt to get to work. On the way, still fearful, he took refuge in a pawn shop, and when he emerged, he was surrounded by four policemen, with a mob collecting ('Kill the nigger!' 'Lynch the nigger!').

The police took Elliott to the station and charged him with carrying a concealed weapon that they insisted he had purchased at the pawn shop.

'I did not buy any weapon there,' Elliott countered.

'Don't dictate to us about what you did not do.'

Elliott mentioned his good reputation, adding, 'I'm not a rioter, I'm only trying to get to my work.'

'We have got no time to look up your reputation. Lock him up.' (Police trip, punch and club him.)

'Kill him! Kill the nigger!' the officers shouted, continuing their assault.

Now Captain Cooney dashed in to interrupt. *'Don't kill that man in here. The reporters are out here, and there is going to be a charge made against you, and if another man touches a prisoner in here I will take a hand in it myself. Lock that man up.'*²⁸

White witnesses

Some white people helped out. One gave a warning not to walk up Eighth Avenue, another butted in to prevent some violent act. A white woman took in a wounded victim, threatened the mob at her door, and offered the man bandages. Later, the victims recalled the words of white people who shunned the mob.

'You had better not go down that way, you will get mobbed.'

'Don't go down there, you'll get killed.'

'For God's sake, boy, you had better go away from here. Go ahead, jump on that car; they just near killed a colored man across the street.'

'Come over here, mister; don't stand there and get killed.'²⁹

*

When it was all over, housekeeper Louisa Francis washed up the blood, from the fourth floor of 341 West 36th Street, all the way down the staircase, on every landing, and into the tenement lobby.³⁰

After the riot

Captain John Cooney compiled a 'Persons Injured' list with exactly seven entries: two patrolmen, a white man shot in the leg, two black men with scalp wounds, one of whom had a pistol wound as well, Inspector Walter L. Thompson (bruised nose and forehead), and Cooney himself (bruised knee and elbow). According to Thompson, Cooney deserved 'all praise' for sending out his men 'to meet all emergencies.' In fact, all detectives and patrolmen who quelled the disturbance were due gratitude.³¹

Then came the protests. 'Negroes Accuse the Police,' read the *New York Times* headline a week after the violence, explaining that 'the action of Chief Devery's men in the riots has now become a political question with Tammany Hall,' given the significant numbers of black New Yorkers who

were voting men. The Reverend William H. Brooks, pastor of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church at 58th and Eighth ('which is said to have the largest and wealthiest congregation of any church for colored people in this city'), preached about the violence. 'Negro Pastor Defies Police to Answer,' ran the *Times* headline. 'Charges Them with Many Crimes in Race Troubles. Declares War Through Law. Unless the Guilty Men Are Removed, He Predicts Another Big Outbreak and Loss of Confidence.'³²

African American leaders, working out of St. Mark's, organized the Citizens' Protective League, which readily gained five thousand members.³³ 'The color of a man's skin must not be made the index of his character or ability,' Reverend Brooks wrote to Mayor Robert Van Wyck. Brooks condemned the actions of Arthur Harris, but made clear that Harris's actions could 'not justify the policemen in their savage and indiscriminate attack upon innocent and helpless people.' As president of the League, Brooks also wrote letters to the police commissioners, New York's District Attorney and Governor Theodore Roosevelt. At Carnegie Hall, more than three thousand people showed up to listen to a slate of distinguished speakers discuss the travesty at hand.³⁴

The white lawyer Israel Ludlow asked the police for an investigation, including testimony from the assaulted and injured. The victims' attorney, Frank Moss, also white, proceeded to gather evidence of his own. 'I have in my possession the affidavits of over forty persons,' he wrote to Bernard York, president of the Board of Police Commissioners, which revealed 'brutal and shocking outrages' openly committed by officers of the law. As to the charges of police violence, 'the whole city knows they are true,' Moss declared.³⁵

That fall, the Citizens' Protective League published *Story of the Riot*, a compilation of the testimony of nearly eighty victims ('Persecution of Negroes by Roughts and Policemen, in the City of New York, August, 1900,' read the inside title). As Moss saw it, Captain John Cooney, Inspector Walter Thompson and Chief William Devery were the men responsible. The riot, Moss maintained, had been fomented by the police, thirsty to avenge the death of their comrade Robert Thorpe. On the day of Thorpe's funeral, Moss averred, 'Several officers told informants of mine that they were going to punish the Negroes that night.' Indeed, the mob and the police were indistinguishable; if anything, the police treated black people even worse than did the mob. Moss was confident that his report would help accomplish an 'overthrow of the infernal system.'³⁶

Justice was far from forthcoming. Moss wanted a warrant, for example, for the arrest of Officer Herman Ohm, who had beaten one John Hains ('with club and fist'). But there was to be no warrant; and though Ohm was summoned to court and 'nearly 102 pages' of testimony taken, the magistrate concluded: 'Officer Ohm simply did his duty.' The same process was repeated, with 139 pages of testimony, for Officer John Cleary in regard to victim George Myers. Here, the defendant and his eight witnesses were

black; the nine white witnesses for the police officer testified that Cleary's conduct was 'not only justifiable but deserving of commendation.'³⁷

