

Alias	Age	Occupation	Interview Period
Maddux Miller	37	Retail worker and Activist	May 2013
Officer Kilburn	38	Police officer	May 2013
Gil McMahon (and his wife)	68 & 65	Retirees	May 2013
Annie Lewis	65	Ex-Air Force nurse	May 2013
Donny Trilusa	30	Small businessman	July 2013
Father Kelly	58	Catholic Priest	May 2013
Jack Keeley (and his wife)	61	Railroader and activist	July 2013
Freddy Kristeva	59	Bar owner and activist	May 2013
Father Candiotti	42	Catholic priest	May 2013
Lou O'Malley (and his wife)	85 & 84	Factory worker retiree	May 2013
Mo Kerrigan	65	Unemployed	May 2013
Will Macmillan	48	Electrician	May 2013
Caroline Macmillan	48	Art teacher	May 2013
Ralph Mickelson	70	Postal service retiree	May 2013
Caleb Jones	42	Parking attendant	May 2013
Jimmy Plummer	26	Handyman	May 2013
Kat Benet (and her husband)	35 & 38	Groundskeeper	May 2013
A.J. Hardy	23	Operations and maintenance	May 2013
Philip Masey	59	Salesman	May 2013
Nelly Caritas	55	Public health worker	May 2013
Leah Perry	29	Factory clerk	May 2013
Eddie Phee	42	Flea market shopkeeper and unemployed	May 2013
Gillian Phee	42	Flea market shopkeeper and unemployed	May 2013
Iggy Nagy	24	Electrician	May 2013
Marge Russell	73	Retired autoworker	May 2013
Sarah Mattingly	50	Sales clerk	May 2013
Tess Delacort (and her employee)	46	Thrift shop owner	May 2013
Vinny Cosenza	65	Restaurant server	May 2013
Billy Morris	44	Grocer	May 2013
Paul Podolsky	29	Chef	June 2013
Wendy Timlin	55	Short order cook	June 2013
Timmy Butler	38	Landscape laborer	June 2013
Didi Schumer	45	Hospital clerk	June 2013
Isabel Crane (and her daughter)	49	Unemployed clerk	June 2013
Violet Lammy	43	Recovering crack addict	July 2013
Fran Sulz	63	Ex-con and student	July 2013
Rachel Gibson (and her husband)	47 & 46	Cemetery clerk	June 2013
Val Coronado	52	Former public official and	June 2013

		businessman	
Sam Guthrie	60	Disabled and unemployed	June 2013
Evelyn Burke	64	Landowner	June 2013
Hank Thompson	53	Industrial painter	June 2013
Nate Scott	39	Metalworker	June 2013
John Avery	46	Metalworker	June 2013
Charlie Johnson	35	Organizer and activist	June 2013
Bill D'Antoni	73	Retired former public official	June 2013
Pat O'Neal	51	City official	June 2013
Sam Szabo	46	City official	June 2013
Tank Schumaker (and his friend)	38	Construction worker	June 2013
Natasha Jackson	52	Building official	June 2013
Bryant Daniels	44	Lawyer and former state official	June 2013
Katherine Kemp	48	City planner	June 2013
Marty Nash	58	Part official	June 2013
Rick Hanley	57	Party official	June 2013
Jim LoDuca (and his deputy)	43	County officials	June 2013
George Ellis	55	Business leader	June 2013
<i>John McNally</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>County Commissioner</i>	<i>June 2013</i>
Karen Amalfitano	61	County official	June 2013
Joe Hinski	50	City official	June 2013
Max Greenfield	60	Party official	June 2013
<i>Steven Dettelbach</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio</i>	<i>June 2013</i>
<i>Mike Tobin</i>		<i>Department of Justice Public Affairs Secretary</i>	<i>June 2013</i>
Bob Campanella	52	Builder	June 2016

(4 interviews off the record)

Italics denote on the record without aliases (only prominent public officials)

Maddux Miller, 37, retail worker and activist

Corruption is—I don't want to say accepted—but people are complacent about it. The problem is that people are always one degree of separation away from the folks getting kickbacks so they're less likely to say anything. When indictments are handed down, people are not okay with it. But there is a cultural acceptance in a broad way. In the nineties, our county sheriff, our congressman and two municipal court judges were all indicted and a county prosecutor survived an assassination attempt. Today, it's more nuanced.

When you dig, the Cafaro Family is behind most of it. They own strip malls and give a lot of kickbacks, most recently implicating the county's Democratic Party chairman who

is in the same circle as the mayoral favorite [John A. McNally], the county auditor [Mike Sciortino] and the county treasurer [Lisa Antonini].

We don't organize on anti-corruption. The feds are presumably on it and there is little we can do. We try to prevent corruption by encouraging government to be more transparent and do more above board. For example we address "code enforcement". Many city officers were making money by threatening citations and telling potential violators that they could 'make the citations go away' for a thousand bucks here and there. That's solvable by forcing officers to register their visits on an online public record. Another example is why we don't hold City Council meetings in the evenings when working citizens can attend.

What you hear is that undisclosed amounts of money are being given to officials. Today, it a lot less money than used to be kicked back, mostly because the economy isn't doing as well.

David Bozanich is the finance director for City Hall. He is involved in the signing and oversight of every economic development deal. He knows where all the bodies are buried, so if you try to replace him, he'll take you down.

[Why haven't you been subject to death threats?] They're afraid that I have a following, a voice and that I'll go public. I had to make a decision like Tom Hanks' character in the movie, *Castaway*. He can stay on the island or escape by building a raft and ride those fuckin tidal waves past the break to smooth sailing. Now that I'm here, people tell me everything and suddenly I can see the matrix of Ohio politics from here to Columbus. There's no filter here.

Drug culture is rampant to make off-the-grid money. The cash is coming from the [wealthier] suburbs and townships. Youngstown didn't die. It just moved out to Boardman and Canfield. Northeast Ohio has lost 300,000 people in the last 40 years, but the [urban sprawl's] footprint has increased 20 per cent.

Considering all our debt, we have basically communicated to our young people that there will be no safety net in the future. The economy is going to Hell and there is nothing you can do about it. So the response has been to stop trying to do anything at all. There's no reason to strive. Nothing is guaranteed.

And Youngstown's businesses are subsidized by the dealers who rent out empty rooms in their stores and restaurants—the same rooms that were once used by racketeers, bootleggers and money launderers. Today's drug dealers are much more localized than before. It's still the Wild West, just lower level. Guys are now block-by-block. There are over 40 gangs that have replaces a small handful of rings. Over the years, we've just gone from a few big hustlers to hundreds of little hustlers. They're on every street. It's still a legitimate thing.

People don't give a damn who the next mayor is. They just want that empty plot of land cleared up. They just want the neighborhood drug house shut down. They just want to survive on their street. People need something to connect to. Some place to voice their feelings.

This was a boomtown with an industry that dominated its politics and economy. So people learned how to get by on the side. And if it wasn't you who was doing it, it was your neighbor or your family member. While organized crime has broken down, the economy has declined and the blue-collar desperation has gone unchanged. The DNA is the same. The history has not left us. People overlook the same activities that made organized crime powerful. Drugs, betting, they just look the other way. It's like Mayberry.

These were second and third class citizens back then, and now those same people are subject to a depression. We've become numb to segregation. And it's the social networks that make change so hard, because change always affects someone you know.

The depressing part is that there is so much bad fucking shit being done that everyone here is only a degree or two away from it.

[Former Mayor Jay] Williams was so embedded in the system of corruption, by the time he realized it, that White House position probably looked pretty good.

I want to be a lightning rod, untouchable because they know I'll go public with everything I know.

Officer Kilburn, 38, police officer

I've had to arrest friends when it's necessary, but I'm not going to pull over a kid I went to school with.

Certain things here, people do without a thought. When I was a kid in 1995, I was working in a butcher shop and I'd sell betting slips on the side for the old Carabbia family. I'd keep a quarter on the dollar. I didn't even think it was wrong. Everyone does it. You just grow up that way. I had the chance to break up one of those betting rings with the SWAT Team, but I stayed in the station because I knew all the guys they were busting. You can be more aggressive if you don't have family here.

The problem is that if you call out everyone every time something corrupt happens, everyone's going to hate you. Sometimes you have to let things go, or tiptoe around it. You have to watch what you do. You have a greater goal, and you want to build momentum, but you need to pick and choose your battles. Just keep names in your black book.

It sounds like a movie, but if someone starts spouting off, people here will come after you. The 'Youngstown Tune-Up' is real. Throw a monkey wrench in someone's business? Get ready.

Gil McMahan (and his wife), 68, retirees

The old hardline rule of [ex-Mahoning County Democratic chairman "Bullmoose"] Don Hanni is fading away. And the state is sorta, kinda, maybe losing its mafia organization. They still try and pull their slipping and sliding, but they're more open now than they were in the [days of] insiders.

In the 1950s, you knew everyone on your street, and when the older folks died off, all the houses became rentals. Now you have no idea who people are or where the hell they're from. After the steel industry died down, the younger folks just sold the family home. No one was around, and no one cared. So the problem is absentee landlords. They're in Utah, they're in Germany, anywhere but Ohio.

When the steel mills were going full blast, working three turns, seven days a week, you'd have to blow the soot off your porch glider but people had good jobs. Now we've got clean air and no employment. Politicians back then were part of a secret organization, backroom dealings, and ties with organized crime. They called it Boom Boom Ballet or Bombtown. More decisions were made over breakfast at the Hub restaurant downtown than at City Hall. All of them, well 99.9 percent of them were involved with organized crime. But living was easier, and people were working. We just didn't know what the hell was going on. People will always have that mistrust because of the background.

The advantage we have now is that not everyone down there is doing that stuff. Some people there are open and keeping things straight. The problem is that they're just going to tell you what you want to hear.

The shadow [of the past's corruption] gives us that old feeling of insecurity and organized crime. It definitely overshadows politics. [Ex-mayor] Jay Williams started with some transparency, but [the mayoral favorite] leaves it wide open for questions. But you got to choose the best of all the evils.

25% of the people here look at the system and they think it's working for them. The rest don't give a shit if it's working as long as it's a Democrat in office. You could run Mickey Mouse on the ballot and if he's got a 'D' next to his name, you bet your ass he'll get elected. It's a shame we don't have more independent thinkers. [At community meetings, attendance] depends on whose ox is being gored at the time. It's kind of sad when you think about it.

A lot of the younger ones are turned off. They have the feeling that their vote doesn't mean anything. And I don't know how you're going to convince them otherwise. Because now you've got McNally running, and what am I going to tell them? He's got

that cloud hanging over his head. But we need the younger generation involved, not the old beer drinking people sitting around the table. We need homeowners who care about the neighborhood.

When I first got laid off from [Wean] United, I worked for the County's disaster services office. My director's brother-in-law was a Cafaro. At the time, the City Commissioner was going to cut two of our staff members as part of a budget deal, so the Director jumped into his car to go to the hill [Cafaro headquarters]. Within 20 minutes, we got a call from the City Commissioner's office saying that our jobs were safe. That boss, he'd disappear in the afternoons all the time, and leave a phone number where we could reach him in case of an emergency. One time, we got curious and we called the number. It was Joey Naples' music store [site of many backroom deals].

The history of politics in the Mahoning River Valley is a very corrupt old boys club. That distrust is passed down from generation to generation, just by talking. In the heyday, my dad and my grandfather would play 'the numbers' everyday from the guy who knocked door to door like the mailman.

White working class people don't know who to be frustrated with. The city, the state, the feds. It's just awfully hard to find a job. Nobody cares about the white working class. We just try to hang on and do what you can for yourself. It's just that, before the mills, we were working and the guys there would walk home together and felt cohesive as a group. The only remnant left of that is the bars, and most of them have closed down. That's where the neighborhoods come together. They'd start with a stiff one at 7am and tell everyone what they were going to do that day.

With the Depression, Roosevelt started the WPA and we still have the stonewall to prove it on Mahoning Avenue. Now nobody looks out for white people. The coloreds never stop fighting, they got the NAACP, and they never let anyone forget that they came as slaves from Africa. I'm not sure who [the politicians] are looking out for. From everything right now, I'd say that most programs are looking out for the Hispanics. Who's making that decision? Now every time you call someplace, you can press '2' for Spanish. But you've got a lot of them here illegally, trying to skip the line in front of folks who have been here. They're spread out all over and Congress may be afraid of losing their votes.

The wealthier white folks are Republicans. Here, they're commuters. They don't care about the city. They just want to get out. As long as it doesn't affect them—until Youngstown starts charging more for their water.

Annie Lewis, 65, ex-Air Force nurse

When the economy declined, we were left with the scrap metal and contaminated water. The city was left in ruins. Now they intend to lease over land for gas to companies with

world domination in mind. These companies will go vertical and horizontal. They will do whatever they want.

We should want the right to make a decision, not that somebody else makes another decision for us. Even if the promise is great wealth, here in Youngstown, the people of Youngstown are we willing to say that our land is precious? Let [county Democratic Party chairman] Dave Betras have a fracking pad underneath his house. He doesn't even live in Youngstown.

My grandfather came from Croatia for streets paved with gold and the promise of wealth—great enough to leave all behind. He came to Youngstown and found backbreaking work driven by wealthy industrialists. When they tried to form unions, the National Guard came in, people got shot, and a heavy hand controlled the neighborhoods. It's inherent in this area. There remains no transparency.

People in the grassroots, we have no money, and we're told we have no control over these matters. The politicians just tow the line and blame unions and the state government. And people are willing to sacrifice the future of their children for money.

When an environment is ruined, there are no children.

We don't make any of our own decisions. It has been so long since we made our own decisions, it's in our heritage. We have lost our essence. If you erase your essence, you're mindless. Neighborhood Associations are all well and good, but we are a bunch of bitties who don't want to rock the boat. They're afraid. They just don't think. They want to preserve their community by making maple syrup.

Donny Trilusa, 30, small businessman

Back in the day, on Phelps Street, there was a jewelry store—Ace's—run by a guy named Dominic Sandine. That's who you went to if you had any trouble. My dad always used to tell me, 'If you got into a bind, he would take care of it for you.' He used to give everyone \$500, \$1000 when they graduated from high school or college. [Why? Everyone?] Everyone who was Italian. He'd say, this will cover your first month's rent. It's an Italian thing. We take care of each other.

