Race Murder and Community Trauma: Psychoanalysis and Ethnography in Exploring the Impact of the Killing of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas

Ricardo C. Ainslie, Kalina Brabeck

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Introduction

For the past decade the first author has worked in three small communities in Texas where conflicts related to race have been salient. In Anson, Texas, he explored the impact of a post Jim Crow reality on a community that had been entirely white prior to the Civil Rights Era but was now over a third minority, mostly Latino. In Hempstead, Texas he studied the effects of a school desegregation process that had erased all traces of the local historically African American school, leaving enormous conflict and resentment among African Americans with respect to the local education system. More recently, for the past two-and-a-half years the authors have been working in Jasper, Texas, exploring the impact of the murder of James Byrd on that community. The methodological basis for the work in all three of these communities has been a psychoanalytic ethnographic approach. That is, this work has drawn significantly from both disciplines to frame an understanding of the work and the processes observed, as well as using them as a methodological guide in approaching these communities and those who live within them.

Psychoanalysis is a set of concepts and assumptions about how the mind works, but these concepts can also be a resource for our attempts to understand community conflicts and group processes. For example, in Anson, Texas, the first author used a psychoanalytic understanding of symptoms and their function as symbolic reference points to underlying conflicts, tensions, and anxieties, in order to formulate the conscious and unconscious dimensions of a community conflict (drawing equally, however, from the work of Clifford Geertz and symbolic interactionism, notwithstanding his sharp reservations about psychoanalysis). In Hempstead, he used psychoanalytic theorizing about repression and the power of experiences that are excommunicated from consciousness to understand the legacy of school desegregation. Similarly, he employed a psychoanalytic understanding of the restorative function of making what was once unconscious conscious, that is, reintegrating into the public memory crucial elements of a largely disavowed or heretofore unspeakable history. In Jasper, we are using the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma, as well as the psychodynamics of defense, to understand how a community has managed to absorb a profoundly disturbing racial murder.

Psychoanalysis is also a framework that defines a particular kind of engagement, and hence, a particular kind of method. When analysts attempt to take their work beyond the consulting room, they have a great deal to learn from anthropology, given that anthropologists have a long tradition of working with the tensions and ambiguities inherent in field work. However, both disciplines work with the ambiguities of transference and countertransference manifestations and the complexities of establishing and maintaining working alliances, that is to say, the management of the psychodynamics of the interpersonal field. Both disciplines also require the practitioners to reflect on what it means to be entrusted with highly sensitive or confidential information. Of special importance is the fact that both disciplines share a similar sensibility, one that trusts the "material" to be guided by the lives engaged and to evolve in meaningful and unanticipated ways that can be grasped, understood. Both also require vigilance against the imposition of predigested frameworks and understandings, even if not always successful in their efforts to ward off such.

All three of these communities have been entered with a notable uncertainty about what it is that would be found in them, yet that ambiguity has not been unsettling. On the contrary, it is quite familiar, being the

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very essence of a psychoanalytic approach to patients' stories/lives as we learn about them in the consulting room. This unstructured, open-ended attitude or orientation leads to extended engagements. In each of these communities, the projects have revolved around a core of long-term relationships. The first author spent three years going to Anson, two-and-a-half years going into Hempstead, and it was two-and-a-half years ago that he first went into Jasper, a work that is still ongoing. Meaningful engagements take time to develop. Anthropologists and psychoanalysts know this well.

