

# CANDYMAN

THE OFFICIAL COMPANION GUIDE

A THEMATIC EXPLORATION

SAY  
IT





**THE OFFICIAL COMPANION GUIDE  
A THEMATIC EXPLORATION**

**MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS FROM CANDYMAN (2021).  
FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, SPECIFIC SCENE  
REFERENCES ARE MENTIONED TO ASSIST WITH THE  
THEME EXPLORATIONS IN THIS GUIDE.**

**OUR ONLY CHARGE TO YOU IS TO #TELLEVERYONE WHAT  
YOU LEARN HERE AND CONTINUE THOSE  
CONVERSATIONS FORWARD.**

THIS GUIDE IS A TOOL OF YOUR OWN MAKING. DO WITH IT AS YOU  
WISH. QUOTE IT. DEBATE IT. HIGHLIGHT IT. WRITE IN IT.  
DEVOUR THE RESOURCES.

THIS GUIDE GRANTS YOU ACCESS TO THE INNERMOST THOUGHTS  
OF EDUCATORS OF BLACK HISTORY, GENRE EXPERTS, AND THE  
HORROR-OBSESSED. WE'VE IMMERSSED OURSELVES IN THE  
RECLAMATION OF CANDYMAN AND WE HAVE QUITE A LOT TO SAY.

TELL EVERYONE.





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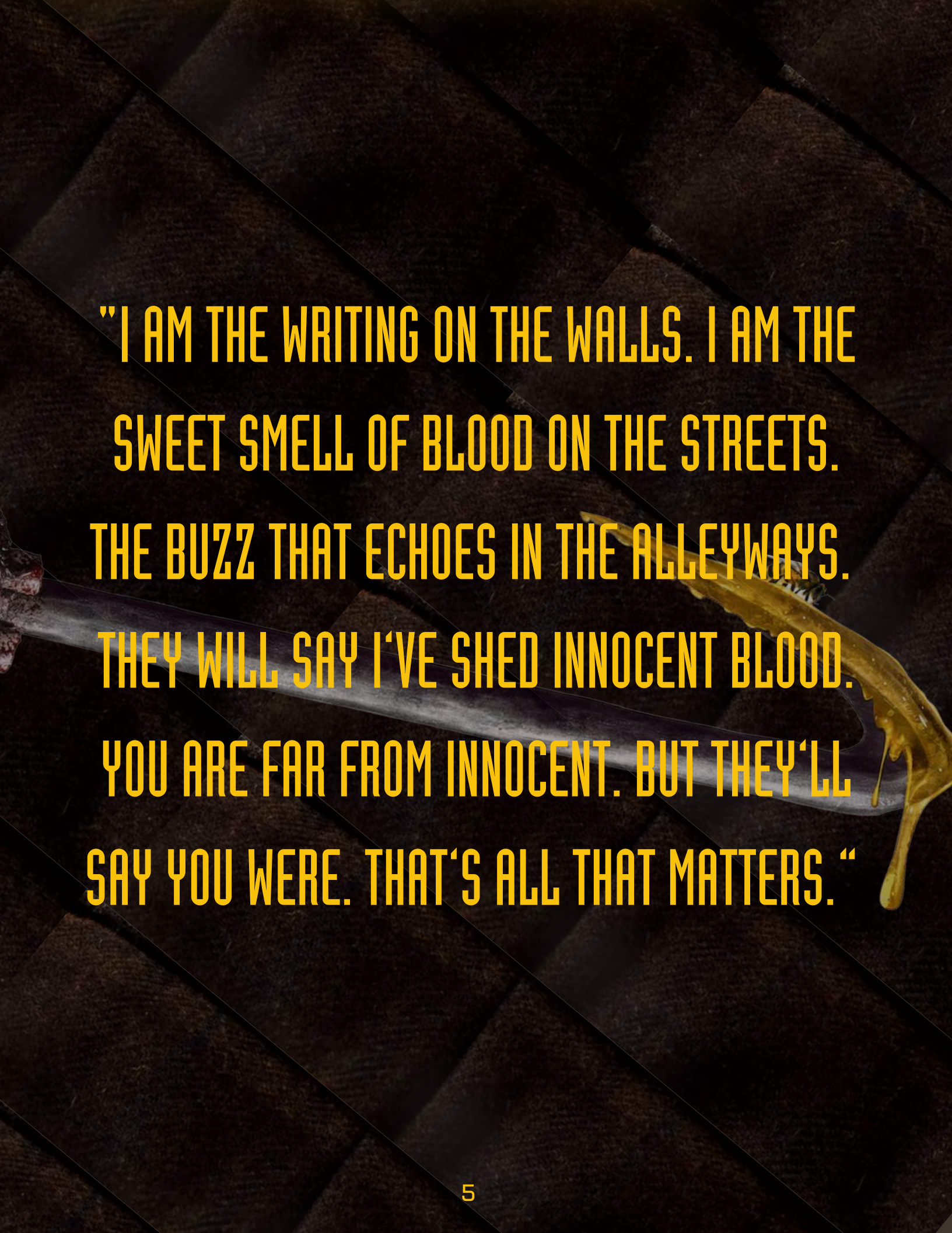
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"I AM THE WRITING ON THE WALLS. I AM THE  
SWEET SMELL OF BLOOD ON THE STREETS.  
THE BUZZ THAT ECHOES IN THE ALLEYWAYS.  
THEY WILL SAY I'VE SHED INNOCENT BLOOD.  
YOU ARE FAR FROM INNOCENT. BUT THEY'LL  
SAY YOU WERE. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS."





# "BLACK HISTORY & BLACK HORROR"

A FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR TANANARIVE DUE



# TANANARIVE DUE

Professor Tananarive Due is an American author, executive producer of *Horror Noire: A History of Black Horror*, and UCLA lecturer. She is best known as a film historian with expertise in Black horror.

Nia DaCosta's *CANDYMAN* could be titled *CANDYMAN: RECLAMATION*.

A reclamation of our story.  
A reclamation of our history.  
A reclamation of our trauma.

In adapting Clive Barker's short story "The Forbidden," which takes place in Liverpool as an examination of urban myths and classism, 1992's *CANDYMAN* transplanted the story to a struggling community in the United States, specifically Chicago's Cabrini-Green housing project.