Father Kelly, 58, Catholic priest

The hope is that the new oil and gas finding will bring some kind of economy to Youngstown. The debate is wanting to protect the environment and wanting to create jobs. The question is what is the hottest fire to put out—the environment or murder? Because with a bad economy, we have drugs and crime. You have a lot of teenagers and young adults without anything to do. Idle hands are the devil's workshop.

Who knows what will actually happen, but the theory is that oil and gas will bring vocational skills. It's a gamble. Are we going to repeat the cycle of boom and bust? I don't know. But we need to do something. The status quo is not an option. I ask people what is the alternative?

The challenge is to get people to do things for themselves, instead of waiting for the government. Part of the history of this place is political corruption—mafias, indicted public officials, there is a sense of hopelessness. Political corruption disheartens the people. And quite frankly, the welfare mentality has made people dependent. The structure is such that it's more conducive than working.

It's not about placing more trust in government. It's letting things happen. There are a lot of naysayers, who think that trying to do things is an exercise in futility. I always hit walls of naysayers, who doubt that any effort made will produce lasting fruit. They have a cynical view that politicians are motivated by greed. These people throw up their hands and saying 'As soon as I get my money, I'm out of here.'

There is a gangster culture of drugs and out of wedlock kids here in the African American community. It's not a racial thing; it's a cultural thing. So white people left the city.

[Why do people want to drive their cars on empty lots?] That's how people are here.

[How many black congregants in the church?] Two.

[So most of the African Americans here are Protestant?] If they go to church.

The cost of building something is prohibitively expensive. It's much cheaper to tear down a building, and then rebuild it than it is to refurbish it. They have tried deconstructing buildings too, to re-use the parts, but it was also prohibitively expensive. You can ignore fundamental economics for only so long. It costs the city \$3000 to demolish, and another \$5000 for asbestos testing and abatement. Private citizens do not need to test.

White working class people feel like they are the heartbeat of America, the American way, what keeps this country moving. They are family oriented and take pride in their ethnic heritages. Now that their ethnic heritage is not as strong as it was for earlier generations, their Catholicism is not as strong either, because their ethnicity was tied to it. So there is a lack of Catholic cohesion now, separated by conservative and liberal tensions and different opinions about social questions like gay marriage and contraception.

Jack Keeley (and his wife), 61, railroader

Too often I'll remind people that I don't have a college degree to make them feel more comfortable. You take on corporations and stand on picket lines with teamsters. And a lot of WHITE WORKING CLASS sit around all day and watch TV, so they'll see the things I'm doing. They may not know what I'm actually doing when I'm on TV, but they'll think you're famous.

They're salt of the earth. They don't mind swearing. They care about their families and neighborhood and each other. And they do not like arrogance. It turns them off when people try and tell them what to do, rather than ask. There's a lot of insecurity and racism. People feel comfortable using the word 'nigger' around me because I'm white, and my parents always insisted that I correct people. I correct them in a way that at least makes them think about their racism. They'll say 'I'm not a racist,' and I'll say 'Yeah you are. You just called them niggers.' But there's a fine line between that and pompous self-righteousness. They're paranoid about their tax dollars going to people who are poorer than them.

[But isn't telling them what to say patronizing to them in the way you described? I thought they want to be asked?]

In most cases, they want to be asked. I just don't think that they understand that they are getting screwed. The most frustrating thing is that people don't know that I'm fighting for their interests. I went to the County's Office of Jobs and Family Services to gather signatures for my campaign. I stood in front of a bunch of people waiting in line and asked, 'Who here is a registered Democrat?!' Silence. Not a single hand went up, in a solidly Democratic county. So I said, 'Excuse me. Do you understand that the programs that you're waiting here for, the Republicans are trying to take them away, and the only thing stopping them from doing that are people like me?'

There is a unionist complacency. They get timely raises, improving conditions. Soon it becomes 'the union' instead of 'our union', with a bigger bureaucracy and the emergence of elite people running it. People feel like their jobs will be protected, and don't want to go to union meetings, so there is some disengagement from unions and also from the government. But I tell people, 'We are the government. We are the union.'

Organized crime representatives would shake hands with me with wads of money inside their palms. 'Nobody knows, Keeley,' they'd say. I would take their wrist and put the money back into their hands. The legal cash donation limit was \$100, and DeBartolo gave me five 100-dollar bills at my office. I put the word out that Keeley doesn't take cash. It meant that they didn't have me. But it also meant that I wasn't a guy that would turn them in. They would try to pay for my meals. They would put hundred dollar bills in my shirt pocket. And usually when I refused the cash, they wouldn't come back with checks [which had to be reported]. With the drug and gambling trades, cash went from the ring to the prosecutor to the judge. There is a slow seduction that takes place. People will tell me, 'Just take their money. Who's gonna know?'

The government has acquiesced. They've acquiesced with hiring practices, the environment, health codes. They think that all people care about are jobs, so they've just given up. They're not willing to go toe-to-toe with big companies in the public sphere. I can't say that I haven't thrown up my hands about my constituents. I'd tell them, 'They put the prison on the Eastside, because the Eastside don't vote!'

Freddy Kristeva, 59, bar owner and activist

The Democrats do support the working people, instead of the businesses, like Republicans. But the combination of the mills leaving, job loss, corruption, white flight, the city is basically shot. Once you pass outside the city line, you start to see businesses again, and the politicians can't solve that. The city just can't pull out of the mess. So legitimate business don't want to be associated with us. We have all the roads, electrical grids, and infrastructure, but GM preferred to build everything new in Lordstown. They don't want to have to pay people off.

I tried to start a bar downtown, but the mob owns all the liquor licenses. There is a finite number of licenses given by the city, and they bought them all up and control who they go to. They don't want me competing with their joints, and if I do, they want me to pay 30 grand and agree to buy the pool tables, dartboards and video games that they rent. They insist on your cooperation or they burn down your building. I mean, it's not that it's a bad deal; it's just control.

The family got riverfront property that was left by one of the mills. The city basically just gave it to them, and the family then sold it back to the city for \$3 million. The Mayor at the time was opposed to the deal, but then suddenly changed his mind. He got his money and we got an albatross. This happens all the time. Everybody just says, 'That's just the way it is.' They think it's like this all over the world. And the Mahoning Democratic Party is part of it.

A few years ago, a woman was telling me how she told a drug dealer to get out of her neighborhood. When he wouldn't listen, she went to the police. They wouldn't act, so she found Joey Naples and he got someone to break his legs with a baseball bat.

Most folks are jaded. [So why do they come to your meetings then.] People don't come to meetings to ask the government to solve things. People come to [redacted] to solve things ourselves.

The government won't stop river dumping, so we deal with it. We won't call City Hall or the mayor, because we know they won't do anything.

Father Candiotti, 42, Catholic priest

Until you tear down the mills, you won't be able to move on. People will always think, there's always that hope they'll open back up. You used to be able to get off the train on Monday and find a job on Tuesday. And just like if you lose a loved one, you grieve for a long time. And when they finally imploded the oldest of the blast furnaces, there was a group of steelworkers who stood watching on a nearby hill, crying. Those were the brutish looking steelworkers who went to work everyday and finished it at the bar with a double—sitting there, weeping.

I think the White working class identity is connected to the growth of the unions. A lot of the White working class thought their jobs and retirement were guaranteed, and it was pretty much the case back then.

The union of the General Electric plant in Niles, OH recently voted down a company plan to shift to producing LED light bulbs. In response, GE shut down all operations and moved. They were concerned that the changeover would alter the structure of their jobs. In the union jobs that we're so used to, the White working class is skeptical of companies. V&M, the French piping company, came in saying that they like to work in the community and engage local people. They were up front about their approach, including their aversion to unions. I never got a read on how many people applied for jobs exactly, but for those 400 jobs, I bet they received around 3 to 4 thousand applications. When our mills closed, there was no law back then that required companies to give fair warning to staff. They just shut down on Monday and 5,000 people were out of work. They just stabbed the community in the back. So the White working class are suspect.

In the immigration debate, many people think the White working class have lost our work ethic, that we're entitled. And there are people in this city who will fill every boat and personally drive them back to their home countries. But even they'll admit that immigrants will work harder for less money.

People are glad to be out of retail because consumers are so demanding and companies are purely profit oriented—not service oriented. Back in the day, the suit salesman was like your doctor and people were loyal. Now it's very cutthroat.

The trains to Youngstown aren't full of immigrants because there are no jobs here, so we don't have an immigration issue really. Without them here though, it can be amplified or misinterpreted. I hear stories every week about a department being cut from 12 to 2 staff members.

There's some Catholic guilt, so our parishioners come back from the suburbs. The tension is that the suburbanites feel like the city is filled with people who don't work and are on the dole. And no one wants to bring up the R word.

Traditionally the government has not been in a leadership position. It's more about fiefdoms of power than service here. The elite wealthier families who ran the biggest businesses want nothing to do with the government anymore. They will make big donations to schools, universities, restored public buildings and get structures named after them, but they maintain residences out of state. They're not here. Even young people feel like there is no choice but to move away. They gotta get out of town.

They don't see the government taking leadership roles. There's been a bit of a vacuum. There's too much reliance on the way things used to be. Don't you think that established grassroots organizations have some corporate wisdom? The government ignores them.

‘We know what to do.’ A lot of forward-looking people are viewed with skepticism: ‘What do you know about us?’ There is no longer a savior. I’m sorry to put it in Christian terms. But there is no longer a family or company that will take care of the community. We were over dependent on an industry. Working in the mills, there were no questions. But to lament and lament isn’t going to do anything. It was phenomenal growing up here, but it will never be what it once was.

Many White working class people are down because they realize that they are becoming the very people they used to criticize—the welfare takers, the unemployed. They feel like they need to know someone to find work these days, but they know fewer and fewer people.

Lou O’Malley (and his wife), 84 and 85, former factory worker and retirees

We had a good steel business. If you couldn’t find work on one block, you’d find it on the next. But these days, the big boys, the people with the big money don’t want to pay the gazeetas. They want something for nothing. We’re sending too much of our business overseas and getting terrible quality back. But I guess you’ve got to go with the flow. The losers are the white working class people. The big business people are the winners.

[Who looks out for the White working class?] We put out good products at [redacted], good stuff, yeah man. Those chairs I have from the company are still as good as the day we first bought them. The unions used to back their people up, and there were a lot of good places to work. But what’s going on now is greed.

We vote for the Democrats because they’re for the working people. Or at least they’re trying. It’s not as strong as it used to be. It’s a hell of a game they’re playing with big business. We’re never going to agree with 100 percent of what the party says. If the government could just see what God wants us to see. Everywhere is so corrupt. I think that the good Lord is going to annihilate the bad ones. God put us where we’re at.

[What has been the effect of all the corruption?] Well the bug was one good thing. They’d come to your door and you could win a few bucks. The people didn’t say much back then. As long as you were working, you were happy.

Greed has moved in. The Mexicans have moved a heck of a lot more now. They’re working very hard, they’re good workers, but they are being taken advantage of.

The White working class are the furthest on the outside. And it’s not fair to hold it against the Spanish people, because they work hard. But we’re so soft, we’re falling apart. The folks from Mexico will work hard and not care as much about their standard of living because it was much worse back there.

Mo Kerrigan, 65, unemployed

My Uncle ran [redacted], a Chinese beer garden on the Westside. It was housed in a residential neighborhood that was converted to a bar. He got into some trouble from the city, because they created some zoning laws that would revoke his license. So he went to a guy who was connected to the Cafaro family to ask for help. Sure enough, the problem got fixed. But every Saturday, when most places backroom banquet facilities were hosting weddings, [my uncle's] backroom was reserved with a table full of food and drinks for meetings. But he needed a favor.

The city's Health and Human Services office was leasing real estate from the Cafaro family for a million bucks a year in one of their strip malls. When they opened a new hospital nearby, the city didn't renew their lease. So the Cafaro's sued, and somehow the case didn't just get thrown out of court. The government, they're like us. They get tired. I bet [the Cafaros] approached the judge and asked how he was planning to afford college for his sons.

I don't have a voice. You have to put yourself out there to have a voice. And nowadays they can dig up anything from your past, and everybody makes mistakes.

There's the NAACP, the Muslim Brotherhood—the white guy? All he has is his little church. White people don't have the strength or support to accomplish anything.

All the wealthy people haven't done me any favors; I would have had to do something for them first. And all the black folks look at me and literally say, 'What do you want, honkey?' I was born here, and they say, 'Get out. This is our hood.' I'm the cannon fodder.

It doesn't seem like hard work pays off. The people putting in hard work are making minimum wage, and they're not going anywhere. And people today advance when they're friends with the boss. The hard worker, they never want to promote him or they'll lose all the labor. They'd rather go with the slacker who can kick back and oversee everyone. It reminds me of my old sergeant. He was a sharp dresser and was always writing things down on his clipboard. But the only time you'd see him around was in the line to get paid.

There was a time when everyone was engaged with each other. Now, you avoid eye contact because it may start a problem. Society today doesn't have to answer to anybody. There's no accountability. The goal is to enjoy our life because you never know what may happen tomorrow. You see people—boom!—they lose everything and have to move into their parents' basement.

I'm the cannon fodder. We take the bullet for the generals. We get sent out on routine patrols, but you're the one who takes the fire.

I felt closer to society when I was in the military and working for GM. But now, I'm meaningless. I don't do anything to promote the good of the community. I'm supposed to

lay down and die, rather than suck up all the resources—that's what all the people in the inner circle think of me. Be seen and not heard. Mind your own business.

Outside the circle, we are the minority. It doesn't matter what color you are. Money is power and influence, so I don't have anyone at my side or at my back. If I had trouble as a black man, I can call the NAACP. If I had trouble as a Jewish man, I can call the Jewish Defense League. As a white man, I have the KKK. They protect us like the others but they have to hide...and they hate Catholics. We have laws and equal justice for all, but on a sliding scale.

The only way you can feel camaraderie is through religion. But even there, you have to give money to the church. Plus, after my divorce, I can't go to confession or receive communion anymore. So I'm an outsider there too. When I die, my service will be on the floor of the church. When the mobster Sandy Naples died, his service was up at the altar. He was a murderer, and I just got divorced! And it was because I was working 16 hours a day and never home with her and the kids.

Will and Caroline Macmillan, 48, electrician and part-time art teacher

I think of my father and grandfather, who were steelworkers and blue collar. When I think of working class, I think of people with pride and no shame in whatever work they do. They just get up every morning and think of their families. I think there are less white working class people today. There's just a larger percentage of college graduates and people who have moved away from Youngstown because they couldn't stay and get a trade. There is a luxury to having the safety net of an industry that gives you a job if all else fails.