William Elliott, the black man attacked on his way to work at the Hotel Imperial and assaulted at the station house, was the best example of the way things were going: a policeman had punched Elliott in the jaw and another had clubbed him in the head, while other officers chanted, 'Kill him, kill the nigger.' But the police disagreed that Elliott was 'in any manner abused or assaulted.' As for charges of clubbing at the station house, the police maintained that the black people had weapons – 'a loaded revolver, a knife, razor or a club' – and had resisted arrest and assaulted officers. Elliott had no legal counsel and was questioned with great hostility, while the police were questioned with great generosity. Though corroborated by three journalists, Elliott's testimony was 'flatly contradicted' by Cooney and other officers, and that contradictory testimony, the police said, justified Elliott's arrest.³⁸

Mayor Van Wyck referred the request for an investigation to the Board of Police itself, which treated the victims with (in the words of Reverend Brooks) 'manifest antagonism and unfairness,' easily siding with the accused officers. Those testifying against the police were permitted no counsel and there was no cross-examination. Cross-examination, the police maintained, would only serve the interests of the lawyers on the other side, rather than getting at 'the true facts.' Months had gone by, and with the murder trial looming, the *Times* reported that Arthur Harris 'caused the west side race riots by killing Policeman Robert J. Thorpe.' After Harris's conviction in November, the *Times* reported again that Harris had 'caused the recent race riots.'³⁹

Now Reverend Brooks told Governor Roosevelt that the whole investigation had become 'more heinous than were the offences of the brutal policemen who clubbed the inoffensive black people.' It was a farce; not one officer had been charged with a crime. Brooks pleaded with the governor to help 'these humble, but worthy people of the colored race to protect themselves against a recurrence of race persecution.' To the Mayor, Brooks wrote that the Citizens' Protective League was 'as earnest in our purpose as when we first organized.' By now, autumn was turning to winter.⁴⁰

'We are not here as black, poor, weak, or helpless citizens, but as American citizens,' the black civil rights lawyer D. Macon Webster reflected. This affair mattered 'as much to the residents of Fifth Avenue as it does to those of the Twentieth precinct,' he wrote, also quoting the Declaration of Independence and invoking the American Revolution along with the lyrics of 'My Country 'Tis of Thee.'⁴¹

Both the protests and the testimony taken by the Citizens' Protective League – now printed up and distributed – were ignored. In December, Police Commissioner President Bernard York exonerated every member of the police force once and for all: no officer would be brought to trial. True,

'many people were clubbed,' York had already conceded, but the neighborhood trouble had been 'very serious.' After all, a white man had been killed by a black man, and so the clubbing had been a means to 'restore order.' Besides, the evidence of assault was awfully contradictory. And so on and so on, for pages and pages.⁴²

From a street corner to the world

To some observers, what happened in New York City that summer was no more than a disturbance on a hot night in a bad neighborhood. The riot, wrote one New York weekly, was 'confined to a small quarter of the city, and was a very local outbreak' between mutually hostile blacks and whites 'in a certain small district.' The *New York Times* thought in local terms, too, writing of the 'hard feeling between the white people and the negroes in that district.'⁴³

But most observers considered wider geographical contexts. Two white men who testified for the Citizens' Protective League had 'talked with a ringleader' who said that northern blacks 'must be treated the same as down South,' and the South, in fact, was on the minds of many. Just weeks earlier there had been a race riot in New Orleans, and some New Yorkers expressed shame at the parallels: who could fathom 'that New York would follow New Orleans so closely in the disgrace of a riotous attack upon its negro residents?' queried one Christian newspaper.⁴⁴

A New Yorker, addressing 'my colored fellow-citizens in the South,' sharply pointed out the ill effects of near-simultaneous riots, in particular the 'renewed boastfulness' of white southerners, evident in their 'jeers and taunts.' Indeed, if white northerners compared New York to New Orleans with chagrin, white southerners drew the same comparison with outright glee; as the headline in the *Atlanta Constitution* asked its readers rhetorically, 'Is It "The Barbarous North" Now?' Gloating over the New York violence – along with recent white-on-black mob violence in the city of Akron, Ohio – the hope was to 'silence for all time any charges against the Southern whites of being more cruel in their treatment of the negro than Northern men are.' That was the voice of white supremacist Senator Benjamin R. Tillman of South Carolina, who bragged that in the South, 'the mob hunts down the man who is guilty' (giving away his game, he added, 'or supposed to be guilty'), while 'innocent negroes are not molested.' The governor of Georgia chimed in, too, contending that in the South, 'the infuriated mob punishes the individual; in New York, the race.'⁴⁵

The summer's violence also prompted reflections on a national scale. A Boston newspaper named 'race hatred' as the cause of the trouble in New York, New Orleans and Akron alike; a Christian paper out of Louisville, Kentucky, added Illinois and Georgia to the roster, along with labor unrest in Chicago, St. Louis, Pennsylvania and Idaho; and a New York reporter

linked the New York and New Orleans riots with the burning of a black man in Colorado. Another surveyor of the nation mentioned the New York, New Orleans and Akron riots along with violence in Georgia and South Carolina. The story of the New York violence reached the West Coast, too. 'Such a furious ebullition of race hatred,' began the Associated Press report, picked up by the *Los Angeles Times*, had 'not been equaled in many years.'⁴⁶

