

Urbanite November 2015 Issue 100: Truth, Reconciliation, and Baltimore

Tracy Ward



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Urbanite November 2015 Issue 100: Truth, Reconciliation, and Baltimore Tracy Ward For nine years, Urbanite led an open and extended conversation about Baltimore--about its history, its hope, and some of its most persistent problems. The magazine closed in 2012, but in November, just weeks before the first trial examining the death of Freddie Gray begins, Urbanite will return for one special issue devoted to April's unrest and its aftermath. "Baltimore's been in headlines around the world since April," said David Dudley, special-issue editor-in-chief. "But as someone who lives here, I wanted more. I wanted to know what people were thinking--and doing about what happened--because so much is brewing right now. You write and report differently when you have a real stake in the story. You can't help it. That's the attitude we all brought to this." The theme of the issue is truth and reconciliation. In the aftermath of long-simmering, mass injustices, countries around the world have used truth commissions to acknowledge grievances and pave the way for restitution. The most famous example is South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formed to reckon with brutal, racist, state-sponsored violence under apartheid. With this model in mind, former Baltimore Sun columnist and Urbanite contributing editor Lionel Foster interviewed local black nationalists; a veteran civil rights activist; Sherrilyn Ifill, head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund; and a member of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to ask if Baltimore is ready to grapple with some of the ugliest facts of its past. In other feature stories, Pultizer Prize-winning journalist E.R. Shipp writes about the heyday of black political capital in the city ands sparks of new leadership. And in "The Running Man," Michael Anft reports on what made Freddie Gray's life unique yet also painfully and tiresomely typical for young men in Baltimore. But much of the issue is filled by residents, with their best ideas on progress and reform. "For me, one of the most fascinating parts of the riot and protest coverage was watching Baltimoreans wrestle their identities back from media outlets, who mostly seemed interested in watching the city burn," said Foster. "This issue is an extension of their work. We hope they recognize themselves in it."

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