I think Bob Hagan represents old Youngstown. But the people here are the same way they've always been. They're not against change, but they're going to keep using the same thinking.

I think this area tends to get looked over when the government is distributing money. We just so happen to be in the right spot for oil and gas and its surrounding industries, but the politicians would like to take credit for it. The politicians who will back the labor unions are supposed to represent us, but they haven't done a very good job of it.

But the unions are so much weaker. They won't stand up for anyone or back us up. Things have just been so bad for us that the union's stances have weakened. This summer was the first time I have ever been told that it was mandatory to work six 10-hour days a week, unless you have a doctor's excuse. Otherwise, the client could fire you. Then they recently added a mandatory 8-hour Sunday on top of that. The general attitude is that because things have been so bad that people seem happy just to have a job.

The government has been very conscious to take care of the very, very poor without requiring them to do much work. When my husband gets laid off, we have fallen on some

tough times, and we have moved into the space between working class and the very poor. We qualified for free services, but we bucked them for a time because of the stigma. Eventually, we didn't want our kids to feel a noticeable difference in lifestyle, so we took food stamps, unemployment and Medicaid. We would shop at different grocery stores to avoid using the stamps in front of people we knew. One day, my daughter was told that her school lunch was free because her parents qualified. She came home and cried, asking us if we were poor.

Three years ago, there was absolutely no work to be found. Thank God for the government's extension of unemployment benefits, because we could have lost our house. We otherwise would have had to drain our retirement accounts to make all our payments.

Eight years ago, I ran my unemployment out and the government refused to grant an extension, even though the whole state of Ohio was struggling. I didn't know what to do, and I called down to the welfare office. It was tough to go that route. We got a Medicaid card and it was better than my usual union coverage. I realized at that time that the welfare money at \$225 per week was half of my unemployment payments and a quarter of my salary when I was working. Why would somebody want to work a minimum wage job if they can qualify for welfare and not have to get up every morning? I can understand if someone who's grown up on welfare, I mean, I didn't want to work at Dunkin Donuts and lose my Medicaid either.

It was a little humiliating but I always appreciated that he didn't make me come down to the welfare office with him.

When you're in charge of your own life, you don't want to be told when and how to get things. You want to be in control of your own fate. But some people like being guided. And when the mills left, I think people felt abandoned. People were lost souls. Just seeing the fear in my dad's face after Black Monday, he came back that night and I saw the stress.

[With regard to black people] I think people in Youngstown now, don't represent the Youngstown I know. We don't have the same experiences. I felt a racist feeling between black and white people. I got the sense that black people do not like me, and I'm sure they feel the same way.

I also don't appreciate people who make money off the backs of other people unfairly, taking advantage of common guys. Everybody has the right to make a profit, just not like that.

The union is the only thing we have that will protect us as workers. And I feel like big business will take the first chance they have to take advantage of me. It's almost like they're looking for an opportunity.

People think that unions are corrupt and evil because of the things that happened when the mafia took over the teamsters. The workers at W&M constantly vote the steelworkers unions down.

All the laws that protected workers' right have changed. I think the government needs to step in. I don't feel like I have a voice. There's a lot of pre-determined politics. Stuff just happens to us. We don't initiate change. The politicians need to negotiate deals and the worker gets stepped on.

Education and money drive power differences. The days when being white could get you closer to the center are over. And I'm glad they're over.

We're outside but we're not on the far outside, because I still feel like things could get worse. There was a time when a man could work 40 hours of honest labor and let his wife stay with the kids, own his home, give children the choice of whether or not to go to college. But something has happened. Now I feel like, when we die, our electric bill will still be due. I never thought that, as a union electrician, I would have struggled as much as I have. Union guys used to be at the top of the food chain, they drove new cars, had a home on a lake. I'm doing the same job they were doing, but I'm living paycheck-to-paycheck. We had our best year ever last year [in financial terms] and we still weren't able to save. We were just playing catch-up on our bills.

What about the people who make enough money not to qualify for welfare but not enough to eat vegetables? Not enough to avoid the burden of proving that they're off drugs in order to get a job. And yet I wouldn't trade places.

One day, my youngest son was in the car with me, and he said, 'I'm not going to be friends with black people.' I freaked out, and realized—my God—we were in a white neighborhood, sending our kids to a white school and attending a white church. What kind of world were we living in? This is not the real world.

That's who we are though. We're all immigrants. In the Southern states, they're using a lot of immigrants for work. And as that goes north, that could threaten my job. I haven't really seen it yet, but the unions are competing for bids with companies that employ immigrants. Nobody cares about the quality of work anymore, what things look like behind the scenes, safety. The cheapest bid gets the job. But some of our ancestors would never have been let in if we had more selective rules. They used to have signs in storefronts saying 'Irish need not apply.' Our country was built on immigrants. Our border should be kept open but maintained in an orderly fashion. It meant something for people to fit in, and that hasn't changed.

Ralph Mickelson (and his neighbor), 70 and 71, Korean War veteran and postal service retiree

We had a problem with black boys coming into the neighborhood, two dozen at a time, tearing up the gardens, beating on cars, getting in fights. My neighbor sat outside her house with a rake, I was cleaning my shotgun on my porch. They said they'll call the police, and I said 'go ahead!'

The Southside is coming apart like a cheap sweater. The Westside was once the only part with any decency, but now we've got houses run by slumlords. The blacks are in control of the ship and they are protected by the cops. The laws aren't enforced. Murderers are only getting five to six years.

I don't see how we can change anything short of anarchy. The people have to make the change because the government sure ain't going to do anything. These days, fairy tales begin with 'When I get elected for office...' These politicians are just trying to get rich or get elected. I envision that the people get so fed up that they get a group of people who say they can't go on like this and put the politicians out of work.

There are jobs that a [university] graduate like my son will never get because of quotas and the need to promote women and minorities, whether they can do the job or not.

Vigilante justice deters. If I'm sitting up here with a gun, they ain't coming. But that's a Band-Aid. But that's pretty much the only way to get things done. If you're going to try to force change that one group doesn't like. The minorities are in control of the ship.

I've got relatives in higher positions, and I ask them what they're going to do. And they say that it's just the way it is. You gotta kiss someone's ass to get anything done. You shouldn't need any more than a [meritocratic] process.

I've gotten away from every organization. I left the army-navy garrison, coin clubs. It just feels like your beating your head against a brick wall. So you get complacent like everyone else. We're a bunch of zombies.

Nobody is looking out for us. Everyone is looking out for themselves. You have to educate yourself on your own. We go to school to adjust to new technology. Meanwhile, other people are getting jobs without doing anything, blaming their upbringing and society. [Employers] are looking out for minorities and immigration. They keep throwing out that all of us come from foreign countries, and it's true; I'm Irish. But my ancestors came legally through Ellis Island. They've never worked here, and they come in and get welfare. I was on welfare too after the mills went to Hell and hit the dominoes. But that's the difference. I wasn't born into it and never left it.

Now there are some damn decent black people, and I'd welcome them into my house. But there's black trash, just like there's white trash. A nigger is just a person who doesn't hold themselves accountable. And I know as many white niggers as I know black niggers. There's a lot of white people I just as soon wouldn't be around.

The things you can see sitting from this porch. Days go by, and I'm just along for the ride... on my chairlift, ha! ...I'm just waiting for the hole in the ground to open up.

We were a bunch of hillbillies, moving our couches across the street from house to house. I used to trap for fur in the Mahoning River. And I still pick up trash as I walk around. I scrap. I did a lot of things to make sure my kids ate.

We were better off under organized crime. All the streets were plowed; there was no nonsense. Now cops have their hands tied behind their backs and a patch over one eye. At least back then, the trouble they created was among themselves. Now we're all suffering. The blacks, Hispanics and whites who don't want to work, they've got Section 8 housing. So they can live anywhere and go to better schools, not like that makes a damn difference.

There is no work ethic or loyalty—to your employer or from your employer. It's at the bare minimum. In some instances, hard work pays off, but in others, it gets you scorn from other workers.

I've been to City Hall meetings. The only people they listen to are minorities, the civil liberties bleeding hearts, the NAACP and lawyers. It's futile. They'll agree with you all day long, but there ain't going to be any changes. I read The Vindicator every day and listen to the nightly news. It's all bad. And why do I need to hear about problems in Tucson, Arizona?

We're on the outskirts all the way around. Shit trickles downhill. If there's anything to get, we've got to get it for ourselves. They have no interest in us, except to tax us and get levies for the government.

What they call minorities aren't minorities anymore. They are just outside the core from the politicians in the state of Ohio and Pennsylvania. They're the majority and we're the minority—the ones who paid all the taxes and fought all the wars.

There is no middle class. You're either poor or you're rich. And not everyone is college material. Some people are made to work with their hands in manufacturing jobs.

You can take fools out of the hood, but you can't take the hood out of the fools. The way I feel, the only thing I'm entitled to is breathing clean air.

His wife: I don't vote. It's just taking one bad person out and putting another bad person in. Like Will Rogers once said, 'Why ruin a good man?' It's just going to turn him into a thief.

Caleb Jones, 42, parking attendant

People want to discredit this community, but it all comes down to economics. Crime and public corruption are all products of economic decline. I don't think that we have a more prevalent corruption culture than any other area that shares our economic woes. It's disheartening when all the associations with your area are negative. The other thing that I'm displeased with is the lack of work.

I'd rather eat than not try out a new industry. You have to take some risks. We're not going to have people knocking on our door with a multibillion-dollar industry every day. We are desperate for work.

It's apathy, and a great deal of laziness, but also not getting much of a response or feeling very effective. You feel as if your participation is almost non-consequential. Based on their relationship with unions, people vote Democratic. However, the average Youngstownian is very right in their values. They don't care for taxes, they're hard on criminal justice, they like the capital punishment, the own guns, they're pro-life thanks to their Catholic values, they hunt, so this area has a tough time defining themselves.

The dependence on the unions and a single party has destroyed the area. If you can't lose, then what do you care about following rules? If there's no accountability or competition, then you lack the incentives to do the right thing.

The principle of self-responsibility has been ingrained into me since I was a young person. With the White working class, people are misguided that unions are looking out for them. Listen, we have had crippling economic woes, but not once has Labor said that they may have had something to do with it. We cannot compete globally when we have to pay people \$30 an hour to put in a bolt. I don't know that anyone is looking out for the White working class.

Our welfare system panders to those who take advantage of it. The people who contribute the least in terms of pro-social behavior are receiving the most attention. While I do think that there is a disproportionate amount of black people on welfare, it is more determined by a lack of education or income.

[Which black people are more subject to?]

Yes.

We just kept an unnecessary municipal judge, because it was a seat held by a black person. If you live in Youngstown, Ohio and make more than \$40,000 a year, then you are a public employee.

The core, the focus of energy is on the welfare state.

I feel closer to the folks who fled the area. As property values go down, everything around them goes down too. Drops in education, rises in crime, a dilapidated infrastructure. Some people are willing to work out of it. It's about self-preservation.

There are reasons for minority representation in the criminal justice and welfare systems, and they're not necessarily blamable reasons. But you can't talk about them because you'll be called prejudiced. People tiptoe around a ton of issues rather than confront them. Even if you present objective, quantitative data, you're a racist.

There has been outrage over the Catholic pedophilia scandals; it's the first thing people mention when you talk about the Catholic church. But they do not question the Muslims. It's a liberal elitism, from the people who stand on the backs of the poor to get elected. Their message is about the downtrodden, but they're not providing them with jobs. The Republicans are at least creating jobs.

[Did you ever accept welfare or government benefits?] Unemployment, yeah. It was a humbling, disheartening experience for three months. I had philosophical problems with it, but I eventually found work digging ditches for a construction company. You know, it became comfortable to get money in the mail. You can really stagnate. I asked myself whether I was not working because I can't find a job or because I don't like the jobs I find. Now, I'm poor, but at least I have a job. I don't get what I want, but I got what I need.

I was ashamed of myself. I would be lying if I said that the stereotypical images of minorities pulling up to the welfare office in an SUV and jewelry didn't cross my mind. But I was more concerned with being associated with white trash. I'm already an alcoholic who just got out of prison six months ago for a DUI conviction. I was concerned with the labels that go with those stereotypes. I mean, I did what they said I did. The labels that I'm most uncomfortable with are true.

Jimmy Plummer, 26, handyman

I'm a lifelong Southsider, and part of the only white family within a four block radius. The kids there are running free and causing a lot of problems and crime. I believe that that comes down to bad parenting. But things are harder, the living situation and minimum wage being what it is. There are jobs but people aren't qualified for them or aren't going for them. They can't afford to get the training or don't have the drive.

If you drove around ten years ago, it was like night and day. It's just a vast emptiness of houses now. People moved, the houses get stripped by scrappers, they get vandalized, they become an eyesore, and then they get demolished. My aunt's street used to have seven houses on her block. It now has two houses, and my family owns both of them. If the government's doing anything, I'm not seeing most of it.

There ain't any group or organization in particular looking out for the White working class. It's just you, me and the next guy. The government is looking out for people on welfare, and people taking advantage of the whole system. I know a family with six kids

and they're getting \$1,900 a month in food stamps, and when she has her seventh, she'll get more money and we'll be paying for it.

If you've got the will, there's always a way to make money. I took my college fund in high school, and bought a truck to haul scrap. Then I bought another to start a business. I still do it for extra cash. Other people want money brought to them. And others go out and make money illegally. A lot of it is parenting, how you're brought up. It's mostly the black community.

I feel closer to the black people in my neighborhood. It's where I grew up and experienced a lot of things that folks out in the suburbs never seen or experienced. People from Boardman, Poland, Canfield, they always thought they were better than me. But I wouldn't change a thing.

I'm very rarely home long enough to eat, sleep, shower and get back to work. So I don't have time to get involved in politics.

In the 70s, we were known for steel. This could be our comeback. The neighborhoods, people will move back.

White working class are close to the core. The numbers are just stronger. They want to better themselves and their families. They don't need as much attention.

Everybody needs help, but there should be stricter guidelines over what you get, how you qualify for it and how long you can receive it. Instead, the government is catering. It's affecting White working class people but not enough that they're willing to do something about it.

The welfare office told my friend that if you're not black or a single parent, you're wasting your time here.

