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MARGINS OF EXCESS






The New Republic, December 25, 2008

THE GREATEST LOVE STORY EVER SOLD

Berkley Books, the mass-market division of the Penguin Group, is slated to publish a Holocaust memoir titled 'Angel at the Fence: The True Story of a Love That Survived'. Herman Rosenblat recounts his experience as a teenage boy during the Holocaust at Schlieben, a sub-division of the infamous Buchenwald concentration camp.



A photograph of a dense, sun-dappled forest. A path or clearing leads into the distance, flanked by lush green foliage and trees. The ground is covered in dry, brown leaves and twigs. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

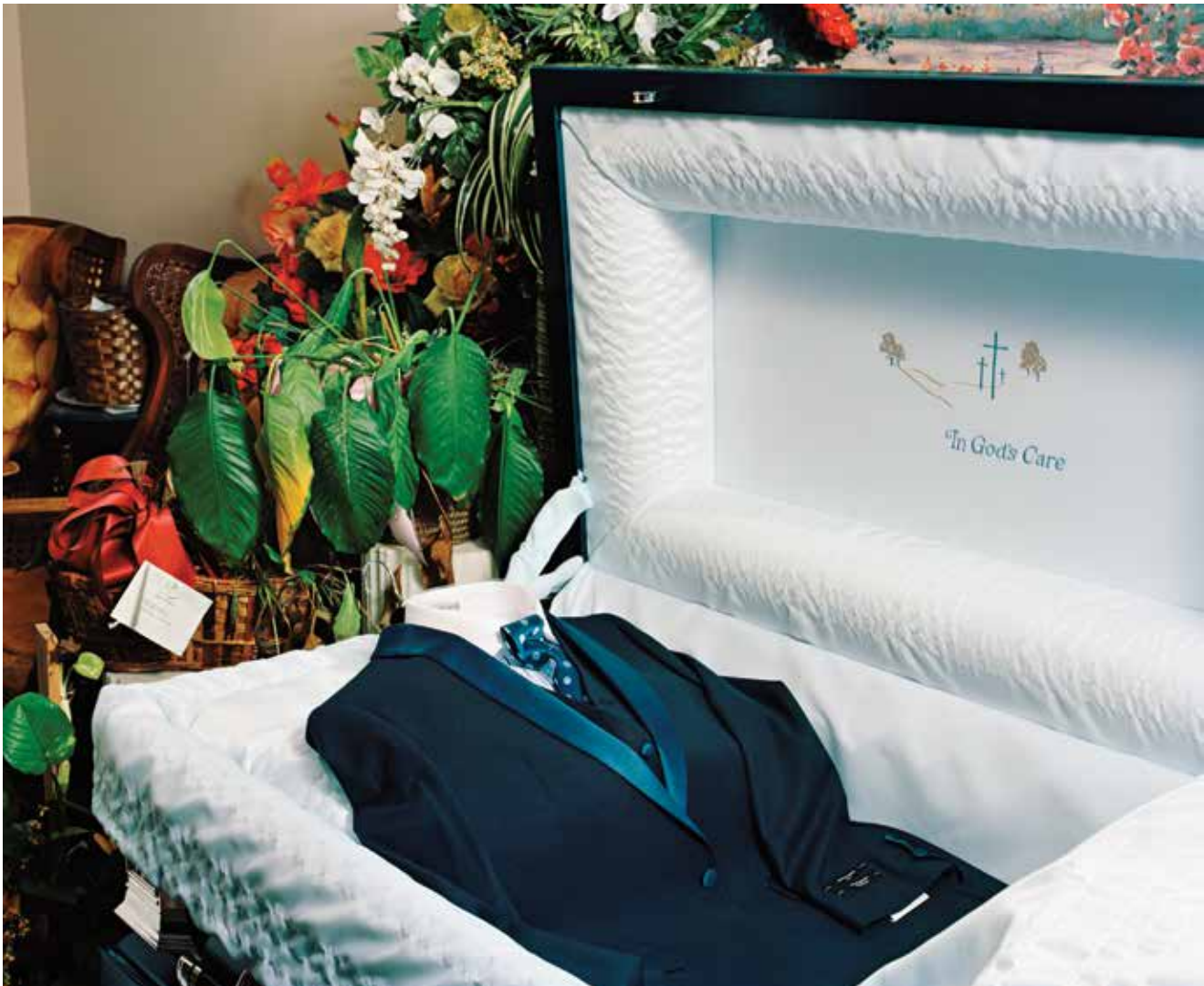
**Dan Harris: Why did you do it?
Why did you tell such a big lie to
so many people for so long?**

**Herman Rosenblat: It was not a
lie, it was in my imagination, and
in my imagination, in my mind,
I believed it. Even now I believe
it. That she was there, and she
threw the apple to me.**

**Dan Harris: How can you say it
wasn't a lie? It wasn't true, and
you know it's not true.**

**Herman Rosenblat: Yes. It was
not true, but in my imagination,
it was true.**

Herman Rosenblat on Good Morning America with
Dan Harris, February 18, 2009





Holocaust survivors tell love story

Los Angeles Daily News, October 13, 2008

NORTH MIAMI BEACH, Fla. – In the beginning, there was a boy, a girl and an apple.

He was a teenager in a death camp in Nazi-controlled Germany. She was a bit younger, living free in the village, her family posing as Christians. Their eyes met through a barbed-wire fence and she wondered what she could do for this handsome young man.

She was carrying apples, and decided to throw one over the fence. He caught it and ran away toward the barracks. And so it began.

As they tell it, they returned the following day and she tossed an apple again. And each day after that, for months, the routine continued. She threw, he caught, and both scurried away.

They never knew one another’s name, never uttered a single word, so fearful they’d be spotted by a guard. Until one day he came to the fence and told her he wouldn’t be back.

“I won’t see you anymore,” she said. “Right, right. Don’t come around anymore,” he answered. Their brief, innocent tryst came ended.

Before he was shipped off to a death camp, before the girl with the apples appeared, Herman Rosenblat’s life had already changed forever.

His family had been forced from their home into a ghetto. His father fell ill with typhus. They smuggled in a doctor, but there was little he could do to help. The man knew what was coming. He summoned his youngest son. “If you ever get out of this war,” Rosenblat remembers him saying, “don’t carry a grudge in your heart and tolerate everybody.”

Two days later, the father was dead. Herman was just 12.

The family was moved again, this time to a ghetto where he shared a single room with his mother, three brothers, uncle, aunt and four cousins. He and his brothers got working papers and he got a job painting stretchers for the Germans.

Eventually, the ghetto was dissolved. As the Poles were ushered out, two lines formed. In one, those with working papers, including Rosenblat and his brothers. In the other, everyone else, including the boys’ mother.

Rosenblat went over to his mother. “I want to be with you,” he cried. She spoke harshly to him and one of his brothers pulled him away. His heart was broken.

“I was destroyed,” Rosenblat remembers. It was the last time he would ever see her.

It was in Schlieben, Germany, that Rosenblat and the girl he later called his angel would meet. Roma Radziki worked on a nearby farm and the boy caught her eye. Bringing him food — apples, mostly, but bread, too — became part of her routine.

“Every day,” she says, “every day I went.”

Rosenblat says he would secretly eat the apples and never mentioned a word of it to anyone else for fear word would spread and he'd be punished or even killed. When Rosenblat learned he would be moved again — this time to Theresienstadt, in what is now the Czech Republic — he told the girl he would not return.

Not long after, the Soviets rolled in on a tank and liberated Rosenblat's camp. The war was over. She went to nursing school in Israel. He went to London and learned to be an electrician.

Their daily ritual faded from their minds.

"I forgot," she says.

"I forgot about her, too," he recalls.

Rosenblat eventually moved to New York. He was running a television repair shop when a friend phoned him one Sunday afternoon and said he wanted to fix him up with a girl. Rosenblat was unenthusiastic: He didn't like blind dates, he told his friend. He didn't know what she would look like. But finally, he relented.

It went well enough. She was Polish and easygoing. Conversation flowed, and eventually talk turned to their wartime experiences. Rosenblat recited the litany of camps he had been in, and Radziki's ears perked up. She had been in Schlieben, too, hiding from the Nazis.

She spoke of a boy she would visit, of the apples she would bring, how he was sent away.

"That was me," he said.

Rosenblat knew he could never leave this woman again. He proposed marriage that very night. She thought he was crazy. Two months later she said yes.

In 1958, they were married at a Bronx synagogue, a world away from their sorrows, more than a decade after they had thought they were separated forever.

It all seems too remarkable to be believed. Rosenblat insists it's true.

Even after their engagement, the couple kept the story mostly to themselves, telling only those closest to them. Herman says it's because they met at a point in his life he'd rather forget. But eventually, he said, he felt the need to share it.

Now, the Rosenblats' story has inspired a children's book, "Angel Girl." And eventually, there are plans to turn it into a film, "The Flower of the Fence." Herman expects to publish his memoirs next year.

Herman is now 79, and Roma is 76; they celebrated their 50th anniversary this summer. He often tells their story to Jewish and other groups, believing the lesson is the one his father imparted.

"Not to hate and to love — that's what I am lecturing about," he said.

"Not to hold a grudge and to tolerate everybody, to love people, to be tolerant of people, no matter who they are or what they are."

The anger of the concentration camps, Herman says, has gone away.

He forgave. And his life has been filled with love.











LIVE



GRIFFITH, IN

FOX 32

CURRENTLY 39° 6:30

ST. MARY'S "MIRACLE"?



HE USED SOME CHARITABLE DONATIONS FOR HIMSELF FOX ILLINOIS GENERA

A statue of the Virgin Mary at Saint Mary's Church in Griffith, Indiana attracts the attention of the faithful after noticing a tear running down the statues' cheek.



People Magazine, April 21, 1975

ARMLESS BUT DEADLY, JAY ARMES IS THE NATION'S TOP PRIVATE EYE

Despite the lack of both arms, the real-life private detective from El Paso, commands million-dollar fees, owns and pilots two jet helicopters, is a black belt karate expert, tools around in a Rolls-Royce, and has built into his artificial right arm a revolver that fires a .22 magnum shell.



The ultimate self-made man, the man with no hands, is the most flamboyant and successful detective around. And with his specially designed steel hooks he can karate smash through plate glass, pluck documents from roaring fires, and shoot with deadly skill from the .22 magnum pistol surgically implanted in his wrist.

Jay J. Armes, Investigator by Frederick Nolan, 1977















The Man Behind the Myth: Jay J. Armes

KFOX14, November 2, 2015

EL PASO, Texas – He calls himself Jay, but everyone else knows him as Jay J. Armes. He’s an El Paso private investigator who achieved worldwide fame back in the 1970s when TV shows about private eyes reached their zenith.

With hooks for hands and a collection of exotic animals, this real-life private-eye’s legend came complete with action figures and an auto-biography that’s been translated into 30 languages. Armes claims he’s the most expensive investigator in the world and with good reason.

“I’ve had 70 kidnappings that I’ve solved in Mexico. And my subjects have never been killed and I’ve saved them and never paid a penny,” Armes said.

The case that brought Armes international fame involved the kidnapping of a Hollywood superstar’s son. In March 1972, Actor Marlon Brando was in Europe, shooting the movie, “Last Tango in Paris.” That same month, the biggest movie of his career, “The Godfather” was released. But Brando was also enduring one of the most traumatic events of his life.

So, he turned to Armes for help.

“He called me from Paris,” Armes said, “He says, ‘Jay, my boy has been kidnapped.’ He says, ‘They just released one of my movies, where I played Don Corleone and I think this is the result from the Mafia. And so, I want to hire you to find him. The FBI, the police, nobody has done any good.’”

Armes said he managed to find Brando’s son, Christian, in a fishing camp on Mexico’s Baja Peninsula. With help from Mexican authorities, Jay said he took the boy from what he described as a group of hippies.

“On the last tent, I went up there and it was Christian. He was almost dying. He had double pneumonia.” Armes said, “He could, he could barely breathe. I told the guys ‘y’know, I’ve got to leave because this is the boy I’m looking for and I’ve got to get him to a doctor.”

Armes said he flew Christian Brando by helicopter back to the U.S. By this time, Marlon had arrived back home in Hollywood. “So, I called him at his home,” Armes said, “and he answered. I said, ‘Marlon, this is Jay Armes’ and he says ‘Oh yeah, I was getting ready to call you because I’ve got some more information for you. I’ve got some pictures of him, of Christian.’ I say, ‘I got something better for you. I’ve got Christian right here.’ And I said, ‘We got to get him to a doctor.’”

His success in reuniting Marlon Brando with his son finally gave Armes the fame that eluded him when he moved to Hollywood for a short time back in the 1950s.

“From there on, I started getting all kinds of calls from the stars and producers and all that,” Armes said. “And I started getting a lot of work.”

I can remember the fascination I had when as a boy growing up in Roswell, New Mexico, in the 1970. I read about Jay J. Armes in People magazine — the private eye with hooks for hands who drove around in a Rolls Royce and had a menagerie of exotic animals.

But before there was the legend of Jay J. Armes, there was the boy from the Lower Valley, Julian Armas, whose curiosity almost killed him. He told me how he lost his hands at the age of 11.

“Dick Caples came one day to my home and he said, ‘Hey Jay, let’s go up to the house. I’ve got to show you something.’ And it was about five minutes from his house. So, then I got in the car and went with him. And he goes out and brings out a box of torpedoes. They were dynamite caps. And he knew what they were, because he was 18, and I was a dumb kid, 11 years old, and I was curious all the time. So, he says, ‘Open up the box’. So, I open the box and he says, ‘Take two of those caps out’ and he says, ‘take the seal off and just rub ‘em together and they’ll sparkle like the Fourth of July.’ Oh, really, because I thought they were sparklers y’know?

“So, I got two of them out and I took the seal off and I barely touched them together and they exploded and it knocked me away, 20 feet from the point of impact, where I was at. And I landed by a little tree. I heard a big old explosion. And I landed by a little tree and I was trying to get ahold of the tree to get up and my hands were shredded to pieces.”

In an ironic twist, Armes believes losing his hands may have saved his life.

“Believe me,” Armes said. “I think I would probably have been killed because I was very daring.”

If he hadn’t lost the use of his hands, Armes said he didn’t want fake hands, which were largely useless prosthetics back in the 1940s. So, he chose hooks to replace his hands — something that makes him instantly memorable when you meet him.

The success and fame he gained as a private eye led to a book about his exploits. He said his autobiography, “Jay J. Armes, Investigator” has been published in 30 different languages. There was even a Jay J. Armes action figure in the late 1970s.

Then in the ‘80s, he translated his success as a private investigator into a political career. He won election to the El Paso City Council as the Lower Valley’s city representative.

“The first project I did, I paved North Loop (Drive). I got a grant, a matching grant with the Texas Department of Transportation.”

Of course, North Loop Drive just happens to run right beside Armes’ massive home compound, which is also a Lower Valley landmark. But he claims he had children in mind, when he worked to pave what had been a dirt road.

“I would see the kids going to school. And then, those cars would come when it rained, with puddles of water. They’d get it all over the kids, you know?” Armes said, “and they’d stop at my home and ask, ‘do you have

a towel?’ to dry ‘em. And I told my wife, ‘You know what I’m gonna do? I’m gonna run for politics and I’m gonna pave North Loop.”

I also repeatedly tried to set up a video shoot at Armes’ large estate. The area became legendary for the wild animals that roamed free, from chimps to elephants and zebras. But he never got back to me. When I interviewed him at his office in Central El Paso, Armes did tell me, despite rumors to the contrary, he has no plans to sell his home. But he said he is selling some of his acreage to developers because the area around his home has become heavily commercialized.

The family business still appears to be thriving. Armes’ son, Jay Armes III, sells surveillance and self-defense equipment out of their long-time office on Montana Avenue.

Jay Armes III said some of his earliest memories are of tagging along with dad on stakeouts, so he followed his father into the family business.

Dad has no plans to quit, even though he’s now in his ‘80s. Jay J. Armes continues to show how a disability can be an asset and destiny is yours to create.

“Y’know, I’m dedicated to my profession like an artist,” Armes said. “When he starts a painting, until he finishes a painting, it’s off his mind. And me, when I take a case, until I finish the case, I’m on to another one. It’s habit forming you know?”

And Armes is still creating. He said he’s working with Hollywood to bring his life story to the silver screen. The movie’s tentative title is “A Call to Armes.”







Meeting with Jay J. Armes

The Investigators' office, El Paso, TX, November 30, 2016

My name is Jay J. Armes. Jay, initial J, Armes. I'm an international investigator working out of El Paso, 1770 Montana Ave, ZIP code 79902. Telephone number being 915 532 5739, that's a 24-hour number. This is my office here. Here's Jay, he died early and I had him taxidermied. This is a replica of me. There's one of my sons, he is on the phone. On the camera you can see it. I keep track of him, I keep track of everything. There's one of my guards, when there are going to be problems, they get on top of the windmill and they can have a picture of the whole estate. They're armed all the time.

The reason I have my office here is because it's centrally located.