The original adaptation also introduced a racially motivated attack and mauling as the origin story of an African-American artist named Daniel Robitaille, reborn as a monster named Candyman.

But while the original film is steeped in discussions of racism, poverty, and violence, the story is very much told through a white lens. As in Barker's short story, the film centers around a white researcher named Helen Lyle.





CANDYMAN (2021): COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

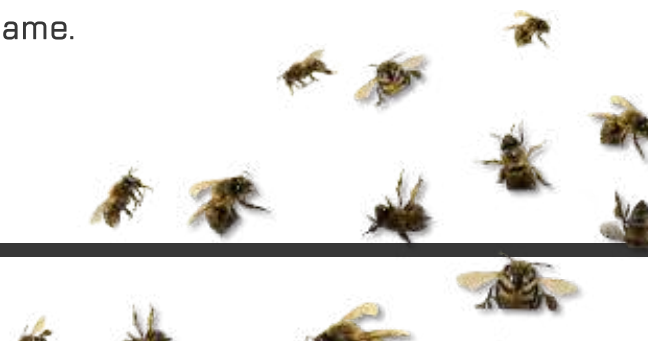
The 2021 reboot—cowritten by DaCosta and Monkeypaw Productions’ Jordan Peele and Win Rosenfeld—is a fun-house mirror showing us what CANDYMAN looks like through a Black lens. Our story. Our history. Our trauma.

DaCosta’s CANDYMAN is a genuinely terrifying film that both asks and answers questions such as: What is the impact of generational and community trauma? What is the relationship between art and trauma? What hauntings result when an entire community becomes a ghost? How do you depict Black fears without retraumatizing audiences or creating fear of Blackness?

This resource guide is designed to help audiences better understand and interrogate the themes that resurrected CANDYMAN—at last empowering audiences to Say His Name.

[If you dare.]

**“A reclamation of our story. A reclamation of our history. A reclamation of our trauma.”**





A close-up shot of a young girl with dark skin and hair, looking through a window. A spiderweb is visible on the glass, partially obscuring her face. She has a wide-eyed, slightly open-mouthed expression, suggesting fear or surprise. The lighting is dim, with a greenish tint on the left side of the frame.

# SECTION ONE A LOOK AT MYTH & FOLKLORE



CANDYMAN (2021): COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

BY  
LANGSTON LEAGUE

## MYTH & FOLKLORE

At the beginning of the film, Troy Cartwright (as played by Nathan Stewart-Jarrett), sets the stage in a way the diaspora is used to. In a moment of collectivism, surrounded by family and friends, he encircles the group to tell the tale of a grad student doing anthropological work around Chicago's Cabrini-Green housing project.

He is passing down a story to unknowing peers, a practice bestowed upon us through the Mande Empire of Mali in Africa and beyond. At first it appears that Troy is CANDYMAN's griot: a storyteller or oral historian that preserves our stories and traditions.

By candlelight, he weaves the myth of Helen Lyle—a woman said to have “snapped” and taken several Black lives and a rottweiler.

As we resume the film, we realize that Troy is a participant in a game of telephone—mistakenly identifying Helen as the serial killer in the urban legend of CANDYMAN.

The story's griot is truly William Burke (as played by Colman Domingo) a connoisseur of the spin cycle at the laundromat—what feels like a metaphor for CANDYMAN's iterations and generational trauma.

William's exposure to CANDYMAN's legacy at an early age establishes an understanding of his story's need to be told. We realize that CANDYMAN isn't just an urban legend, but a warning to be taken seriously, a culmination of real tragedies that have happened throughout CANDYMAN's Cabrini-Green history—stories that would go untold without generations remembering to “tell everyone.”

“CANDYMAN is how we deal with the fact that these things happened—that they're still happening.”

**“CANDYMAN AIN'T A HE.  
CANDYMAN IS THE WHOLE  
DAMN HIVE—  
A STORY LIKE THAT, A PAIN  
LIKE THAT LASTS FOREVER.  
THAT'S CANDYMAN.”**





# ZORA NEALE HURSTON

In Troy Cartwright's recounting of Helen Lyle's demise, he notes that she came to Cabrini-Green "asking questions and taking pictures of graffiti and people." Lyle's work noted here and in the original movie, is very much like the "three-walled room" that author and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston speaks of.

Hurston defined many Black American spaces as "rooms with one wall missing, exposing their lives to the white man's intentions and inspection."

In February of 1927, Hurston made her way to the Gulf States to preserve our stories through community griots. With a pistol in tow and a car named Sassy Susie, Hurston navigated the Jim Crow South collecting the songs, stories, dances, and traditions of Black people.

Hurston's work began in Eatonville, Florida, a self-governed Black town from which she hailed. She described Eatonville as a "four-walled room," a space mostly bereft of outside interference.

The antithesis of Helen Lyle, Hurston's preserving of our stories exemplified our self-determination, centering our full selves, dialect, folklore, collectivism, and all. Works such as "Barracoon" and "Every Tongue Got to Confess" are living legacies to this work.

—Langston League

# W. E. B. DU BOIS



"I found that this Negro, Sam Hose, had been caught and lynched and that in the meat market, which was on the way I had to pass, his fingers and toes were being exhibited. Well, I didn't deliver the letter. I went back to Atlanta University. And then I made up my mind that knowledge wasn't enough, that even if people were ignorant of essential matters which they had to know, they wouldn't correct their actions without more realization of just what the difficulties were. They had not only to know, but they had to act."

In W. E. B. Du Bois' recorded autobiography, this quote feels like a turning point.

Du Bois, on his way to deliver an article on "the Negro problem" to a newspaper, stops at a market. At the market, he sees the body parts of a Black man named Sam Hose on sale as "souvenirs" from a lynching.

It is at this point Du Bois realizes that his labeling of Black American social justice issues was harmful.

Du Bois' recollection of his experience in the market shows us that CANDYMAN's origin story, which also involves a lynching and severing of an arm, is a real American horror story.

—Langston League



Click the record to listen to the excerpt from Du Bois' autobiography.





# THE CONFESS PROJECT

Barbershops are pertinent to Black communities and are often a space of lively, social interactions, storytelling, and healing camaraderie. Having conversations while grooming brings calmness to many, in which barbers are centered as healers too. The Confess Project Coalition exemplifies this cultural tradition with its mission.