Kat Benet (and her husband), 35 and 38, groundskeeper

There are a lot of vacant houses, people moving in and out so much that I don't even know their names. We didn't have to worry about people breaking into your car or house. You could leave your doors unlocked because you knew everyone. Now, we've been vandalized and my car windows were broken by thieves who tossed stuff around looking for things to steal.

I leave [politics] alone. If it doesn't pertain to me, I don't stick my nose where it don't belong. Around here, if someone finds out that you said something about them, they'll retaliate. So we leave it to the neighborhood watch people. Down the street, someone served as a police witness and got bricks thrown through their windows or they got jumped. You rock that boat, they'll come back at you. Those drug dealers will come right back at you and find you.

I've never gone to a meeting or organization, but we did sign a petition for more police patrols where the neighborhood watch people came and asked. But we're too busy. It's out of our hands. It's on the government and politicians. Whoever takes over. Let them take care of it all.

Now we're in a rut. It doesn't feel too great. We're losing work to people who have 15 or 20 years of experience. It should be even-stein for everyone. You should have ways to start a career and have something to fall back on. The minimum wage is not decent enough for people in poverty. Some people are getting more money for doing the same thing. If a white person and black person apply for the same job, the black person will say it's discrimination if they are not hired. It's everywhere. I should be able to claim discrimination too, without getting into trouble for saying it.

I look at people for their personality. I don't care if you're black, Mexican or Cuban. I just like people with manners, who'll wave when they come by. That's how you know they're nice. I learned that growing up on my grandma's street. White folks are just as bad as anyone else, especially when they ain't got nothing else to do.

People on the inside have better jobs, better power. On the outside are the ones who are trying to make it, but can't—the people living out on the streets. We're never near the middle, and we'll never get there. And if we try to get closer, we get knocked back.

Whatever it takes to make rent, I'll do it. A lot of people at the cemetery complain about paying taxes to support people on welfare. But if they had the chance to get government money, they would jump on it. They think they deserve help too. So they're mad about other people getting it. If we were both working, the benefits would drop a little, but it's better in the long run. But if someone needs it, then they should receive some help.

A.J. Hardy, 23, operations and maintenance

I hear stories about the steel mills all the time. There were a lot more jobs back then and the city was booming. But growing up, I've seen a lot of buildings go. In my neighborhood, the shops, restaurants and bowling alley have all been shut down and gutted. Instead of fixing problems with mold, the owner of our local plaza, Mr. Cafaro, he just kicked them out and everybody got fired. It was bad on the neighborhood. People had to go further for their banking and groceries. Half the buildings I grew up with are gone. In my social circle, more and more of my friends go every couple of months, moving to places like California and Georgia. My best friend went to cooking college in Pittsburgh, and she got used to a faster pace. So she took the first chance she got to move that came her way. People are looking for opportunities to leave, not opportunities to stay. Around here, if you don't drink or play pool, there's not really anything to do.

The city got excited about getting money to tear down more homes, but I think that they should be fixing them up. There's more you can do with a house than with an empty lot. Some of these places have some of the most beautiful moldings and painted walls.

I vote but I don't know how to voice my opinion, other than talking to my friend who's on a homeowner's board. I think all it takes is one voice, one snowball rolling to start an avalanche. But I don't get much time in between work and supporting my family.

A lot of people don't go on the Eastside much because of the shooting and drug busts. It's a breeding ground for drugs and bad behavior. My parents used to let me run around the neighborhood til the streetlights turned on. Now parents won't let their kids go more than two or three houses down the block. A home in excellent condition that needed no work went for \$8,000 last week. A lot of the problems occurred with demographic change. Eight nearby homes have been raided recently, and three houses on my street are operating drug houses.

My dad has more black friends than white. He gets so dark in the summer time that you might think he was black. I've seen photos of him when he was young with a picked afro. Growing up, color was never an issue. My dad's best friend is black, they always called each other 'brother'. I thought they were brothers until I was eight years old. The man slept over enough times in my living room.

In high school, when people would fight over race and religion, I would drift into the corner because I didn't know which side to take. When I was going to Rayen High School on the Northside, my dad was driving me to school one time when a man in a car pulled up along side of us and started yelling, "You're a nigger too, because you hang out with them!"

My father was in the steel mills, he was a Vietnam vet, a city employee, and he taught me—what he called—Real World 101. He'd say nothing in life is handed to you. You got to earn everything you get. At Christmas, I wouldn't get gifts without perfect behavior and completed chores. I got a job sweeping up guts on a butcher farm when I was 10. At 13, I worked in a locker room at a summertime pool. In high school, I worked as a student janitor.

I feel like I am living the American Dream. Most people my age live with their parents, and very few have jobs. If you've got a roof over your head, food on the table, and you're paying off your bills each month, then that's all you need. There are plenty of other things I want in life, but where I'm at, I'm happy. When I get together with my friends, it's always at my house and they tell me how lucky I am.

You don't have very many politicians or businessmen where I come from, and almost everyone I know has had some kind of run-in with drug dealers. My best friend got shot and killed next to me, while I was walking with him near Oak Street about 10 years ago. He was shot for trying to leave a gang. The guys who shot him was found dead seven

days later. There's no record of the murder because his mom was related to the mayor [George McKelvey], and she didn't want any bad publicity.

Philip Masey, 59, salesman

Most people characterize Youngstown politics as not working. We have a city that—I just don't understand why—has not been able to redefine itself since the steel industry wound down in the seventies. I see a nearby city like Pittsburgh thrive, when its industry left in a big way. And now it has a vibrant downtown area, with supported sports teams, and major well-respected universities linked to its progress. They have found ways to become a center for education and research and business—60 miles away. There's a little bit of that in Cleveland, and in Akron, where they have responded with resilience after the loss of the rubber industry. Now you can't swing a dead cat in these places without hitting a new restaurant or development. We're surrounded by success stories. But a reputation as a mob town doesn't help. We have seen one public official after another indicted, including prosecutors, sheriffs, judges, just at the municipal level. Our congressman was only the second in history to be expelled from office. I'd like to be a fly on the wall at these backroom meetings that have limited the development of our city. I think there is a perception that to do business here you need to do it with more than your customers. Sunshine laws don't exist when Vinny Nono's representatives are talking with city officials. It's hard to say that it's all not true today. If I make enough noise about this stuff, I may just get an invitation to meet with some people who will tell me more. I'm just not sure what it is that makes our officials behave the way they do.

After all of the work it took to create the County's land bank, the Mahoning County prosecutors office is like a glob of glue in a funnel. They have received 600 applications for property conversions and about 26 have gone through. This is not an issue of capacity; The prosecutors just want to be the ultimate approver of what happens. They don't want to shuffle applications to the court. They want to be a center of control, which is not necessary. It's just a power play, lord over all. I just don't know where that comes from. Here in Mahoning County, it's just one example of someone standing in the way. That seems to be the way things have been done for a long period of time, to the development of progress.

There are going to be some instances of people getting tired of things and just retreating back to their houses. Now others are starting to realize that they have a voice. The [history of corruption] makes me even more willing to fight.

[During the mayoral debate] I felt awkward during that scene. That sort of runs counter to the purpose of community organizing.

[With regard to City Council's closed door meeting with the board of Cardinal Mooney High School] You ask yourself how some of them did not realize that a council quorum was present, so why was it behind closed doors? Why did no one think of that? Maybe

that just says something about our public officials losing their way, remembering the rules, and the conceit of their power.

[What are the region's white working class people like?] I wish I knew. The white working class are a minority, when they weren't before. Like me, they are doing what they can do to get by. I had a great job with a software company, but after the great recession of 2008, I'm working at [redacted – retail]. And frankly, it's probably more because of my age, not my qualifications. I've worked at two call centers before that. It's Hell on Earth. Hard and frustrating work.

VXI pays the city a lot of money in taxes and they occupy a city-owned building with over 400 people. The deal was egregious. The rent was suppressed and the city provided bus service. They just have so much leverage that they can threaten to leave us with an empty building, and it may go two inches deeper.

There are times when I don't feel welcome. Even though I'm not from Planet Neptune, I did grow up 35 miles away. So I didn't go to one of the local high schools, and people here put a lot of stock into that. But I've been here since 1979, and 30 of the last 34 years. But I can't shake that feeling that people are going to look at me a little differently because I wasn't part of the East High School class of 1972. And that parochialism is something we're going to have to get over to survive.

Nelly Caritas, 55, public health worker

Oh, it was beautiful, down on Mistletoe Avenue. We were the children of a barber. Our neighbors were a lawyer and a doctor. There was a market down the street, with a bank, a bar, and a banquet hall, where everyone went for drinks. Ella Fitzgerald once sang there. You go down there now and it's a line of drug houses. But Hell, I've got drug dealers on my street too now on the Westside, and they're pulling up in front of my house and selling dope in front of everyone. We used to have a lot of Italian neighbors who took care of their gardens; there are only four of us left.

I'm not a political person, but I was so excited by the election of Jay Williams that I bought a house because I was so certain that the area was going to build up. I went downtown to attend a meeting of the Youngstown 2010 [urban development] initiative to discuss the revitalization of the city. Guess what? I never heard any more about it, and within a few years, Mayor Williams moved to Washington, DC and we're back to Square One.

When I was young, I worked on a few campaigns, particularly for a municipal judge. Other than calling my councilman to complain about a mentally ill woman who was becoming a nuisance on my street, I'm not politically involved at all. I know people who go to the neighborhood block watches, and I haven't seen them make any difference.

If you can't get a union job, people will just as soon work elsewhere. I don't think that anyone is looking out for white working class interests. I'm working harder now than I was 20 years ago and we haven't gotten a raise here for five or six years. Two years ago, there were two people doing my job.

Hard work pays off if you're working for yourself, but not if you're working for somebody else. I think that the American Dream exists if you have family stability, a good education and faith. But not if you're brought up on welfare. Then I don't think you have a chance. You're just too focused on meeting your basic needs.

Minorities seem to know how to get the resources they need to improve their lot. They'll do what they have to do. The folks on the outside are so used to living that way, that's just their culture. They don't want to get into the mainstream.

Other than my siblings, I don't associate with people in the suburbs. So I feel closer with the people in my neighborhood. [So you feel close with the black people nearby.] I don't socialize with them. I don't invite them to parties or anything, but I will invite some of the poorer white folks. I mostly stay with my family and have beers on my porch.

Youngstown is basically all black now. So they're getting a little more attention, but that happens when their population goes up. If you add in the Mexicans, then our population, yeah, it's really changing.

I see the world turning into Star Trek, where everyone gets mixed up. So why fight it? There's no chance of returning to Andy Griffith. I'd love to, but there's no chance of that happening. The people in power want that though. They want to go backward.

The Democrats are all I know. Is it because I'm a social worker? Is it because I think everyone deserves an equal chance? They try to make it that way. I think people are desensitized to corruption. [The Democrats] have always been white, mafia, holding influence in this town. So those side deals will always be there. Greed will never go away. I don't want that to come back to haunt us, but I think there has been more integrity lately.

Leah Perry, 29, factory clerk

My ex-husband was telling my [7-year-old] son that only coons live in the ghetto where our house is. I was at a low point in my life when I thought it would be a great idea to marry a homophobic racist who lives in a \$3,000 post-war shit box on the Southside.

If you don't do bad things, then I believe that bad things will not happen to you. There came a time when I decided that I could either loathe living here and be miserable or I can embrace this shit and be a cheerleader for the city. I ditched my home in [the suburb of] Poland and actually spent more money in order to move to the Northside. I volunteered for absolutely everything. Just 10 years ago, there were prostitutes hanging

out in the park across the street, and it has gotten a lot better with some effort. I will provide coffee and fresh baked cookies if the demolition guys would just tear down the building next door.

The government has nothing to do with any of the changes I've seen here. The City Council is self-serving and will do everything for themselves, their friends, and their self-preservation. To keep the status quo. My councilwoman holds a seat that was previously occupied by her husband—a black couple representing a neighborhood of white university employees, and they will do anything to stay in. I have no idea how. All I know is that the streets she drives to work are the ones that get paved and the two of them meet every morning in a church's empty parking lot. I don't know what they're doing but I can only imagine it being shady. The Council is completely out of touch with the future of this city. They would rather impede progress than bolster it. I don't feel like I have any voice. I vote in every election. But the way the Council operates, there's no point in attending. They don't even release the agendas in advance.

Banks will not give mortgages on houses that they consider uninhabitable. You need a 'purchase and rehabilitate' loan from HUD [Housing and Urban Development]. They assess the property and estimate its value post-rehab. But there's not a single house in this neighborhood worth much more than \$15,000. It's modern-day red-lining. They're refusing to lend. You need cash or a credit card.

If I want a certain quality of life, the only way to do it is to do it myself. You don't need to rely on other people to get things done. The government just makes it hard to work in their framework, so you either have to do it yourself or give up. This is the area that founded unions. People have a chip on their shoulder. They think that they are owed things. They expect the union to do it for you. You'd got to the steel mills, clock in, clock out, collect your pension, and repeat. There are people my age that are still waiting for a union or factory.

What you're left with is African Americans and Mexicans on the Eastside, and on the Westside, it's really poor white folk who don't give a fuck about anything. I go to neighborhood cleanups and community gardens, and you always see the same people there. [The rest] of the people who live here are uninvolved, obese, foul people. The block watches are a fucking joke. I don't have time to hold people's hands.

I don't qualify for welfare or health insurance. I had a better quality of life when I was working part-time at \$9.00 an hour. I'm making enough money to exist, but that's too much for the government. The city doesn't have a program for me. [The office of] Jobs and Family Services doesn't take any action. I guess I could do what other people do and not report parts of my income. But I want to live honestly. There's no way to live honestly.

I want to raise my son in a diverse environment, but the black population is just separate. They organize public events in the neighborhood park, but they don't publicize it to people like me. I want to be with a certain caliber of people and, aside from a few black

friends, most of my [black] neighbors are not quite there. There's no opportunity to make friends with black professionals with any interests similar to mine. I don't feel that difference. I don't feel uncomfortable around black people. But socially, there is a huge separation between white and black people in this town. I used to wait tables at a restaurant on the Eastside, and they hated me at first, but eventually we were cool. I walked into an event at the Trumbull County Country Club one time with a black friend, and the whole room turned around.