When D. Macon Webster, the black civil rights lawyer, made notes for a speech, he thought beyond US borders, too. The American flag, he jotted down, had not only 'carried freedom' to four million black men in the United States after the Civil War, but also brought 'peace and freedom' to the Atlantic (Puerto Rico and Cuba, he listed) and the Pacific (the Philippines). For a 'government that stands among the nations of the world as the protector of the weak, the guarantor of freedom and justice,' he mused, the violence in New York was 'an outrage.' A white writer in Boston likewise put the riots in New York, New Orleans and Akron in the context of 'the race antagonism that is so profoundly influencing the relation of the white to the yellow and black races on the international arena.'⁴⁷

White supremacist Ben Tillman surveyed the world, too. With the upcoming presidential election in mind, he denounced US interests in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, invoking the New York violence as evidence of universal and inevitable race hatred, which propped up his fierce opposition to 'incorporating any more colored men into the body politic.' Allies of African Americans also invoked the problem of imperialism, if to a different end. At a meeting called to protest the New York riot, a white Baptist minister put it this way: 'Some of our countrymen seem to have more concern for the brown man on the other side of the world than they have for the negro at home. Does not imperialism flourish in New York?' A Chicago reporter looked all the way to the other side of the world, comparing the mob violence in New York to the attacks on foreigners in China, contending that 'the New York hoodlums are less excusable than the Boxers.' News of the New York riot reached across national borders, too. A correspondent for the *Jamaica Gleaner* wrote a long story under a prominent headline followed by a sub-headline reading 'Wild Scenes in Broadway,' with descriptions of blood-stained sidewalks and rushing crowds 'yelling in hatred against the blacks,' while at least some of the police force assisted the white mob.⁴⁸

From the corner of 41st Street and Eighth Avenue, to the surrounding neighborhood, the city, the North, the South, the nation and beyond, the riot rippled and echoed. But the echoes were shallow, since no justice was to be done. Gilbert Osofsky, who in the 1960s became the first scholar to investigate thoroughly the New York City race riot of 1900, noted that the Citizens' Protective League 'simply ceased to exist.' It had 'accomplished nothing,' he wrote, for the 'little power it could wield was hardly enough to crack an almost solid wall of indifference and opposition.'⁴⁹

An argument in search of a story

That is the starting point of my argument: In the summer of 1900, racial injustice in a New York neighborhood had been exposed and illuminated across the city, the nation and beyond, yet that knowledge and its circulation did not result in justice, or in any meaningful action at all.

By the opening of the new century, news traveled easily, via electric telegraph and press agencies. Daniel Walker Howe, in his prize-winning book *What Hath God Wrought* (the title is taken from the first words, a phrase from the Bible, transmitted over the telegraph in 1844), argues that this revolution in communications ‘gave a new urgency to social criticism.’ In the nineteenth century, according to Howe, newly speedy communication spurred ‘conversation’ across vast distances; one of the results was that southern slaveholders were forced to contend with the judgments of far-away observers. Long-distance communications, in other words, made the wrongdoings of nations more accountable to other nations.⁵⁰

Yet to assume that the circulation of knowledge about racial violence – whether that circulation was local, regional, national or global in its dimensions – would bring justice in its wake is to assume that most consumers of that knowledge would judge such violence as unjust, or that they would even care. Ann Laura Stoler offers us the fitting phrase ‘well-tended conditions of disregard’ to illuminate the tenuous relationship between knowledge and ethical consciousness on the part of colonial officers working on behalf of imperial regimes, noting the distinction between simple ignorance and more complicated ‘acts of ignoring.’ Historians of the origins of abolitionism have also reflected on the convoluted relationship between knowledge and moral action.⁵¹

Mere indifference, therefore – even indifference that is plainly willful or deliberate – cannot sufficiently explain the complete lack of redress for the victims of the New York City race riot of 1900. Rather, the circulation of knowledge was overwhelmed and overpowered by the justifications of those who embraced and furthered Jim Crow racism. As Leon Litwack has pointed out in a different but parallel context, if white Americans worried about appearing uncivilized in the eyes of the world, they evaded the question by defining lynching as a civilized response to a primitive race; ‘the inhumanity, depravity, bestiality, and savagery practiced by white participants,’ Litwack writes, was ‘justified in the name of humanity, morality, justice, civilization, and Christianity.’ Furthermore, in the summer and autumn of 1900, white supremacists and their allies submerged and subjugated the knowledge of atrocious white-on-black violence through a process of erasure that is illuminated in the surviving documents of the police archive.⁵²