I can get to Mexico City in an hour and a half, I can get to Dallas in an hour, I can get to Los Angeles in an hour and 20 minutes, and I can get to Mexico in five minutes, because Juarez is five minutes from our city. We can hear when the machine guns go off in Juarez, day or night. They shoot somebody, we can hear the shots; we're that close. I do a lot of work up there. I've done a lot of terroristic cases where they kidnap someone and I recover them without paying a ransom. Sometimes they ask for 5 million, sometimes they ask for 50 million, sometimes they ask for 3 million, it depends. Everybody says that Jay J. Armes is the most expensive investigator in the world, but that's not true because I do a lot of cases pro bono. Pro bono means for free, for people that can't afford it. But they never mention the pro bono cases that I do, and I do about 50 cases pro bono a year. They come in and say, "My husband is a drug dealer and he beats me up" and all that. I investigate that. They don't have any money and I solve the case for them. I'm glad to help people.

I've been an investigator for about 50 years. I started really young, at 19 years old. When I was a youngster, this boy that I used to respect came up to my home. He was 18 years old and I was 11. He brought a box of dynamite caps and he told me to open the box and take out two torpedoes. He told me to take the seals off and rub them together so it would sparkle. I was curious and I did it, I took the seals off of both of them and then peeled off the cover and just touched them together. They ignited and it was a big explosion that blew my hands to pieces.

The person that came over was a neighbor. He took me to the hospital where they called my dad and put me in surgery. I heard the doctors explaining to my dad that they had to amputate my hands at the wrist. I heard that and was kind of sad. When I went into surgery, I was in the surgery room and there was a skylight, and I was looking up at the skylight and the different shades of the atmosphere and the sky, and the things that were up in the sky, they were looking dark. I asked the Lord... God, I was selfish, I said, “Why did you take my hands?” What I really meant, inside of me is, “Why did you take my hands, and not my friends’ who brought the dynamite over.” I was kind of selfish. When I said that, the clouds were coming in turmoil with each other. They looked ugly. Then I said, “Dear Lord forgive me. You did not take my hands, it was the devil that took my hands, because you are our Father and you would not hurt us. So please forgive me, dear Lord.” When I said that, all the sky started to get real bright and shiny, and that’s the way it’s been for all this time since I lost my hands. Bright and shiny. Everything I want to do, I’m successful at doing it. Whatever it takes. You can come in here, to my office, and hire me for the most extreme cases in the world. I can solve them. Like I said, that’s a gift that the Lord gave me. I’m not arrogant and say I’ve got mystic powers, no mystic powers, I just know how to work and I work all over the world. I speak different languages and I use that to my benefit.

In my next book – I already have a book in different languages, it’s called Jay. J Armes, Investigator. McGraw Hill was the publisher – my next book will be ‘My Best Secret Agent’, which is about one of the agents that work for us. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. People think I’m crazy when I say that, but I mean it. The Lord takes me everywhere I want to go and he opens the right doors for me. This is why I’ve been successful in solving every case I’ve ever had. There are some cases out there that I’ve not solved because my clients have not cooperated with me.

Other than that, I can domesticate and acclimate any animal in the world. From cheetahs to tigers, rhinos, elephants, and all that. I’ve had every type of animal that you can imagine. When I was young, I couldn’t afford a good certified dog and I made up my mind: “When I grow to be a professional I want to be the best in the world.” And

that’s what I’m trying to do. I’m still trying to work as what I promised and this is why the Lord has given me the gift to solve any case. You can come in with the most complicated case in the world and I can solve it for you. Where can you get that? You can’t.

When I decided to be an investigator I fell in there by mistake. I was actually studying law but I wasn’t satisfied. I said, “When I finish, when I get my degree, I will go from my office to the courtroom and from the courtroom to my office. I don’t want to be doing that.” So I investigated every type of police agency and I came up with the worst: the private investigator, who has the worst reputation. I said, “That’s what I want to be; I’ll clean up the investigation business.” Now, 50 years later, you can turn on the TV and there will be a private eye show. It’s not going to be a dirty show. It’s fiction.

Did you see the Jay Armes doll, the action figure? There is going to be some more merchandising. There are going to be more action figures of today’s Jay Armes.


I’m getting a television series with the best directors in the world, Justin Lin and Mark Holder. All the cases that I’ve solved are going to be on the air, solved by a real investigator. A real case history. They will be solved within a week. It’s going to be different because the character is not fictitious, he’s a real character and he lives in El Paso, Texas. This is not just a regular TV show of a private eye, this is a special show because every case is true and documented. That’s what’s going to be the difference. That’s why they’re paying the big money. Right now, I’m on TV with a show that’s called ‘Mysteries at the Museum’. I’m on the air every day. They focus on my action figure and say it’s of a real person. His name is Jay J. Armes. They start talking about the cases that I’ve solved: Marlon Brando, Yoko Ono, and all the kidnappings and that’s what it is. I’ve been on a lot of shows and starred in one of the shows. I was very successful but I didn’t want to do that. I’ve been in different shows and they call me from all over saying, “Do you want to be in this show, do you want to be in this other show?” and I turn them down. There are reporters coming in from Paris. I’m going to be in a documentary filmed in Paris. They’re going to show it all over the world.

I'm working on a bunch of cases right now. I'm working on some hard cases in Mexico. In Mexico, they kidnap people all the time. Right now, the Chamber of Commerce here made a deal with the Chamber of Commerce in Juarez to not publish all of the killings. They kill ten every day and they report five. They kill 40 to 50 a month, they report 20. So when they interview me I say, "No, that's not the way it is." They kill 50 people a month. So it's very dangerous to go there, but I go there and work on kidnapping cases and rescue the people and don't pay any ransom. That's what I'm about.

Other than that, I've worked all over the world and I love people. They claim that I'm the most expensive investigator in the world, but they never say anything about the cases that I do pro bono, for nothing. I love to help people. I have that gift. You as a photographer, have that gift. Follow your dream and also follow the Lord that makes everything happen, you and your wife. That's why I gave you the interview. I'm very particular. I'll be honest with you, I turned down four interviews today, and they don't even know about the television series. But that's what I want to do and I hope that you can use the pictures that you take in a good sense. I would like to tell you that you'll be working with every type of situation, but remember one thing: the truth is stranger than fiction.







The killings began with no explanation. Then the snipers left cryptic notes and phone messages demanding \$10 million, just as millions of Washington area residents were distracted by white vans and other delusions that authorities were mistakenly chasing.

The shootings caused Washingtonians to change their daily rhythms. People zigzagged through parking lots and instructed their children to duck down in cars while at gas stations.

Washington Post, November 11, 2009























When a passing driver hurled a flashing, clicking object into their police van in Times Square, it looked like danger to Sgt. Hameed Armani and Officer Peter Cybulski.

"Boss, this is a bomb," Cybulski said.

But rather than run to safety, Armani hit the gas, determined to get the device away from the crowds.

"We're gonna go, but I'm not going to have anybody else go with us," he thought.

AP News, July 20, 2016

A photograph showing a man from the back, sitting in the driver's seat of a vehicle. He is wearing a white shirt that has several large, fresh blood stains on its back. The vehicle's windshield is shattered with multiple cracks and bullet holes. The interior of the car, including the steering wheel and dashboard, is visible. The scene is dimly lit, with a bright orange and red light source visible through the side window.

While the device that Meneses threw into a police van early Thursday morning was nothing more than a candle and some wires, it appeared at first to be a bomb, and the officer inside the vehicle reacted as if it were one. The bomb squad ultimately determined there was no threat of an explosion, but an hours-long standoff ensued until police took Meneses into custody and eventually found the questionable equipment that the NYPD reportedly determined "Didn't even get close to an improvised device."

International Business Times, July 21, 2016











The New York Times, January 31, 1981

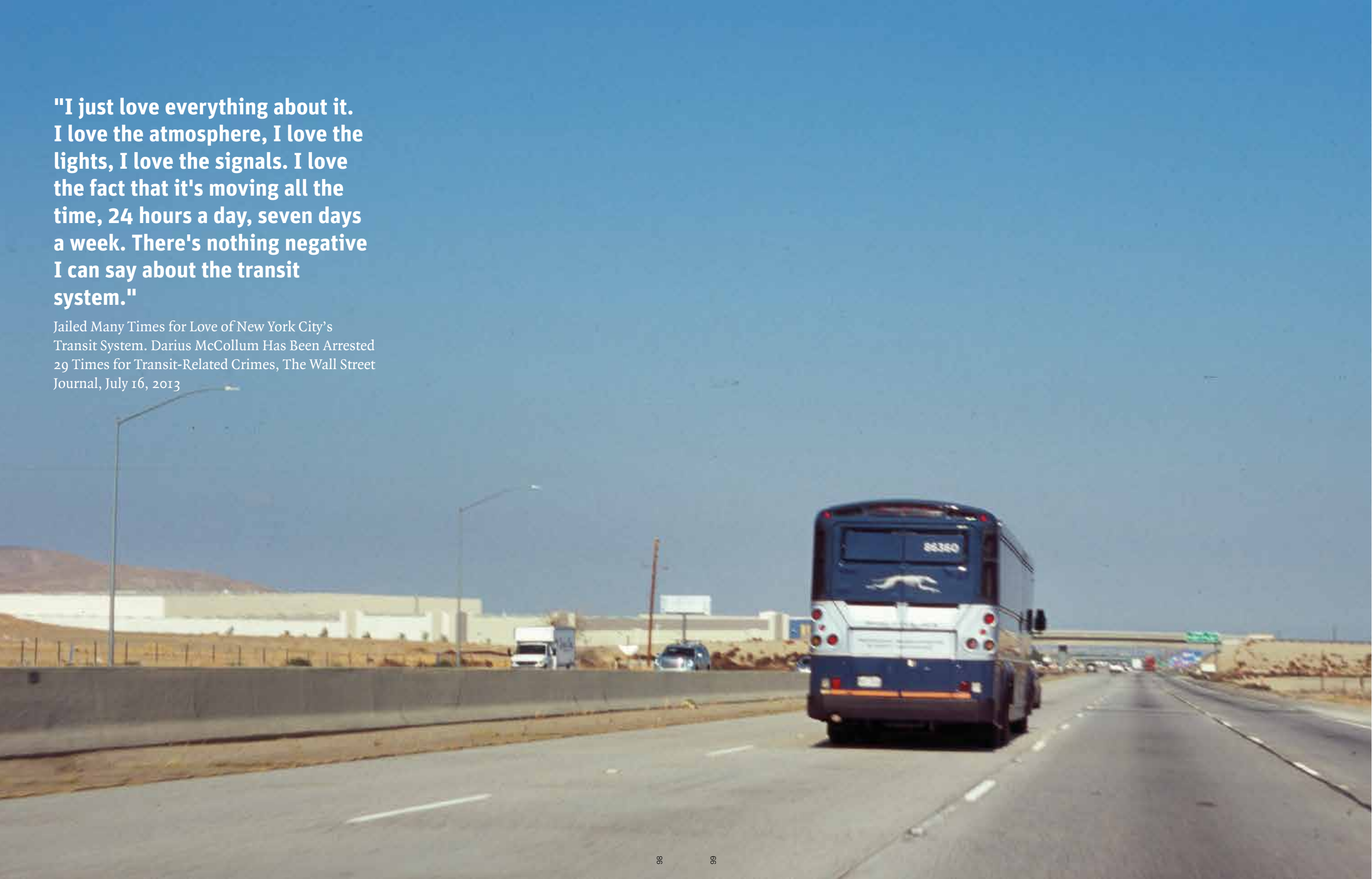
RIDERS UNAWARE AS BOY, 15, OPERATES I.N.D. TRAIN

A 15-year-old Queens boy took over the controls of a subway train Thursday night and operated it as its passengers rode unaware for six stops.



"I just love everything about it. I love the atmosphere, I love the lights, I love the signals. I love the fact that it's moving all the time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There's nothing negative I can say about the transit system."

Jailed Many Times for Love of New York City's Transit System. Darius McCollum Has Been Arrested 29 Times for Transit-Related Crimes, The Wall Street Journal, July 16, 2013







Man arrested 30 times for bus and train thefts just wants to work on the subway

The Guardian, November 12, 2015

Darius McCollum has become an unlikely folk hero for illegally commandeering New York City’s trains and buses, in an attempt to fulfill his childhood dream.

Darius McCollum has a peculiar hobby: impersonating New York transit staff, stealing buses and trains, and then driving them away.

As one police spokesman said of him in 2010, he has “a thing for mass transit”.

Once, he stole a bus at Penn Station and drove it, full of passengers, to New York’s Kennedy airport. Another time he responded to an emergency stop call on the subway at 57th street in Manhattan; clearing passengers safely and correctly and diagnosing the problem, in full uniform, before being caught by the train driver, who had seen his face on a wanted poster.

It has made him something of a folk hero. But he has spent a third of his life in jail for his hobby, and he seems to be incorrigible. On Wednesday, he was arrested for the 30th time in 35 years, and just 79 days after his previous parole ended, in Brooklyn, at the corner of Union Street and Third Avenue in Gowanus, driving a Trailways bus taken from Hoboken, New Jersey.

McCollum grew up in Jamaica, Queens, near the terminus of the F train at 179th street, where he would spend hundreds of hours watching the trains come and go, according to a 2002 profile in Harper’s magazine. By the time he was eight he had memorised the entire subway network. When he was eleven, he was stabbed with a pair of scissors by a classmate, puncturing his lung. Soon after the stabbing, McCollum was skipping school to ride the subway network, sometimes for days on end, surfacing for food only to disappear back underground again.

His parents tried to stop him by locking him in his room at night, and even tried having him escorted to school in the mornings. It didn’t work. They changed his school; they pushed him into psychiatric treatment. Nothing worked.

He became friends with Metropolitan Transit Authority workers at the 179th street depot; they taught him how to drive trains; how to maintain tracks and signals, how to direct traffic. He kept incredibly detailed notes. A train driver known as “Uncle Craft” first taught him to drive subway trains, on the stretch of track between the last stop and the depot at 179th street.

At 15, somebody gave him his first MTA uniform. “I can’t compare that feeling to anything,” he said of that moment later, speaking to Harper’s

from Riker’s Island prison. “I felt official. I felt like this is me, like this is where I belong.” MTA employees, he said, called him “Transportation Captain”.

In 1981, when he was arrested for the first time at the controls of an E train – having driven it without incident from 34th street to the World Trade Center at Manhattan’s southern end after being handed the controls by one of his friends, a driver who was sick – he had already driven subway trains dozens of times.

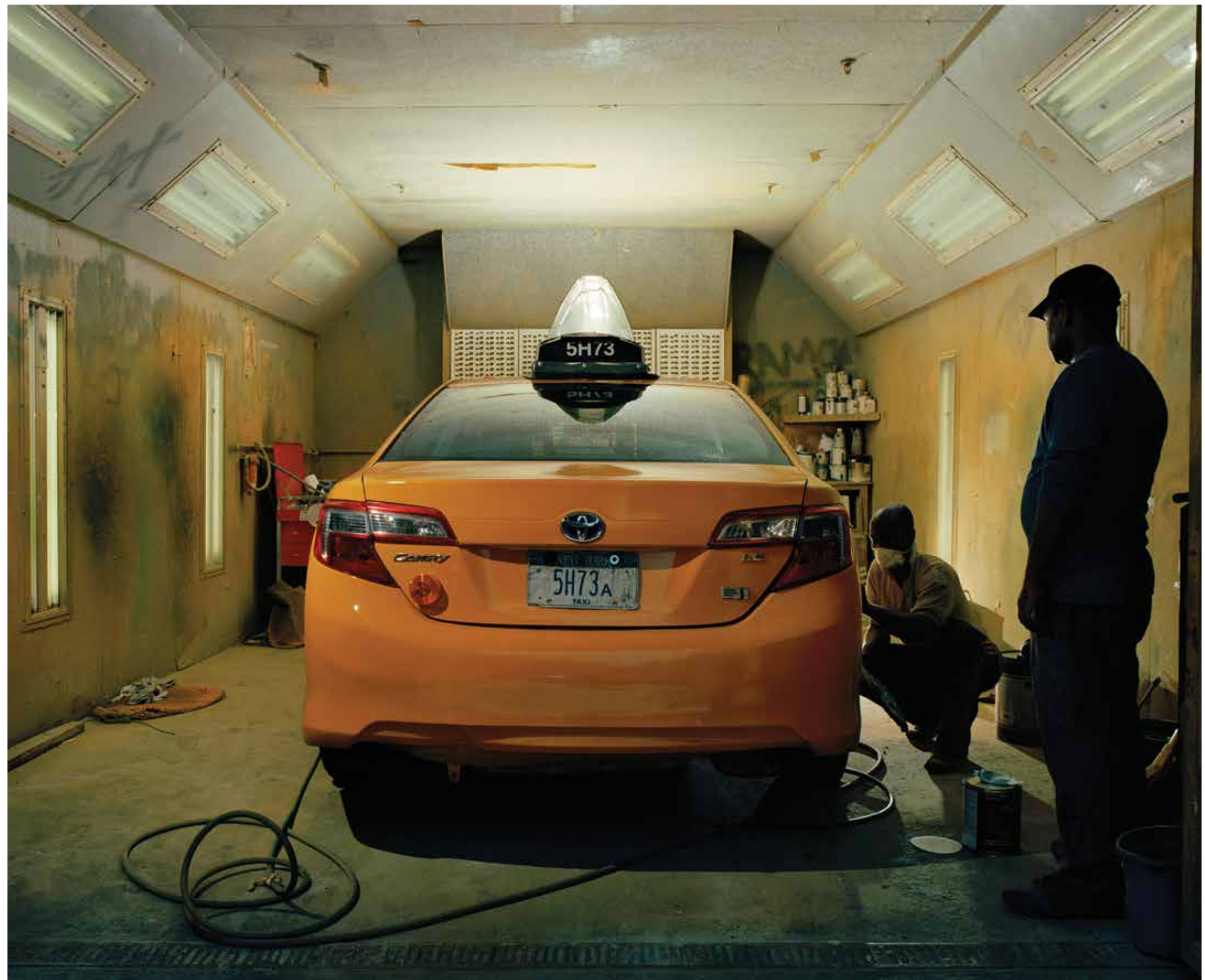
The arrest didn’t deter him. “I feel I just need to be there even if it’s just for a little while,” McCollum told the Wall Street Journal in 2013 about the transit network. “And then, the more I’m there, the more I want to get involved.” By the time he was 18, he was unofficially covering workers’ shifts off-the-books.