The Confess Project is committed to building a mental health culture for boys, men of color, and their families through capacity building, advocacy, organizing, and movement building. We believe in a world without barriers to stigma and shame.

The organization prides itself on being 'America's First Mental Health Barbershop Movement,' in which they offer to train those interested in becoming barbers and equip them with the necessary tools related to mental health advocacy. In addition, barbers are taught the importance of active listening, positive communication, validation, and how to reduce mental health stigma when servicing and interacting with clients.

Learn more [here](#).



**Langston League:** Could you elaborate a bit more about reducing the mental health stigma pillar that you use to train barbers?

**Lorenzo:** To your question, breaking down language, getting people to understand that saying words like 'you're weak' can be a detriment to Black men and their mental health. We also talk about how generationally we've been taught to pray but not knowing how to go beyond that. We show people how to actively get engaged with healing and support.

**LL:** Considering the amazing work that you've done already, is there a particular goal that you have for your organization that you would like to see come into fruition?

**Lorenzo:** In the next three years our goal is to train 5,000 barbers, and at the end of this year we would've trained 1,000 barbers. Right now we're pushing the #RoadtoOneMillion campaign and we're in partnership with Gillette. We want to reach a million people by the end of December 2021 because, with 1,000 barbers, each of those barbers can reach up to 100 clients per month. Our goal is to reach people through the training of advocacy, conversations, and dialogue in the barber's chair. We've also been able to partner with Harvard University and have done research with them over the last year to show how barbers are becoming mental health gatekeepers, especially in this racially distrust era of COVID-19.



**LORENZO LEWIS**

FOUNDER OF THE CONFESS PROJECT





# TERMS TO KNOW

## Griot:

Prominent in West African culture, a griot is someone who is responsible for the oral traditions, histories, and lessons that are passed down from generation to generation. through storytelling, songs, poems, dance, etc.

## Myth:

Myths are thought of as symbolic narratives that usually focus on the earlier history of a people or society. Traditionally, myths have been used to explain phenomena or occurrences that appear to be out of the ordinary. Many myths are largely and widely accepted, but not always proven to be true.

## Folklore:

Folklore refers to the oral history that is enriched and preserved by the people of that particular community or culture. It is important to note that folklore is an aspect of culture, meaning that every community has a folklore tradition but aspects of it may vary according to the cultural group or community.

## Urban Legend:

Urban legends are thought of as humorous or cautionary tales that circulate the community in the spirit of “a friend of a friend told me this.” Because of the way that urban legends are communicated, people rarely accept them as truth, but we see that CANDYMAN pushes back against this.

# SCAVENGER *hunt*

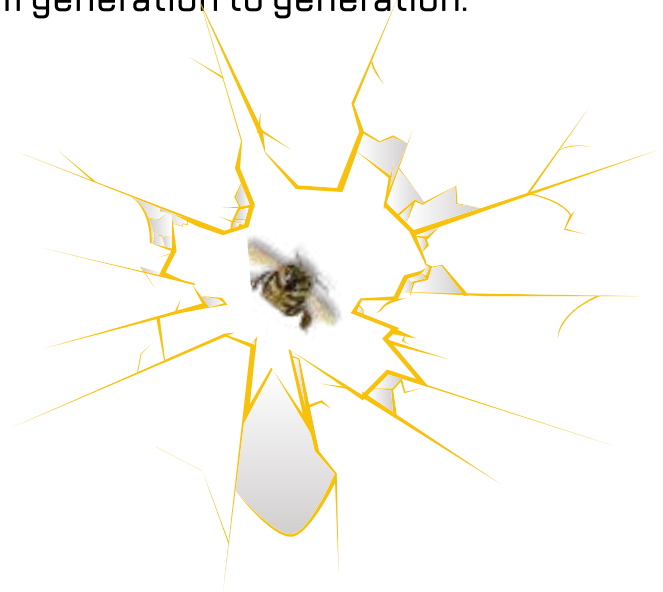
## SAY WHAT?!

The art of storytelling continues to shape and guide the very lives we live. Stories similar to CANDYMAN are plentiful within the Black community, and more are added to the repertoire everyday.

We invite you to explore some of those stories, phrases, sayings, etc. that continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

1. Take a moment to write down or discuss some of the sayings you have been told or have told others. If doing this activity with a group of people, see how many you each can come up with. Considering the “terms to know,” decide which of the sayings would be a myth, urban legend, or something else.

- Examples: “If you break a mirror, that’s seven years of bad luck.”
- OR “If you have a dream of fish, someone is expecting.”

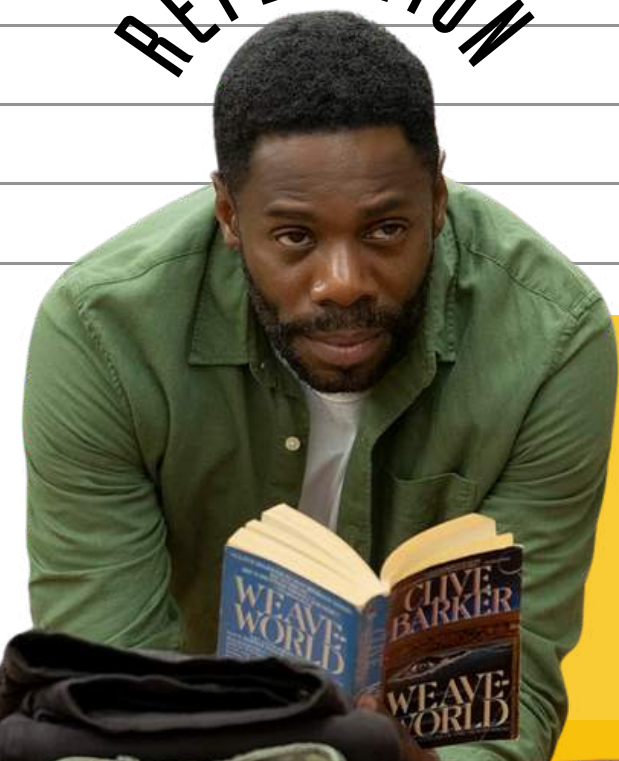


2. There are a number of sayings and phrases that we use even though we don’t know where they came from. It’s almost second nature to use them and we sometimes forget that everything has a backstory. Use your search engines to research the stories of the following phrases:

Examples: Eeny meeny miney moe; nitty gritty; Fuzzy-Wuzzy



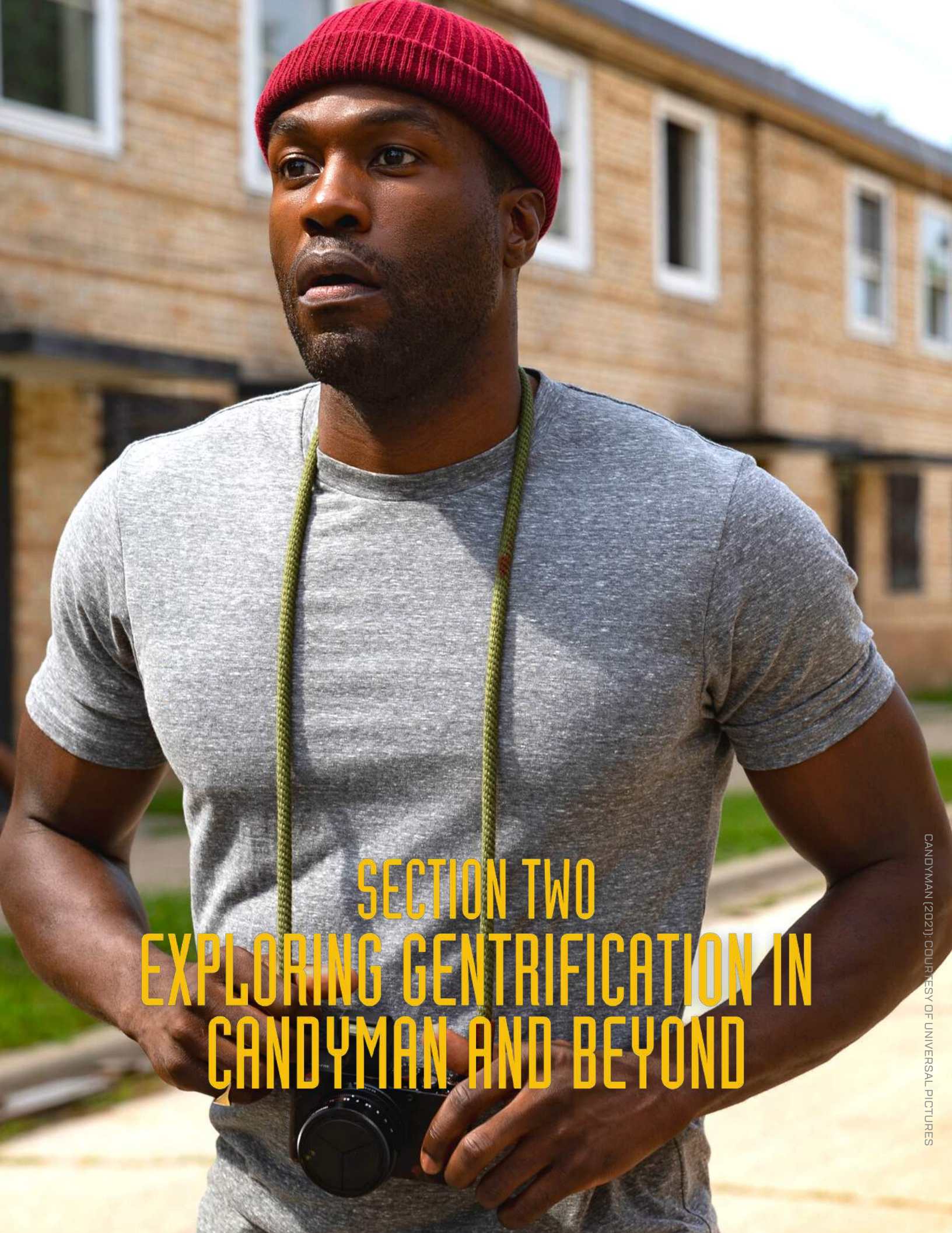
# REFLECTION



Take a moment to reflect on the griots in your family or community. What are some of the stories that you can recall? What are the stories that may be painful to keep or tell, but still feel necessary to protect?





A man with a beard and a red beanie is looking off to the side. He is wearing a grey t-shirt and has a green cord around his neck. He is holding a black camera in his hands. The background is a brick building with several windows.

# SECTION TWO EXPLORING GENTRIFICATION IN CANDYMAN AND BEYOND





CANDYMAN (2021): COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

## DISPLACED

A few years ago, Langston League held a workshop in a neighborhood that had very few Black residents. The school was emphatic about the urgency of teaching decolonized Black history to their students. After discussing ways to surface history in their area with students, a teacher raised her hand and said, “This is a historically white neighborhood. We would have difficulty finding Black history here.”

On our way to the school, we noticed an African Methodist Episcopal Church a few blocks away. The church was established in the 1800s. Based on several of our history research trips, we know that where there is an A.M.E. Church, there are Black people and Black history.

The presence of Black churches has always been evidence of our roots in a community. Anthony holds up an outdated image of a Missionary Baptist Church in Cabrini-Green. The mural once painted above its door depicts imagery of diverse peoples alongside names of figures who are synonymous with tragedy and triumph: Malcolm X, Anne Frank, Dr. King, and more.

The mural was painted in 1972 by a prominent Black muralist and Chicagoan named William Walker. It was a piece heralded up until its very last moment when preservationists discovered it had been whitewashed by painters.

The church's whitewashing feels like a metaphor for our continued displacement at the hands of urban renewal, development-induced displacement, and gentrification. It is a reminder of our continued erasure, despite mounting evidence that we have always been here and always will be.

“LITTLE HELL.  
SMOKEY HOLLOW.  
COMBAT ALLEY.  
CABRINI-GREEN.  
KEEPING US SAFE OR  
KEEPING US INSIDE.”





# A CONVERSATION WITH PHENOM

Phenom, a Chicago-based artist, calls Cabrini-Green Homes “The Greens.” The metaphor isn’t lost on us, as he describes how each distinct neighborhood on Cabrini-Green’s map takes its own shape and assists or hinders its residents’ growth.

Phenom describes a community different from the glimpse we see in *CANDYMAN*: “As a kid in Cabrini-Green, you’re not focused on the violence. We saw grandmothers, aunties, people getting in motion to head to the grocery store to celebrate holidays. Everybody was living and ready for the feast. When it was good, it was really good, and when it was bad, it was really bad.”