I feel like I'm on the outside. But that is based on my choices. I didn't have to have a baby at 21. I didn't have to take the job I have. But we benefit the least from the government. You're not living in a society where the less fortunate are getting a hand—or at least a hand that is helpful. The wealthy are getting protected. I'd take welfare if I qualified. Shit, you pay into it. It's like, are you also too proud to drive on the streets that your taxes built, pave and light?

It's a caste system based on wealth. It doesn't matter to them if food stamps got cut, if insurance premiums go up, if a factory they don't own closes. There's not that much of a difference between us on the outside. Just because I don't qualify for welfare doesn't mean that I can afford to pay my bills any easier. We're all one step from welfare. You are one bad car accident, one unexpected lay-off, one medical bill away from losing your house.

There are a lot of people who are living charmed lives who haven't worked hard but knew the right people thanks to how they grew up and where they're from. I mean, what year is it? Nepotism is still very much at play. And anyone who says it's not is full of shit.

The American Dream that me and my parents were sold has become impossible. It's impossible to buy a house, to get a raise, there's a huge disparity.

We need an uprising. But if you scheduled one, only three people would show up.

Eddie and Gillian Phee, 42 and 42, flea market shopkeeper and unemployed factory worker

This is a fixed town. Mobtown USA, the Murder Capital of America, that's what we take pride in, as despicable as it is.

The guy sitting over there selling flowers, he runs the local mob family. They still run the numbers and the guy who sits next to him is the strongman. But that's not new to this town.

A Spanish kid stole a watch from my stand, so I chased his ass outside to his car. I said pay me for the watch or you'll wish I had called 911. He threw the watch into the backseat out of reach, so I said, "Eat rocks!" and chucked a brick through his back

window. You got to take care of things yourself. That's how we do things in Youngstown.

We do good deeds. We volunteer at the local Catholic school.

I opened my window one morning and a city worker was pissing in my front yard. So I called the Water Department boss. The man told me to drop his name the next time we needed something taken care of. When we bought our house and needed the city to reinstall the water valve, I dropped it and sure enough, they came the next day. It usually takes over a week! Everything is who you know.

You can't call the city government or police to complain about drug dealers hanging out and selling outside of my house. You just have to do it yourself. If you want anything done, you need to confront them. I didn't want them doing that stuff in front of my kids. And when they didn't have no room in the jail, it got real bad around here. The police told me I shouldn't say nothing because he might have a gun. But one night, I went out there with my dinner in-hand and screamed to get off my property. They needed to take that back home.

After that, we went to the neighborhood Task Force with their information, and within a week, the dealers all changed their cars and license plates. We eventually figured out that it's more effective to report things online than tell people. They'll obviously talk.

[Who looks out for your interests or the interests of people like you?] No one. No one at all. For white working class folks? Nobody. There was a training session for people at the Business Incubator downtown, and it was advertised as only for [minorities].

We're stuck between a rock and a hard place. You can't get a job or you'll lose your medical [Medicaid]. But if I don't get a job, we're not really making enough. Each month, we want our numbers [profits] to come in right—high enough to pay the bills, low enough to keep the medical coverage and food stamps.

The American Dream works for some people. Other people just live day-to-day. If you do have a dream, this town will find a way to shoot it down.

Hard work pays off if you're not under someone else. The harder someone sees you work around here, the more they will take advantage of you. That's this town. We get told by out-of-towners that people around here have a crappy attitude. But everyone is so bottomed out, we can't trust no one. Truthfully, I don't even see race. Everyone in this town is messed up.

We pretty much raised ourselves. Neither of our moms were home. [Manny] had a stepdad and my dad was a trucker who also had another family.

We're healthy and happy. What more can you want? We're not the richest people in town, but I think that wealth is having a good family that takes care of each other. So some of our friends think we're the richest people they know.

Iggy Nagy, 24, electrician

You have to pass a test that's based on reading comprehension and math. If you can't pass, it doesn't matter who you know or what quotas are out there. You won't get in. Then you have an interview, so they can see if they like you. Then there's a probationary period. As long as you have a good attitude and don't piss anybody off by acting like you know more than everybody else, you'll be fine.

My parents would tell me how downtown used to be, lit up with things to do. But in my lifetime, there's never been anything but a couple bars with the wrong crowd. I'm hoping that economic development pushes away the things that made the neighborhoods around here worse—the Section 8 housing, abandoned homes, low property values, arson.

If there was a way to reduce welfare. Politicians are so concerned with helping people, but those who get the help haven't worked a day in their lives, pop out babies and work the system. They sell their food stamps on the street and buy steaks, drugs and Cadillacs. The problem is that most people don't see it the way I see it. They're complacent and just worried about themselves. So I can't get people to do what I want; it just turns into an argument. To do anything politically, you need to have the support of people with a bunch of money.

A lot of people like to link welfare to race, but that's not entirely true. Yeah there are a lot of black people abusing the system, but there are some white people do the same thing. They do it with worker's compensation claims too.

I just want to go to work, do my eight, get paid for my eight, and not have to owe anything to anybody. In the union, everything is supposed to be equal. You pay the same dues; you bring the same tools. But these days, you see some guys bringing their own high-priced tools. That'll save the employer money from not having to provide those tools, and make them more employable. When work was bad, the contractors had a lot of power. Non-union workers rose when the unions ignored smaller jobs in favor of the mills. But eventually, there was less work to go around and with the mills closed, the contractors chose who stayed on the job. What is equal anymore? Everywhere you look, people are doing bad things and not getting punished. A lot of times, hard work doesn't pay off. Some people get away with the minimum, and some people get it right. It's just that the percentages ain't what they ought to be.

Whoever had money runs to government. I know the president's going to do what the investors who supported him want him to do. He's got to pay back his debts. We need 16 choices for office, not just the better of two evils.

White people have become the minority itself. A lot of [the black people] will bitch about politics but not do everything about it. It just seems like a low percentage of them are doing good for the community. Maybe it's the bad publicity.

You can only be a racist if you're a white person saying bad things about a black person. But if someone calls me a cracker, that's still racism. People have freaked out on me for things I've said, because I can't say anything because of slavery and their historical oppression. People aren't looking for equality; they're looking for retaliation.

A lot of politics is still controlled by white men. There should be more women; I'd like to see more of everyone in there. The disadvantage for white people is at work. I see people get jobs not because someone is good at what they do, but because we need to fill a demographic quota. Who'd going to do the work right?

I'm on the outside, or pretty close to it. Just because at the center, it's not about color; It's about money. Money matters less.

When the unions were strong and represented the working class, we were higher up [in society]. But that just shows how it all comes down to money. Unions could be more independent, rather than be so obsessed with the Democrats. At meetings, the message is always anyone but a Republican. You have to preserve your work, first and foremost. The Republicans need to re-gear. They're pushing people away. They need to update for the modern world.

Government responds to the moral need for welfare, not to the power of people on welfare.

If I get laid off, I would take unemployment. At least I paid into the program. I'm not getting something for nothing. That's how the skilled trades go. You work yourself out of a job.

My friend was getting food stamps without really needing them. It's for people who are actually struggling, not people who could otherwise make sacrifices and spend money on dinner instead of video games.

There is always a chance to [achieve] the American Dream.

Marge Russell, 73, retired autoworker

Our old street has only six or seven houses left on it. Our beautiful, old brick house with its sundeck was torn down a few years ago. The blight is now creeping out everywhere. The area is just not as affluent as it was in the 1960s.

[With regard to her job as an autoworker,] I was in the right place at the right time. But my coworkers weren't always happy about it. One guy threw a K-brace at my legs.

Others would try to sabotage my car because I was driving a [competitor's car]. People resented me even more when I went on salary with the company.

I do, I think my voice matters. Most politicians are accessible. I just go to certain social functions and go up to them. If you're a pest, they respond. A group is always more powerful though. It's the same way you build cars: You can't get anything done unless you talk to people.

Today, being white and working class doesn't mean a peck of beans. Being drug-free is more important to employers. Between the alcohol and narcotics, people are having trouble holding down jobs.

Right now, the whole of Youngstown is black. Blacks are becoming more educated; it was just a matter of time. Hopefully they'll vote for the best man in the elections, but in reality, they vote according to [race], religion and other craziness.

We are the underdog now. People of my generation certainly think so. Younger people were not raised in a time when black people could not get on a bus. That always broke my heart. Many were always intimidated by the white man, and never got over that fear. Today, if young white people have had bad experiences with a carjacking or a mugging, they become scared by the way black people talk and act. Now I can be intimidated.

The hierarchy is based on money and jobs. In the fifties and sixties, it was more about color, but that changed when you had the influx of national corporations that were forced to treat people equally.

The unions went too far. They got just as powerful and crooked as the companies they fight against. Their philosophy is all about seniority, and they've made it such that even if you're a convict or a drug addict, they will always have your back. The auto industry pays for their counseling and abuse of the system. People were able to milk the system and it wasn't fair to the clean, hard worker.

I want to say that hard work matters, but I firmly believe that it is not enough. The American Dream works because people are busting into this country to live that dream. For the White working class, immigrants are able to get subsidies to go to college or to get scholarships. There are just as many people coming in legally as illegally, just not so much in Youngstown, Ohio.

I don't know if it's because we have not educated our kids or if it's because of the generous open arms of America. I just don't know if this predicament is because of something we've done. I just know that it's awful hard for a white kid to get educated and get scholarships. Does this necessarily lead [white people] to drugs and crime? I don't know. And I'll be the first to have three or four glasses of wine, but I don't know.

We were bystanders to the mobs' competition. The layperson was not affected. They were careful not to have collateral damage. If you're outside of it, then you don't see it.

Sarah Mattingly, 50, sales clerk

Everybody likes to talk about downtown's revival, but when I was young, there were department stores and bargain basements. It was really alive. When the mills closed and crime increased, there was an exodus. Downtown was all utility companies and government offices. But you can't always go back to the way it was. There are just too many struggling people committing crimes. There are a lot of broken families and kids are not getting an education. All they worry about is today. I had a dad come into the store and he thought good fatherhood was all about getting his daughter a pair of Nikes.

A lot of the programs they have to help people may actually hurt people, because they become dependent on the free stuff. There's no one trying to get better. They're just using the system. They have money for bars and tattoos, but not for children's clothing.

I don't think that anyone would really listen to me. You can't be cruel and cut off programs. We went on assistance once, but you don't want to stay on it and raise kids on it. People are taking advantage of welfare as a way of life forever. It was a struggle to make the kids' tuition at Catholic schools. I had to work constantly, because my husband grew up expecting everyone else to do things for him.

The government loves putting people on welfare. If they can keep people down, they'll keep a base of Democratic votes. They're just trying to get reelected.

You're on your own. The unions used to be interested in White working class people, but they're too politicized now. Where are those dues going? You would think that they would be there for White working class people. Any politician that tells you that they're not with the mob is lying. That's how things have always been done around here. There's still a lot of gambling, drugs and bookies, and just because there aren't any bombs going off does not mean there is no corruption. There's a bookie who always comes in here and tells me how he broke some deadbeat's legs. I would say that Jim Traficant took care of people. When the mills closed, he started protests.

I run a clothing drive. I was tempted to go to some local meetings, but I don't think anyone listens. You got to take care of yourself.

I feel closer to the poor white and black folks here. I trust black people here more than the white people in the suburbs. They're more honest about their feelings; they're more real. Some can be snobs, but I feel like I've known many of them forever.

Demographic change has not happened nearly as much in Struthers and Campbell. It's more Hispanic than black people.

Power is wealth. And we're never going to see the wealthy, wealthy people. You feel powerless because you're so far down on the totem pole, hopefully not too far down. You feel like you're just getting by.

You don't see who's in control. I asked the local drug dealer if he ever thought about where his supplier lives and what he's doing. He's protected on some island, while this guy is on the run from police. He didn't care at all. He's just thinking about his stash of money and how fast he can leave town.

Hard work pays off. It's the only thing that pays off. If you're educated, then race don't have much to do with it. The problem is that it costs an arm and a leg in debt for years.

Tess Delacort (and her employee), 46, thrift shop owner

I feel this sense of internal panic everyday. Everyone is struggling right now. I have never been more worried, not since maybe I got pregnant as a teenager. My husband was in Iraq and is now suffering from severe post-traumatic stress. He needs to be hospitalized, so he will soon lose his job, which means the family loses his medical coverage. I take ten different meds a day. So right now, I feel like my family is one month away from homelessness. When he got hospitalized, we were on the verge of a divorce. But I just could not tell my kids that I'm leaving their father and letting him commit suicide.

We're all hovering just above poverty. Every month is a struggle. We have been in a recession depression for years now. Even before the crisis when I thought we were doing incredibly well here, my brothers and sisters would come in from out of town and they couldn't believe we were surviving.

Vinny Cosenza, 65, restaurant server

I don't discuss politics in my place, because I backed a candidate one time and a valued customer said he'd never come back again.

People refer to me as 'the Godfather' because I'm the oldest guy north of Meridian Road. People ask me if I can do something, and after 31 years, I can get a lot of things done. I'm not going to owe nobody for nothing. I just ask for favors. It's bartering. You might call it politics, but if you get into trouble, you'd get out of it here if you knew somebody. If you know somebody, you'll get what you want. A speeding ticket, a DUI charge. I knew people; I still know people. If you want something done, your street paved, I can get it paved. I never get turned down. It don't matter what you want. People do things for me, because they may need something later. Quarters, a case of beer, they come see Vinny. That's how this Valley works. Everyone knows everyone.

What do you study?

[Politics.]

Jim Traficant did a lot for this Valley. It's just bartering. He went to jail for it, but he cared a lot about the working man. The little man, the small businessman, that's what built this Valley. There's a gas station on Salt Springs Road. You know the guy who works there? He's 75, but just ask, and he'll pump your gas and check your oil for you. When the mills were running, the working people on the Westside would walk to work, rain or snow, and get there an hour early to be sure to start work on time.

There's no fast way to get anything done here. The workers just aren't the same as they used to be.

[The government] wanted to double the cost of liquor licenses years ago. We gathered a small group, went to Columbus, and protested it. They only ended up raising it by 50 percent. You have a voice, but that doesn't mean it's going to work. We don't do protests around here [in Youngstown] like in the big cities with thousands of people. People know their vote doesn't count.

A lot of things happen whether people like it or not. Like the cigarette ban a few years ago. No one ever voted to expand the ban to ma and pa operations. They just did it. That says to me that they're trying to put us out of business. There are not many of us, small businesses. My opinion doesn't matter. They'll do what they want.