He has been diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, an autism spectrum disorder, as well as depression and anxiety stemming from the attack at school, but only recently have courts begun to take this into account. Lori Shery, president of the Asperger Syndrome Education Network and a friend of McCollum’s family, told the Guardian that she found him a job at a train museum in South Carolina, where his mother lives, but he found the pull of the real transit network too strong. Her theory is that he enjoys the notoriety. “I think he likes being in the limelight,” she said. “He’s become a celebrity of sorts. I think he likes that.”

He is set to appear in court in Brooklyn on Thursday afternoon, charged with grand larceny, possession of a forged instrument, unauthorised use of a vehicle, possession of stolen property and trespassing.

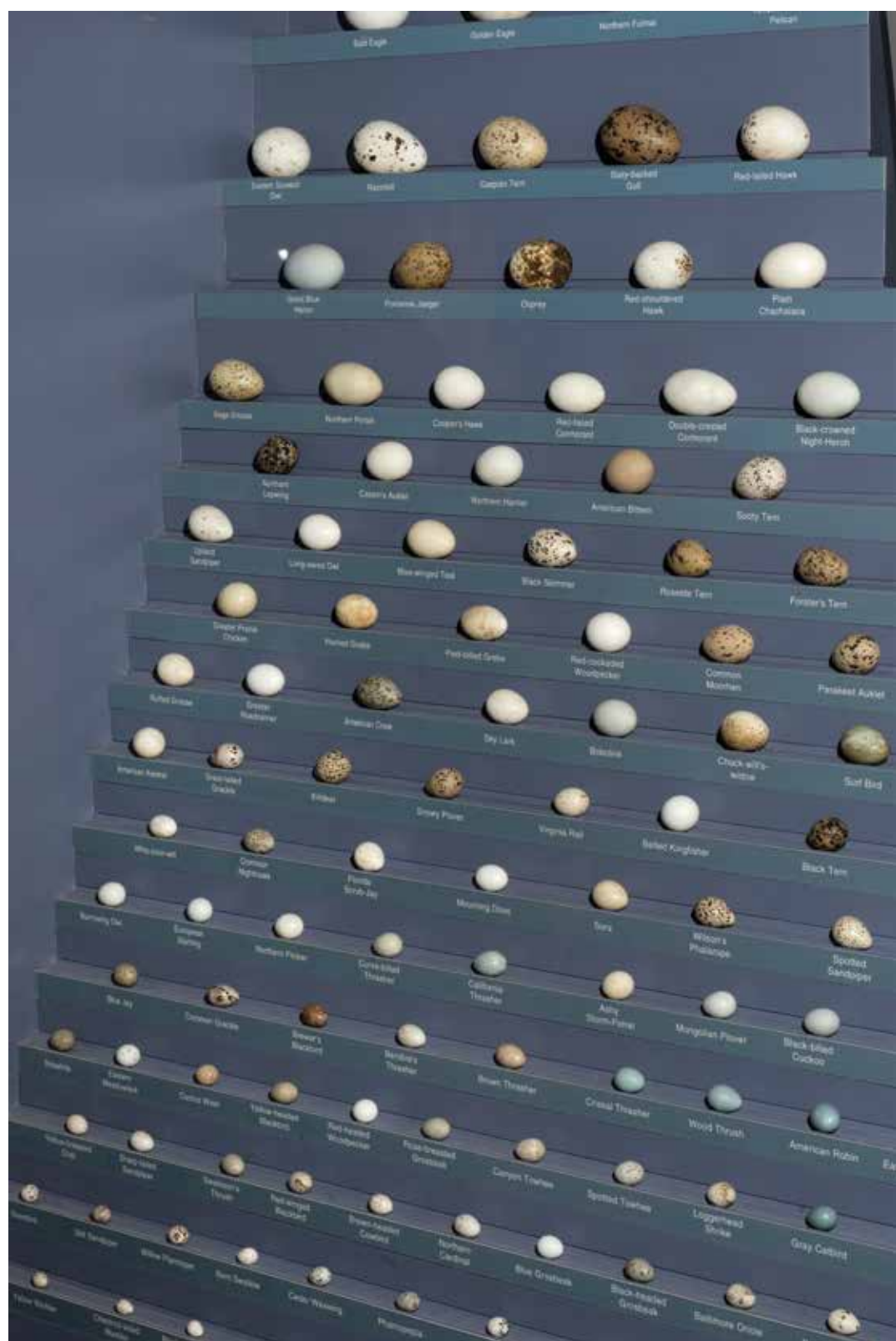
McCollum has often said he would seek therapy, but always ends up back on the rails or behind the wheel of a bus. He has applied and been refused real transit authority work several times – he told the Journal that he believed his 1981 arrest got him “blackballed”.

“Honestly, I feel that if an agency really took an interest in him, could give him employment in the field of transportation, that would make a world of difference,” Shery said. “I think then he would find what he’s seeking.”

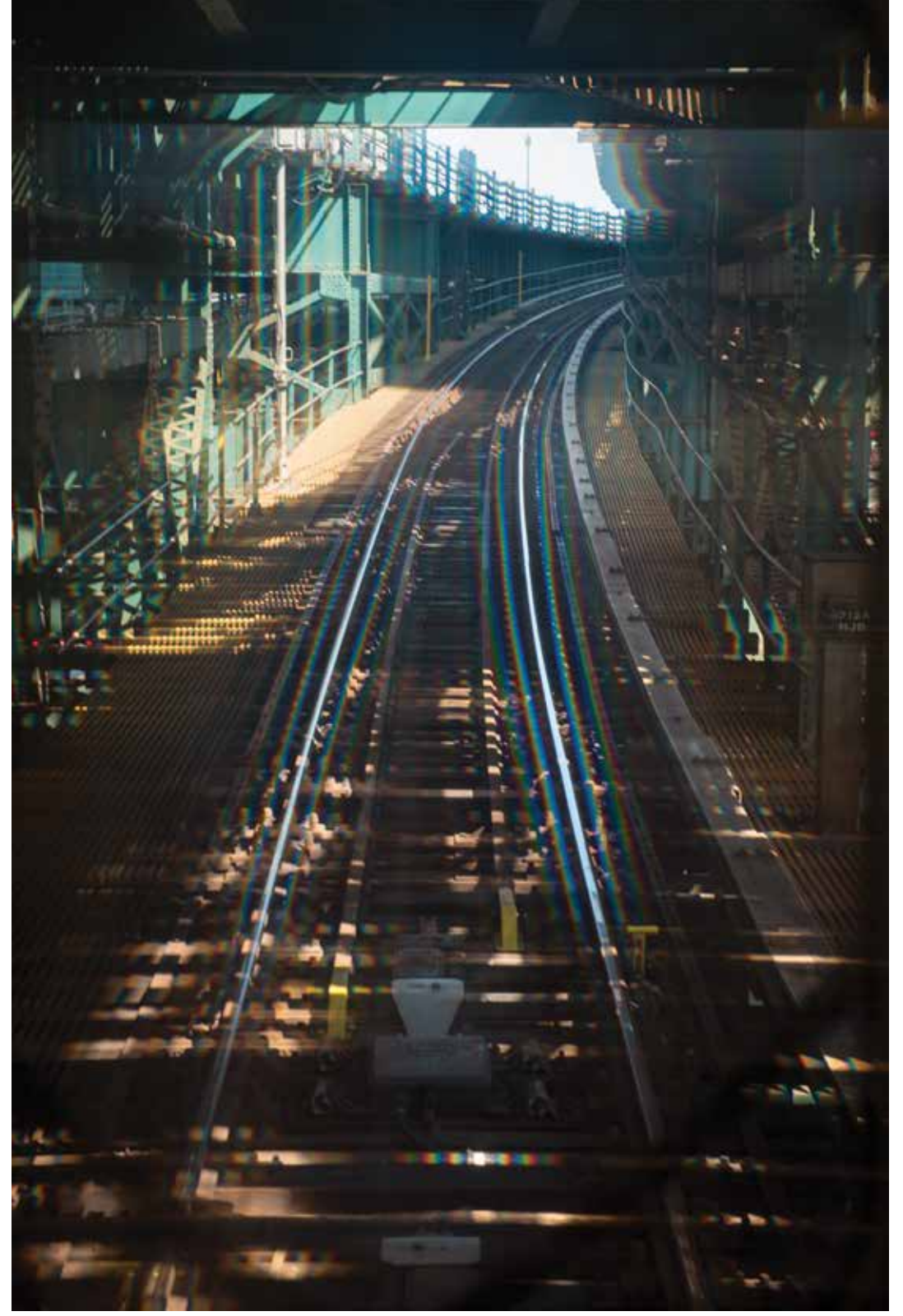














Meeting with Darius McCollum

Rikers Island Correctional Center, Manhattan, NY, December 27, 2016

My name is Darius McCollum. I am now 51 years old. I've been living here in New York City for all my life, throughout most of my years, as far as I can remember. I am currently an inmate here in Rikers Island in AMKC C95. I am also a train buff and I enjoy the New York City transit system.

Over a period of say, 30 years, I've been involved with the New York City transit system, here in New York. Unfortunately, because of my ongoing escapades it has led me into being incarcerated. I'm known as a train buff. A train buff is a person who is, basically, enthusiastically inclined about something of worthwhile to them. My worthwhileness was the transit system; the trains, the trucks, the buses, and stuff like that. I got involved at a young age of 12 and I've been escalating ever since then. I have worked for various employees throughout the system at various times, doing their jobs, even when I wasn't supposed to be there. I'm not even a licensed person to be there. One thing about being in there that captivated me is the fact that I fell in love with the system. And I like the transit system here in New York because it's the most dynamic system in the U.S., pretty much. I don't think there's any other system anywhere that can compete with it.

I started driving with trains and buses from a young age, say, around 15 years old. When people used to take me under their wing, so to speak. They would take me as far as into the train yards and show me how to operate trains here and there, show me how to work the switches and things of that nature. It came to the point where I learned so much that the people that worked there actually trusted me, and allowed me to come to work for them, and didn't really bother me too much. I thought I was pretty much part of them. They made sure that I had uniforms, they made sure that I had keys. They made sure that I had ID, whatever I needed to get in. I was able to buy these things, to sign in various equipment rooms for these things and I pretty much did the job as a regular professional transit employee would. I never really had any material gain from it. I just enjoy what I do and if I have the uniform or if I have the keys, then that's what I use to help me get

around. I don't try to use it to do anything derogatory or anything like that, or to cause any harm towards people, I just pretty much enjoy what I do more than anything else.

Some people have said over the years that I know the system better than they do because they are people who have actually trained and taken the classes and the tests to get in. I've taken the test to get in too but the transit system has made up excuses as to not hire me. Unfortunately, I had to deal with that. But it hasn't discouraged me either. I always remained optimistic and I appreciate everything that people have told me over the years. I don't look forward to being incarcerated for my endeavours, but unfortunately it happens.

Therefore, in doing everything that I have done has also been beneficial to me and has allowed me to learn many different things as far as the transit system and how various jobs work. There was nothing I didn't want to do and the more I got involved, the more I wanted to do.

The first time I got arrested for operating a train, back in 1981, I was 15 years old. I got caught for operating the E train from 34th Street to the World Trade Center. People thought I was actually a regular train operator, but I really wasn't. People then got suspicious and they were like, "Wow, who's really operating the train?" Unfortunately it had to lead on as to what took place, and it kind of got me in trouble and then the cops had to come, and other supervisors had to come. But I never got directly put in jail for that, at that time. I did get released to my parents' custody. It was incidents after that, that unfortunately lead me to being incarcerated as far as driving trains, like, along the railroad or other trains in the transit system, sometimes taking buses from the transit system and stuff like that, or wherever else I had been. People that understand what I was doing, they thought I was trying to steal it, but at the same time, I also used to bring it back too. They thought that was kind of odd. "Wait a minute, how does he steal it but also bring it back?" It was mind-blowing to them.

The one thing about me operating the trains and buses too, is that, like I said before, the employees made sure I had everything I needed, so they made sure I had a uniform. Naturally, a person sees your uniform,

they take it on face value that that's where you work at. They figure that you must be there somewhere. So I just jumped in and helped out with the people and did everything that I was pretty much trained to do.

I've been portrayed in various newspapers and articles, even on TV and on radio. I mostly don't have a problem with the media as to what they say. Sometimes what they say may not be totally inaccurate but sometimes they do get the story wrong, but I have to try to just ignore it and keep going on because there's a case involved. That's the basic focal point. The media is allowed to express themselves to the best of their ability, just as well as I am. It is what is known as intellectual rights amongst them and freedom of speech. Over the years, a lot of people have said things that didn't make sense, and then when I have to clarify them, it even makes more sense. So, eventually, it gets worked out in the long run and we can move on from it.

I think that over the years, because of my unfortunate ongoing endeavours, so to speak, with the transit system, and by me being publicized throughout the media over the years, I really don't think it's been blown out of proportion too much. I do believe that some things are a little bit more exaggerated, but other than that, it's not really the media that I focus on. I try to focus on just trying to get through the case and from there on out. The media is one part of the story, but the media doesn't directly know my true story or anything else, so I try to give them the best encouragement through my legal counsel and go in that fashion.

One of the things in reference to me being a train buff is because I have what is known as an obsession, and my obsession comes from me having a diagnosis of what is known as Asperger's. Asperger's is what is known as high-functioning autism, which would make me autistic. Therefore, I am not only enthusiastically inclined but I'm autistically inclined too. People sometimes read into the diagnosis and try to figure out that this is the best thing to make it more concrete. Even though I'm here and I'm going through what I'm going through right now, as far as with the pending case, there's always going to be questions as to how the diagnosis of the Asperger's relates to the case, and relates to the charge, and stuff like that. Therefore what I have to do is try to focus on getting some kind of help and try to seek


whatever I can; the best possible judgement that the court can give me in reference to my Asperger's, and stuff like that. Prime example: if you realize I have a problem then I should be getting help for it. As for the people trying to condemn me, and well, they still do, but I still try to get through it.

Since I was a kid and up until nowadays, I knew that I have an overall passion. I have an overall love for the subway system. It has made me feel that by doing all the things that I have done over the years I wanted to keep doing it and learn more and more, and I just felt compatible as far as being there. I just enjoy my passion more than anything else. Over the years, as far as me being in and out of prison or in jail, I've never directly counted; according to the media it's about 29 or 30 times but, over the years I have let my passion, or my autistic capability, get out of control. The thing is that even if I know that I need help and I've admitted that I need help, I still love the subway system no matter how you look at it. I'm not ever going to stop loving it because I know it's going to be there until death do us part. I feel that I'm still going to enjoy it whether I'm in the age bracket that I am now or in future years to come, because it's always upgrading, it's always going to provide the sense of travel for a many great people here in New York. People even come from other places just to see the subway system because it's so well popularized.

In one of the articles that was publicized about me years ago, or maybe a couple of different articles, it said that I was an impostor. I never thought it was fair to say that I was an impostor because in order for me to be an impostor, basically, I would have to say I am impersonating someone else. And actually I wasn't impersonating somebody else, I was impersonating myself. People have a way of, what is known as, stereotyping things, making it into their own kind of format. So, I says, if you want to call me an impostor, fine. But in actuality it's still me. It's not like you don't know who I am because unfortunately I've been in trouble for the same thing over. Not that I'm really happy about it but I've been in trouble for it and you know who I am if you just google my name. So hey, it's just something that happens.