Finally, in the most recent projects, in Hempstead and in Jasper, psychoanalytically informed community interventions have been incorporated as part of the work. What it is that we do with what we learn from our ethnographies, how we utilize our insights into people and communities to engage the issues that trouble them, is an important question. For example, in Hempstead "the unconscious was made conscious" by creating a public event in which the history of the community's historically African American school was re-instated into the official and public memory of the community. In addition, the first author produced a documentary film ("Crossover: A Story of Desegregation") that provided a means for the narration of a story that had been "repressed." In Jasper, we have collaborated with a documentary photographer to develop an exhibit ("Jasper, Texas—The Healing of a Community in Crisis") which narrates the community's response to the murder. Both of these might be considered "interventions" in that they address events and responses in relation to which each community has powerful emotions. Both the film and the exhibit draw directly from the relationships and interviews developed over the course of the ethnographic work in each community where each project has had a significant impact. We believe, in other words, that what one learns in the course of doing ethnographies can lend itself to, or become the basis for, meaningful representation of a community's experience. Ethnography can be a form of therapeutic praxis.

Jasper, Texas

In the summer of 1998 James Byrd, Jr., was dragged to his death in Jasper, Texas, after having been chained to the back of a pickup truck. The brutality of the crime, and the racial hatred reflected in it (two of the men convicted of the murder were members of a white supremacist group), shocked the nation. The murder traumatized Jasper and created immense tensions that threatened to fragment the community. There was an eruption of anxiety and mistrust between the community's African American and white citizens. Blacks felt both outrage and fear that the murder might be part of a broader conspiracy to terrorize their community. Many whites feared retaliation. These tensions were quite evident and tangible within hours of the discovery of James Byrd's body and they created a sense of crisis within Jasper that persisted for an extended period.

Jasper is a community of 8000 people in remote East Texas. Its population is approximately 44% African American and 48% white. The East Texas pine woods provide the major source of employment, but the lumber industry is in sharp decline, resulting in high unemployment throughout the region, a circumstance that affects blacks disproportionately, but affects whites significantly as well. The majority of Jasper's school children are on subsidized lunch programs, for example. Poverty, in other words, is widespread.

The first author's initial visit to Jasper, Texas, occurred in November 1999 during the waning days of the trial of Shawn Berry, who would become the third and last man convicted of the brutal racial murder of James Byrd Jr. In the eighteen-month interval between the murder and the last trial, Jasper was transformed from a town that few, even in Texas, had ever heard of, to a household word that the nation viewed as synonymous with the virulent Jim Crow racism of a previous era. It was evident from media accounts that the citizens of Jasper had been subjected to enormous stress, both internally and externally derived. The brutality of the crime was deeply disturbing. However, the dark racial motives that had fueled the murder immediately transformed its reading from an unusually gruesome murder to a hate crime that drew national and international attention.

In addition to the impact of the murder, the community was strongly affected by the media coverage. In the interval between the murder and the last trial, journalists from around the world inundated Jasper. "We

were under siege," is the way one resident described the circumstances. Residents were keenly aware of the fact that the community itself was on trial. The murder, the media seemed to be saying, must be a reflection of the community.

Our interest was to explore the impact of the murder of James Byrd on Jasper. Since his initial visit, the first author has made approximately twenty trips into the community. During this time he has interviewed a broad range of people, including educators, civic leaders, and religious leaders. He has also interviewed many individuals who are not part of the local economic, political, or social power structure. On three occasions the doctoral students who comprise the Jasper Research Team, including the second author, have conducted interviews with members of Jasper's white and black churches. In all, our project has interviewed some fifty individuals in Jasper. A subset of these the first author has interviewed in a more extensive, in depth manner that is less semi-structured or information gathering in spirit, and more psychological in character. These latter conversations have a significant resonance with the kinds of conversations one might have with patients in a clinical setting; that is, deeply personal conversations about individual lives. These conversations have had a common point of departure, namely, the shared trauma of the murder of James Byrd and its impact on them both as individuals and as members of a community. However, these conversations have also evolved into reflections about lived lives, relations with family members, childhood experiences, as well as attitudes and experiences related to race.

I. Self and Community

One of the criticisms of psychoanalysis has been its over emphasis on early development and familial experience at the expense of an understanding of the individual as situated within a broader social and cultural context. The evolution of Freud's tri-partite model of the mind in 1923, in which he delineated the specific characteristics of the Ego, the Id, and, especially, the Superego (conceived, in part, as the internalization of society's values and morals), laid the groundwork for an appreciation of such factors but did not exploit these possibilities. Rather, psychoanalysis as a discipline (and especially as a clinical praxis), remains primarily interested in the psychology of the individual whose most important influences are assumed to be familial in origin.