If the mafia was running this town today, things would be different. You wouldn't have all this crime. They took care of their own when they got out of hand. Everybody was working. They ran things with a strong hand. They didn't control the government as much as they controlled the town. The government just stood out of the way.

Can't say that the government is looking out for the White working class. Nobody cares. I can't remember anyone looking out for the little man. For the little man, they're not going to change. Chains and big companies can move in anytime and put you out of business. That's who's getting all the breaks from the government.

[But I thought you were the Godfather?] There are limitations to my pull. You can call me what you want, but I know what I can do. When they see me comin', I'm not asking anyone to bow down to me. I put my pants on the same way as anyone else.

[Are there downsides to the bartering system you described?] Downside? ...I don't know. No, can't think of one.

In the mills, the Irish were the first ones to run the open hearth. When the Dagos came in, the Irish wouldn't show them how to do it. When the blacks came in, the Deaos wouldn't show the blacks. But today, the black man is just as much the little man as the white man. So we work together now.

I go to all the tables here, and see everyone at the bar. I know that guy since I was 19. He taught me how to finish concrete. He eats here now. That couple just ordered sandwiches to go. I asked them how they were. Do I give a shit? No. But that's the difference between the little man and the big man. They need to know I care. Every one of my customers are faithful—because I am faithful to them. That's the name of the game.

Billy Morris, 44, grocer

Things started to improve after guys like Ungaro and Traficant left office. At one point, downtown looked like Germany after World War II.

Several of my neighbors have asked me to get more involved in their local meetings, but my personal motto is to not wait for somebody else to do things for you. Just do it yourself. Some people say that I should let the government cut local lawns and plant trees in vacant lots, but I know they're not coming. Don't depend on somebody else. I've seen family members and friends complain to the city, but nothing gets done. You can't even get the councilwoman to return phone calls. Her predecessor used to tell me to call him if something wasn't done in 30 days. Every man and every business is out for themselves.

After the fire, I told the fire department about the Molotov cocktail from the hospital. Conveniently, they found nothing. I personally handled the bottle myself. But they blamed the whole thing on an electrical fire. They were clearly paid off by the drug dealers. The lead investigator wouldn't help because the house wasn't covered by fire insurance, which would have otherwise given him a kickback. [But what about the bottle?] They said that I was hallucinating from a dose of Benadryl [antihistamine] that I took three days before the fire.

I wasn't going to let them drive me out. I moved right back onto our street, into a house directly across from where we used to live. Since then, I've seen the cops honk and wave at the drug dealers when they drive by. Turns out the police dispatcher I had been calling is related to the drug family. It's a big joke.

There's nothing I can do. All I can do is trust God. Let God handle it. I don't want to be put into prison and have to leave my kids. At some point, you have to meet your Maker.

No one is looking out for the average guy. They look out for whoever donated to their campaign. I'm on the outside, but I'm glad I have a job with benefits. I try to create a world where I am in the center. You try not to depend on anybody. And for a while, I had to [depend on friends while rehabilitating], but I refused to sit still. The only time I sit still is if I'm eating, driving, or on the throne.

I remember my dad saying, "Chipper Dipper, you need to work at this or that factory." But all those jobs are gone now and I'm still on my original contract that pays full benefits, like in the old days. I only earn \$11 per hour but they took care of \$110,000 worth of medical bills after the fire.

Paul Podolsky, 29, chef

We never had extravagant stuff when I was a kid, but I wasn't deprived. Unlike my friends, we went on vacations, but I wasn't spoiled.

The way my area has gone, crime is creeping in. There's more section 8 housing. We know fewer and fewer neighbors. My parents want to move out.

There are black people and there are niggers. Blacks are educated. They respect each other. They don't think they're better than anyone. Niggers think everything should be given to them. They do whatever they want, without regard for others. You go to the store at the beginning of the month, and they're buying all the expensive meats and lobsters.

A lot of black people who move in now are section 8. We had this quiet little neighborhood and now the white people are trying to move. Everyone deserves a nice place to live, but if you don't keep it up and cause problems... They're getting free rent. It's not a place to raise kids. But they're not that different from the white trash.

None of us have any time for politics. My mom and dad work 8 to 5, although I guess dad was president of the bowling association back in the eighties, but that's bowling. I'm a member of the Knights of Columbus but I never go to any meetings. I vote, but not always. The church has done good work to clear abandoned houses in its neighborhood, and unfortunately it took two murders to move things faster.

The black community is less likely to keep up the neighborhood because they're getting discounts on rent and buying lower priced properties. If you charged higher taxes, you'd attract people who could keep things up. But the landlords like it this way because they're able to rent to anyone [without fixing up the buildings].

My father thinks Youngstown will be better in 50 years, because everyone will clear out and we'll start over. The only part that's in shape is the Westside. A group effort means something, but one person can never change anything.

Whites are the minority now. Just seems we're outnumbered, especially in major cities. Look at Detroit. There's a bigger black population, but even in the suburbs, there are Arabs, Indians and other people from the Middle East. Sometimes, it gives [black people] greater power because it's the higher group. So they can get their way. My uncle works at a plant where everybody is scared to tell the black people what to do because they're worried about retaliation. The managers are outnumbered and they don't have a backbone.

Poland and Canfield hide a lot [of crime] because people don't want to show those kinds of changes. In the city, all the whites are moving away and their children are really just selling off to anybody.

White people are held to a different standard. In history books, whites were always above the blacks. But we desegregated to change the world. It's been 100 years and they still want more. They can get grants for school and then not use it. My aunt got injured and could not get welfare support. It would have helped if she were black because then she would have had more kids or been in default. The welfare isn't helping the people it should.

My position in society fluctuates. We float in the middle. Sometimes I feel like we're in the middle when we vote and get what we want, like the success of the church campaign. When I [McCain] lost in 2008, I felt more on the outside. Just because I'm not participating doesn't mean that I'm not connected. I get updates and see people at church and talk to them.

In the old days, hard work paid off because you could retire of it. My dad can retire two days after he dies. My uncle had a pension but he's blowing through it.

The American Dream exists but only to an extent. Not sure how far you can go. It's easier to come from old money. The economic instability has really hurt. It may take 100 years.

Wendy Timlin, 55, short order cook

I live next to two drug houses, with residents who were recently out of prison. Dozens of cars pull up to them every day, some parking in the middle of the street. The one next door has four kids and had a shooting in front of their house last month. Every time I open my mouth, they threaten me and say they're going to kill me. I try to ignore it but it's hard when they're smoking pot in front of my kids and grandkids. [My husband] just tells me to go back into the house. He let's everybody do what they want to do, except me. He gives them everything, not me.

[Why have you not left the neighborhood yet, and instead purchased two more houses?] I don't want to lose 33 years.

[My husband's] tried to do something. He knows a couple of cops. The boyfriend attacked the cops a little while ago, and they threw him in prison.

The government's looking after black people. That's it. They let them do what they want to do without doing anything.

But I guess we're just like the black people now. White people, we sell drugs, commit crimes, go on welfare. I grew up in the projects around them, even though we've never

been on welfare. We've always had jobs, always worked. We ain't going to depend on no one but ourselves.

[Do you feel closer to your black neighbors or the white people who have left Youngstown?] I feel closer to the black folks. I grew up with them, you know. You meet everyone at the bowling alley, so I get along with everybody except those people next door.

I was brought up on the outside. I was put into foster care. I had to fight for everything, that's all I know. My mother came after me with butcher knives.

Timmy Butler, 38, landscape laborer

There are photos of me as a kid, the only white kid on the porch. We were all middle class. But when I was six or seven, all of a sudden you couldn't walk to the park anymore. All these mansions became halfway houses for crazy people and no one felt safe. When I was younger, you knew the bad parts of town. But now those bad parts are all dispersed. There is no concentration of bad parts anymore. The streets I grew up on look like a warzone—boarded up, abandoned houses, section eight.

I complain to the Department of Housing and they'll cut the grass and trim the bushes. I communicate with neighbors through a local website. I just don't have time for more.

I guess shit rolls downhill. The government cares because that's how they get elected. You don't want a high crime rate, but it only bothers them to the extent it bothers voters. They care enough to appease people. That's what politics is.

There's a perception that the Tea Party is about hunting, pickup trucks and guns. I think the Right tries to appeal to them. It seems like if Obama came up with the cure for cancer, the Republicans would veto it. It's not that they don't care about what the white working class thinks; I don't think they care about what anyone thinks.

A guy like Bobby Hagan cares. He's a train engineer and pro-union. I don't know who looks out for us. We're the 35 percent now, not the 65%. We're not the majority anymore. That's why a Georgetown-educated, white lawyer [like mayoral candidate John McNally] almost lost the primary to someone like [African American] Tito Brown.

I'm not a second-class citizen; it's still the United States. The surrounding suburbs and where we hang out is still predominantly white. But you are watching the old guard go out. Hagan couldn't become Mayor; the old guys are gone. Jay Williams came out of nowhere and knocked out a guy whose family has over 50 years of governing experience. It's a race issue. Black people will vote for the black guy, and white people will vote for the white guy.

My boss is a black guy and I couldn't see him saying to himself, 'Let's screw Timmy over there and give my black buddy his job.' There are some advantages. When Williams became Mayor, everyone from his church got jobs with the city. But when McKelvey became Mayor, how do you think I got my job. Knowing people helps here, but you still got to do the job.

The Cafaros are in that middle circle with the very wealthy. Then you get your politicians and business owners, me on the third circle, and the very poor on the outside who nobody cares about. My family probably felt closer to the middle when my grandfather was a steelworker and foreman, and there were a lot of them in Youngstown.

Today, you need to work smarter, not harder. People still respect hard work, but luck and relationships play a role. Moving up based on the quality of your work happens, but there's a lot of red tape and rules about seniority that prevent people from moving up. Merit pays off in smaller businesses.

My grandfather's life, from an orphanage to a sixth grade education to forming a successful family and working at a management level, that'll never happen again. I've plateaued. I'm basically a laborer. I bought my own house, but you got to take risks to make it bigger.

Didi Schumer, 45, hospital clerk

There are a lot of people on drugs, there are less jobs, and you're constantly reminded that you're replaceable with someone else who demands less money. It's worse as you get older.

I just don't feel like my opinion counts. [The government and politicians] do what they want. They're all out for the money, and sometimes they get caught, but it means that you can't trust them. The unions just aren't there either. ...The politics trickles down to little league games.

There are a lot of drug dealers, but the time that my [12-year-old] son is without me between him arriving from school and me returning from work is only 40 minutes. So he calls me everyday from the bus, and then I ask [my neighbor] to check in on him. What else can I do? I can't leave work.

I forgot to vote this time, but I'd vote for John [McNally]. He's done some things, but he's family. I went to school with him. But sometimes, I don't know who I'm voting for. I go with the girl [candidate] or I just let my son choose for me. They're not going to do anything anyway.

The big corporations are looking out for each other. Look what they did to people's mortgages. Instead of working with us, they leave houses empty and let people come and steal the copper out of them.

Companies are giving people more work and finding ways to cut people's jobs. Hard work doesn't pay off. They know you'll get the work done, because you're replaceable. So it matters if you're in the circle. I get along with everyone because I'm not one to run my mouth, but I'm not in anybody's circles. I don't create waves or stand out.

The American Dream exists, but it's rare. My life isn't bad. It could be better. I take care of my kids and manage my money, so I could be worse off.

The people on the inside are the businesses, then the middle management, then the loyal workers, then the crappy workers, then the people with drug and alcohol problems.

[Black people] get more than we get. There are more opportunities for schooling, food stamps, day care, Medicaid. [But are all of those opportunities also available to white people if they qualify?] There's a cutoff limit on your income, so we can't get it. Good lord, I don't know how they get those benefits when they make as much money as me. They just get around the system.

When the mafia was around, people had more respect. They didn't do things in the open.

Isabel Crane (and her daughter), 49, unemployed clerk

Heroin is huge in this area. It's very cheap and it's the most addictive thing out there. Readily available anywhere in the city.

Whatever the government says, firefighters are not retiring with multimillion-dollar pensions. We have always worked two jobs, six days a week. You will meet very few firefighters that do not work more than one job.

The government does all these things for other countries, and that's great, but you need to give to your community first. The dynamics are changing. There are so many single moms, broken homes, children raised by their aunts, uncles and grandparents. The government says they've created jobs, but you can't raise a family between minimum wage and \$10 an hour. Our graduates can't find work either.

There are so many scholarships, but they're geared to destitute African American women. That's the major focus. We are not a prejudiced family. But raising a handicapped child, we were without help for his first 18 years.

Any opportunities that come through, the casinos, the fracking, politicians fight to keep the status quo. They just shoot them down. Fracking is one of the only jobs that pay anything.

The middle class is working hardest, but they are not getting any support. My husband has not gotten a raise in three years, but the price of everything just keeps going up.

We're not looking for handouts, but most people we know are living paycheck-to-paycheck. Moms can't afford to stay at home parenting their children, but all the money they earn goes to pay for daycare. We lost tax breaks. I think they pander to high-income people, and working people are paying double the taxes. We just want a fair shake.

The government helped a lot in the 1970s when Youngstown Sheet and Tube closed. Unemployment lasted longer, and they helped workers find jobs. Today, everything is online and impersonal.

We've signed petitions, and my husband is a union firefighter, so he sometimes had to attend council meetings. And we vote every time. Unions are not what they once were. They used to fight for us. But in this area, there is no job security. We have seen so many places get boarded up. It just seems like politicians are only out for themselves, and the people who help them out.

I think there's a lot of abuse of Medicaid. Everyone is saying that people getting government assistance should be drug-tested. I can't say I disagree. I have seen people waiting in line at the soupkitchen, carrying iPhone 5's. People can stay at home and get food stamps and Medicaid. They've not making welfare people look for work. They're not making minorities look for work.

The government is putting the interests of minorities ahead of white people. Though our immediate community has been very good to us, we are the forgotten. More than half this country is white working class. I wish I knew why the government lost their interest.

On the outside are people falling through the cracks. People with health issues. It's not about race, but most of the ones falling through the cracks are African Americans. They're reaching for handouts, not jobs. They're using child support cards to buy hair spray and beauty supplies.

Having a handicapped child, I just think that we, at this age, we should be so much further along. For two people who've worked all their lives, the only way to have the American Dream is to hit the lottery. That's the new American Dream. We've had setbacks, but we've gotten less support. For the white working class, the American Dream left in the fifties and sixties when companies left to find cheap labor. I'm not asking for wealth, just comfort. I want to pay my bills, pay for my children's education, and put a little money aside. The American Dream isn't available to non-white people either, but on average, there are more white working families working harder to achieve.

