

I am hopeful that this might be a turning point in the United States

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the November 25, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the Arts in Bethlehem* 

Kimberly Schwartz is a student studying Sociology & Anthropology at Moravian College. She is passionate about criminal justice reform, equal rights, feminism, and climate change. This piece was originally written for a course at Moravian titled Writing as Activism, taught by Dr. Joyce Hinnefeld, in which students are encouraged to consider topics such as mass incarceration, migration, and how to change the world through writing.

What I Know, Right Now, About Incarceration in The United States:

A History of Learning Through Experiences and Exposure

part 3

According to the most recent data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Statistical Briefing Book, 41% of juveniles in correctional facilities are black (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2017).

It is the summer of 2014, and I have just turned 19 years old. Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager who was around my age, was recently shot to death by a police officer in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, and protests are being met with a militarized police force. I am watching the chaos unfold on the TV at my father's house. I am disgusted and appalled, and I can't help remembering the way my friend Trevor was treated by an officer all those years ago. I am hopeful that this might be a turning point in the United States. That society might awaken to systemic racism and police brutality. This is the summer I begin to conduct my own research regarding mass incarceration and the racial and ethnic disparities present in the criminal justice system. In this moment, I am determined to do what I can to educate myself and help expose others to the oppression and violence people of a different skin color and from different socioeconomic backgrounds face at the hands of law enforcement and the larger criminal justice system. I am still ignorant and naive. I have much more to learn.

third part in a series . . .

The Bethlehem Gadfly