The work of Donald Winnicott offers us an important opening for a more ambitious psychoanalytic understanding of the location of cultural experience. In his theorizing, Winnicott, an English Object Relational theorist, situates subjectivity firmly within a geography that is at once deeply psychological and sociocultural. He argues that culture is like a membrane that envelops both the mother and the infant from their earliest interactions, and that it is only within this medium that the infant conceives of a "self" and an "other" ("Location"). Neither the child nor the parent can exist in each other's mind outside of this culturally created and defined space. The infant's engagement with the world is not simply given shape by culture; it is already synonymous with it.

We are not suggesting that children necessarily understand or can reflect upon those experiences that we term "cultural." The capacity to do so is a product of a developmental process within which children gradually become more cognizant of where and how they are situated within their world. While it is within the matrix of familial relationships that every child begins to *feel* the character of the kinds of experiences that we term cultural, it will be years before a child has an awareness of those experiences as *specifically* cultural. As younger children, these social and cultural elements live within us without meaningful conceptual delineation. Gradually, however, children begin to understand, for example, that there are others whose lives are organized along alternate lines. Certainly by adolescence, social, ethnic, and gender markers, among others, have become deeply inscribed as complex codes of behavior and relationship—culturally prescribed meanings become more and more salient and specific (Volkan, "Enemies; Winnicott, "Location").

This opening in psychoanalytic theorizing requires us to entertain simultaneously two frames of reference that are traditionally viewed as opposing perspectives, namely, a depth psychology and a social-cultural view. The nuanced psychoanalytic understanding of the convergence of developmental and familial influences on how a child comes to see self and others becomes

inseparable from a profound appreciation of the sociocultural universe within which a child is developing. This means, in part, that from the very beginning of life every individual's psychology is simultaneously highly idiosyncratic while also deeply linked to the social and cultural realities defining the child's world. Our emotional lives cannot be distinguished from the cultural vessels which give them shape and within which they are contained.

This shift in perspective problematizes the traditional psychoanalytic view of the individual as relatively self-contained, a view that privileges familial narratives of human motive and conflict. Winnicott's realignment permits psychoanalysis to understand better the individual as a psychological being situated not only within a family, but also within a community and within a broader cultural milieu. Another implication of this shift is to problematize traditional sociological frameworks that examine social conflict and community life as if the impact of these processes on individual lives were either unimportant or to be conveniently relegated to other disciplines. Because Winnicott conceptualizes the self as situated firmly within a psychological matrix that is infused equally with familial and social/cultural elements, both are understood as indissoluble components of the self.

This refined conceptualization helps us to understand better why it is that we are so deeply affected, psychologically, by disruptions and transformations within our communities and societies. Winnicott's realignment allows psychoanalysis to speak more coherently about the relationship between individuals and the communities within which they live while still maintaining an appreciation for the deep character of our lives as *psychological*, a sensibility that has been the hallmark of psychoanalysis. Winnicott's theoretical turn thus helps psychoanalysis to repair or re-orient its historical inclination toward viewing the individual as a rather de-contextualized being, as if one could live within a familial universe that is detached from a broader social or cultural one. Thus equipped with a more seamless appreciation of the relationship between individuals and their communities and societies, we are also in a better position to explore incidents such as the murder of James Byrd as both individual and collective experiences.