Phenom then emphasizes that while some days were tough—even remembering a Halloween moment with parents fearing razor blades in trick-or-treat candy—the fear fueled the community’s defense. As a result, families became overprotective, rummaging through candy bags and ensuring kids traveled in herds and made them closer.

“Everything was in a four-block radius,” he says. “My school, my church, my girlfriend, my best friend, my grandparents on both sides, and my aunties and uncles.”

Phenom describes a daily routine, bouncing from house to house, collectivism, and care all around him and others. He says his favorite memory is an uncle whom many respected and feared through the neighborhoods; an uncle who would stop to wipe his nose if he thought it was runny. “He was presumably a goon and a big dude, but he had a soft side. So that’s important too.”

Phenom says he channels the community care he felt in Cabrini-Green in his work as an emcee, educator, poet, and leader.

A major part of Phenom’s life’s work is a Chicago-based organization he founded for young emcees, aptly named EmceeSkool.

EmceeSkool’s objective is to develop a social-creative-arts initiative designed to strengthen young teaching artists in the fundamentals of becoming sustainable and impactful assets to their community and family via organizing through the arts. In addition, Emceeskool serves as restorative justice and violence prevention strategy.



# CABRINI-GREEN: A BRIEF HISTORY



## The 1850s

The area acquires nicknames such as “Little Hell” and “Smokey Hollow” because of the factories established there that were often surrounded by flames or smoke.



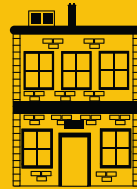
## The 1940s

The Francis Cabrini Houses are built. They are row houses with 584 units in 54 buildings.



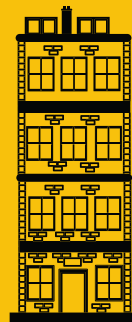
## The 1890s

The area becomes known as “Little Sicily,” due to a large population of Italian immigrants.



## The 1950s

The Cabrini-Green extension is built, made up of red brick mid-high-rises with 1,925 units in 15 buildings.



## The 1960s

The William Green Homes are built in 1962. There are 1,096 units. The lawsuit *Gautreaux et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority* is filed, stating that CHA's public housing program was racially segregated.



# CABRINI-GREEN: A BRIEF HISTORY



2021

CANDYMAN is in theaters, having been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It features former Cabrini-Green Homes.



The 1990s

Cabrini-Green begins a plan to demolish standing spaces and replace them with "mixed-income" communities. The first CANDYMAN is filmed at the towers.



# LORRAINE HANSBERRY

The world is familiar with Lorraine Hansberry's work and legacy, especially her play "A Raisin in the Sun." However, many people don't know that the play, named after a line from Langston Hughes' "A Dream Deferred" poem, was inspired by her parents' fight against Chicago's discriminatory housing practices.

In 1937, while most Black Chicago residents were restricted to Chicago's Black Belt due to racially restrictive covenants, Hansberry's father purchased a home in a then-all-white area of Chicago called Woodlawn.

After his purchase, white residents took the Hansberry family to court, demanding their departure from the neighborhood. Despite this, the Hansberry family stood their ground and continued to stay in their house during attacks on their home and property. In addition, Carl Hansberry patrolled the home at night with a loaded handgun to keep his family safe.

The Hansberry v. Lee court case made it all the way to the United States Supreme Court, where the court ruled in favor of the Hansberry family. The prosecution did not have the 95 percent of the required signatures to enforce a racially restrictive covenant. While the court case didn't change discriminatory practices for the nation, it showed many that it would one day be possible to end legal housing segregation.

—Langston League



# IDA B. WELLS

Nia DaCosta's **CANDYMAN** helps us reconsider what “urban renewal” and “redevelopment” really have to offer Black communities everywhere, especially when considering Black residents in Chicago. When we think of the original **CANDYMAN** Daniel Robitaille's story, we are reminded by William that before the creation and demolition of the Cabrini-Green housing projects, Robitaille's murder and execution took place upon the same grounds where the high-rises once stood. A site of trauma constantly built on and built over under the guise of “redevelopment.”

For example, look at the Ida B. Wells Homes, named after the Mississippi-born investigative journalist and freedom fighter herself. Wells spent her life speaking out against the injustices of Black people through her writing, focusing on the horrors of lynching in the American south through her anti-lynching campaign. Following the death of her friend, Thomas Moss, Wells became interested in the tactic of white mob violence and the use of lynching as a tool of terrorism and intimidation. In 1892, she published her pamphlet, “Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases,” which resulted in the destruction of her printing press in Memphis and her eventual relocation to Chicago, where she would remain until her death in 1931.

About eight years after Wells' death, the Ida B. Wells Homes, or Wellstown (1939-2011), were created in response to years of protests and campaigns for affordable housing in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. Unfortunately, by the start of the 1980s, the Ida B. Wells Homes became susceptible to negligence from housing authorities, inter-communal violence, and policies enforced to create vacant properties, a fate that would befall many area housing projects, including Cabrini-Green. If we think of ghosts of the past as “site-specific,” as Professor John Jennings would say, then it forces us to reconsider whose shoulders are we standing on? And in the case of **CANDYMAN**, how literal or figurative might this question be?

-Langston League

“WHITE PEOPLE BUILT  
THE GHETTO AND THEN  
ERASED IT WHEN THEY  
REALIZED THEY BUILT  
THE GHETTO.”





# A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK CHICAGO



## JEAN BAPTISTE POINT DU SABLE

The first “settler” of Chicago, Illinois, was a Black man. Settling near the Chicago River in the 1780s, Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable was a founder of a trading settlement, landowner, and immigrant from Haiti. He is recognized as “The Father of Chicago.”



## THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BLACK BELT

In the 1840s, fugitive enslaved people migrated to Chicago, where they established the largest settlement on Chicago’s South Side. By 1853, a law was passed prohibiting Black people, including freedmen, to move to the state. In 1865, Chicago appealed those laws. They were called “Black Laws.”



## THE SOUTH SIDE



By 1870, more than 3,000 Black people were living in Chicago! The boundaries of the South Side expanded southward and were known as the “Black Belt.” After the Civil War, the Black Belt saw an influx of Black-owned businesses, churches, political strengths, and social organizations.