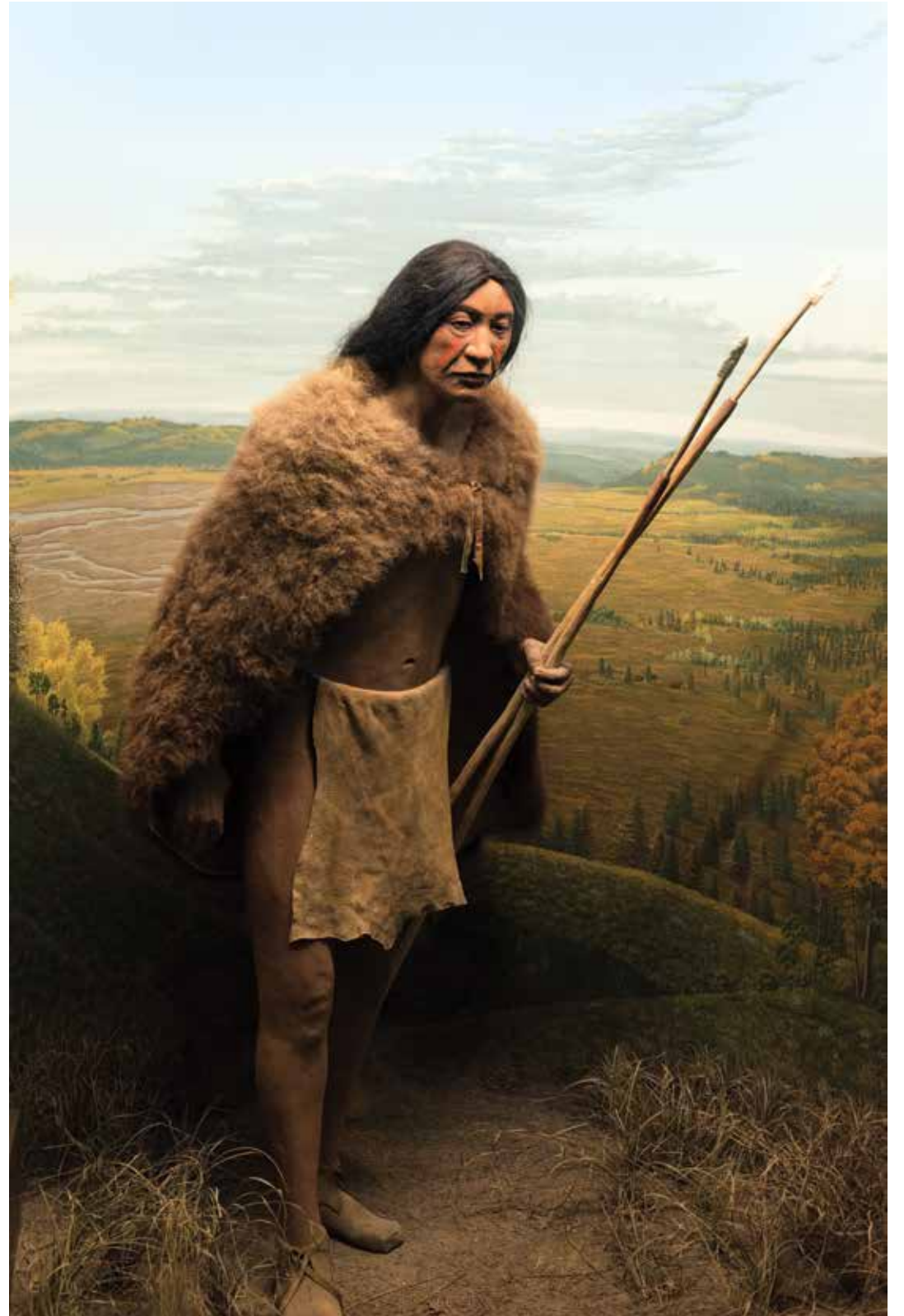
A photograph of a swampy forest. The foreground and middle ground are filled with a body of water covered in a thick layer of green duckweed. Several tall, slender trees with light-colored bark stand in the water. The background is a dense forest of similar trees, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. The overall scene is lush and green.

The Dismal Swamp covered great tracts of southeast Virginia and northeast North Carolina, and its vegetation was far too thick for horses or canoes. In the early 1600s, Native Americans fleeing the colonial frontier took refuge here, and they were soon joined by fugitive slaves, and probably some whites escaping indentured servitude or hiding from the law. From about 1680 to the Civil War, it appears that the swamp communities were dominated by Africans and African-Americans.

Smithsonian Magazine, September 2016













Devices used to disguise tracks while crossing dragged roads.

A tree on the side of a road in Polk City, Iowa has been receiving attention because many see the silhouette of the Virgin Mary growing on its trunk. Since it has been noticed, visitors leave flowers and candles at the base of the tree.





The Telegraph, October 15, 2009

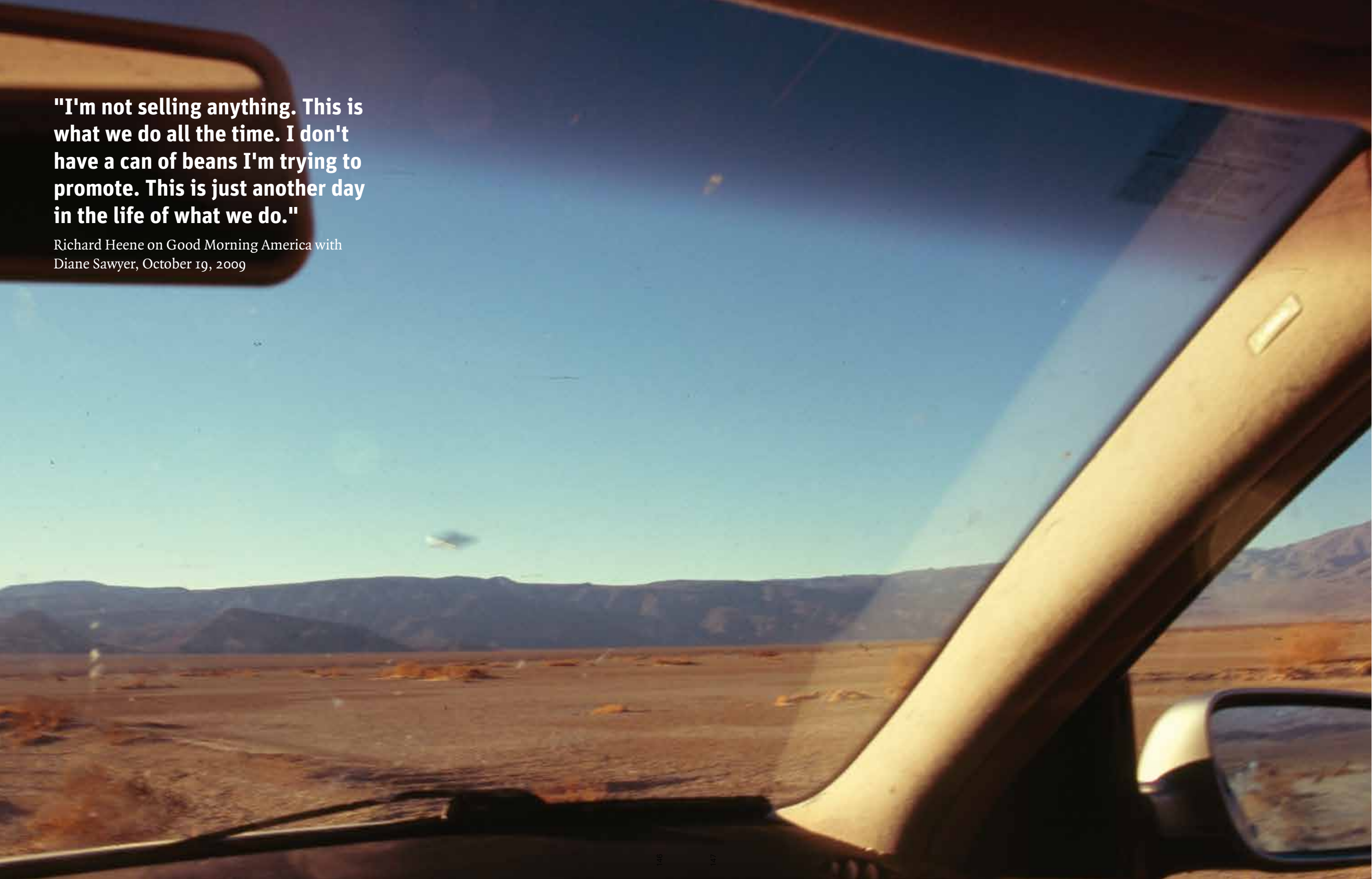
BOY TRAPPED IN 'UFO-LIKE BALLOON' FLOATING OVER COLORADO

A six-year-old boy is trapped in a small homemade helium balloon resembling a UFO and is floating thousands of feet in the air in Colorado.



"I'm not selling anything. This is what we do all the time. I don't have a can of beans I'm trying to promote. This is just another day in the life of what we do."

Richard Heene on Good Morning America with Diane Sawyer, October 19, 2009













On August 1, 1961, a dark, circular object was seen in the sky over the town of Roswell, New Mexico. The object was seen by several people and was described as being about the size of a basketball.



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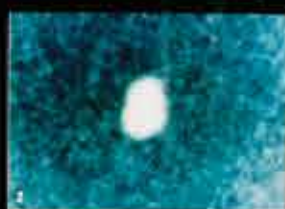
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"Balloon Boy" Falcon Heene Found Safe in Attic of Fort Collins Home

The Denver Post, October 15, 2009

FORT COLLINS – For 2 1/2 hours Thursday, the bizarre image of a home-made, helium-filled flying saucer – thought to be carrying a 6-year-old boy – transfixed a global television audience as it blew for 50 miles across the Colorado sky.

But the tale of a boy’s unplanned flight from his Fort Collins backyard aboard his father’s experimental aircraft took two jarring turns: first when the craft settled to earth with no sign of the boy; and later, when young Falcon Heene reappeared, frightened but safe, from his hiding place in the family’s garage attic.

Along the way, rescue workers from several jurisdictions mobilized, helicopters filled the air, Denver International Airport rerouted planes and perhaps millions of television viewers watched with reactions ranging from horror to disbelief.

At a news conference after the boy emerged, the family said Falcon hid because his father had earlier yelled at him when he tried to climb into the craft.

In a later interview on CNN, Falcon was asked again why he hid and didn’t come out when he heard his family calling his name.

“You had said that we did this for a show,” Falcon said.

His father, Richard Heene, was asked to clarify the comment. He said he was “appalled” at the question and its implication the ordeal was a hoax. He suggested Falcon’s response might have stemmed from the family’s appearance on the TV show “Wife Swap.”

After the CNN interview, Larimer County Sheriff Jim Alderden told The Associated Press that although personnel dealing with the family are convinced that the incident was legitimate and “not a hoax,” the department intended to ask the family today “to cooperate with our investigation through answering more questions and resolve this issue.”

For those watching the saga unfold on TV, it ended when Falcon simply climbed down from the attic and walked into the house. His mother, Mayumi Heene, screamed as he entered the living room.

“He came out of nowhere,” she said. “I thought this was going to be the worst day. Instead, it’s the best day of my life.”

Richard Heene, who has been profiled in the news as a storm chaser and inventor, called the experimental craft a “3D-LAV,” for low-altitude vehicle. He described it as an early version of a commuting vehicle that would allow people to hover above traffic.

Local public elementary schools were closed Thursday, and Falcon had been climbing into a compartment affixed beneath the helium-filled

saucer, prompting angry words from his dad. Falcon told his older brother, Bradford, he was going to crawl into the craft again. But instead, Falcon shimmied up pipes in the garage and hid – even napping briefly – in an attic area. “I’m sorry I yelled at him,” Richard Heene said, becoming emotional as he spoke. “He scared the heck out of us.”

The Crisis Begins

The drama began late Thursday morning, when the helium-filled craft came loose from its backyard mooring and rose into partly cloudy skies. According to early reports, officials and the boy’s parents – working from information provided by older brother Bradford – thought Falcon had climbed aboard just before the craft went airborne. That was the working assumption as live video feeds on several major networks tracked the flight east from the Fort Collins area. Next-door neighbor Bob Licko said he heard a commotion as he left the house to run an errand. He saw Richard Heene running around the house. Mayumi Heene appeared distraught. The two older boys were standing on the roof with a video camera. They told Licko something about their brother being up in the air. But as the 20-foot-diameter, 5-foot-high craft, which resembled a silver flying saucer, drifted, spun and listed across the Colorado sky, some experts already were speculating that no significant weight appeared to be on board. If true, that left two possibilities. One was that the boy had never been aboard. The other was more chilling. Weld County sheriff’s Deputy Jared Webb had been driving north on County Road 41 when he caught a glimpse of the craft high in the sky to the north. He parked his patrol car and scrambled up to the top of a hill so he could get a better view. As he watched, it appeared that something fell from the balloon. “I didn’t see it detach – but I did see something fall,” Webb said. At first, he tracked the object, plummeting against a blue sky. But then it passed in front of a cloud, and he lost sight of it. He and others feared the worst – that it was the boy plunging to his death. Based on Webb’s report, Weld County launched a massive search over a 27-square-mile area. Deputies, firefighters and volunteers worked their way through the fields on all-terrain vehicles and on horseback, looking for any sign of the boy.

“Jumping Up and Down”

Meaghan Croghan, 15, and her brother, Ryan, 17, were stacking hay on their family’s property when the noise of helicopters in the distance caught their attention. Just then, a friend called with news of the wayward craft. They grabbed binoculars, a telescope and a camera and began watching it drift toward them. “It was jumping up and down, and it was on its side sometimes,” Meaghan said.

“To me, it just looked like a balloon,” Ryan said. “I could see ropes hanging down from it, but I couldn’t see a basket.” Officials from Larimer, Weld and Adams counties worked with the Federal Aviation Administration and assistance from the 9News helicopter to track the balloon. It sometimes drifted as high as 8,000 feet above sea level – nearly 3,000 feet above ground level. The craft hit estimated speeds of about 30 mph on its 50-mile journey, gaining and losing altitude as it flew in and out of thermal air currents. After 2 1/2 hours aloft, the craft finally touched down softly in a Weld County field, where rescue workers immediately grabbed the rope tether, punctured the helium-filled structure and secured it to the ground. But when no sign of 6-year-old Falcon was found, the bizarre emergency segued into a perplexing mystery. Search crews fanned out along the flight path to look for any sign of the boy. Alderden grimly addressed reporters. “Obviously at this point we’re looking at a recovery type of operation,” he said. Seconds later, shouts arose from Sheriff’s Office personnel behind him. Alderden conferred with them and then walked back to the reporters – this time holding his hands high in a thumbs-up gesture. “He’s been located. He’s alive. He’s at the house,” Alderden said.

An “Unusual” Family

Neighbors of the Heenes on Fossil Ridge Drive described an eccentric but kind family. Marc Friedland, who lives next door, said Richard Heene was always tinkering on interesting things. “They’re unusual, yes,” Friedland said. “But they’re great. We like them a lot.” The Heenes have sons Bradford, 10, and Ryo, 8, in addition to Falcon. They were recently featured on the ABC series “Wife Swap.” In a promotion for one of the Heene episodes, the network described the family this way: “When the Heene family aren’t chasing storms, they devote their time to scientific experiments that include looking for extraterrestrials and building a research-gathering flying saucer to send into the eye of the storm.” Neighbor Licko said the boys are always outside and are often involved in the family’s endeavors, whether storm-chasing or Richard’s inventions. “He gives them a lot of free rein,” Licko said. “But at the same time, I think he’s a very responsible and caring parent.” Richard Heene said his son would not be grounded, but, “We’re going to talk to him.” As for the silver saucer-craft, it was grounded in a newly planted field of winter wheat on the Abbott family farm. Emergency vehicles responding to the landing damaged the field, but Georgene Abbott, whose father-in-law started farming that ground in 1927, said she was relieved that the little boy was alive and well. “Oh, thank goodness,” Abbott said. “That’s a blessing.”

LIVE

SKY9 HD



**AIRCRAFT: IS SHAPED
LIKE A FLYING SAUCER**

9NEWS HD

1:36 66°

BREAKING NEWS





Meeting with Richard Heene

The Heene's home, Dunnellon, FL, December 11, 2016

My name is Richard Heene. A few years ago I got into a bit of trouble. It went from a backyard experiment to something that was just blown out of proportion. I still can't believe it to this day. I was told by the press back then that the only reason there were so many people out there was because nothing was going on. I think they were pursuing Bin Laden and then that kind of died out, you know? So, I feel like I was the next Bin Laden. Just try to imagine; we have this family, doing what we do, experiments and inventions. This one just happened to go awry. So, I would say, on a scale of one to ten, this thing went to a twelve; out of proportion. I would've thought that it would have been covered by a local paper, if anything at all. It's known as the 'Balloon Boy' incident by the media. They tag a cute little phrase onto it, try and regurgitate it and sell it. That disturbs me. Prior to this incident, I had a vision of the media like it would come on NBC, CBS, FOX, whatever. You kind of believe what you hear, prior to knowing what it's like.

We ended up contacting the FAA. That was the logical thing for me to do, because I'm certified to launch high-power-rockets. Whenever you have a high-power rocket launch and it's going to a particular altitude, you must call the FAA and tell them about the launch. They told us to contact the authorities. The next thing you know, we've got the cops over at the house, tons of media out in front of my house and it was just crazy time. The only thing I had in my mind was getting my son back, that was it. Now, here's the crazy part: I got fined by the FAA. I think it was \$8,800. Then I got fined by the local cops: \$36,000. The whole thing was so blown out of proportion because of the media. If it were just the cops involved, and they helped me try and find my son, that would've been fine with me. But they say that I cost everybody a lot of money. But nobody ever mentioned one thing: how many ads were sold based on this hyped up story? They must have made billions, literally billions on this. And they played on this for two weeks in front of my house. They kept covering it weeks after that.