II. Community as Suitable Target of Externalization

Given that the murder of James Byrd occurred within a deeply racialized context, Vamik Volkan's work is a useful resource for framing how it is that constructs of ethnicity and ethnic identity, specifically, but also broader cultural elements, become mobilized in group conflicts. Volkan uses the construct of "suitable targets of externalization" to conceptualize the psychological links between individuals and the societies within which they live ("Enemies"). "Suitable targets of externalization" refers to the ways in which individuals engage and appropriate symbols, events, or cultural artifacts and utilize them, psychologically speaking, to regulate or manage subjective states and the terms of their engagement with others. They become "invested with psychological magic," as Volkan puts it, magic derived, in significant measure, from the fact that they are cathected with, and therefore represent, aspects of the self. Targets of externalization are often determined by one's ethnicity or nationality, and in this way lend themselves as the building blocks for a sense of community. Familiar aspects of a child's environment–the taste of food, odors, sounds, or even oft-repeated songs and other signposts that are the basis of cultural bonding, become targets onto which the child externalizes aspects of the self (Volkan, "Enemies"). For example, a college student from Texas might proudly display the Texas flag in her dorm room, thereby affirming a sense of collective identity that serves psychologically comforting functions, as if the flag were a kind of psychological pillow. These suitable targets work in ways that are matured extensions of the function served by transitional objects so aptly described by Winnicott ("Transitional") as essential organizers of the young child's emotional life.

In *The Need for Enemies and Allies*, Volkan traces the evolution of the sense of enemies from the infant's stranger anxiety (as a *precursor* to individualized enemies), to the capacity to share the same enemies with other members of one's group, tribe, or nation. This process proceeds in parallel with the evolution of one's capacity to experience a sense of shared allies. Volkan is describing a complex, binary process that organizes the world from the "me"/"not me", to the "us"/"them", a complexity that involves a deepening awareness and

specific consciousness of the social and cultural worlds within which our lives are embedded. The experience of enemies and allies is given form through the activated suitable targets of externalization. Via such psychological mechanisms as externalization, projection, and displacement, we utilize socio-cultural elements to create or define a sense of who is enemy and who is ally, psychologically speaking.

The concept of suitable targets thus helps bridge the gap between traditional psychoanalytic conceptions of an individual psychology that is distinct from a broader "external" reality. As with Winnicott's concept of transitional objects, the construct of suitable targets allows us to understand how socio-cultural realities become a part of the self, defining the self in substantive ways and making cultural terms essential to the regulation of self states (Ainslie, "Plasticity"). In other words, although every child has his or her own particularized psychological characteristics and organization, one stamped with the familial psychodynamics that have been the cornerstone of psychoanalytic theorizing, at the same time children are allied with others in their group. The "group" may be variously defined, be it in ethnic, religious, linguistic, community, regional, national, or some other terms, but these elements take form as processes and commitments in the psychology of the individual through shared suitable targets of externalization. Thus, suitable targets are reservoirs for the complex, affectively charged cultural elements that form an individual's self and object representations.

III. James Byrd's Murder As Collective Trauma

Group or collective psychologies reflect similar psychodynamics as those seen in individuals who are responding to stress, trauma, and anxiety. Groups engage in collective or shared idealizations and devaluations, in denials and reaction formations, in splitting, and projection, and other defensive strategies, all efforts to protect the group identity, to disavow the group's aggression, or to manage collective feelings of humiliation and helplessness. Jasper, as a community, was traumatized by the murder of James Byrd. Both white and African Americans' accounts of the crime suggest a profound impact, if not always an exactly parallel one. In interviews conducted in the community it was readily evident that symptoms typically associated with post-traumatic stress disorder were in evidence. For example, there were accounts containing statements suggestive of *flashbacks*:

> I started having flashbacks in my mind. I couldn't really go to sleep. I don't know if I got 10-hours of sleep in a whole week.
>
> There's not one time that we cross that creek [that I] don't think about it. I'm thankful that those little [evidence] circles are gone. It gave you an eerie feeling driving down that road.

Overwhelming anxiety and phobic reactions:

> [Friend] reacted with shock and intense fear. . . . [She] refused to leave the house and forbade her son from doing the same.
>
> And I was like, Is anything else gonna happen? Cuz my husband was on night shift that whole week. And almost every night this week I'll be here by myself. And most of the time I would stay there [friend's home] until it was time to go to bed cuz I couldn't sleep.