## THE GREAT MIGRATION

As the violence across the south increased, many Black Americans traveled north to Chicago at the turn of the 20th century. Between 1915 to 1960, thousands of Black Americans would call Chicago home.

The Bronzeville District in Chicago had one of the largest Black populations in the country in the 20th century.



## CIVIL RIGHTS

Despite finding better jobs and educational opportunities, Black Americans continued to fight segregation and discriminatory practices in Chicago. Black people faced housing discrimination in redlining, exclusive zoning to single-family housing, and racially restrictive covenants. These covenants stated that white owners could not sell or rent housing to Black people in certain areas. Large development projects, such as Cabrini-Green Homes, were built as transitional apartments for low-income families but ended up becoming all-Black spaces by the 1960s.



# BEAM

## BLACK EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH COLLECTIVE

The ongoing cycle of racism and discriminatory practices have had damaging long-term effects on Black well-being. Unfortunately, these shameful practices were happening across the country, not just in Chicago. We need intentional healing to combat practices that we refuse to let become our destiny in times like these. The Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective (BEAM) is committed to uplifting this healing work.

BEAM is a national training, movement building, and grant-making institution dedicated to the healing, wellness, and liberation of Black and marginalized communities. Their mission is to remove the barriers Black people experience getting access to or staying connected with emotional health care and healing through education, training, advocacy, and the creative arts.

BEAM is built on the premise that we cannot just rely on psychiatrists, therapists, and social workers for our communities to heal; we need to provide tools to the entire community. BEAM trains stylists, barbers, teachers, activists, families, and more on responding to mental health crises in ways that center on healing and Black culture.



As an additional means of meeting the wellness needs of our communities, BEAM developed the Black Virtual Wellness Directory, which is a compilation of Black therapists and wellness professionals from across the country who are available to provide services to folks in need.

Through its training and grantmaking efforts, BEAM advocates and organizes for accessible, innovative models of mental healthcare outside and within the systems that exist, while emphasizing that effective emotional and mental health care systems must affirm the value of all Black lives: Cis and transgender, hetero, gender non-conforming, disabled and able-bodied, lesbian, queer, gay and bisexual Black people.

BEAM also centers village care as a critical mental health intervention by building up the capacity of all community members to offer peer support, disrupt mental health stigma, and help our communities gain access to care.

**"This continued legacy of violence against Black folks that has happened through many ages . . . The legacy of the land and the way in which you think about trauma and the land and, for Black folks, these sites of harm that continue to reverberate when these things happen."**



**YOLO AKILI ROBINSON**  
FOUNDER OF BEAM





# TERMS TO KNOW:

## URBAN RENEWAL

The redevelopment of areas within a large city, typically involving the clearance of “slums.”

## DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Development-induced displacement occurs when people are forced to leave their homes in a development-driven form of forced migration. Sometimes this displacement is associated with the construction of dams and lakes for hydroelectric power and irrigation, as in Lake Lanier, Georgia, or Lake Martin, Alabama. This displacement can also result from mining, agriculture, military installations, airports, industrial plants, weapon-testing grounds, railways, highways, urbanization, and more.

# SCAVENGER *hunt*

## GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE

Cabrini-Green's economic and cultural transition occurred when wealthier residents started to move into the neighborhood. While the shift pumped new people and economic investment into the community, it prompted a rapid increase in property values. It also altered the character and culture of an established community. As a result, many residents were displaced and forced to move. Use your search engine to answer the questions below, to learn more about Cabrini-Green's gentrification.

1. Cabrini-Green was made up of three key spaces. What were they?

2. What was the role of the man the William Green Homes were named after?

3. Who moved into Cabrini-Green to emphasize its crime rate? (Hint: Politics)



4. What famous television show had opening and closing credits that featured Cabrini-Green?

5. While Cabrini-Green was a public housing project such as Rockwell Gardens or Robert Taylor Homes, it was different because it was in a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ part of the city.



Answers: 1. Frances Cabrini Rowhouses, Cabrini Extensions, William Green Homes. 2. William Green was once the president of the American Federation of Labor. 3. Mayor Jane Byrne. (She only stays for two weeks.) 4. Good Times. 5. Affluent/Rich/Wealthy

# REFLECTION



We all have varying understandings of what home means to us. Our very own neighbors, depending on their generation, their daily schedule, and perspective, have different ideas of the community on their tongues. Use this page to reflect on the transformations in your community.





# SECTION THREE THE EXPLOITATION & CELEBRATION OF BLACK ART



CANDYMAN (2021). COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURE



BY  
LANGSTON LEAGUE

## BLACK ART

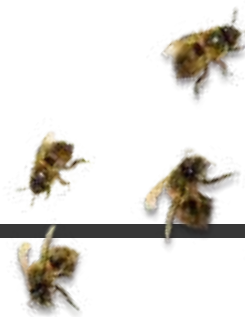
A question that seems to find its way to the surface of our minds often is what is the duty of an artist? *CANDYMAN* helps us clue in to the things that we indulge in and question them with ferocity. Examining the role of Brianna Cartwright in the film, we could even propose the question of what is the duty of a curator? And to complicate it further, what does it mean when said artist or curator is Black?

Looking specifically at the scene where Anthony is told that his artistic take on a piece he wants to do, celebrating the South Side of Chicago, is “kinda played,” in this moment we understand how Black art is constantly reduced to trauma in order to sell and exploit it. Furthermore, we see Anthony begin to dig into the trauma of Cabrini-Green’s history and its people, where he discovers *CANDYMAN*. The film highlights the thin line between celebration and exploitation, urging us to think about why trauma-based work is prioritized over work rooted in healing and joy?

Concerning the gallery as both a physical and imaginative space, we are forced to question its politics. The word “imaginative” is employed here because of the rules that govern the gallery space and how seriously its enforcers take them. *CANDYMAN* highlights these paradoxical rules that drive Anthony further to exploit the pain and trauma of his own community in order to be featured in the gallery exhibition. While it is recognition and the futurity of more opportunities to showcase his work that drives Anthony to do this, his reproduction of *CANDYMAN* is good enough to draw attention to the art itself, but very little attention to the justice that *CANDYMAN* is still awaiting and very much deserves.