If those are the beginnings of the argument, then what is the story? I knew I wanted to place the experiences of the victims at the center of my narrative. Accordingly, my recountings here rely a good deal on the booklet,

appropriately enough entitled *Story of the Riot*, published by the Citizens' Protective League six weeks after the violence. But *Story of the Riot* is far from a flawless document. While the very fact of a race riot, in which innocent men and women were assaulted, points to the guilt of the mob and the police, that fact alone does not mean that everything the perpetrators said was a lie, and everything the victims said was true. The police and their sympathizers crafted their stories to defend themselves, but so too did the victims and their allies craft *their* stories. In fact, *Story of the Riot* is a doubly crafted document: not only did the victims shape their testimony (as all testimony is shaped), but the Citizens' Protective League likely added another round of revision and polish for publication. As the white lawyer Frank Moss wrote in his preface, 'The dissolute Negroes who are so often seen lounging about the "Tenderloin" and its neighborhood are not to be found among the witnesses.' In other words, Moss selected the testimony of victims who could be presented as upstanding and respectable as opposed to 'dissolute.' Or, as William Elliott described his violent encounter with a police officer, 'I started to tell him about my reputation and not being a rioter, and that I was only trying to get to my work.' In other words, the victims themselves contributed to the idea of worthy versus unworthy sufferers.⁵³

Moreover, as I read through these pages, in tandem with the manuscript sources in the city archives, it became clear that the printed statements in *Story of the Riot* had been selected from much more voluminous testimony. The 'nearly 102 pages' of testimony taken about Officer Herman Ohm and victim John Hains, and the '139 pages' of testimony taken about Officer John Cleary and victim George Myers (both mentioned in the papers of Mayor Robert Van Wyck) were, however, missing. According to the documents about victim William Elliott, 'the testimony accompanies this report,' but those pages were missing, too. The Van Wyck collection also mentioned 'nearly eighty pages of testimony' and 'Four hundred pages of testimony,' but none of that could be found either. These were the documents from which I wanted to write both a story and a history of the riot, from which I wanted to write a story with an argument.⁵⁴

In the face of these seemingly colossal erasures – thrown out? intentionally destroyed? stolen? – there surfaced one promising lead: Gilbert Osofsky's 1963 article, 'Race Riot, 1900: A Study of Ethnic Violence,' the earliest comprehensive account of the riot, offered an intriguing citation. Where Osofsky wrote, 'Harris died in prison on December 20, 1908,' the footnote read: 'Harold W. Folletta, Acting Warden, Clinton Prison, to author, Aug. 14, 1961.' During his research, Osofsky had apparently corresponded with a prison warden (either Folletta had worked at Sing Sing in 1908, or Harris had been transferred to Clinton). Had Osofsky saved his research notes? Might his files yield the warden's letter, which might include information about Harris in prison? Or perhaps Osofsky's files contained

photocopies of some of the missing testimony; might even the New York City Municipal Archives have handed Osofsky those hundreds of pages of testimony back in the late 1950s, when archivists made little room for the voices of the unknown poor? (This kind of disposal of documents was not, after all, unknown.) Thus I set out to see if I could find the missing letter and, maybe, the missing testimony, too.⁵⁵

Gilbert Osofsky was a leftist and an activist scholar who joined the History Department at the University of Illinois-Chicago in 1963 and taught there until he died, tragically, at the age of 39, in 1974. When I visited, his papers were unprocessed, meaning that archivists had dumped the contents of his office filing cabinets into nearly a hundred cartons. Here was a record of a scholar's papers before the electronic age, swelled by crumbling newspaper clippings and rubber-banded stacks of index cards.⁵⁶

I unearthed correspondence from the eminent historians Avery Craven, William Freehling, David Montgomery and Robert Remini. I leafed through papers written by Osofsky's students, including a colleague of mine at NYU. There was a folder marked 'HEW Shit,' with a 1973 article about Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Elliot Richardson, and another with the typed label 'University Shit,' stuffed with departmental memos. I came upon a 1970 letter from Cornell University, describing a search for a junior appointment in the field of the American Revolution, in which one of the candidates was 'a girl named Mary Beth Norton,' described as 'very attractive' and with 'very few of the hangups that plague so many women in the profession.' I found a clipping about Jackie Robinson's autobiography, in which the reviewer thought the book served 'the interests of the bourgeoisie,' on which Osofsky had written, and double-underlined, 'Fuck You,' followed by ten exclamation points.⁵⁷

I found ads for Osofsky's book *Harlem, The Making of a Ghetto* (which also contains a detailed narrative of the riot), reviews of the book and royalty statements. I found a folder labeled 'Negroes in NYC' and another labeled 'Negro New York, 1900.' I searched for two days, but there was no letter from the prison warden or anything else that had anything to do with the 1900 riot. It made sense, in some ways; *Harlem* was published in 1963, the year Osofsky moved from Hunter College, in New York, to the University of Illinois. With the book in press or already published, why move the research notes (whether one letter or hundreds of pages of testimony) all the way to Chicago? In the end, all I could definitively conclude was that these documents – the ones that preserved the words of the most marginal historical actors – had vanished.⁵⁸

From one perspective, the extant archives of the New York City race riot of 1900 offer no shortage of documents. My narrative here – which only begins to unfurl and untangle the complexities of the many versions of the riot, its origins, and its aftermath – is constructed from the victims'

testimony, along with court records, police records, coroner's reports, newspaper accounts, published commentary, official correspondence, personal letters, neighborhood history, the US census, and even the *Monthly Weather Review* of the American Meteorological Society. Dialogue is taken directly from the documents, including some instances in which I have reconstructed quotations from paraphrases or descriptions. (For example, I translated the words 'He then asked me where I worked. I told him' into 'Where do you work?'/ 'I am employed by Bernard Brennan, saloon keeper at 49th Street and Broadway,' with the response taken from the information, included with the testimony, that the man was 'employed by Bernard Brennan, saloon keeper at 49th Street and Broadway.')