And the *collapse of the past into the present*:

> I remember it just like it happened today.
>
> I can remember all my emotions. I can remember exactly what I felt at the time.

Traumatizing experiences activate defensive processes aimed at containing and/or distancing an individual from overwhelming feelings. Such defenses were also evident in the interviews that we conducted, including the following:

Dissociation:

> It was like you're in a movie . . . It was unreal in a way but yet you were there. It was almost surreal.

Isolation and Denial:

> It's an isolated incident.
>
> I can't believe this happened in Jasper.
>
> I didn't believe it, this is not true. This is not happening in Jasper. It's too small of a town. Everybody is too close . . . . Wouldn't nobody let this happen.

Compartmentalization and Splitting:

> Jasper was a community that cared. That has love, and not hate. Because I have never ever felt the hate in this community except for that one incident.

Externalization:

> This was a random event [that was] brought here.
>
> Those guys were not from Jasper.
>
> I felt it was someone off somewhere [that] had come into the community and done this terrible thing rather than a core of people within the community . . . .
>
> It was brought here, it wasn't created here.
>
> When I first heard about it I thought: "Probably someone from out of town.

These last examples, from both white and African American residents, are particularly interesting because they distance the source of the racist rage not only from the individual whose account it is, but also, explicitly and implicitly, from the community itself as a collective representation. These are common responses to traumatizing events and they suggest that the murder had a profound impact upon the community of Jasper as a whole.

IV. Traumatized Communities and the Social Fabric

Communities often unravel under the stress of the group processes that get activated by a traumatic incident. This is because collective responses to trauma often lend themselves to powerful, fragmentation-prone impulses, what we term *centrifugal processes*. They do so, in part, because traumatizing incidents typically activate a broader collective memory of traumatization. These "fishnet" characteristics link the present traumatic incident to prior incidents suffered by the group or community, and the emotions that are a part of those past grievances and injustices become fused with the present circumstances in ways that can be quite destructive when *centrifugal processes* gain ascendancy. Examples of such circumstances in the United States include the riots in South Central Los Angeles following the acquittal of the officers who beat Rodney King, or the 1991 Crown Heights riots between the Hasidic and African American communities after an automobile accident in which a black child was killed. The Cincinnati riots in 2000, following the shooting of an unarmed black man by a police officer, are another example. In all of these instances, a history of tensions and conflicts became re-engaged, part of the group/collective response to the current, precipitating event. These are all illustrative of the *fishnet processes* that almost always become mobilized when a group or community is re-traumatized. In all three of these illustrations, the *centrifugal processes* resulted in significant loss of life and property as riots broke out within those communities. The present crises were immediately woven into the collective histories that formed the context for the current tensions, histories that were part of the group's collective identity.

In ethnic conflicts, the bloodlines that link the various groups within the community often come into relief, creating borders or boundaries that are increasingly entrenched, and which cannot be crossed except at a significant, perhaps life threatening, cost. "Two groups that have lived together for generations may suddenly be transformed into merciless enemies and the unthinkable may become a gruesome reality [in which] individual values can give way to a collective will," Volkan notes ("Blood" 20).

Similar *centrifugal processes* were activated in Jasper within the African American community in the face of James Byrd's murder. For example, one woman spoke with relief that Jasper had remained relatively peaceful notwithstanding the underlying tensions. She described a strong fear that the murder might activate an explosion of underlying racial tensions: "If it hadn't been for how people reacted those first weeks and for what the community and [the] ministers did, I think it would have been totally different," she said. Other residents voiced similar concerns:

> There could have been a major uproar here.
>
> I think they [the Byrd family] are marvelous people because there could have been a riot . . . . I had fears that the town would erupt in a riot.