They talk about how I was responsible for costing tens of thousands of dollars, and yet they made billions. And then the sheriff – nobody

ever covers this – but the sheriff was the one who wanted all of the press. He wanted the media. I was sitting in the house when we found Falcon, with my wife. The cops were there and it’s done, it was over, he was there. And they said, “Well it’s not over, you gotta go outside and talk to the press,” I said, “I’m not talking to press, I don’t want to talk to anybody.” I was very emotional, I didn’t want to go anywhere. They said, “You’re gonna have to talk to press because they’re going to hound you for the next two weeks, they’re going to follow you around.” So, I said to the cop, “Can you go out with me?” He said, “No, but the sheriff is on his way down right now to get in front of the camera with you.” He comes down and he forces me to go out there to talk to the media. They got all these cameras out there, and he’s standing there doing his thing. They were the ones that called it a hoax; which it wasn’t.

Anytime the press can hype something up, juice it, work it any way they want to sell ads, that’s what it’s about, it’s about the money. They said it was a so-called hoax. I never got charged with a hoax, I got charged with attempting to influence a public official. They said I have to take the guilty plea or they are going to deport my wife. I mean, can you imagine? So, my attorney said, “It’s only gonna be 90 days in jail, you’re in, you’re out, and you keep your family.” So I weighed it out and said if that’s all I need to do to keep my family, then I’ll do it. I was going to fight it all the way through.

With respect to the press, the way they blew the whole thing up... I think every country was there, I heard it was in China, they were watching it live, I guess. I heard that every country was watching this thing. So on planet Earth, I guess it was just a dead day. They had no story. Try to imagine, here I am, with my family, doing what we do best. And all of a sudden, it blows up, not like, you know, one cop showing at your door and the local paper showing up, but it just got so massive, so big. My friend later wrote me from Los Angeles and said it was the most searched thing on Google, for the past ten years or something like that. I forget what the stats were. And I’m thinking, “Why? Leave me alone!” The last thing I want is to have people hanging out in my garage looking at what I’m working on. I got a lot of stuff that I don’t want to get out there. That’s the life of the inventor.


They asked me to go to Larry King, Ellen DeGeneres wanted me on her show. I didn’t want any part of this but since everybody turned on me, I felt that I had to have a say in this. People need to know what really happened. What they were reporting was completely farcical. They were reporting as though it was fact what the sheriff was saying. The sheriff came out and said that the whole thing was a hoax. You can’t do that, it’s illegal. And based on that, I could’ve walked. There you have him saying that I’m guilty of charges that weren’t even presented. It took them two weeks to find charges. And then the sheriff turned all the attention back to him, saying I was attempting to influence a public official, meaning him. And I never even met the guy! It’s just a joke. Then, he had the audacity to write a book about it. I was told by the Fort Collins newspaper that he came out with a book. He had a book signing and nobody showed up. Good! He deserves it. And yet they would take his word for everything. I think it’s criminal that you can ruin someone’s life.

Anyway, things have kind of smoothened out, I can now walk to places without people recognizing me so much. Of course, I grew the long hair too, it may help, I don’t know. I’m gonna tell you something, this is the truth, I never had one person, in person, ever say anything bad about me. Not once! So all the stuff that was going on was being projected by the media. Nowadays they’ve got this whole thing called fake news going around. There are videos online of CNN shooting green screen like they’re over in Iraq and there’s a war going on. Have you seen those?


The kids did a song: ‘Chasing Tornadoes’, it’s about the media. The lines are, “If it doesn’t bleed it will not read, if two people die, one hundred is a better lie, crack the zoom lens today, the world ends.” Everything is so negative in the news, and they always put a negative spin on it. They would do so much better if they would do positive news. There are so many things that they could be talking about, and I don’t mean boring things like “Hey, a couple of puppies were born.” There’s a lot of great stuff they could be talking about. But they constantly jam the negatives down peoples throats. My advice to anybody is, turn off the news. Don’t read the news. Focus on other things, you will be happier. I know I am.


They sentenced me to 90 days. It wasn't just 90 days in jail, it was 30 in jail and 30 in work release; which is next door. You spend the night there, you go to work, you come back and you go back to jail. And then it was another 30 days with the home monitor. So, it wasn't that bad. I got sentenced and then I showed up to jail in the morning. I get in my vehicle, the press follows me. Not only that, this is true, they had undercover cops in black SUV's all down the street, all the way to the jail. And they had a helicopter follow me, like I'm gonna skip town, like I'm a murderer!

Has it changed me? It really did change me a lot as far as my respect for law enforcement, in the way the court systems work and how everything's so rigged. If you have money in this country and you go to court for anything, you're good! You buy your way out of it. But when you don't have any money and you can't afford an attorney, you take the deal they hand you. When you start to find out how corrupt these people are, it really distances you. I don't want to have anything to do with law, ever again. My attorney told me that they were going to ask for what is called an Alford plea, that's a guilty plea without saying you're guilty, and it never came up. But anyway, you just got to get through something like that, and then you get on with your life as quick as possible and just put it behind you. You can't let it eat you up, you know. My kids are great, we don't talk about it around them. It doesn't come up. We move on.


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At the height of UFO hysteria then sweeping the nation, two young barbers and a butcher took a dead monkey, lopped off its tail and applied a liberal dose of hair remover and some green coloring to the carcass. Then they left the primate on an isolated road north of Atlanta in the pre-dawn hours of July 8, 1953, burning a circle into the pavement with a blowtorch before a police officer came around the curve in his patrol car.


The men eventually admitted the hoax and paid a \$40 fine for obstructing a highway.

NBC News, July 29, 2008

The preserved monkey is permanently on display in the lobby of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab in Decatur, Georgia.







In the race with Russia to put the first man in orbit around Earth, NASA trained several chimpanzees to participate in flight simulations. As the first "chimp-o-naut," HAM was blasted 155 miles into space during the Mercury-Redstone 2 mission on January 31, 1961. After he died, a controversy arose over what to do with HAM's remains. The Smithsonian had planned to do a taxidermy preparation and permanently display him in the Great Ape House. This resulted in a public outcry.

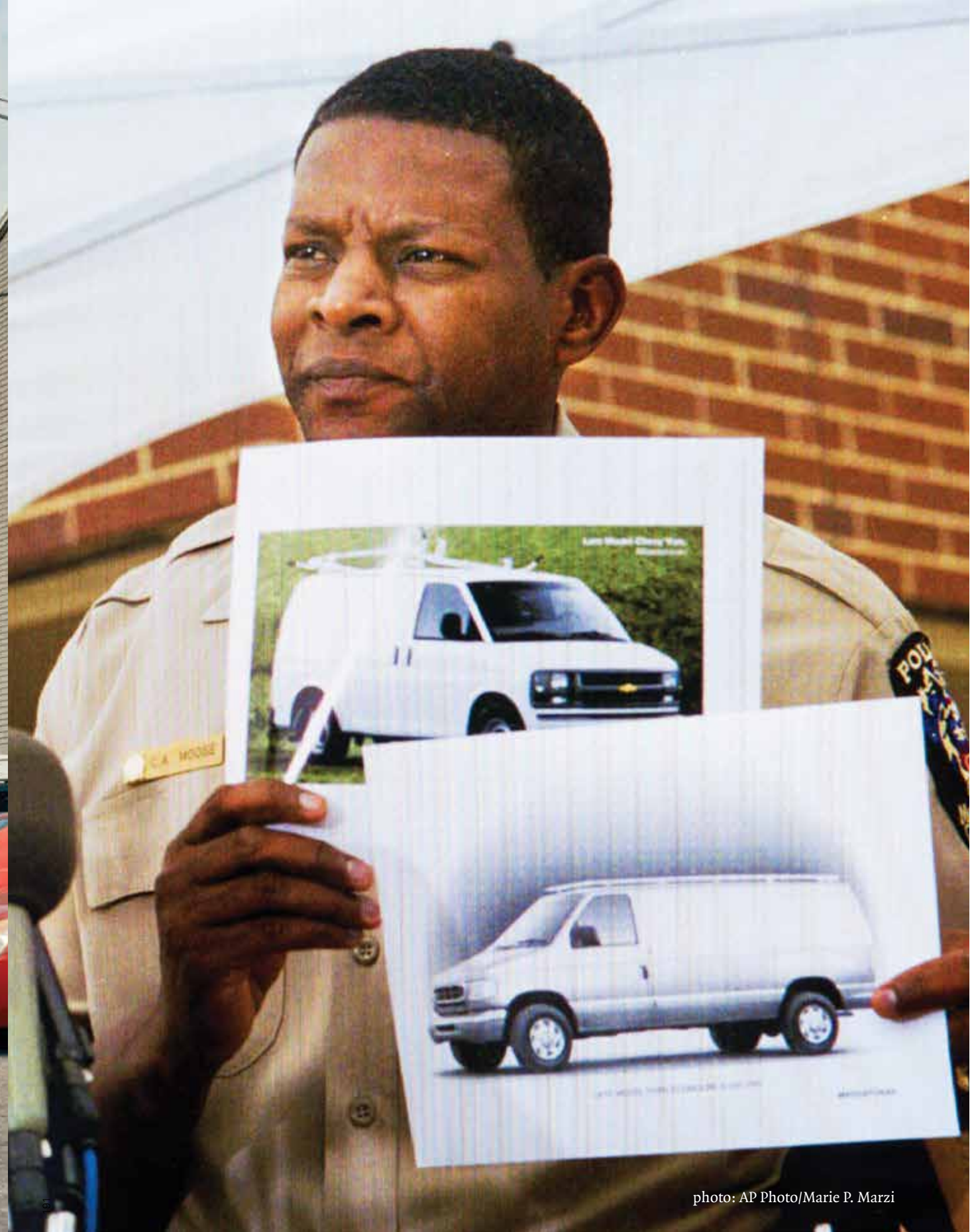
HAM, A Space Pioneer. Andrea Schierkolk, BA. Military Medicine History, AMSUS





Police officials have released composite drawings of a light-colored Chevrolet Astro and Ford Econoline as possible getaway vehicles. Motorists now look with suspicion – even fear – at such vehicles, which have many industrial uses and often are outfitted with the ladder rack police also say is a possible feature.

Los Angeles Times, October 19, 2002

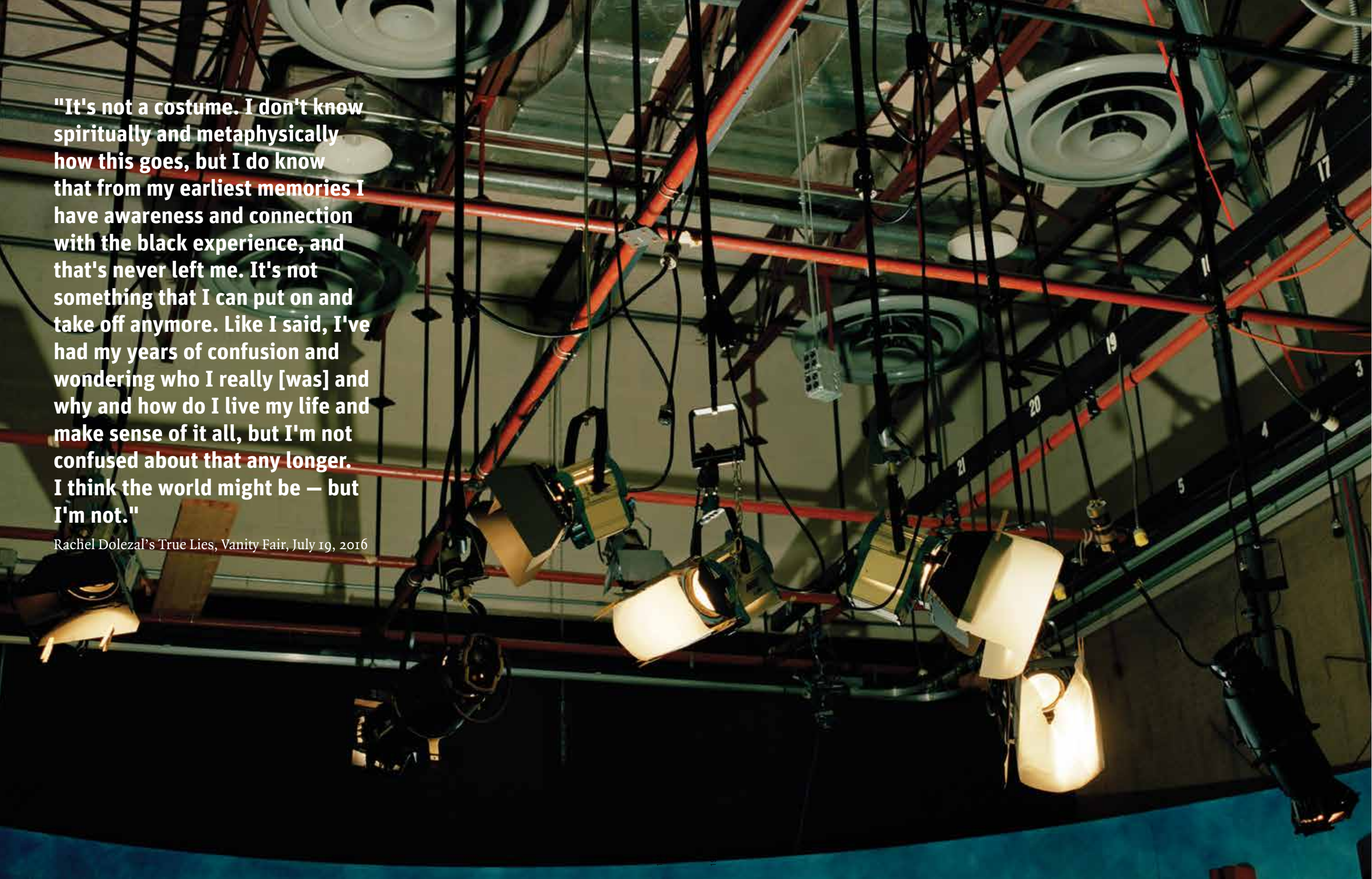


The Cœur d'Alene Press, June 11, 2015

BLACK LIKE ME? CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST'S ETHNICITY QUESTIONED

Dolezal, chair of Spokane's Office of Police Ombudsman Commission and president of the city's chapter of the NAACP, has made claims in the media and elsewhere about her ethnicity, race and background that are contradicted by her biological parents.





"It's not a costume. I don't know spiritually and metaphysically how this goes, but I do know that from my earliest memories I have awareness and connection with the black experience, and that's never left me. It's not something that I can put on and take off anymore. Like I said, I've had my years of confusion and wondering who I really [was] and why and how do I live my life and make sense of it all, but I'm not confused about that any longer. I think the world might be — but I'm not."

Rachel Dolezal's True Lies, Vanity Fair, July 19, 2016



A close-up portrait of Rachel Dolezal, a woman with voluminous curly brown hair and light-colored eyes. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a patterned top and has a slight smile. The background is blurred, showing some greenery and a pink flower.

NBC NEWS EXCLUSIVE

"I DEFINITELY AM NOT WHITE"

RACHEL DOLEZAL INTERVIEW SPARKS FIERCE DEBATE



Rachel Dolezal's True Lies

Vanity Fair, July 19, 2015

For a time this summer, it seemed all anyone could talk about was the N.A.A.C.P. chapter president whose parents had “outed” her as white. The tornado of public attention has since moved on, but Rachel Dolezal still has to live with her choices—and still refuses to back down.

It’s safe to say that Rachel Dolezal never thought much about the end-game. You can see it on her face in the local-TV news video—the one so potently viral it transformed her from regional curiosity to global punch line in the span of 48 hours in mid-June. It is precisely the look of a white woman who tanned for a darker hue, who showcased a constant rotation of elaborately designed African American hairstyles, and who otherwise lived her life as a black woman, being asked if she is indeed African American.

It is the look of a cover blown.

At first, as I watched Dolezal’s story rise from meme to morning show, I wasn’t completely sure what to think, or particularly sure how much I cared; there are, obviously, a host of more crucial issues facing black America. But despite my initial reluctance to even acknowledge Dolezal’s presence in the national conversation, she slowly began to win my attention. There have been women over the years who’ve spent thousands upon thousands of dollars for butt injections, lip fillers, and self-tanners for a more “exotic” look. But attempting to pass for black? This was a new type of white woman: bold and brazen enough to claim ownership over a painful and complicated history she wasn’t born into. After making calls to what felt like everyone in black America, I was able to get a hold of Dolezal’s e-mail and cell-phone information, and we began a friendly month-long correspondence. We spoke on the phone and exchanged e-mails as events quickly shifted the nation’s focus from Dolezal’s fantastical story to an actual tragedy in Charleston. Eventually, I visited her in Spokane, Washington, where she had been voted head of the local N.A.A.C.P. chapter in November 2014, the crucial, profile-raising step on her rapid ascent in the city’s black community. Throughout our exchanges, as the cameras moved on to their next assignments and public interest waned, she has simultaneously defended the identity she has carefully crafted and insisted that she deceived no one in creating it.

“It’s not a costume,” she says. “I don’t know spiritually and metaphysically how this goes, but I do know that from my earliest memories I have awareness and connection with the black experience, and that’s never left me. It’s not something that I can put on and take off anymore. Like I said, I’ve had my years of confusion and wondering who I really [was] and why and how do I live my life and make sense of it all, but I’m not confused about that any longer. I think the world might be—but I’m not.”