My main argument, about the overpowering of knowledge concerning racial injustice, emerged from the story constructed from the available documents, including the testimony of the police who defended themselves against any wrongdoing. Frankly, no additional material about the lives of the victims is required; it is standard practice for historians to invert the voices of the powerful to discern the lives of the powerless, and, indeed, the very silence of the least powerful actors can be read to strengthen the argument. And yet, the fact that the very words of the victims themselves had once been recorded so thoroughly made it utterly vexatious to try to do justice to their stories. *Story of the Riot* is thus a document at once rich and frustrating, offering detailed narratives that nonetheless represent only a fraction of all the testimony taken from the mob's targets and their allies; a mere eighty pages must stand in for the hundreds of pages of stories once recounted, now gone. The real trouble is that I am less interested in writing simply an argument-driven narrative and more interested in writing a narrative in which, while historians can find their arguments in it, readers can readily find and follow a story.

Placing a street-corner encounter into the historical context of a neighborhood, a city, the nation and the turn-of-the-century world, I had envisioned a story that centered on people's lives. Who was Arthur 'Kid' Harris? What was his mother's name and how did they get along? Who was May Enoch and what was her life like before she met Harris? Who was Robert Thorpe, who was his intended bride, Lizzie Murray, and what about Thorpe's sister Alice, who identified his body? Who was William Elliott, the hotel worker studying to be a pharmacist, and who was Louisa Francis, the housekeeper who mopped up the blood when the riot was finally over? Who, even, were Chief William Devery and Acting Captain John Cooney? Mostly, though, I wanted to write about the men who drank at the saloons on Eighth Avenue, the women who came from the South and found rooms in west-side boarding houses, and the families – black, white, immigrant and native-born – who crowded onto tenement stoops on hot nights: their lives in the neighborhood, at work and at home, their aspirations, anxieties and missteps.

This was not, of course, the first time I had confronted silence in the archives, nor is this a particularly lonely struggle. Decades ago, social historians began to piece together the lives of the silenced by ransacking impassive sources like probate records and tax lists. As Paul E. Johnson wrote with such spare eloquence in telling the story of Mayo Greenleaf Patch and his family, caught up short in the industrialization of early New England, ‘no one bothered to save their mail.’ More recently, Wendy Anne Warren has interrogated a single paragraph in a travel account in an effort to reconstruct the briefly mentioned and thoroughly mediated experience of an enslaved woman who confided that she had been raped. In between the social historians of the 1970s and 1980s (like Johnson) and the creative exercises that are increasingly admired in the profession (like those of Warren, whose article won a mainstream prize), came Gayatri Spivak’s postcolonial-studies question, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ The voices of the powerless, Spivak reminded us, are usually recorded in sources controlled by those in authority, and then expropriated once again by the scholars who recount their lives.⁶⁰

In the most traditional approach to telling stories from archival silences, the scholar invents nothing and alerts the reader to all speculation, liberally inflecting the narrative with words like ‘perhaps’ and ‘possibly.’ Less conventional approaches, inspired by scholars like John Demos, Daniel K. Richter and Simon Schama, include offering readers imagined scenarios and scripts, albeit grounded in the archival evidence. Beyond the discipline of history, there are bolder models still, like that undertaken by the prize-winning novelist Geraldine Brooks, who wrote *March* by imagining the Civil War experiences of the largely absent father in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, accomplished in part by immersing herself in the letters and journals of Alcott’s father, Bronson, held at Harvard University, along with the diaries and memoirs of Civil War soldiers, chaplains, nurses and teachers. For a historian, that would be crossing the border out of history-writing – unless you agree with John Demos that the move from inference to invention is vindicated by the ‘wide and nebulous borderland’ between non-fiction and fiction.⁶¹

*

There are many ways to write history, and one way is through storytelling. There are many ways to write stories, and the kind I would most like to write here is a truly multi-vocal and multi-version narrative constructed with both rigorous research and historical imagination. This would mean finding the evidence to reconstruct the lives of Arthur Harris, his mother and May Enoch; Robert Thorpe and his fiancée, Lizzie Murray, as well as his sister Alice; William Elliott, Louisa Francis and their neighbors. Of course there are still more sources to consult: many more newspaper articles, more

accounts in local and national weeklies and monthlies, most especially including an active black press at the turn of the century. Prison records, church records, hospital records, more digging in the census: all of these could yield information to move a story forward. That is the main question, though: Can it be a story? Or more precisely, what kind of story can it be?⁶²

I stand now delayed between inspiration and uncertainty: between the promise of the unknown and the possibility of disappointment. Ideally, I would forge ahead and uncover enough information about enough of the actors to write a story that illuminates both individual lives and larger questions of knowledge and indifference, justice and injustice. Whether that scenario comes to fruition depends not only on what the archives yield, but also on decisions about how to call upon imagination in the service of history-writing – and storytelling. These searches and decisions will move me toward the verdant fields of inspiration or into the rarely acknowledged graveyard of unfinished scholarship.