Violet Lammy, 43, recovering crack addict

I don't feel safe at all, especially in Youngstown. They don't clean up the city anymore. It's dirty; our river is dirty. I try to stay out of Youngstown as much as I can. My mom left her house in Brier Hill because of the crime rate seven years ago. You couldn't sell anything in Brier Hill at that time, and she wanted out. As soon as she moved out of the

house, it got stripped by scrappers and it was torn down a year later. Now there's one house left on the whole block. Drugs are all over the place.

I never touched drugs a day of my life until I was 32 years old. I had some bad luck and made some bad decisions. My stepson died of anorexia, after I had cared for him for years. Our house burned down that Christmas, and afterward, I left my second husband to be with this guy who was in with the wrong crowd. A friend of ours would steal things from stores, return the items for gift cards, sell the gift cards for cash to buy crack with. I never smoked marijuana; I just went straight for the hard stuff.

I couldn't pay my rent, I sold my car, I sold my TV, my furniture, all to pay for drugs. I took everything from my mother and emptied her savings accounts. I lost everything I had. And my mom told me that I'd lose my daughter too if I didn't go to rehab. I ended up with a blood clot in my lung that nearly killed me. Now I avoid anyone I suspect of being on any kind of drugs.

The government is worthless. What're they going to do? We've been fighting to get a VA pension for my father-in-law, and they don't take care of anyone. Unless it's a bombing and someone gets killed, they don't care. They go out and help Saudi Arabia and other countries where stuff happens, like China—well, not China, they take care of themselves—but what about our veterans? People needing pensions? And we're funding Saudi Arabia.

They look out for blacks and other people. The union helped my husband get his jobs back

My daughter and her husband are on public assistance, but they're off Medicaid and the government won't put her back on. You see all these minority people with 15 kids, and they get food stamps and health care after never working a day in their lives. They say my daughter's income is too high. I think minority groups are judged in a different way. They've got the NACP [sic] and stuff like that to protect them. You don't know how many times the [management] have come to harass our trailer park manager because of all the colored people here. So he's been told to lay off them. Who've we got to get protection from when we get disrespected? If you look at somebody wrong in Wal-Mart, one black guy there threw a fit at me in the store.

I have no bad feelings toward black people til they do something wrong. Just like white people. My grandkids are mixed.

I do vote—Democrat. I was raised a Democrat. I think they're easier to deal with than Republicans, thought I'm beginning to wonder with this Obamacare stuff. Employers are cutting hours so they don't have to cover their staff with insurance.

We're on the outer banks. What we say don't matter. We're like flies and society hopes we'll die off soon. They make you feel like you're low because you're not in their income bracket.

If you're lower class and black, you'll get more help. My husband told black person to shut the hell up, and the next thing you know, there are 40 black people coming up to us. A 14-year-old told me that she's going to stab me. The cops came and they wanted to take me to jail. It was like a riot, and to this day, I still get dirty looks from them.

Hard work is important because, without it, we wouldn't have the United States. Somebody's got to pick up the slack for the people who don't do nothing.

I don't think people care about America anymore. They disrespect America. The immigrants come here and bomb places; the crime, the drug lords, serial killers, they ruin it for everybody.

My family struggled all their lives, and so did I. My mother grew up on dirt floors. We've always been on the outside, struggling everyday. But you make due with what you have.

I'm very cautious. I know that no one is going to help me because I don't have small children and I'm not black. The way the government treats the elderly and people with medical issues, people who worked all their lives...

Fran Sulz, 63, ex-con and student

We have good neighbors, but we're used to helping each other out in my family. Here, if you want help, they want money for it.

I killed my husband in 2004. My daughter sued me, took everything I owned, and emptied out my bank accounts. I went to prison for five years and was left with nothing. My husband was abusive since our wedding night. He'd slap me just to see how far he could get. The last 20 years were a nightmare. He'd beat my kids and his compliments to us were "You're useless, worthless and a waste of life." I lost my mind. He had beat me so bad that I needed stiches and casts on a regular basis. I was getting brain damage, I wasn't getting any sleep at night; I must have looked beautiful. He choked me with a garden hose, stomped on me with steel-toe boots. I cut my ponytail off, so he couldn't swing me with it to slam my head into things. I would constantly look back over my shoulder to see who's behind me. Psychologists told me to leave, and after he threatened to kill me, I turned him in in 2002, but it just got worse. One evening, he beat me all night, so at 7am, I took my 38 snubnosed [pistol revolver] and took him out.

I don't like to volunteer or join organizations, because I don't like giving my background information and [criminal] history. I don't even really know why I'm talking to you. I keep a very small circle and don't tell people these things. But I can't work with children or the elderly because of the violent crime conviction. They're just not going to let me work with people because I'm [disqualified].

The working class people support the government, but the government just benefits themselves. The poor need training and jobs, whether it's in cutting grass, trimming trees or farming. But nobody looks out for us. They're taxing us to death and not giving us benefits. The wealthy get the tax breaks and the government pays themselves too much. I'm not asking for a free life, but once in a while, a little help wouldn't hurt. We're falling through the cracks.

The minorities that get me are the ones that are uneducated, that realize they have no future, so they get knocked up and collect. Not all of them do it; many work. But I think that if you're black or Hispanic, you can get almost anything. Meanwhile, I go to the welfare office, and get looked at like 'Why aren't you working?' They come in on drugs and get free food stamps, medical and unemployment. They know you can only get welfare for a child for the first five years. So they have babies every five years. The squeaky wheel gets all the oil. I've always been one to take care of my own. We're hard-working poor people.

The Mexicans come to this country to work. We were immigrants too.

I'm on the outside. And there are a lot of people like me. But like me, they think the younger generation needs to get out and do something.

Employers are in their glory right now. They can hire and fire anytime. People working at the grocery store leave every five months.

The problem is that America doesn't want to offend anyone. Why worry about white people when the black people will get together and protest? We just mind our own business and take care of ourselves. So blacks and Hispanics are closer in because they're a minority group that benefits from quotas in the name of equality.

Rachel Gibson (and her husband), 47 and 46, cemetery clerk

Two weeks ago, my husband's brother was beaten into a coma by three black men on the Eastside, after exchanging comments while stopped at an intersection.

This used to be a nice neighborhood. They've torn down or burned down thousands of houses. Every morning I wake up to the sound of sirens going down Mahoning Avenue. We're moving soon. I'm putting the house up for sale this summer.

We have a block watch, but I don't go. I work six days a week at [redacted]. There's not enough of them anyway. They're all older people. [What about the government?] I don't know nothing about the government.

This neighborhood was great. But people died, sold off the houses to section 8 people, the new neighbors don't put any money into the blessed homes, and now drug people are destroying the neighborhoods.

Nobody looks out for us. We're discriminated against. Every time the board of education meets, it's all about black kids. The first thing you ever hear about is race. Why does it matter? A lot of these people are trash. Martin Luther King did not put the word black in his speeches; it was always about equality. The white people are the minority in the United States. I am so sick of hearing about black, black, black and Latino. You don't hear nothing about the white man or white people.

There are gang members in that home, sitting on their porch, yelling 'Nigger' this and 'Nigger' that, with kids out of school on a weekday, whipping rocks at my house and my dog. Who's going to replace my windows? Not black people. They are running down our neighborhoods. That's why we are getting the hell out.

You do not touch, talk to or threaten a black child. They can say or do whatever they want to a white child though. This place is turning into the Eastside.

I'm going to call the Councilman and the Mayor about them, but it's not like they give a shit. This town is going to Hell. I don't look for nothing to get done. I just call to give them a piece of my goddamned mind.

This Westside Citizens Coalition, they're trying to beautify the neighborhood. I don't care how many trees you plant—and they put one in front of my house—that's not going to change the out-of-state landlords who sell to lowlifes. The city doesn't care. They get their property taxes either way.

We are the minority. First come the blacks. Then the Latinos. Then the Native Americans. Then white people. I'm waiting for the moment when someone on TV says, "We, white people." But if a white person mentions color, they're a racist. Except when you apply for college or a job, then you're required to disclose it. So they can hold it against us. What do white people get for being white? Nothing.

Money is irrelevant [to the social hierarchy]. Look how generations [of black people] have lived off of welfare for a lifetime. It is a racist society and the white people are at the bottom. When will people stop seeing color? Why does it matter? What ever happened to the color-blind society?

Everyone acts like the white people are well off. You're white, so you must be rich. We work two jobs and struggle to get our kids through school. But you're white, you can afford it. You don't need help, no minority loan, no government discount.

Nigger is not about black or white. It's about the trash of society, people who are disrespectful. Muslim, black, white, Latino, you commit crimes and ruin a neighborhood, you are a nigger.

I feel closer to the white people who left for the suburbs. They're struggling too. They're not all rich. It's just worth the higher prices out there because it is so bad here. The

Westside hasn't changed; it's the people who moved in with us. They're not Westsiders. But who's left here to fight them. No one.

Val Coronado, 52, former public official and businessman

The people pass away, the kids move away, they sell everything off cheap. They could give a shit about us. I called the Councilman and the police chief about the drug house across the street. I even gave them their license plates. The drug dealers are everywhere now, and crime is moving to the suburbs because there's nothing left to steal in Youngstown.

The Mahoning County Democratic Party chairman controls people like puppets on strings. Politics here, people in this area vote with name recognition even when the representatives haven't done nothing for us since the mills shut down in the 1970s. They just keep flipping jobs. Everything is politicized, and the chairman is an asshole.

People in this town are easy to control. The committees are older, so they've been involved for so long that they're just rubberstamps. The names in the race stay the same, so boom, boom, boom, it's automatic. Positioned shift from husband to wife, and when people take power, it's all favoritism in hiring practices. After I recommended a hire by Mayor McKelvey ten years ago because they guy was a harder worker and good for the city, he told me: 'Well, that's not what it's all about. It's about politics.'

Traficant was the only one who did anything for this area. He brought more money in than anyone else. I'd vote for him no matter what he ran for. He was one of those people who thought he was above everyone else, especially after he beat the first set of racketeering charges. He voted to bring money here, even if it meant he had to vote with the Republicans. All elected officials do what Traficant and McKelvey did. They're all doing it. They just went after Traficant because he went against the party.

The County Democrats just want people to fall in line. The candidates fall in line. The precinct officers fall in line. And that all continues because everyone here just punches a hole next to the 'D' on the ballot. The renters coming in keep it up, because most of them are on Section 8 assistance. The only thing that would change things is if a homeowner moved into the house their property and had different ideas.

Once you move up and become a politician, you think less about the people where you were and more about the people where you are. So I don't know who's looking out for white working class people. For politicians, it's a career. Our former councilman ran for re-election just so he could be eligible for hospitalization coverage from government insurance. They only think of their own, themselves. Themselves. Themselves.

The mafia politics has stuck around, but just in a different format. It's there when it comes to contracts. With contracts, it's the same approach.

Minorities are getting more attention now. 92% of blacks voted for Obama. A similar amount of Hispanics supported him. Here, the black folks vote for the black candidate, and the white folks vote for the white guy. They complain that whites won't support a black candidate, but it's not like they're supporting white candidates either. The minority population keeps rising and rising. Look at the numbers. Politicians will do anything to stay in power.

I'm a white male. We're in last. You have your minorities, the white woman, and I'm on the last rung. I felt like I was in the middle, but then 20 years ago, they passed laws about favoring women and minorities who were similarly qualified for hiring.

And Hispanics are moving inward. I feel closer to the blacks who stayed. I respect the people who stayed in town.

Sam Guthrie, 60, disabled and unemployed

I can't take it easy. I sleep two or three hours a night. I've always worked and raised kids. That's just what I need to do. That's who I am.

We were mentally and physical abused in foster homes. They were not well regulated back then. I didn't speak English for much of my early childhood, and I was separated from my biological sisters. My best home was with a black family, who were friends of my parents, but then he died young.

The biggest problems these days are drugs, rape, child molestation and crime. This world's just not getting better. The cops' hands are tied. Parents have got their kids selling drugs, so that they can get high. The street next door is all addicts and people getting in fights. I spoke once to the fire chief, but he said their hands are tied. It's not right.

I wanted to start a tenants' association, but I need to get all the information. I'm not a member of anything, but I do vote. If I don't vote, what can I say about the system? But I don't think it does any good. They say they want to do something about [these problems] but it's just paperwork getting shuffled around. You don't know what to do.

I would give anything to go back to the old days. All these folks getting raped, shot, killed, people are giving up. Sure you can bear arms, but nobody has the right to take another life.

You can say white, black, Latin, but I'm American. I feel caught in the middle of all the prejudices. None of them look out for us. Back in the sixties when the mills were running, things were good. But now jobs come and go. We're not going nowhere.

[The government] needs to think about people here. No one wants to work some of these jobs. My daughter has to work to get her food stamps, but her lazy boyfriend just wants to sit in the apartment.

I'm beyond the last circle. I'm more street-wise than book-wise. I can't get nothing done. The government doesn't do what they say. Obama keeps saying that his hands are tied, well put someone else in there. Something has to change. The rich are getting richer. You work to get ahead, but you don't. The politicians want the title, but not the responsibility. I was closer to the middle before, and it just gets worse with age.

I block out the outside world. I just stay in my trailer here. It doesn't scare me. What scares me is where this society is going. Kids are getting high, staying on their couch, parents are not parenting, no one has qualifications, and no one wants to work.

There's no more freedom of speech. The law don't have no power. I don't see us having any power. Back in the day, people at least had control over their neighborhoods and they cared for their neighborhoods. That's pride. That's power. And it's been taken away by drug dealers. Their power is temptation and fake love, promising support and pocket riches.

The American Dream ain't here no more. It's all talk. Gone. Having your own family, your work, feeling like you're somebody. The American Dream left when they took all the money out of schools. My dream now is just that my kids don't grow up the way I did. So I guess I'm blessed.

Evelyn Burke, 64, landowner

There's no pension here, so we started buying houses to fund our retirement in the eighties. When the sign company doesn't do well, the rents also support the company. We have had to beg, borrow and nearly steal to keep the business going during times when it was feast or famine. [My husband] works 80 hours a week, just like his father. It's a very hard industry, and when you've got business, it's your life. My husband was there for the important things, but he missed a lot too.