After her estranged parents set her downfall into motion by telling a local newspaper, in no uncertain terms, that their 37-year-old daughter had been born Caucasian, Dolezal was relieved of her paid and unpaid positions in Spokane. She resigned from her position with the N.A.A.C.P. (though odds are she would have been ousted if she hadn't), and was asked to step down from a police oversight commission. Eastern Washington University, where she had a beloved part-time teaching job in the school's Africana-studies program, did not renew her contract. Her life bears little resemblance to the one she and her 13-year-old son, Franklin, were living just six weeks ago.

"I've got to figure it out before August 1, because my last paycheck was like \$1,800 in June," she says. "[I lost] friends and the jobs and the work and—oh, my God—so much at the same time.

And yet, Dolezal's claim on black womanhood still seems to be non-negotiable. Even in conversation with an actual black woman on the other end of the line or sitting in her cozy home, Dolezal unequivocally identifies as black. (Never mind the ancestry.com heritage test that arrived on her doorstep the day I visited.)

Dolezal spent years researching and then perfectly molding her black identity. She commands an impressive knowledge of African American literature, its writers, and the history of the Civil Rights movement. She attended graduate school at the historically black Howard University (where, *The Smoking Gun* reported, she unsuccessfully sued for being discriminated against because she was white). She is an expert in black hair, both as a practical matter and as a subject of academic inquiry. She makes it clear she doesn't plan on altering the way she presents herself anytime soon.

"It's taken my entire life to negotiate how to identify, and I've done a lot of research and a lot of studying," she says. "I could have a long conversation, an academic conversation about that. I don't know. I just feel like I didn't mislead anybody; I didn't deceive anybody. If people feel misled or deceived, then sorry that they feel that way, but I believe that's more due to their definition and construct of race in their own minds than it is to my integrity or honesty, because I wouldn't say I'm African American, but I would say I'm black, and there's a difference in those terms."

This is a peculiar defense. If there is a difference between being black and being African American, it's one that escapes the vast majority of people I know. When I said as much to Dolezal, she claimed to have received a recent traffic ticket where the police officer marked her race as "black" on the ticket without even asking.

"It's hard to collapse it all into just a single statement about what is," Dolezal says. "You can't just say in one sentence what is blackness or what is black culture or what makes you who you are."

Dolezal feels her outing was a big misunderstanding, but she appears unclear on exactly what was misunderstood. She did identify as a black woman when she was not—there's not much to misunderstand there. For months, she showcased Albert Wilkerson Jr., a black man she met in Idaho, as her father on Facebook, a move that could only be charac-

terized as misleading. There's not much of a misunderstanding there, either. The problem, as Dolezal sees it, is one of timing. Had she been able to explain her complicated childhood and sincere, long-time love for black culture to everyone before the blow up, all would have been forgiven.

"Again, I wish I could have had conversations with all kinds of people," she says. "If I would have known this was going to happen, I could have said, 'O.K., so this is the case. This is who I am, and I'm black and this is why.'"

Despite the controversy, Dolezal says she has been in touch with some of the people she wishes she could get a do-over with. She says that in the last few weeks she's been in contact with members of the local chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., where she served as president for just over five months. Most of the interaction, she says, has been with the older members in the black community who continue to reach out to check on her.

"It's been really interesting because a lot of people have been supportive within the N.A.A.C.P., but then there's also some awkwardness because I went from being president to not-president," she says. "I'm kind of just keeping a little bit of distance so that Naima can get in her flow of leadership. It's actually hard because I think there's a little coldness from her, which is hard to deal with for me, to feel like she doesn't trust me as much now or something. I don't know."

Naima Quarles-Burnley took over as president of the N.A.A.C.P. in June, and earlier this month told Spokane's *Spokesman-Review*, "I feel that people of all races can be allies and advocates, but you can't portray that you have lived the experience of a particular race that you aren't part of."

When I ask Dolezal if she feels her dishonesty about her race hurt the organization or other race-related initiatives in the area, she accepts some of the responsibility but also quickly deflects blame.

"Yeah, I mean taking away my ability to lead in the community by questioning my integrity or my character or whatever really hit all of those things really hard," she says. "Everything I do is connected to other people, so I don't know how to assess the damage other than within my own mind. I know what I was working on and different people and systems that I was engaged with, but I mean, I hope that people are jumping in and picking up the slack."

As she figures out where she'll land next, Dolezal says she is surviving on one of the skills she perfected as she attempted to build a black identity. At Eastern Washington University, she lectured on the politics and history of black hair, and she says she developed a passion for taking care of and styling black hair while in college in Mississippi. That passion is now what brings in income in the home she shares with Franklin. She says she has appointments for braids and weaves about three times a week. She says that a previous custody agreement with her ex-husband mandates she stays in the Spokane area, but that now her ex may approve a move given recent circumstances.

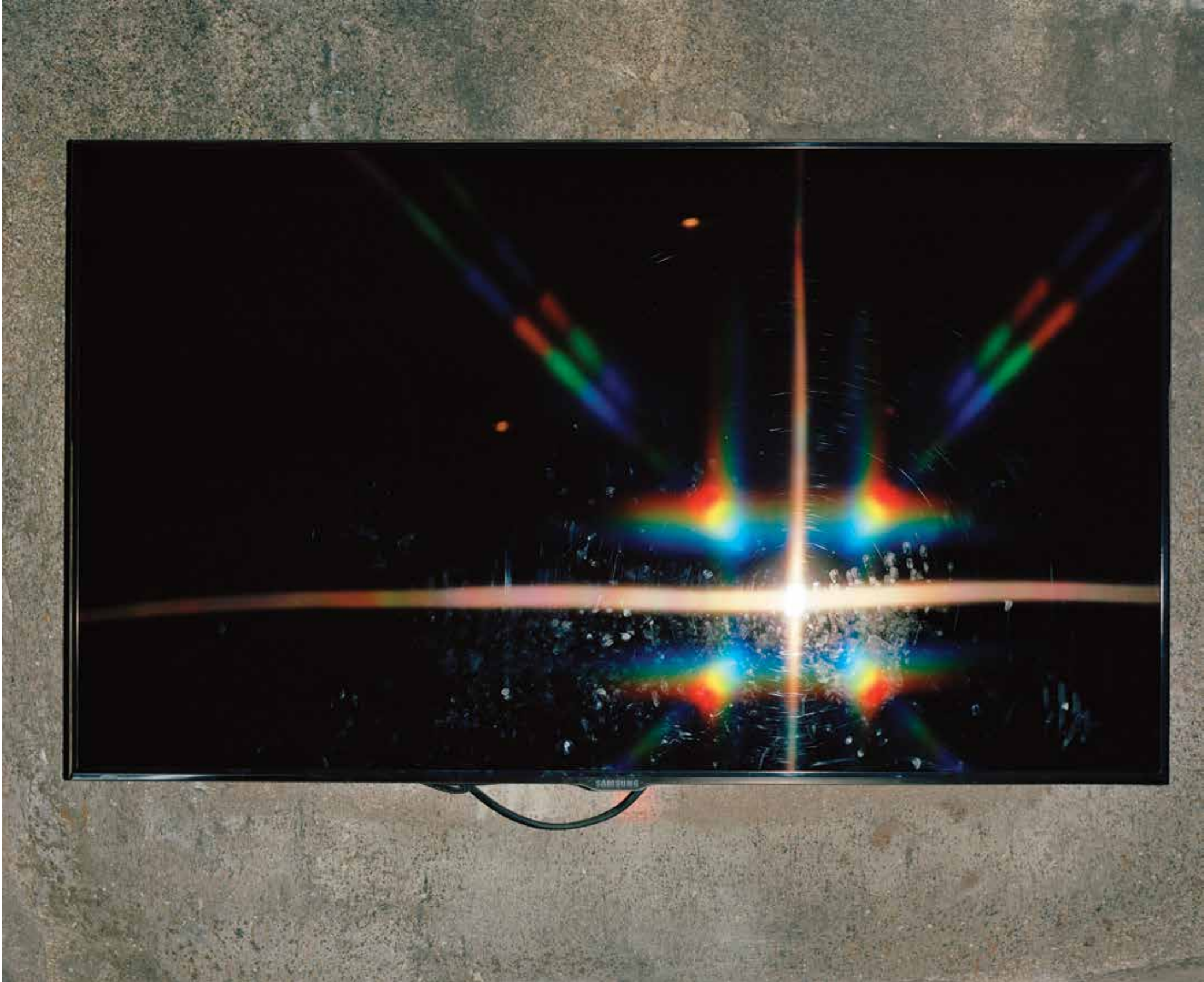
"I would like to write a book just so that I can send [it to] everybody

there as opposed to having to continue explaining,” she says. “After that comes out, then I’ll feel a little bit more free to reveal my life in the racial social-justice movement. I’m looking for the quickest way back to that, but I don’t feel like I am probably going to be able to re-enter that work with the type of leadership required to make change if I don’t have something like a published explanation.”

And so, nearly 40 days after that local news interview, Dolezal is still unapologetically identifying as a black woman, still sure that any confusion about her singular story can be explained, still sure she’ll be back in the movement as soon as people stop misunderstanding her.

Her cover’s blown, but that turned out not to matter. It was never a cover to her, anyway.









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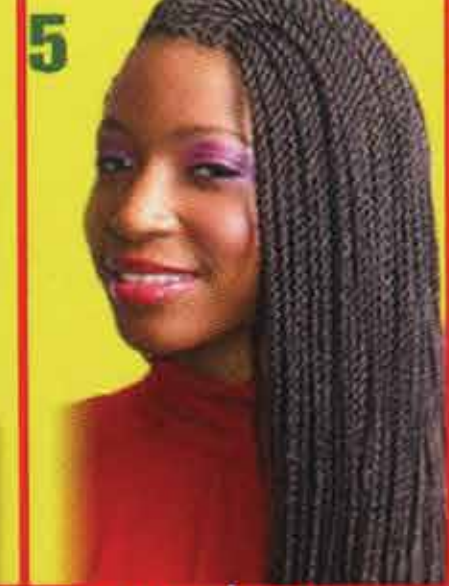
2
havanah



3
ghana corn rows



4
box braids



5
senegalese



6
senegalese



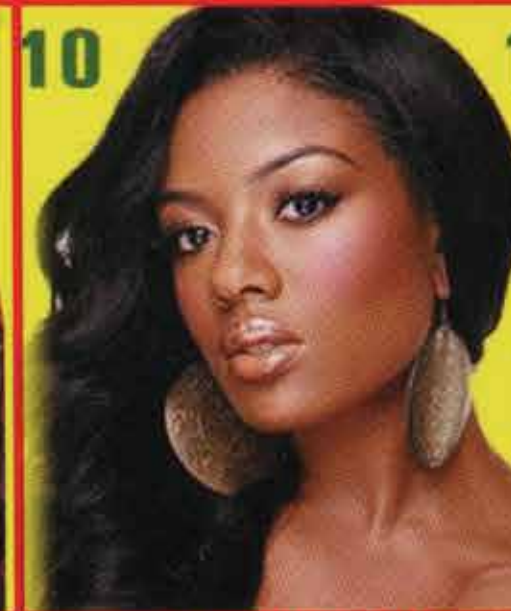
7
corn rows



8
goddess



9
tree braids



10
sew-in weave



11
corn rows



12
box braids



13



14



15



16



17



18







Meeting with Rachel Doležal

Rachel's home, Spokane, WA, October 22, 2016

My name is Rachel Doležal and I'm a mother, an artist, an activist, and an educator. In 2015 the media really tore into my life. Thousands of articles, memes, videos, and comments flooded the internet. It really devastated my life. I lost all four of my jobs. It ruined me financially and impacted me emotionally. I feel like the process of rebuilding is going to be very long and slow. I've tried to protect my three sons and my sister meanwhile, and do what it takes to get back to the life that I had. I don't deserve to be remembered as a liar or a fraud. I'm just being me. There's one human race and a race is a social construct. So what we're left with is ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and other forms of identity. I identify culturally as black, and that has been interpreted as an offence to the race worldview, as well as just both sides. To white supremacists, to black nationalists, to some white liberals who ultimately believe in race essentialism and believe that I'm treading on the color line per se in America. This is nothing new because, historically, a lot of people have actually passed as or identified as white, who had some degree of black ancestry, under the race worldview. But to go the other way has been seen as taboo and unexplainable.

The media really attacked me on a very personal level. They alleged that my entire life was essentially a lie. That my claim to be black was fake, inauthentic and was some kind of fraud. They attached almost every aspect of my life to that narrative and accused me of being a chronic liar and a psychopath. That's not true. It seemed like there was a mob mentality on social media. People mocked me for every part of my physical being; from my hair to my nose to my lips, my skin color, my body type. I was pregnant at the time, so it was hard, as a woman, to be teased and bullied. Self-esteem is kind of an issue when you're pregnant too.

I'm just being me, I've been a black hairstylist for 22 years. I do my hair in either weave, dreads, braids, or curly, textured styles. That's the art form in hair that I am an expert in. It was misrepresented as cultural appropriation and I was told that I don't have the right to

style my hair as I choose. I get messages to just go away. My kids even got text messages saying, “Tell your mom to do the world a favor and jump off a bridge.” My very existence is an offence to people. That’s been really hard because I’m a good person and I really want to help people. I want to help my children and I want to help my sister. You know, I want to be able to feel beautiful myself and have an empowered life on my own terms. To be self-determined, to create for myself, define myself and speak for myself, while not being created for, defined and spoken for by others. So I’ve taught my kids to not back down, to fight for your rights to live and to be true to yourself. I’m continuing to fight for that. Somedays it’s really hard, but I won’t give up.

I was born to white parents but I identify as black. All my positions were damaged and I lost all my jobs. I had been working as quarterly faculty for Eastern Washington University for almost seven years and was the president for the Spokane NAACP and was also the chair of the Office of Police Ombudsman Commission, which is a long name for the head of civilian oversight for civilian law enforcement – essentially, keeping the police accountable. I was leading the Black Lives Matter movement here in Spokane, leading protests, rallies and marches. I was writing for The Inlander, a local paper, and The Black Lens, a black newspaper that started in 2015. When I lost all those jobs I had no savings; nothing financially to fall back on. I tried to sell my art, braid hair, it really financially destroyed me. I had gone from being this celebrated leader in the black community, locally and even regionally, fighting for human rights, to the point where I’d become a target for a lot of the white supremacist groups here. It was really hard for me, but also for my kids, who lived through all of it too, and knew first hand what had happened. They were being attacked on their cellphones and on social media. I was called a trans, n-word, c-word, b-word, and all kinds of expletives per gender and race. Some new ones were apparently just made up for me, because of my identity.

When I say that I identify as black, I say I identify as black culturally and in a sense of pan-African identity, because I acknowledge and pay homage to our African ancestors, which we all have. We all go back to a black mother. When I say that I identify as black I also mean philosophically, in a spiritual sense. And that’s how I feel, behave and

move in the world. I don’t think from a majority privileged white, rich perspective. My friends and my colleagues, and everybody I worked with knew the real me and when the media said that wasn’t the real me, people believed it and turned on me. Instead of saying that the media was betraying the public, they said that I had betrayed them. Some people say I was outed, that I was exposed, but I don’t feel like that’s what it was. If you’re outed it usually means that someone exposes you for what you really are and you’re trying to hide that. In my case, over a period of more than 30 years, I had really organically evolved into all of who I am, which is a complex plural identity structure. So it was more like being put in the closet than outed. Like being in a glass closet. It’s very surreal because people are then seeing me as something that I’m not and I’m trying to continue to be who I am.

The people who are standing up and supporting me, vouching, saying, “I’ve known her for 20 years, she’s black”, or “I’ve worked with her and there’s nobody who fights for the cause and is as committed as she is”, didn’t get their interviews aired. But anybody who attacked me, whatever they said was promoted. So it became an opportunity for people locally to achieve positions of power by attacking me. The people that were the most vocal against me actually got promotions and moved up in the social, political and economic tiers.

I’ve just been really committed to the process of rebuilding and circling back around to everything, remembering who I was before the big explosion hit. I got a call from Attallah Shabazz – Malcolm X’s oldest daughter – and she also encouraged me, “Think of who you were in May and how you felt, and don’t let this shape you.” There were really amazing people that did reach out: Karim-Abdul Jabbar, Whoopi Goldberg... There were people who supported me: Rihanna, the pop star, “She’s actually a little bit of a hero...” Even people from South Africa have said that my story is transitioning race around the world and they have written articles about me.

I really care about justice issues and that’s what I live for. To do the work of racial and social justice and education. I want to get back to that work, but it has to be very strategic and almost invisible. Like the time I joined the Braiding Freedom movement by request of its leader, Isis Brantley, who has fought 20 years to free braiders, lockers

and twisters from the oppressive cosmetology licensing laws. She asked me to come down for the annual parade and festival, and people boycotted it because I was there. I feel that if I'm visible I'm a liability to the cause, and I'm a liability to anybody I'm around. It's really hard to live and feel like even the people you love the most, might be better without you. I'm fighting to atone for that, to make up for what damage has been done, to offset it enough to where I can be an asset and a benefit to people, my kids and my sister. It's just going to be a long process. I don't know how long it will take but I've been writing a book and I hope people will hear my story. That's the only way: all the interviews or any of the media opportunities were not really opportunities, they were just for peoples' laughs and entertainment, and to further play out the controversy. So I stepped back from media and stopped doing interviews and it became very clear that I can't tell my whole story in ten minutes, so it has to be in book form.

