Remembering Africville

ALEX DIOCHON

















SAME THING IF YOU WERE HUNGRY OR THIRSTY. EVERYBODY TOOK CARE OF EVERYBODY ELSE. WE DIDN'T HAVE FANCY HOUSES, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE WE DIDN'T MAKE MUCH MONEY. HARD TO MAKE MUCH MONEY WHEN YOU CAN ONLY WORK AS A MAID OR A COOK OR HAULING LUMBER OR ON THE TRAINS.

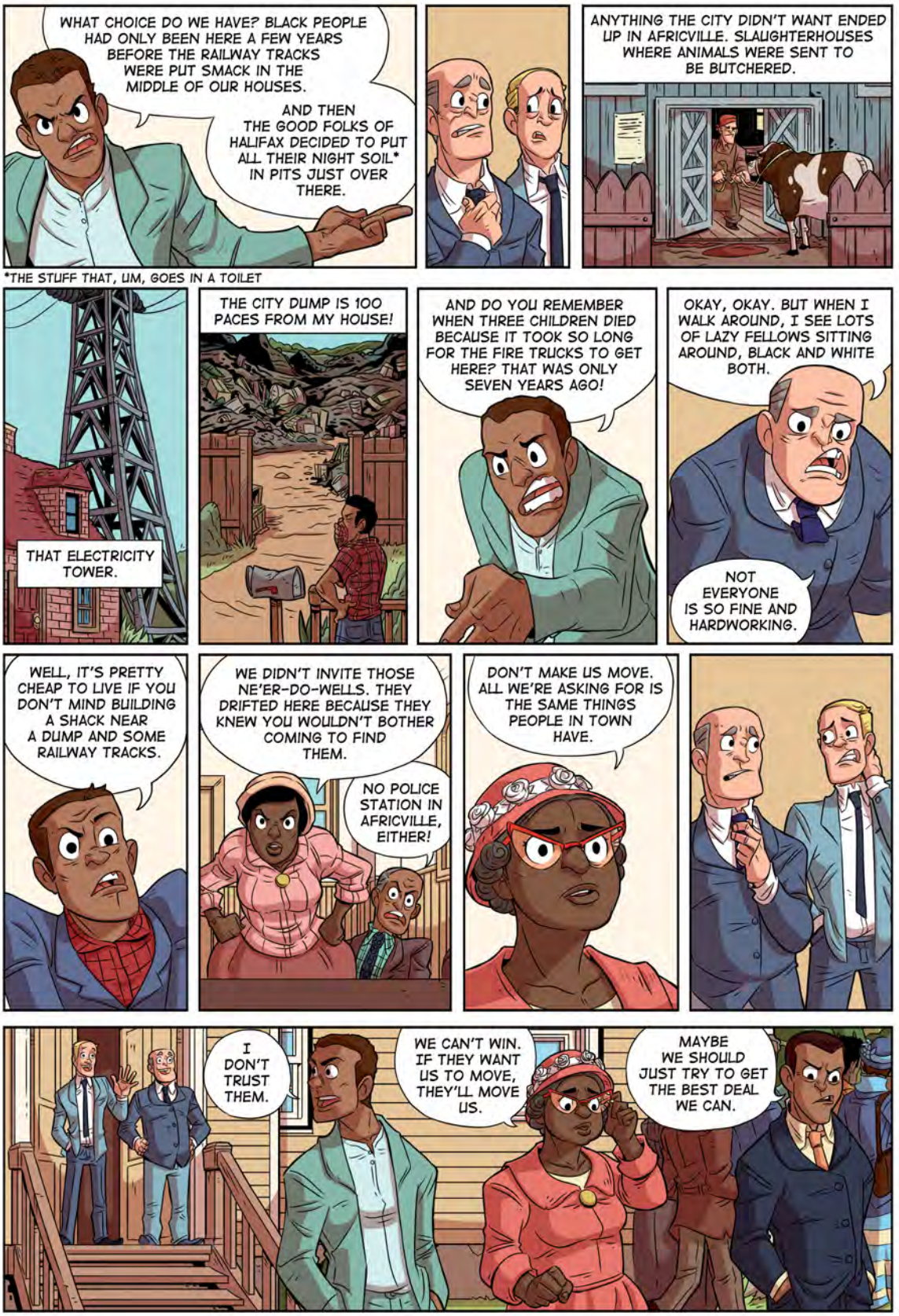











WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE? BLACK PEOPLE HAD ONLY BEEN HERE A FEW YEARS BEFORE THE RAILWAY TRACKS WERE PUT SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR HOUSES.
AND THEN THE GOOD FOLKS OF HALIFAX DECIDED TO PUT ALL THEIR NIGHT SOIL* IN PITS JUST OVER THERE.
ANYTHING THE CITY DIDN'T WANT ENDED UP IN AFRICVILLE. SLAUGHTERHOUSES WHERE ANIMALS WERE SENT TO BE BUTCHERED.
*THE STUFF THAT, UM, GOES IN A TOILET
THAT ELECTRICITY TOWER.
THE CITY DUMP IS 100 PACES FROM MY HOUSE!
AND DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN THREE CHILDREN DIED BECAUSE IT TOOK SO LONG FOR THE FIRE TRUCKS TO GET HERE? THAT WAS ONLY SEVEN YEARS AGO!
OKAY, OKAY. BUT WHEN I WALK AROUND, I SEE LOTS OF LAZY FELLOWS SITTING AROUND, BLACK AND WHITE BOTH.
NOT EVERYONE IS SO FINE AND HARDWORKING.
WELL, IT'S PRETTY CHEAP TO LIVE IF YOU DON'T MIND BUILDING A SHACK NEAR A DUMP AND SOME RAILWAY TRACKS.
WE DIDN'T INVITE THOSE NE'ER-DO-WELLS. THEY DRIFTED HERE BECAUSE THEY KNEW YOU WOULDN'T BOTHER COMING TO FIND THEM.
NO POLICE STATION IN AFRICVILLE, EITHER!
DON'T MAKE US MOVE. ALL WE'RE ASKING FOR IS THE SAME THINGS PEOPLE IN TOWN HAVE.
I DON'T TRUST THEM.
WE CAN'T WIN. IF THEY WANT US TO MOVE, THEY'LL MOVE US.
MAYBE WE SHOULD JUST TRY TO GET THE BEST DEAL WE CAN.


BETTER LIVES
HALIFAX
RELOCATIO
BETTER-JOBS
BETTER-HOUSE
