

Growing up in Media circa 1950-1960
By Juanita Edwards

Growing up in Media, I had many pleasant memories. It was a small, walking town as we walked to school, and often walked back home for lunch before racing back to school again. As a teen, we could go across the street for lunch, to the pizza or steak shop. Neighborhood children would gather at the Friends School playground after school and during the summer programs. Some summer nights you could hear the neighborhood boys harmonizing a '60s 'doo wop' song under the corner street lights—and they were good!

My neighborhood was predominantly Black and an extended family community. There was always a watchful eye of one of the neighborhood mothers who would dutifully report your action to your parents. It was a village. The north side of Media was home to a diverse Black community with Black doctors, a dentist, business owners, educators; it was a strong, family-oriented, civically-active, and faith-based community. Our family lived on the fringe of the neighborhood where many of the neighbors were white. Many of my playmates were white and we spent the day at each other's homes, riding bikes and playing sidewalk games. My mother was a local social justice advocate, perhaps not such a glorified title back then. It made me keenly aware of many of the disparities of our idyllic little town. Disparities like how my white friend, after a certain age, would have planned activities other than playing with me; swim clubs, sport teams, or no reason at all. There was the notorious Broomall Lake at the end of my block. Kids would walk by with their swimsuits and towels to go swimming; however, Blacks were not extended memberships to the swim club. Blacks scoffed at the exclusion and strangely accepted that it was fine going to the lake to fish or ice skate in winter. Ironically, in the 1920s my great-grandfather, Arthur Franklin, was a 'caretaker' at the lake and was charged to keep trespassers, his own, off the premises.

My mother, Mary Edwards was well-known in the community as an activist and was often solicited to help those who encountered prejudicial treatment at school, work or with police. She along with many in the community were members of groups seeking equality such as: NAACP, Media Civic League, The Media Friends, and Fellowship House. They sought equity from incidents such as when two Black women, seated at the Media Town House, had a waiter drop a note in their lap that said they don't serve coloreds. There were incidents of over-policing, disparate school discipline and hiring practices, watchful and suspicious shop owners, and a litany of issues not exclusive to that time. She later formed the Citizens-Community Task Force to combat the incidents of hate associated with the Ku Klux Klan when hate flyers were strewn on our lawns, when the Klan had a permit to march nearby, and when skin-heads beat a young man in Media. These incidents later prompted some to mock and revise the Media slogan "Everybody's Hometown"- 'Including the KKK.'

As a child about 9 years old, I recall sitting in the window of my bedroom, when I heard voices and commotion in the normally quiet neighborhood. With my face pressed against the window I could vaguely see the far corner, but through the trees and with aid of the streetlight, there was an discernible gathering and loud voices. I ran to tell my mother, who discovered that about 30 Black men had been arrested for demonstrating at a prominent politician's home. I later learned that trashmen were deputized to corral and arrest the Black protesters. They were herded into the Court House garage building which would serve as their inappropriate jail cell with no facilities for sanitation. The community quickly came together and picketed the building to ensure justice and humane treatment for these people. At the age of 9 It was my first protest. A prominent Black businesswoman, Eva Winter Johnson, mortgaged her property to post bail for these people. Her daughter, Eva Young, is a current member of Second Baptist Church.

Media was visibly an idyllic town with parks, restaurants, recreation, patriotic parades, good schools, even a trolley... all of the hometown charm. There were those who enjoyed the privilege and those who sought the same benefits that seemed at times to be exclusive.

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