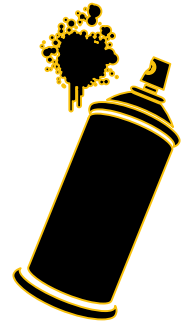
The late Nina Simone once said, “The duty of an artist is to reflect the times.” At what point are Black artists allowed to fully reflect where they are in their respective journeys in their work? Why must trauma be at the center of it all? We cannot absolve ourselves of the responsibility that we have as artists, creatives, and consumers. We owe it to one another to allow people to create from places other than trauma. But if this is not our mission, then WE’RE obviously in the wrong place.

“THEY LOVE  
WHAT WE  
MAKE  
BUT NOT  
US.”





# "I AM THE WRITING ON THE WALL."



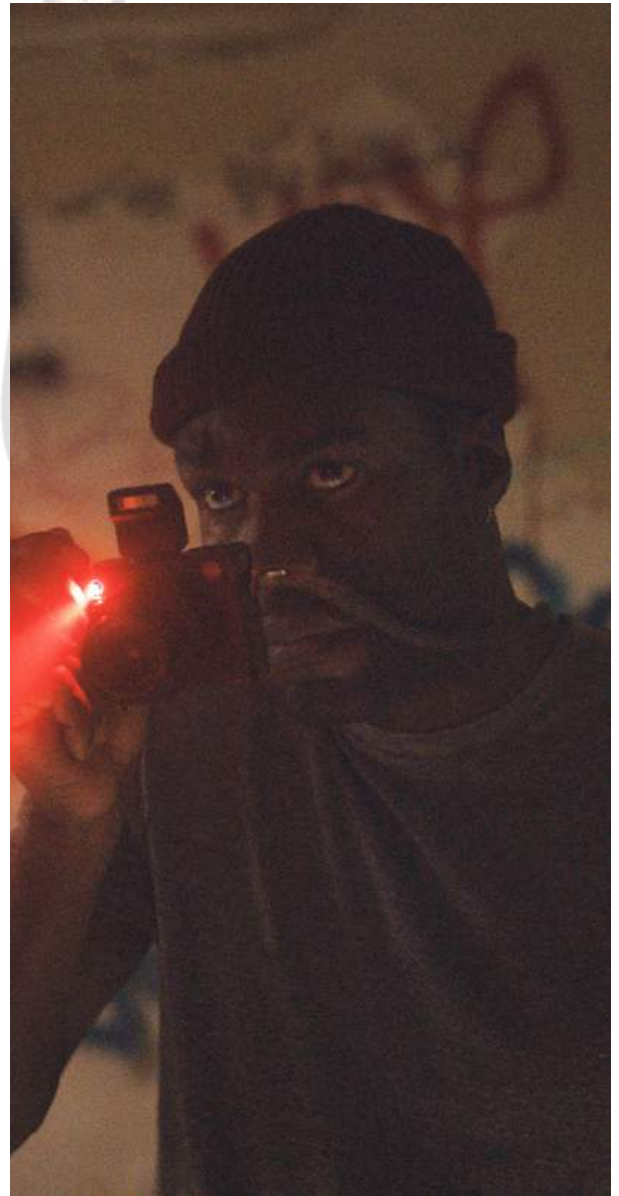
It is believed that writing something down can increase the likelihood of you remembering it. In the case of CANDYMAN, we can see how this might be true. The presence of graffiti in both the 1992 and 2021 versions of the film allows us as viewers to partake in the collective memory that has been written into our minds and splattered across the walls. We come to realize that CANDYMAN follows a tradition of memorialization as well as marking.

The use of graffiti—to mark as we saw during the golden age of hip-hop—could be seen as a way to claim territory, highlight existence and settlement, or to draw attention to those we've lost. Like hieroglyphics, graffiti can be used in the film as its own language, making us pay attention to what it says in particular about CANDYMAN.

In the film, Anthony stumbles upon a graffiti-style drawing of CANDYMAN during his visit to Cabrini-Green for research. There he finds that the walls are marked, letting us know that not only were there others there, but that CANDYMAN was as well. In some way, it's ironic that Anthony would be the one to find this drawing, seeing that the story behind his birth could be seen as a marking in itself. A marking of territory by CANDYMAN or a horrid foreshadowing of what Anthony is to become.

If the writings on the wall could talk, they might urge us to learn more about what we see and remember that every place is filled with stories that are never told. In the event that you do see the writings on the wall anywhere, make sure you tell everyone. You never know whose memory you might be preserving.

—Langston League



CANDYMAN (2021): COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES





# SHERWIN OVID



Sherwin Ovid is an interdisciplinary artist born in Trinidad and based in Chicago whose works explore diaspora, hybridity and the aesthetics of migration. He earned his BA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his MFA from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has had solo exhibitions at Goldfinch Gallery (Chicago), Randy Alexander Gallery (Chicago), and Demon Leg Gallery (East Harlem, NY) and his work has appeared twice in the juried publication New American Paintings. Recently Ovid contributed artwork to Lena Waithe's Showtime drama "The Chi."

His work appears in CANDYMAN:

Ovid created the paintings seen as the main character Anthony McCoy's fictionalized later work.





# CAMERON SPRATLEY

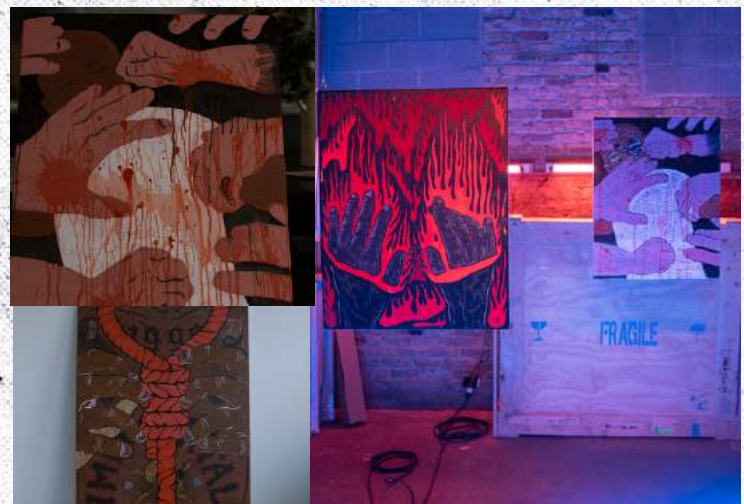


Cameron Spratley's work is a critique and problematization of the relationship between specific racialized forms of state or cultural violence and their normalization in popular culture writ large. Using the mechanisms of racism against itself, the work is purposefully abrasive. However, its vulnerabilities and cryptic references gain meaning if one looks past the surface, removing the work's mask. He received his MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his BFA at Virginia Commonwealth University.