One African American woman described the following interaction with a group of black adolescent boys:

All you big strong guys, how do you feel about this?" she asked them.

"Well, this is what we want to do: we want to go and tear the town up and do this and do that," they replied.

"You shouldn't do anything that would cause more hurt to the town and to the family," the woman responded.

"No, that's what our parents are saying. We're trying to stay cool and everything," they said.

Clearly, this was a community under considerable stress. African Americans felt a mixture of rage and fear. Whites tended to experience a mixture of shame and anxiety that there might be retaliation. Volkan argues that stressful events foster a shift from the position of an individualized psychology, where the broader social/cultural milieu remains largely implicit, to one in which group or collective identities become foregrounded. While Volkan's language might suggest a greater dichotomy between the individual and the collective than is justified, his theorizing helps us understand the mobilization of group feeling, including ethnic and national identifications, in the context of collective stress. When there's shared anxiety and regression, members become preoccupied with reparative psychological processes aimed at shoring up the collective identity. These efforts often involve a reinforcement of the group identity, and a sharpened delineation of the psychological boundaries between "us" and "them." These reparative efforts readily become part of the *centrifugal processes* in that the reinforcement of group boundaries and group identity facilitates the objectification of the "other" and the kinds of group splitting that fuel collective violence. It is these processes that lead to what Kai Erikson refers to as the breakdown of the "tissue of a community" (303).

V. Jasper as Suitable Target of Externalization

Jasper, Texas, had all of the ingredients for just this kind of collective regression, for a break down of the "community tissue" to which Erikson refers. The murder was a clear-cut act of racial hatred, in a community where race was a salient variable. There are many aspects of Jasper's history that might have predicted just such an outcome.

Within Texas, East Texas is known for its cultural affinity with the South and all that that implies. There are numerous and infamous acts of racial hatred that have occurred in the region. And Jasper, itself, is not a community without tangible racial tensions. For example, the first author heard numerous accounts suggesting that after the passage of the Civil Rights act a community public pool was filled with dirt to ensure that whites and blacks would not be swimming together. A white teacher recently sued the school district claiming discrimination by a black supervisor. In the fall of 1998, after the murder of James Byrd, a white middle school student was repeatedly suspended for wearing a Rebel belt buckle on grounds that his behavior was racially inflammatory. His older sister subsequently married an Ohio Klan leader who moved to Jasper. Several black teachers at the high school filed complaints arguing that their salaries are not on a par with their white counterparts. Jasper's churches are still segregated for the most part. Except for barbecue establishments, restaurant clientele appears to be predominantly white, although there are often some black patrons as well. Recently, there was a suit filed against the Jasper Police Department when they broke up a party at a public park after the posted 10:00 p.m. curfew. Police claim drunk and disorderly individuals resisted orders to disband; the individuals arrested, all African Americans, claim the use of excessive force and have threatened to file a Civil Rights suit.

The history of race relations within this community, like that of the region, is far from utopian. This is precisely the kind of history that might have readily become re-engaged in the context of a racially motivated murder, especially one that had such clear white supremacist links. Why did Jasper not explode? One ready hypothesis is that Jasper's African American residents live in a community governed by a neo Jim Crow elite where the overt and subtle coercion of political and economic power, if not the outright fear of retaliatory force, hold sway. This explanation might account for the failure of many brutalized minoritized communities to respond to their oppression, but it doesn't make adequate sense of the Jasper experience.