I think that, ultimately, we are the expert on who we are as a person and nobody else can really tell you who you are. Even if who you are doesn't fit into the boundaries of society in the decades that you're living, you still have to proceed in being yourself in order to really truly live. To be forced to identify as somebody I don't feel I am, feels like death to me. So, I'm choosing to live and kind of 'fight for my right to be here' and to find a way to support my kids. Maybe in 10 or 20 years, this all won't be a big deal. The first one that is a pioneer per se, publicly in regard to an identity, tends to take a lot of blows and gets chopped up by society. I never really meant to start a movement, I was just being myself and living my life. But now, I think it will be easier for other people in the future, people who maybe have some kind of plural identity that doesn't fit into categories ascribed by society.

Hopefully it's a chance for everybody to re-evaluate their ideas of race. The fact that I've transitioned, that for part of my life I was seen and treated by others as white, and that for the last 20 years I've been seen and treated as either biracial, black or undetermined, depending on who's doing the viewing, is kind of a unique story. A unique experience. So I do feel like a bridge. I don't have a place where I fit. But it doesn't mean that I don't have a real sense of self. It maybe is a little rare, but it's still real.







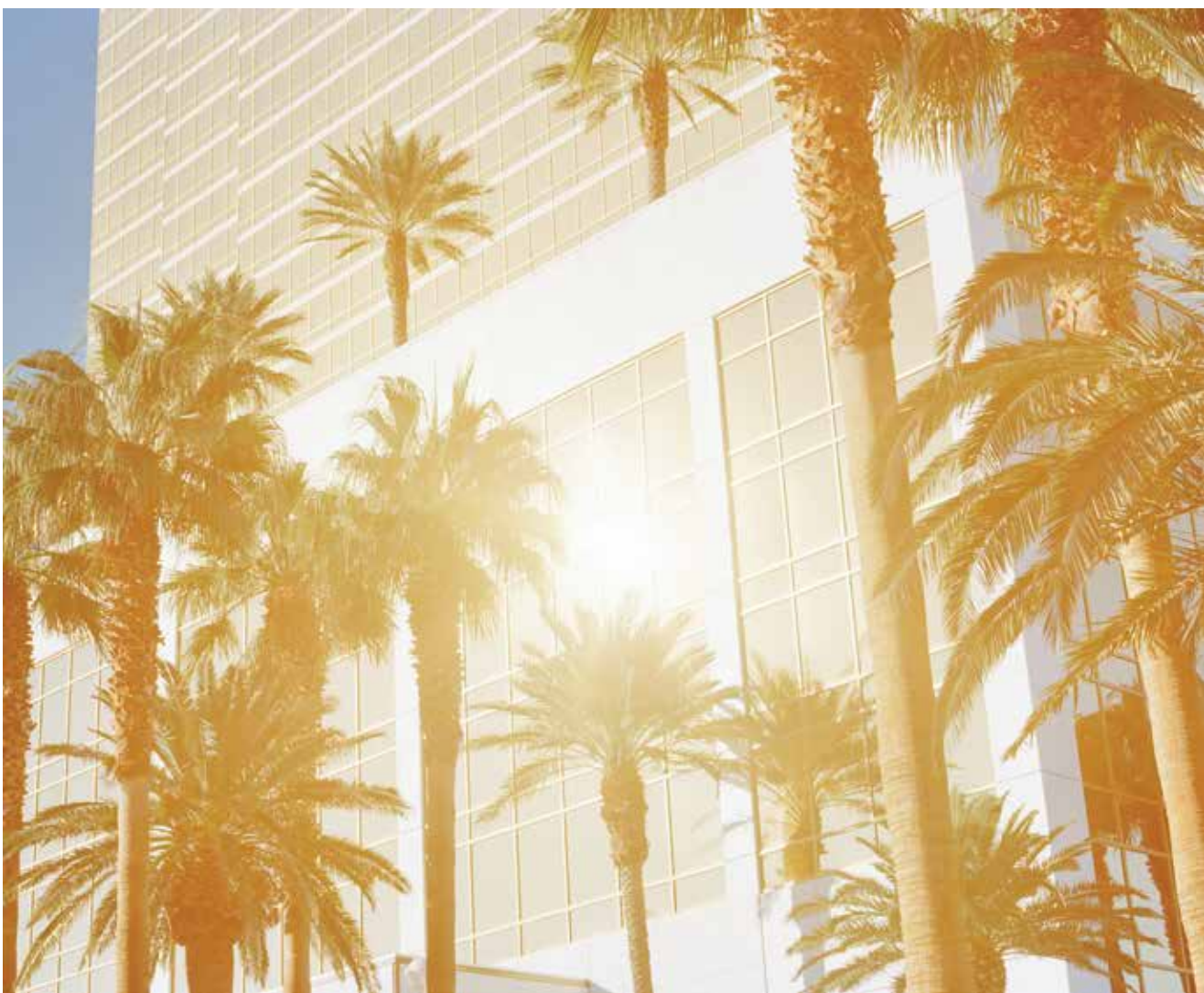






VIRGINIA 13 ELECTORAL VOTES
TOO CLOSE TO CALL
48%
47%
HISTORY OF DOING THIS, WE KNOW WHERE THIS IS HEADED BUT, NOW, RUMP
1,559,291
5,763
1,553,528

Relaxation
Nail Spa





A portrait of Kevin Spacey as President Francis J. Underwood by Jonathan Yeo presented at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. amongst other presidential portraits at a temporary exhibition in 2016.
















An atomic bomb was accidentally dropped on Florence yesterday from a B47 – but without the deadly warhead that could have laid waste this city of 30,000. It landed 100 yards from the residence of Walter Bill Gregg. The Gregg house was shattered. Six other houses and a church were damaged. Six persons were injured, none seriously, by the conventional TNT explosive which triggers the atomic bomb. The blast shook an area two miles wide in the Mars Bluff community, five miles east of here.

Leominster Daily Enterprise, March 12, 1958









The remains of the crater are still visible at the site of the atomic bomb accident at Mars Bluff. Its high explosive trigger detonated on impact, making a crater as large as 35 feet deep and 70 feet wide, which is now marked by a signpost.











The New York Times, March 11, 2006

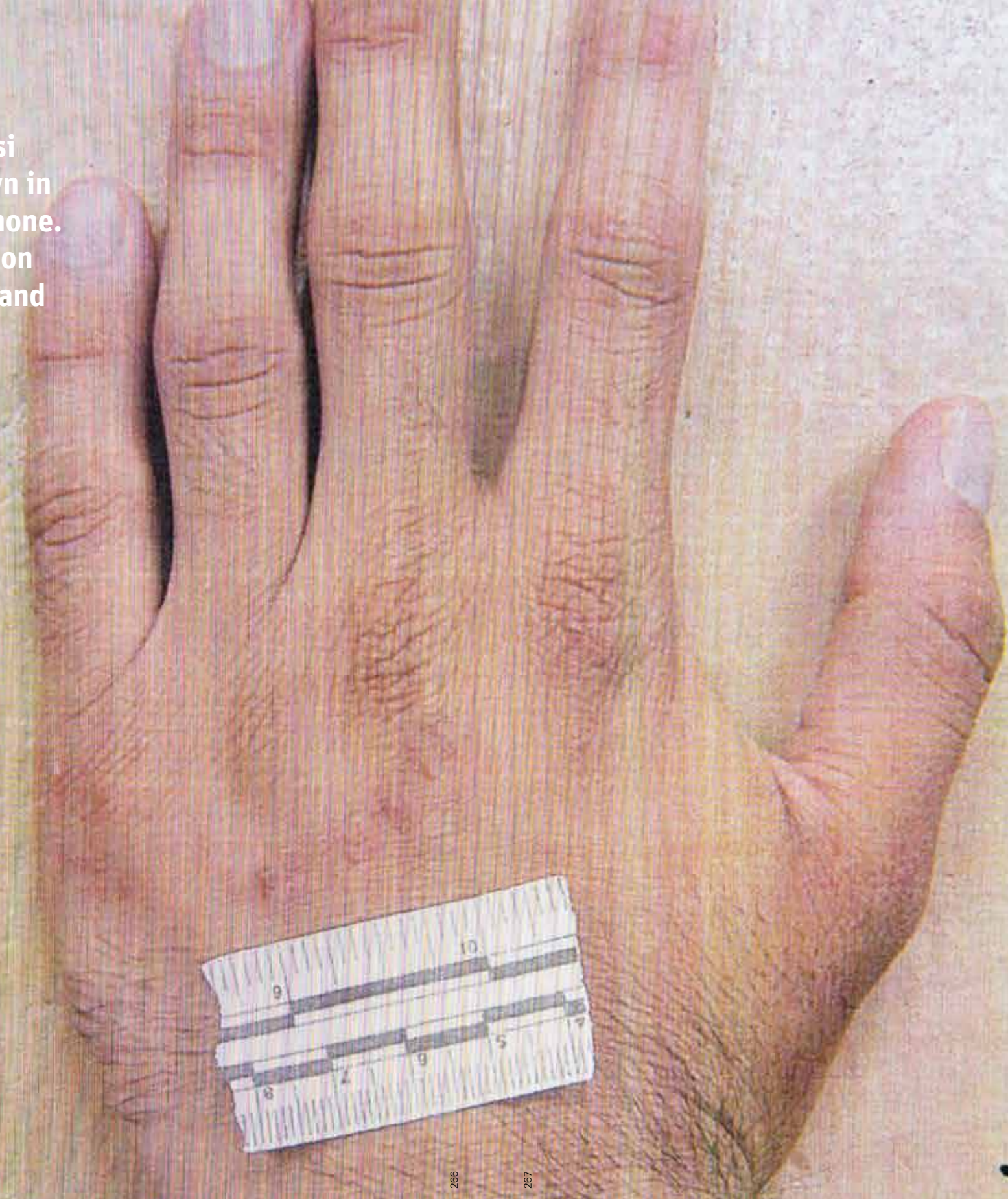
SYMBOL OF ABU GHRAIB SEEKS TO SPARE OTHERS HIS NIGHTMARE

Mr. Qaissi, 43, was prisoner 151716 of Cellblock 1A. The picture of him standing hooded atop a cardboard box, attached to electrical wires with his arms stretched wide in an eerily prophetic pose, became the indelible symbol of the torture at Abu Ghraib.



"I know one thing," Mr. Qaissi said yesterday, breaking down in tears when reached by telephone. "I wore that blanket, I stood on that box, and I was wired up and electrocuted."

The New York Times, March 18, 2006



I-123-77

photo: United States Department of Defense





Cited as Symbol of Abu Ghraib, Man Admits He Is Not in Photo

The New York Times, March 18, 2006

In the summer of 2004, a group of former detainees of Abu Ghraib prison filed a lawsuit claiming that they had been the victims of the abuse captured in photographs that incited outrage around the world.

One, Ali Shalal Qaissi, soon emerged as their chief representative, appearing in publications and on television in several countries to detail his suffering. His prominence made sense, because he claimed to be the man in the photograph that had become the international icon of the Abu Ghraib scandal: standing on a cardboard box, hooded, with wires attached to his outstretched arms. He had even emblazoned the silhouette of that image on business cards.

The trouble was, the man in the photograph was not Mr. Qaissi. Military investigators had identified the man on the box as a different detainee who had described the episode in a sworn statement immediately after the photographs were discovered in January 2004, but then the man seemed to go silent.

Mr. Qaissi had energetically filled the void, traveling abroad with slide shows to argue that abuse in Iraq continued, as head of a group he called the Association of Victims of American Occupation Prisons.

The New York Times profiled him last Saturday in a front-page article; in it, Mr. Qaissi insisted he had never sought the fame of his iconic status. Mr. Qaissi had been interviewed on a number of earlier occasions, including by PBS’s “Now,” Vanity Fair, Der Spiegel and in the Italian news media as the man on the box.

This week, after the online magazine Salon raised questions about the identity of the man in the photograph, Mr. Qaissi and his lawyers insisted he was telling the truth.

Certainly, he was at Abu Ghraib, and appears with a hood over his head in some photographs that Army investigators seized from the computer belonging to Specialist Charles Graner, the soldier later convicted of being the ringleader of the abuse.

However, he now acknowledges he is not the man in the specific photograph he printed and held up in a portrait that accompanied the Times article. But he and his lawyers maintain that he was photographed in a similar position and shocked with wires and that he is the one on his business card. The Army says it believes only one prisoner was treated in that way.

“I know one thing,” Mr. Qaissi said yesterday, breaking down in tears when reached by telephone. “I wore that blanket, I stood on that box, and I was wired up and electrocuted.”

Susan Burke, a lawyer in Philadelphia who is representing Mr. Qaissi

and other former prisoners in a lawsuit against civilian interrogators and translators at Abu Ghraib, said that Mr. Qaissi had been abused in the same way as the man in the photo. “The sad fact is that there is not only one man on the box,” she said.

Using a name that Mr. Qaissi is often called, she said, “Haj Ali is but one of many victims of the torture by Graner and the others.”

In the interview for the article, Mr. Qaissi pointed to his deformed hand and said it matched the hand in the photograph. A close look at the photograph, however, is inconclusive.

Whether he was forced to stand on a box and photographed is not clear, but evidence suggests that he adopted the identity of the iconic man on the box, the very symbol of Abu Ghraib, well after he left the prison.

Records confirm that Mr. Qaissi became inmate 151716 sometime after the prison opened in June 2003, but do not give firm dates; Mr. Qaissi, a 43-year-old former Baath Party member and neighborhood mayor in Baghdad, said he arrived at Abu Ghraib in October 2003 and was released in March 2004, two months after the Army began an investigation into the abuse.

And he suffered mistreatment and humiliation at the hands of the same people who photographed the man on the box: photographs investigators seized show him forced into a crouch, identifiable by his mangled hand, with the nickname guards gave him – “The Claw” – scrawled in black marker across his orange jumpsuit.

But if he was the hooded man on the box, he did not mention it on several key occasions in the first months after the scandal broke.

In the spring of 2004, Mr. Qaissi approached Muhammad Hamid al-Moussawi, the deputy director of the Human Rights Organization of Iraq, and proposed that the men set up a group for prisoners of the occupation, Mr. Moussawi said this week. Yet Mr. Qaissi never claimed at the time that he had been the man in the photograph, Mr. Moussawi recalled.

A journalist who interviewed Mr. Qaissi three times that May and June about what happened at Abu Ghraib similarly said he never mentioned the pose or the photograph. The journalist, Gert Van Langendonck, said Mr. Qaissi mentioned the other cruelties he described in the Times profile.

A lawsuit Mr. Qaissi joined, filed on July 27, 2004, also made no allegation that he was shocked with wires or forced to stand on a box. That allegation appeared only on an amended version of a complaint he later joined, filed last month, which said he had been forced to stand on the box and fell off from the shocks of the electrocution: “They repeated this at least five times.”

Another man had already been publicly identified as the man on the box in May 2004, when documents including logbooks and sworn statements from detainees and soldiers were leaked to The Times.

On May 22, 2004, The Times quoted the testimony of a detainee, Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh: “Then a tall black soldier came and put electrical wires on my fingers and toes and on my penis, and I had a bag over my head. Then he was saying, ‘Which switch is on for electricity?’”

Specialist Sabrina Harman, one of the soldiers later convicted of abuse, identified the man by his nickname, Gilligan, in her statement.

She left some room to believe that others were subjected to the same treatment. “The wires part,” she said, was her idea, but she said Specialist Graner and Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick II had forced detainees to stand on a box to stay awake, and did so at the request of military intelligence officials. Abu Ghraib photographs show more than one example of a hooded man forced to stand on boxes.

But Chris Grey, a spokesman for the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command, said that the military believed that Mr. Faleh had been the only prisoner subjected to the treatment shown in the photo. “To date, and after a very thorough criminal investigation, we have neither credible information, nor reason to believe, that more than one incident of this nature occurred,” he said.

Mr. Qaissi’s lawyer, Ms. Burke, countered, “We do not trust the torturers.”

Mr. Qaissi seems to have first begun identifying himself as the hooded man in the fall of 2004, by which point he had started his prisoners’ group out of a politically charged mosque in Baghdad.

In an article in the February 2005 issue of Vanity Fair, Donovan Webster identified Mr. Qaissi as Haj Ali, the likely man on the box, based on an extensive investigation of military records. Soon, Mr. Qaissi was featured in numerous profiles, including in Der Spiegel, reprinted by Salon, as well as on the PBS current affairs program “Now,” where he described being shocked: “It felt like my eyeballs were coming out of my sockets.”

With his soft voice and occasionally self-deprecating humor, he has impressed interviewers as affable and credible. He told his story with a level of detail that separated it from that of many others.

Most of his assertions and details could be confirmed, Mr. Webster and others stress. In his three-hour interview with The Times, Mr. Qaissi did not veer from reported details and appeared confident in his discussion, punctuating his story with bitter laughter and occasionally, tears. But he never raised the possibility that another man may have also been photographed in the same pose.