His work appears in CANDYMAN:

Cameron created the paintings seen as the main character Anthony McCoy's fictionalized early work.

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ARTISTS  
FEATURED IN CANDYMAN!](#)





## DR. WENDY ASHLEY, PSY.D, LCSW

Dr. Wendy Ashley received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.) from Ryokan College and her MSW from the University of Southern California. She is a professor and the associate chair of the California State University at Northridge's Master of Social Work program. Dr. Ashley maintains certifications in Diversity and Inclusion practices from Cornell University and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing from the EMDR International Association. She has been a licensed clinical social worker since 1998 and has more than 25 years of clinical experience.

Dr. Ashley is the author of multiple publications, speaks at conferences nationwide and internationally, maintains a private practice, facilitates staff, leadership, and agency training, and provides consultation as a trauma expert. Her research interests emphasize the promotion of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in practice, pedagogy, and organizational culture. She is passionate about social justice advocacy and infuses a trauma-informed, anti-racist, intersectionality lens in her teaching, practice, training, and research.

Watch Dr. Wendy Ashley in CANDYMAN's roundtable discussion "The Impact of Black Horror," [here](#).

"Sometimes the  
only way to express  
pain, express loss is  
through art."



# REFLECTION



Think about a piece you've created: a painting, a poem, a choreographed dance, etc. Then, take the time to write an art reflection. Please explain the process behind your work, why it was important to create it, and some of the challenges you faced while making it. Using reflective statements about our processes help to make us more self-aware.







CANDYMAN (2021): COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

# "#TELLEVERYONE"

AN AFTERWORD BY PROFESSOR JOHN JENNINGS



# JOHN JENNINGS

Professor John Jennings is an educator, graphic novelist, curator, design theorist, 2018 Eisner Winner and *New York Times* bestselling author.

“If you are silent about your pain, they’ll kill you and say you enjoyed it.”

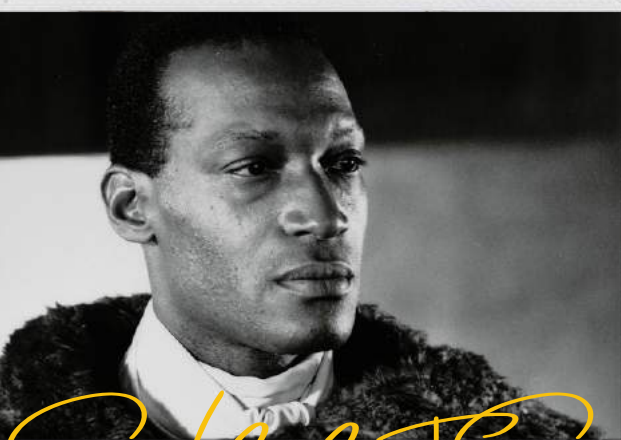
—Zora Neale Hurston

So much about the epigraph above speaks to some of the central themes of this new incarnation of CANDYMAN.

CANDYMAN longs to be heard and seen and believed. So many times, this hasn’t been the case when dealing with the effects of racism on Black urban communities.

Historically, Black trauma, history, culture, and creativity have been systemically, intentionally, and violently erased.

CANDYMAN is the reification of those actions and stands as a living monument to all the unspeakable things that still befall Black people when the camera phones aren’t looking.



CANDYMAN (1992); COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

SWEETS



CANDYMAN (2021); COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

TO THE



CANDYMAN (2021); COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES

SWEET

A great deal of DaCosta's elegantly terrifying film is centered around what is seen and what is unseen; what is reflected and what is allowed to cast a shadow. The Candyman is usually thought of as just another "invisible man" but if you invoke him, he can break through and make his presence felt. By invoking him you shift the agency to a Black point of view, which we come to see in the film with Brianna's character.

CANDYMAN isn't just one tormented soul. CANDYMAN is a system or hive of tormented victims who now represent a dark and necessary strategy to resist violence and erasure of our experiences and our collective humanity. The Candyman can be anyone if the right circumstances occur at the wrong moment. As American history has shown us many times before, anyone of us can be the "writing on the wall" and be made the subject of another injustice. We now have a system of "wailing walls" around the country.

Every one of them is a painful reminder of the reconciliation that has yet to occur around our nation's true history and the history it sees in some distorted, patriotic fun-house mirror. As a father, educator and citizen of the world, I hope that we can really break this cycle of neglect and trauma. If we don't, the real-life victims of our failures as a nation can never rest and never be silent. They require that we tell everyone and we shall.





ARTWORK BY JOHN JENNINGS





ARTWORK BY JOHN JENNINGS



FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO FIND WAYS TO  
JOIN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT CANDYMAN,  
PLEASE VISIT [CANDYMANMOVIE.COM/IMPACT](http://CANDYMANMOVIE.COM/IMPACT)

#CANDYMAN

#TELEVERYONE



SAY IT

A FILM BY NIA DaCOSTA AND PRODUCER JORDAN PEELE

CANDYMAN

UNIVERSAL PICTURES AND METRO GOLDWYN MAYER PICTURES PRESENT IN ASSOCIATION WITH BRON CREATIVE A MONKEYPAW PRODUCTION  
"CANDYMAN" YAHYA ABDEL-MATEEN II TEYONAH PARRIS NATHAN STEWART-JARRETT COLMAN DOMINGO COSTUME DESIGNER LIZZIE COOK MUSIC BY ROBERT AIKI AUBREY LOWE EDITED BY CATRIN HEDSTRÖM  
PRODUCTION DESIGNER CARA BROWER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN GULESERIAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID KERN AARON L. GILBERT JASON CLOTH PRODUCED BY IAN COOPER p.g.a. WIN ROSENFELD p.g.a. JORDAN PEELE p.g.a.  
MGM BRON M  SCREENPLAY BY JORDAN PEELE & WIN ROSENFELD AND NIA DaCOSTA DIRECTED BY NIA DaCOSTA A UNIVERSAL RELEASE 

IN THEATERS AUGUST 27