BETTER-SCHOO
BETTER-LIVES
BETTER-FUTUR
RELOCATION
VOTE
TODAY
JANUARY, 1964.
OUT OF 400 PEOPLE
LIVING IN AFRICVILLE,
41 COME TO THE VOTE
ON WHETHER TO MOVE.
THIRTY-SEVEN VOTE YES.
MOST PEOPLE HAVE JUST
GIVEN UP, BELIEVING
NOBODY WITH THE CITY
IS LISTENING
TO THEM AND NOTHING
AFRICVILLE PEOPLE
SAY WILL MAKE
A DIFFERENCE.
THIS IS WHAT THEY SEND TO MOVE OUR THINGS?
WHAT WILL OUR NEW NEIGHBOURS THINK?


I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
THEY DEMOLISHED MY HOUSE WHILE I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL!
!
BOIL
WATER BEFORE
DRINKING AND
COOKING
THE CHURCH . . .
IT'S GONE!
THEY KNOCKED IT DOWN IN THE NIGHT?
KNOCKED THE HEART RIGHT OUT OF AFRICVILLE WITH IT.
WITH THEIR COMMUNITY DESTROYED, THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF AFRICVILLE WERE CHANGED FOREVER.


THE LAND IS USED FOR HOUSES AND A BRIDGE. THERE'S A PARK, TOO. AND IN 1983, THE FIRST AFRICVILLE REUNION PICNIC TAKES PLACE.
FEBRUARY 25, 2010
PETER KELLY, MAYOR OF HALIFAX
ON BEHALF OF THE HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY, I APOLOGIZE TO THE FORMER AFRICVILLE RESIDENTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS FOR WHAT THEY HAVE ENDURED FOR ALMOST 50 YEARS, EVER SINCE THE LOSS OF THEIR COMMUNITY THAT HAD STOOD ON THE SHORES OF BEDFORD BASIN FOR MORE THAN 150 YEARS.
YOU LOST YOUR HOUSES, YOUR CHURCH, ALL OF THE PLACES WHERE YOU GATHERED WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO MARK THE MILESTONES OF YOUR LIVES.
FOR ALL THAT, WE APOLOGIZE.
THE AFRICVILLE CHURCH WAS REBUILT AS A MUSEUM IN 2012
EVERY JULY, PEOPLE COME FROM ALL OVER FOR THE AFRICVILLE REUNION TO REMEMBER THE WAY THEIR COMMUNITY WAS DESTROYED, AND CELEBRATE THE MEMORIES THEY KEEP ALIVE.
THE SPIRIT LIVES ON