Dear Reader: I welcome your reflections, your encouragements, or dismissals.

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Notes

1. *Monthly Weather Review*, American Meteorological Society, Washington, DC, August 1900, 348.
2. 1900 US federal census, Manhattan, NY County, NY, enumeration district 359, p. 9A (Thorpe). On the riot, see Osofsky 1963a, 46–52; 1963b. See also, for example, King and Tuck 2007; Collins 2007; Sacks 2006, 39–42; Hicks 2006; Johnson 2003, 57–69; Johnson 2002, 319–61; Washington 1998; Weisenfeld 1997, 69–74; Johnson 1930, 126–30.
3. *Annual Report of the New York African Society for Mutual Relief* (New York 1901), for year ending 1 October 1900, 3–4, Records of the New York

- African Society for Mutual Relief, box 5, Special Collections, Long Island University, Brooklyn, NY. Maritcha Rémond Lyons, 'Memories of Yesterdays, All of Which I Saw and Part of Which I Was: An Autobiography,' typescript, n.d., in Harry Albro Williamson Papers, vol. 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York (hereafter SC).
4. 'Your Mother' to Arthur Harris, Washington, DC, 25 June 1900, in *People v. Arthur Harris*, Aug. 1900, County of New York, District Attorney case #32015 (hereafter *People v. Harris*), New York City Municipal Archives (hereafter NYCMA). 322 E St. Southeast was a boarding house, though no one named Harris was recorded there in the 1900 census; see US federal census, Washington, DC, enumeration district 127, p. 9A.
 5. Statement of Arthur Harris, Washington, DC, 19 August 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Harris mentioned 'Congressman Springer'; see William M. Springer in *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress*, available at <http://www.bioguide.congress.gov>. William Travers Jerome to Charles E. Hughes, New York, 22 May 1908 (cook, barber, carpenter; Harris's age) and testimony of Thomas Reilly, New York, 8 October 1900 (top floor), both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Harris is difficult to pinpoint in the 1900 US federal census.
 6. Statement of Harris, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.
 7. May Enoch, 1900 US federal census, Newark, ward 2, Essex Co., NJ, enumeration district 13, p. 2B. Testimony of May Enoch, in Inquest into the death of Robert J. Thorpe, 22 August 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Harris said he and Enoch had lived together a year and a half; in her testimony, Enoch said almost a year. Enoch was called a prostitute in Jerome to Hughes, 22 May 1908, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Memoranda, in Inquisition taken at Coroners' Court, Criminal Court Building, 22 August 1900 (house of detention), and Testimony of Edward Rounds, in Inquest, 22 August 1900 (black eye), both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.
 8. Testimony of Edward Smith (two versions), 22 October 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. The 1900 US federal census lists at least two Edward Smiths in the neighborhood, one listed as black, one as white.
 9. Testimony of Annie Johnson, 8 October 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 1900 US federal census, Manhattan, NY Co., NY, enumeration district 80, p. 14B.
 10. Testimony of Anthony W. Bolden (two versions), 22 October 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 1900 US federal census, Newark, ward 2, Essex Co., NJ, enumeration district 16, p. 11A.
 11. Testimony of William I. Scales, October 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Scales was not classified by race in his testimony and is not listed in the 1900 US census.
 12. Testimony of John Duane, in Inquest, 22 August 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.
 13. Testimony of Herbert Small, 18 October 1900, and testimony of Herbert Small, in Inquest, 22 August 1900, both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.
 14. Testimony of Edward Rounds, n.d., and testimony of Edward Rounds, in Inquest, 22 August 1900, both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 1900 US federal census, Manhattan, NY Co., NY, enumeration district 823, p. 14B.
 15. Statement of death of Robert J. Thorpe, 13 August 1900, and Inquisition taken at Coroners' Court, 22 August 1900, both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. See also Jerome to Hughes, 22 May 1908, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.