Human rights workers were compelled by his story, as well. Reporting the Saturday article, The Times relied in part on their statements that he could well be the hooded man, as well as on prison records and interviews with friends and his lawyers, who say they have Mr. Qaissi’s blanket, the same one, they said, draped over the man in the photograph. Army officials at the time refused to confirm or refute Mr. Qaissi’s claims, citing privacy protections in the Geneva Convention.

Abdel Jabbar al-Azzawi, who now lives in Baghdad and says he was in the prison with both Mr. Qaissi and the man named Gilligan and has joined the lawsuit, says he saw Mr. Qaissi wearing the blanket fashioned into a poncho depicted in the photograph, though he did not see the photographs being taken.

Mr. Qaissi’s lawyers also stress that the iconic photograph is not the basis of his case. In court papers, he also says he was punched, kicked,

hit with a stick and chained to his cell while his captors poured cold water over his naked body.

Meanwhile, it is not clear what happened to the real hooded man, Mr. Faleh. An Army spokesman said he was released from American custody in January 2004. Tribal leaders, and the manager of a brick factory next to the address where prison records say he lived, said they had never heard the name. Besides, they said, detainees often make up identities when they are imprisoned. Mr. Qaissi's attorneys said they have not attempted to search for him.







Meeting with Ali Alqaisi

Ali's home, Berlin, Germany, November 22, 2017

(Translation from Arabic by Orwa Ajjoub)

My name is Ali Alqaisi and I was born in 1962. Before the American invasion of Iraq I was an activist working mainly with peace organizations. I am pretty much influenced by Gandhi's way of resistance. I thought that if Gandhi could liberate his country, which is five or ten times bigger than Iraq and has a larger population than Iraq, than why not Iraq? I'm using the word invasion because the United Nations called it an invasion. This invasion was carried out without the permission of the UN or the Security Council. Even the Pope, I quote here, told George Bush that he "would go to Iraq without God's blessing".

The first act of resistance after the invasion was an attempt to break the media siege posed by the United States on the foreign journalists in Iraq, especially after they shelled the Sheraton Hotel and killed a Spanish journalist. My first peaceful act of resistance was to visit the international journalists who were allocated in the al-Hamra compound. They were used to getting their news sources from an American officer who came every day between 9 and 10 pm to provide them with the news that the American Army wanted to publish at the time. We used to hear that there were journalists from all over the world in Iraq at the time, however, what we saw on TV did not reflect that.

I went to the compound and offered those journalists cars and security because it was a failing state and no one could protect them. I took them on a whole-day trip where they witnessed the magnitude of the catastrophe of Iraq. They saw corpses, mass destruction and prohibited weaponry. In addition to ruins of museums and governmental institutions. Taking those journalists on that trip was a breach of the American policy. The Americans were not comfortable with what I had done. I was told that the officer who used to provide the news to those journalists was very upset and angry. This is the real reason behind my detention.

As for the detention, I don't want to talk too much about it, but I can tell you there were two phases. The first was detention and the other was transferring detainees to solitary confinement. The photos that were spread all over the world showed this. The moment a detainee enters the detention center they prepare him for what they call a 'welcome party'. My welcome party lasted for five days. I suffered different kinds of torture. First there was loud music and noise, electrocution and then there were wooden tools which they would stick somewhere that is kind of sensitive and caused bleeding. It was serious torture. I was naked for fifteen days before an officer granted me a blanket. When a detainee gets a blanket everybody else congratulates him. We used to hold the blanket and rub it against the wall so we could create a kind of hole so we could wear it on our body. Then the interrogation sessions started.

First, it was me in the picture. I stood in this position and one of the photos is of me. But it was not only me who faced such a situation. One day I was exposed to electric shocks. I bit my tongue and I started bleeding from my mouth. They summoned a 'doctor' for me. He put me down on the floor, put his heel over my jaw and poured some water over my mouth and said, "It's okay, you can continue." He was a bad doctor. That doesn't mean that everyone there or all the doctors were bad. There was one who was really good to us. I wish that one day he will hear my voice and know that I send him my greetings. This doctor used to wear tiny glasses and I knew later that he gave a testimony which was with us, not against us. I had the bathtub removed here in my apartment because seeing it gives me anxiety. I've been waterboarded seventeen times.

Usually, the security companies prepare the detainees before the interrogation session. It's basically a one-day preparation, which includes stress positions and sleep and food deprivation. They prepared me for one day and then I was escorted to the interrogation session. We know that the interrogation sessions lasted between 10 to 20 hours and the interrogators changed from time to time. The first question was "We give you freedom of speech so why do you reject our presence in Iraq?" At that time, I had been deprived of urination for one day. Spontaneously, I answered, "Yes, you came to support us with freedom of speech, but now we want freedom of urination. In

Saddam's time we didn't have freedom of speech but we had that." The translator laughed, and the interrogator was angry with him. He kicked him out. At that time, I was uncovered but when I said this, they covered me. Then the interrogator summoned the translator again and asked me the same question. Without me saying anything, the translator replied with the same answer I had already given him. Then there was a moment of awkwardness and the head interrogators laughed. Usually they would send us out of the room for a while, but the interrogators left the room instead. They came back and uncovered me. They wanted to start with the same question but they didn't and just ended the session. For a while, whenever I saw this interrogator we looked at each other and laughed.

After I was released I started the organization 'Association of Victims of the US-Iranian Occupation Prisons in Iraq', which focusses on detention victims and their families. When the photos came out to the public, I had been working on educating people and telling them about the catastrophic situation in those prisons. I thought the photos would have enhanced what I was working on the whole time. I expected the Americans to help me because I was absorbing people's anger by conferences, courts and media coverage. We started to open offices for our organizations and expanded our work. Intellectuals and people from different backgrounds had found our non-violent resistance work a good tool. We had great success. But the militias started to break into our headquarters and bases. These militias were affiliated with the Americans or working with parties that were coordinating with Americans. Al-Qaeda groups and other extremist groups considered me an enemy because I was calling for non-violent resistance. I faced four assassination attempts from al-Qaeda.

My strength was that I was calling for a peaceful resistance, a non-violent one. This had mobilized a lot of good people around me. However, I reached the point where I needed protection because al-Qaeda and other militias were against me, as well as my traditional enemy; the Americans. It was difficult for me to get protection. I needed hundreds of men. Eventually I realized it was better for me to leave Iraq in order to conduct my work freely because my relatives and I had faced a lot of threats. I decided to leave. I moved to Jordan with fifty dollars in my pocket and had to face more than thirteen

embassies and more than twenty-three security and intelligence apparatuses from Jordan and other neighboring countries, in addition to businessmen and affiliates with security companies like Blackwater and others. I had to face this all alone, no army nor government to protect me, other than some shy support from organizations and activists who defended me. In spite of all these difficulties, I managed to open an office in Jordan.

I started to contact every organization and everyone working on documenting the breaching of human rights in Iraq. I started to record all these incidents. In addition to contacting NGO's and media outlets, we were launching fairs and expositions. If an organization needed anything related to human rights violations, our office was the main provider of this information. I felt that I needed to expand my work by talking not only to Iraqi detainees but also to Iraqis in neighboring countries. We started to work with almost every country in the Middle East, but we faced huge battles with the security companies. I never accuse the Americans or even the American army. When I talk about 'those people', I mainly mean the security companies. I always wanted to denounce those companies and tell the American people that they are taking their money and that what they are doing will create revenge acts against them and a lot of innocent people. Those companies are nothing but mercenaries. They take American people's money and do not care about the repercussions of their actions on America and the West. On the other hand, I wanted to tell the Iraqi people that Americans are not as bad as they think they are. There is a different dimension to this. I want to tell them that we have friends who are ready to defend our rights.

For the record, I was told by some activists and people that I trust, that I was a target because I transferred the cause of the detainees to the public. To be honest, I had expected a bigger media campaign of discrediting me after the photo had been published. Most of all, it was the Americans who denounced these violations, starting with an American journalist and the presenter of '60 Minutes', who were an important part of making these acts public.










Specter is a genetic duplicate and like his donor, he is being trained as an explosives detection dog at Shallow Creek Kennels in Sharpville, Pennsylvania. He is the third clone that the kennel has trained. The other two are now working with federal SWAT units.



A photograph of a white Chevrolet Caprice van parked on a dirt lot. The van is positioned in the foreground, angled slightly towards the left. Behind it is a tall, white, two-story building with several windows, some of which have metal bars. To the right of the van is a blue corrugated metal fence. In the background, there are power lines and a clear blue sky with some clouds. The overall scene appears to be an industrial or storage area.

It wasn't the white van. Or the white box truck. It was a Chevrolet Caprice, the favored undercover car of police departments across the country. After arresting Gulf War veteran John Allen Muhammad, 41, and John Lee Malvo, 17, investigators said their blue, 1990 sedan was the vehicle from which they killed 10 and wounded three.

CBS, October 25, 2002

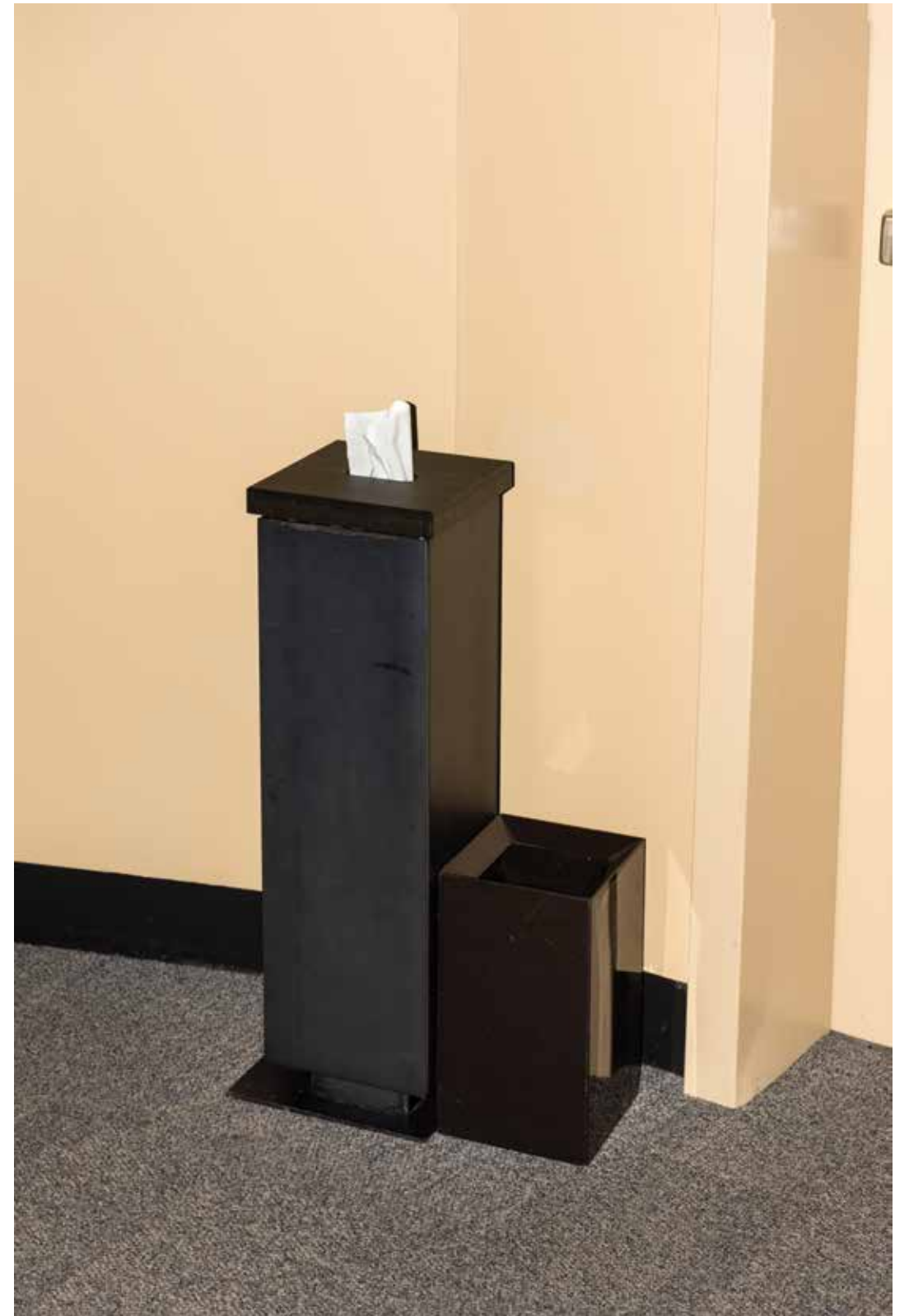









Pedestals with tissue dispensers
are placed throughout the
exhibition rooms of the National
September 11 Memorial & Museum
at Ground Zero, New York.



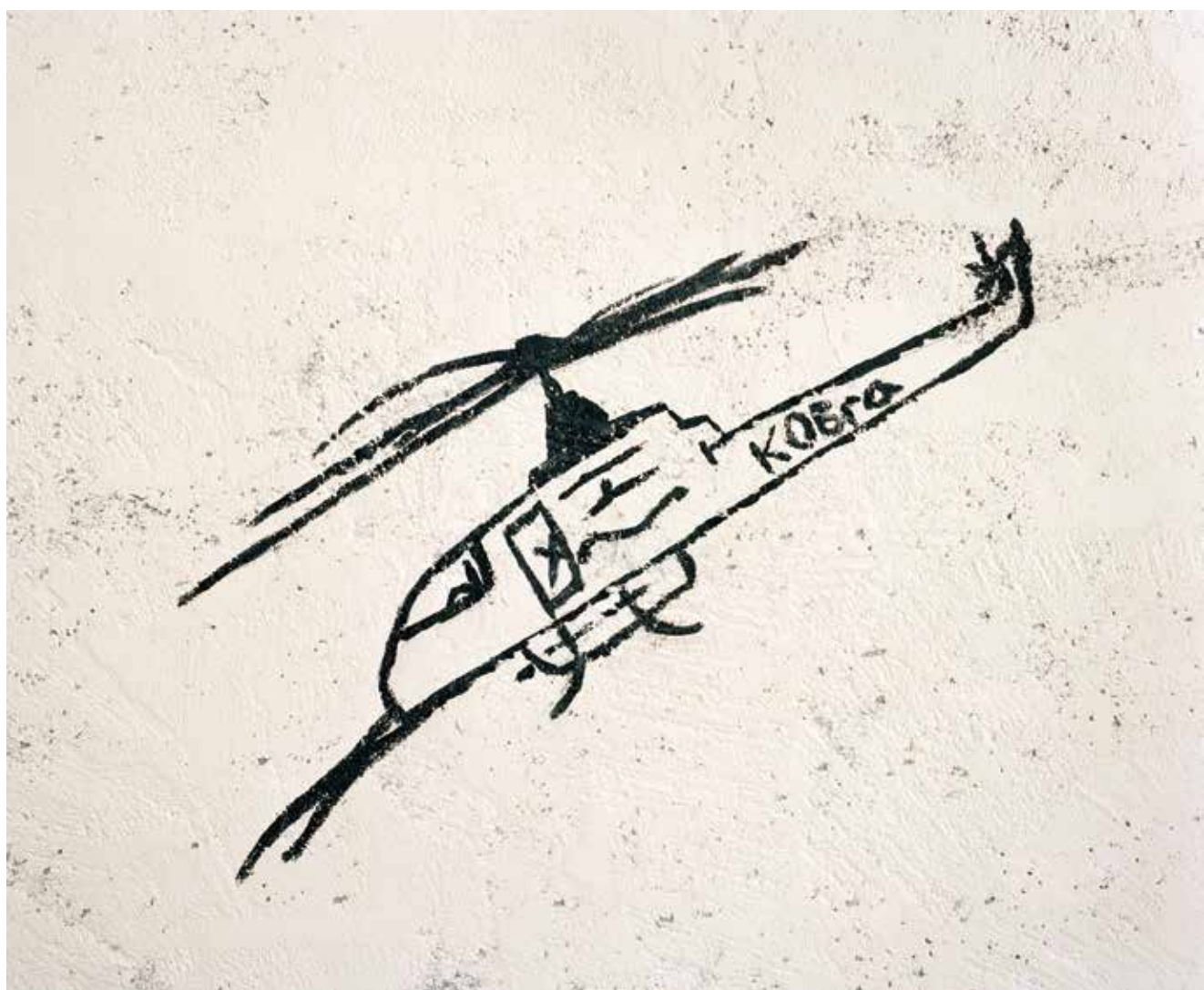






"I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I now prefer gray skies," Zubair, a 13-year-old boy from North Waziristan, Pakistan, said in a testimony before Congress in October 2013. "The drones do not fly when the skies are gray... When the sky brightens, drones return and we live in fear. It's something that a 2-year-old would know... We hear the noise 24 hours a day."

Salon, February 15, 2015









COLOPHON

Max Pinckers
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Performances by Arielle Beth Klein, Bryan Lewis, Leah Serinsky
and Neil Redfield in Brooklyn, New York, October 2016, and
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Angeles, California, November 2016

Site-specific installation by Gauthier Oushoorn and Sam
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HoGent

“No matter how precautionary and punctilious the photographer is in
arranging everything that is placed before the camera, the inability of the lens
to discriminate will ensure a substrate or margin of excess, a subversive code
present in every photographic image that makes it open and available to other
readings and uses.”

Christopher Pinney, Photography’s Other Histories, p.6, Duke University Press, 2003