The explanation lies, instead, in what we term the

"Center Holds Model." When a community's social, political, and economic elements are sufficiently inclusive, they create a medium (one might say a collective ego structure) that can absorb potentially divisive (and regressive) conflicts, impulses, and anxieties such as those that threatened to erupt in Jasper. Contrary to the stereotype of the backwoods, redneck, good-old-boy-governed town, by 1998 Jasper actually had a significant black middle class. Jasper's mayor was African American, as were two city council members. The presidents of the school board and of the chamber of commerce were black. One of the school district's four principals was black, as were twenty-percent of the teachers. There were also African Americans with significant economic power. The CEO of Deep East Texas Council Of Governments, an organization that funnels millions of state and federal dollars into communities in the region, was black, as was the CEO at the local hospital, the largest local employer not counting the timber industry. The police department, the sheriff's department, and the local highway patrol had African American officers, although not nearly in proportion to their numbers in the community. In other words, for all its poverty, for all its rural marginalization, and not withstanding its history of slavery and a harsh Jim Crow era — and despite the fact that one could readily purchase Rebel flags on the highway outside of town— Jasper's power centers were surprisingly integrated. This "social infrastructure" meant that a significant number of African Americans had a meaningful stake in the fate of their town. There was a "center" in this community that was viable, if not utopian.

Second, Jasper's law enforcement handled the murder and its investigation in a manner that broke with the law enforcement practices that had been the staple of the region for generations. James Byrd was found on a Sunday morning. By eleven that night, all three men had been arrested through a fortuitous circumstance. At 8:00 a.m. Monday morning, Jasper's sheriff was at the FBI offices in Beaumont seeking the collaboration of Federal authorities in the prosecution of what he now knew to be a hate crime.

On Tuesday morning, less than 48 hours after Mr. Byrd's remains had been found, the Sheriff, the Jasper Chief of Police, and several FBI agents attended the monthly meeting of the Jasper Ministerial Alliance, whose membership was comprised of most of Jasper's white and black churches. While many communities in Texas still have racially segregated ministerial alliances, Jasper's ministers had been meeting together for eight years at the time of the murder. In an unusual step, law enforcement shared the "Probable Cause" document that would be the basis for their charges against the three men who had been apprehended. They also indicated that they were aware that significant rumors and misinformation were flowing through the community, creating considerable anxiety and paranoia, especially within the black community. The law enforcement officers asked for the ministers' help in calming the fears of the community. It was also a clear statement that the murder would not be swept under the rug, that they intended to prosecute the three men to the full extent of the law. Eight months later, when a predominantly white jury sentenced John William King to die, he became the first white in the history of the state of Texas to receive the death penalty for the murder of a black person.

This same "center" worked to silence the centrifugal voices within the black community that were calling for a different kind of response to Mr. Byrd's murder. The margins were silenced in Jasper. For example, one influential and respected African American minister refused to attend a rally where he had been invited to give the benediction because, as he put it, "to do so would have been to validate those who had organized it," individuals whom he described as "dangerous." Similarly, when a local black family with ties to the Black Panthers in Dallas allowed the Panthers to use their driveway as a staging area, the Panther demonstration was largely ignored within Jasper's African American community because local ministers had discouraged such involvement.

The final reason that *centrifugal processes* did not gain ascendancy in Jasper was James Byrd's family. They set a tone by voicing support for the investigations and the processes that were in place. They were part of the "center," and they were invested in maintaining the cohesion of the community.

Significant numbers of Jasper's African Americans were identified with the community. This identification was both fueled and buttressed by the "center" and it reflected Jasper's post-civil rights progress,

progress that had altered, in psychological terms, how "community" came to reside as a construct within the emotional lives of its inhabitants. For a significant portion of Jasper's African Americans, the community was a suitable target of externalization, a meaningful psychological construct in which they were invested and which they experienced as an extension of themselves. These factors could not prevent a murder driven by the kind of hard core, virulent racism that is produced within Texas's prisons (where two of the three assailants had joined white supremacist gangs). They could also not transform or contain the psychodynamics of the individual perpetrators and the family histories that may have played a role in the psychological processes that lend themselves to hatred and violence. But they could contain and absorb the rage and anxiety that swept over the community in the aftermath of the murder. Rather than centrifugal processes leading to psychological fragmentation and splitting in the face of this community trauma, centripetal forces were ascendant. Many of Jasper's black and white residents voiced strong longings for cohesion and solidarity and participated in activities that reinforced those needs.

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