16. Testimony of Alice Thorpe, in Inquest, 22 August 1900, and Statement of Death, 22 August 1900, both in *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. Another source records Thorpe's age as 36, but the census supports age 26 (see note 2, above). 'Thorpe's fiancée very ill,' *New York Times*, 18 August 1900. 'Negroes wound a policeman,' *New York Times*, 13 August 1900.
17. Statement of Harris, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 'Capture of Arthur Harris,' *New York Times*, 17 August 1900. M.R. Muller to Henry Michaels, Washington, DC, 26 August 1900, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. To no avail, I searched Reports of Arrests and Blotters for August 1900, Records of the Metropolitan Police, Records of the Government of the District of Columbia, RG 351.5, National Archives, Washington, DC. Jottings on another document include the words 'Rape Brooklyn Disorderly conduct Stabbing Newark Convicted of attempt at Rape in New Jersey' and on the reverse, 'He was begging in Cranford'; see 'Grand Jury Room,' *People v. Harris*, NYCMA.
18. Statement of Arthur Harris, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 'District of Columbia inventory of historic sites, alphabetical version' (Washington, DC: State Historic Preservation Office, 2009), 158, available at <http://www.planning.dc.gov/>.
19. 'Thorpe's slayer in New York,' *New York Times*, 24 August 1900. Robert H. Fuller to William Travers Jerome, 20 May 1908, and Jerome to Hughes, 22 May 1908, *People v. Harris*, NYCMA. 'Life imprisonment for murderer Harris,' *New York Times*, 3 November 1900.
20. Testimony of W.H. Cooper, in Citizens' Protective League, *Story of the Riot* (New York: Citizens' Protective League, 1900), 79. In quotations from this source, I have occasionally made slight alterations to punctuation or hyphenation to better convey dialogue; likewise, where first letters and dashes appear for *bitch*, *damn*, *darned*, *hell*, and *whore*, I have filled in the words. Later in the article I explain how I occasionally, and conservatively, created some lines of dialogue from descriptions or paraphrases.
21. 'Policeman Thorpe buried,' *New York Times*, 17 August 1900. 'West side race riot,' *New York Tribune*, 16 August 1900. 'Race riot on west side,' *New York Times*, 16 August 1900.
22. Testimony of Maria Williams and Carrie Wells; William E. Johnson, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 38, 35.
23. John Cooney to Walter L. Thompson, New York, 20 August 1900, Mayor Robert A. Van Wyck Papers, 'Police Department,' box 10, folder 121 (hereafter RAVW), NYCMA.
24. Testimony of Charles Bennett, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 26; other quotations on 41, 46, 8, 12, 24, 54, 27.
25. Testimony of Nicholas J. Sherman; Paul Leitenberger and Alfred E. Borman, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 78, 47; other quotations on 49, 13, 15, 50, 17, 39, 40, 51, 53, 54, 51, 24, 17.
26. All occupations from *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900); quotations on 6, 65, 35, 48, 52, 17, 56, 21.
27. Testimony of Robert Myrick; Nettie Threewitts; William Devan, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 41, 60, 61. In this section I have italicized the words of the police for the sake of clarity.
28. Testimony of William J. Elliott, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 68–73; see also Israel Ludlow to Bernard J. York, New York, 30 August 1900, RAVW, NYCMA; W.H. Brooks to Robert A. Van Wyck, New York [22 November?] 1900, in Miscellaneous American Letters and Papers (hereafter MALP), SC; 'Looking into race riots,' *New York Times*, 8 September 1900; 'Race riot investigation,' *New York Times*, 15 September 1900.

29. Testimony of Adolphus Cooks; Stephen Small; Chester Smith, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 8, 6, 15; other quotations from 31, 7, 69, 41.
30. Testimony of Louisa Francis, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 54.
31. 'Persons Injured,' Cooney to Thompson, 20 August 1900, and Walter L. Thompson to William S. Devery, New York, 21 August 1900, both in RAVW, NYCMA.
32. 'Negroes accuse the police,' *New York Times*, 22 August 1900. 'Negro pastor defies police to answer,' *New York Times*, 27 August 1900.
33. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 3, 4. See also Brooks to Van Wyck [22 November?] 1900 (5000 members); W.H. Brooks to D. Macon Webster, 30 August 1900; postcards from Brooks to Webster, 17 September, 3, 11 October 1900; Frank Moss to D. Macon Webster, New York, 3 October 1900, all in MALP, SC.
34. W.H. Brooks to Robert A. Van Wyck, New York, 12 September 1900, printed in *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), prefatory pages. W.H. Brooks to: Bernard J. York et al., New York [22 November?] 1900; Asa Bird Gardiner, New York, 22 November 1900; Robert A. Van Wyck [22 November?] 1900; Theodore Roosevelt, 22 November 1900, all in MALP, SC. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 4 (3500 people). 'Negroes' public protest,' *New York Times*, 13 September 1900.
35. Ludlow to York, 30 August 1900, and Frank Moss to Bernard J. York, New York, 14 September 1900, both in RAVW, NYCMA. US federal census, Brooklyn, Kings Co., NY, enumeration district 400, p. 14A (Ludlow); Manhattan, NY Co., NY, enumeration district 945, p. 2A (Moss).
36. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 1, 2, 5.
37. *John Hains v. Herman A. Ohm*, and *George L. Myers v. John J. Cleary*, City Magistrates Court, 26 October 1900, RAVW, NYCMA.
38. Testimony of William J. Elliott, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 68–73. Thompson to Devery, 21 August 1900, RAVW, NYCMA. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 3–4; Bernard J. York to Police Board, n.d., RAVW, NYCMA.
39. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 3. Brooks to Van Wyck [22 November?] 1900, MALP, SC. Bernard J. York to Frank Moss, New York, 8 September 1900, and Bernard J. York to W.H. Brooks, New York, 18 September 1900, both in RAVW, NYCMA. 'Harris a "cunjah doctah,"' *New York Times*, 24 October 1900 (this headline deserves further explication); 'Life imprisonment for murderer Harris,' *New York Times*, 3 November 1900.
40. Brooks to Roosevelt, New York, 22 November 1900, and Brooks to Van Wyck [22 November] 1900, both in MALP, SC.
41. Notes of D. Macon Webster for speech made at meeting of Citizens Protective League, n.d., MALP, SC. On Webster, see Carle 2002, 112–13. On black protest after the riot, see also Weisenfeld 1997, 71–4.
42. Brooks to Van Wyck [22 November?] 1900, MALP, SC. 'Police are exonerated,' *New York Times*, 9 December 1900. York to Police Board, n.d., RAVW, NYCMA.
43. 'The race riots in New York,' *Outlook*, 25 August 1900, 946. 'Race riot on west side,' *New York Times*, 16 August 1900.
44. Testimony of Paul Leitenberger and Alfred E. Borman, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 47. 'A betrayal of trust,' *Evangelist*, 23 August 1900; on the New Orleans riot, see Hair 2008; Ida B. Wells, 'Mob rule in New Orleans' (1900) in Royster 1997.

45. 'Defense of the Negro,' *New York Times*, 2 September 1900. 'Is It "The Barbarous North" Now?' *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 August 1900. B.R. Tillman, 'Causes of southern opposition to imperialism,' *North American Review* 171 (October 1900), 443; on Tillman, see Kantrowitz 2000. 'Murderous onslaught upon the Negro population of this city,' *Christian Advocate*, 23 August 1900 (quoting Georgia governor). On Akron, see Blocker 2008, 105–6, 118–19.
46. 'Waning respect for law,' *Congregationalist*, 30 August 1900. 'Riots – the church's influence,' *Christian Observer*, 29 August 1900. 'Survey of the world: other events of the year,' *Independent*, 3 January 1901, 5. William R. Shepherd, 'Lynch law and race feuds,' *Political Science Quarterly* 15 (December 1900), 752–3. 'War on the blacks; most serious race riots at New York,' *Los Angeles Times*, 17 August 1900.
47. Notes of D. Macon Webster, n.d., MALP, SC. 'The anti-Negro riots,' *Watchman*, 30 August 1900.
48. B.R. Tillman, 'Causes of southern opposition to imperialism,' *North American Review* 171 (October 1900), 445; on racist anti-imperialism, see Love 2004. 'Negroes' public protest,' *New York Times*, 13 September 1900. 'The New York riot,' *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 17 August 1900; on the Boxer Rebellion, see Cohen 1997. 'Race riots in New York,' *Jamaica Gleaner*, 24 August 1900.
49. Osofsky 1963b, 24. In *Black Manhattan*, James Weldon Johnson writes of the aftermath of the riot: 'nevertheless, the Negroes of New York, moved by this sudden realization of their danger, had taken a step towards making that city anew the chief radiating centre of the forces contending for equal rights' (Johnson 1930, 130).
50. Howe 2007, 1–2, 7, 696; Howe adds, 'Better communication did not necessarily foster harmony' (7). See also Blondheim 1994; Storey 1951.
51. Stoler 2009, 256, 255. Bender 1992.
52. Litwack 2000, 22.
53. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 5. Testimony of William J. Elliott, *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 71–2.
54. *Hains v. Ohm*; *Cleary v. Myers*; York to Police Board, n.d., all in RAVW, NYCMA.
55. Osofsky 1963b, 24 n.54. While researching a nineteenth-century romance between a white woman and a black man at Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, I found that Eastern State had given the prisoners' letters to a Temple University anthropologist who was writing about the case; Jacob Gruber to author, email, 30 January 2007.
56. Gilbert Osofsky Papers, RG 011–13–22, Special Collections, University Archives, University of Illinois-Chicago (hereafter GO). I consulted the papers in July 2008; they have since been processed and described in greater detail. 'Recent deaths,' *American Historical Review* 80 (April 1975), 552.
57. Boxes labeled 'Personal Letters, etc.,' 'Student papers,' '20th century' and 'Miscellaneous,' GO.
58. Boxes labeled 'Personal Letters, etc.' and '19th century,' GO.
59. *Story of the Riot* (Citizens Protective League, 1900), 40–1.
60. Johnson 1982, 489. Warren 2007. Spivak 1988.
61. As C. Vann Woodward wrote in his review of my *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 'I counted the use of "perhaps" eight times in as many efforts to explain one event. I do not mean to suggest tedium but rather credibility'; see Woodward 1998. Demos 1994 (see 108–9); Richter 2001 (see 11–40); Schama 1991; Brooks 2005 (see 275–80); Demos 2010, 21.

62. On storytelling and history writing, see Goodman 1998, Chakrabarty 2010. For the black press, see, for example, 'Anti-Negro mobs a southern product only,' *Washington Bee*, 25 August 1900; 'The New York race riot,' *Colored American* (Washington, DC), 1 September 1900; 'Negroes' suits against New York City,' *Richmond Planet*, 1 September 1900; 'Rioting in New York,' *Colored Citizen* (Topeka, KS), 17 August 1900. New York's main black newspaper at this time, the *New York Age*, was edited and published by T. Thomas Fortune, who chaired the executive committee of the Citizens' Protective League (*Story of the Riot* [Citizens Protective League, 1900], prefatory pages); no copies of the *Age* exist from August 1900.

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