We moved into one of our Westside rentals 10 years ago, not realizing that the neighborhood would be so much different from the way it used to be. If I still had kids, I wouldn't live here. There are fine, hardworking people on every side of town, but it takes one or two groups of families to make a neighborhood unlivable, whether it's drugs, crime or whatever. I tell each of our tenants to remember that they are not just moving into a house; they are moving into a neighborhood.

Drugs make this neighborhood rough. They make this city rough. And I don't see it coming to an end. You're going to have neglected children, theft, people caught in the crossfire. I like living in a neighborhood where people go to work everyday, where they want to talk to each other about their families and life philosophy. I don't have that here.

We thought we'd only stay on the Westside for two years. It was to get [my husband] closer to work when he's putting in so many hours. He drives the three blocks, because it's just too dangerous to walk. There are a lot of vagrants and you just don't feel safe. When I walk, it's during the day, I don't dress up, I clutch my purse, and I walk fast. ...When I lived in Canfield, we used to entertain at the house. I don't do anything like that anymore. People are scared to park their car in the neighborhood.

Our house on the Westside has a drug house across the street. In my neighborhood, people will make comments about how scary our Belgian Shepherd Malinois is, and I tell them, 'My dog is very aggressive. If you look at me the wrong way, he'd probably take your leg off.' The police asked me to take down the license plate numbers of people showing up at the house, but I don't want to get killed. They need however many undercover buys before they can make a bust. The problem is that the dealers disappear all of a sudden. I found out that they pay a year's rent up front, and then live in a variety of different houses for three months at a time because they know that it takes the police over three months to bust them. They rotate. That's from my councilman's mouth.

In the eighties and nineties, HUD [the US Department of Housing and Urban Development] ran checks to see if landlords would rent to blacks. In fact, when I put ads in the local paper, you were not allowed to write that the house was in a 'good neighborhood' with 'good schools' or name a particularly white school like Cheney [High School]. Those phrases signified white tenants only, no blacks. At the same time, I had neighbors approach us and tell us that they would burn down our property if we rented to blacks. They'd say, 'I'm not saying that I'll burn it down, but someone may.'

Back then, you really wanted prospective tenants to know that it was a good neighborhood with good schools. Now, they're all so bad that it doesn't matter. We don't always do a background check on [prospective tenants], but if we don't like the look of them, there are Internet sites we can check. You never know everything, but I know a lot. And a lot of them lie on their applications, but we do inspections and check the homes. So we find out.

I evict anyone I suspect of drug dealing. I can't claim that it's a hunch, but if they are one day late on a rent payment, I file the papers and go to court. It happens two or three times a year, but it happens less now. It's not that there are fewer drug dealers, it's that there are so many that the neighbors don't call me to tell about it anymore. And the homes are getting destroyed. Our culture is now a drug culture. They're just giving up. Even me, I don't see any change, so I don't report to the police as much as I used to.

Unless landlords keep up their properties and screen their tenants, values dip and social problems get worse... Some properties are getting more and more difficult to rent because the Southside is a mess.

I've lost 10 to 12 properties from arson, and another one to an accidental fire. We only have liability insurance. They won't sell you arson insurance, no way. Unless maybe if it's a better property, but then it costs more than it's worth.

I don't mean to be a downer, but I don't think the councilman, the neighbors anyone can do much. You want to protect your family and you don't want a war with drug dealers. They've got automatic weapons and glocks [hand guns]. It's not going to get solved.

Years ago, I thought all the judges, doctors and lawyers were doing what's best for the city. I was on the board of landlords. I'd testify in courts and to the city council. But the more I saw the more I realized that money can buy your way out of anything. Then you see your sheriff get indicted, your congressman dishonored, our prosecutor in prison, and a mayoral nominee with a cloud over his head. The Valley has been embroiled in political corruption for a long time, and people just look out for themselves. It makes you sick. You don't see it firsthand, the corruption, but you know it's there. Why can some of my tenants get out of prison sentences? A few years ago, a drug kingpin was renting one of my houses. He was living in a property that was leased under the name of another woman who was listed as the tenant but, as it turned out, never lived there. He was the son of a policeman.

I don't have time [to join organizations], but if I could see that I can make a change, maybe I would get involved. In 64 years, the political climate here has changed very little.

There needs to be a safety net. But welfare is a way for life for these people, mostly black people. A lot of white people get themselves on some sort of disability and eke it out on unemployment checks for as long as possible, but they're the same people complaining about people on welfare. They take advantage of the same system. Many of my tenants are brought up in a culture of welfare. Blacks are a matriarchal society because the women are the ones who do all the work and provide for their families.

In anything, you show up everyday. Hard work and pride pays off. You may not get a \$300,000 house, but you respect yourself. You give your employer 100 percent from nine-to-five, they give you money, and from there, it's your life. I don't think everyone has an equal shot though. It's by birth, and some people start with more money or intelligence than others.

I'm somewhere between the inside and outside. I think I have the respect of my peers, but I probably had more power when I was on committees and such. But I think that as people get older, they get less relevant.

The people on the outside have given up. They're poor and without the resources to do things. They've given up.

I have one tenant in Florencedale, a terrible neighborhood on the Northside. She was stealing from a drug dealer and got shot in the bottom. I know she's trouble, but I haven't

evicted her. She's Section 8, so I get the rent on time every time, and all the neighbors have said that as soon as she leaves, they'll steal the house's aluminum siding. The truth is that no one else will live there anyway. I used to have someone stay and watch over properties like that when they were between tenants. Now we just board them up. But this one, they'll burn the place down as soon as she leaves. It's the only house left on the street.

Druglords don't care if the heating doesn't work, if the back door is off the hinges, or if the floorboards are broken. So it's not worth improving those properties. They're just there to do business. I went into one abandoned property, and the dealer had written on the wall: 'If you mess with my stuff, I'm gonna shoot your ass. – Ratdog'

No one considers themselves to be a slumlord. You just are. Many of them just have one or two properties that were in the family and they don't have the money to fix them up.

Hank Thompson, 53, industrial painter

I'm going to get lung cancer like this. If they would let that racetrack casino [proposed for Mahoning County], I'd take a job there, so I can be in the air conditioning all day with broads walking around me.

These days, if people get jobs, they hang on to them for dear life. You hear about some getting tired of working somewhere and threatening to leave, but who are you going to bump out at the next shop over? A lot of companies will lay you off as soon as business slows. I got a wife and four kids.

The blacks are moving in. They're selling dope and the riffraff is now coming to this side of Steel Street. I can't leave the truck outside overnight or they'll steel the tanks for the metal. Hell, they stole a lawn mower I left out last year.

We need carry permits for our 9 millimeters [guns]. If the landlords would screen people better—but they don't care as long as the rent's coming in on time. They need to rent to people with jobs and stop bringing in tenants on welfare.

Jimmy Traficant cared. He was always right. Jimmy had his fingers in bad things, but he was the man. He got caught, but they all do it. So you take him out and they put in another guy who's stealing instead.

When the mobs were running things—the Strollos, the Predos, the Carabbias—you didn't see all these drug houses, car jacking, shootings and murders were all down. If you crossed them, yeah, they'd knock you off. But you probably deserved it. They'd remind you who their father was or whatever, but they were real friendly and they always paid in cash. It was better back then.

The blacks' interests come first. They'll get hired before we do, til the boss finds out that they're stealing or not showing up for work. They gotta screw up before we get our shot. We're at the bottom of the totem pole.

You work your butt off everyday, and you can barely pay your bills and keep your head above water. We can't do anything nice so the family just stays at home on the weekends. My wife's always complaining, but I also gotta buy her a laundry machine and pay for the kids doctor's appointments. People say save your money. Well, what money? They like to call us the middle class, but we're really just the working poor. Even [our boss is] not living anything luxurious.

Militias are filled with crazy bastards, and they're white folks too. But I'm kind of with them. They're all out in the country with their guns, and don't like people on their property. But you know they don't put up with any bullshit. They home-school their children. They're anti-government but also family. I don't see anything wrong with them.

Nate Scott, 39, metalworker

If I had a lot of money, I could influence people. But I can't do shit. They're not going to listen. They just think we're bitching. Our boss has more influence than we do, and he can't stop drug dealers. He's got one across the street from his house.

I've worked a lot of places where you're just a number. You're just there to bring in money, a claim on their tax return. But [our boss] will give you off if your pet gets sick. Most employers only give a shit about money. [Our boss] borrowed money to make payroll rather than lay us all off when times were bad. He stays in the office til 2am to make sure we have things to do when we come in the morning. It's like a family. [redacted] will shut you down in a heartbeat and send you to the unemployment line.

[Who looks out for White working class interests?]

Nothing stands out. If there is an organization that looks out for us, I don't know about it.

[Who's on the outside then?]

Other Worker A: [pause] Well...

Other Worker B: We are. We're on the outside. No one takes any notice of us.

John Avery, 46, metalworker

[Our boss] will give work to a guy off the street, just so he can feed his family. As recently as the 1980s, this place was a boomtown. And then it fell apart. In 2008, the economy went to Hell, and they started laying people off. I lost my house, and my dad

put me up. It was real hard. Now the economy's getting better, but there's a lot of crime, especially on the Southside. They're trying to clean it up by knocking down houses left and right to make it a better place. It's like 10 houses down per day. The Southside is like a Little Detroit though. I wouldn't live there but there are still some friendly people.

To keep a job is really tough. I tried moving to Florida for work, but I came right back. I guess I just really like Youngstown. It's just hard to be a single dad raising a daughter.

I don't vote and I'm not part of any organizations, but when I go do maintenance jobs, I trim the community's grass as a nice thing to do. Right now, I'm between a rock and a hard spot. My dad's in the hospital and Mom's got ALS, I don't have a house. I'm just proud and grateful to have a job. I'm just waiting to get back on my feet.

But we'll be booming again when they start pumping all that oil with the tube companies. And when they finally put that casino in, things are going to turn.

The president's done a Hell of a job turning the economy around. He came into a complete mess and he kept this area going. He bought out the auto industry and GM is the biggest thing around here. If not for them, we'd be dead. Other than that, you got to stick together to make it a better place to live. You come to work every day, work hard next to the guy beside you. It's the working people who make this place roll.

Everyone knows where Youngstown is. We're known as the steel capital of the world and that brings people back. There are still a few mills kicking and it's because of that history. They closed down before and it was because the workers exploited the companies. They didn't know how good they had it. The companies gave them everything they could want, the unions, everything, until the jobs were gone. This generation will be more grateful.

One time, I was in the center. I was there. I proved myself and moved up. I had a good job and I was happy with who I was. Now I'm trying to build myself back there, working my way in from the outside, It's going to take a better economy, but also me stepping up in this company or getting a promotion through another one. You've just got to be proud to have a job.

If you need welfare, then fine. But there are a lot of people who abuse it. I'm running around busting my hump, while another guy sits on his porch. That's not right. I get food assistance and medical from the government because of my daughter. But I go to work every day, even after I broke my leg [on the job]. You have to earn it.

[People on welfare] are closer in. They're driving around in new cars and I can't even afford a vehicle. The government pays their rent and utilities, and so they spend the cash on gold chains and a Cadillac, when I can barely afford a Cavalier. They're mixed background. People will take advantage of things any way they can. It doesn't help to get angry. It just causes more problems.

Being a foreman, you learn to cope with society—every shape, color, attitude, I have adapted to them. I knew who likes doughnuts in the morning. I knew how to speak with who. I judged people and found ways to be agreeable so I could associate with them and make them work. In the end, everyone works together to get the job done.

Charlie Johnson, 35, organizer and activist

I'm an overachiever, so I don't feel like I've done anything until I've moved mountains. We have an unaccountable finance director and a culture of corruption. Very rarely do you have people follow the letter of the law. More commonly, people ask what they have to do to not get busted. City Hall plays fast and loose. The spirit of the law is to err on the side of public transparency, but that doesn't go on here. They don't give a shit. We also have a culture where people [citizens] would rather sit at a monthly meeting to get promises and updates [from their elected representatives] than confront their elected representatives. You hear a lot of 'My councilwoman said that she's get back to me next month,' and that was two months ago. We have a culture of non-engagement and a culture of corruption.

When there's a campaign about something bigger like bringing a new bank to town, it's unfathomable. People are too concerned about the vacant properties on their block. I've gotten tired of seeing the same people doing the talking.

You don't confront people or make noise here. There are still names you don't mention in public—DeBartolo and Cafaro. You whisper them in the ear of the guy next to you. We haven't engaged them directly in any of our actions, so we don't touch them because there are easier targets than entrenched power brokers. We just have this dead zone where people are scared.

The white working class are confused and scared, threatened by the lack of prosperity and how things are getting where they live. A lot of houses are for sale, abandoned, and this time of year, there's a lot of high grass.

They come from histories of prosperity, and they have inherent attitudes to trust the police and trust the government. We were doing so well before that you could skim off the top and nobody would notice.

There's a lot of joking about Molotov cocktails, planting yourself in the mayor's office, interrupting government meetings, and that comes from a sense of hopelessness.

Many are happy to go to a meeting where Mike Ray hands out charts, gives a presentation, but doesn't actually do anything. Their eyes just glaze over. They are really distrustful of the distant federal government, and I ask them why they can't apply the same skepticism to the government standing in front of them.

We have large groups of people who will never show up to meetings. They're invisible.

Racism is blatant or, at best, people buying into public stereotypes. It's also classist, but there is little awareness of connections between skin color and economics.

Bill D'Antoni, 73, retired former public official

[redacted]

The whole Democratic Party was controlled by the mafia. It's money. You need to pay precinct committeemen on election day, you need TV, and generally the mayoral candidate raises money and that's done by cutting deals with people who have money. The Cafaros, the Debartolos, Bill Leiden, Bruce Solden (Fireworks), Calrence Smith, Dick Mills, the rest of them were just your major unions who generally had a lot of influence and generally support democrats. When we lost all the jobs, I got all the steel mills torn down to redevelop the brownfields. I remember there was an internal study done by Toys'R'Us saying not to do business with Youngstown, but I was giving free land, ten-year tax abatement, no fees, water and electricity lines directly into their facility, and I ask who's shaking who down. We saved one Steel Mill, NorthStar, with a tax abatement, but I got killed because they were non-unionized, but today it's V&M and the only one left standing and everyone is thrilled to death. We went from being a dominant American labor city to embracing a foreign company; it's French, for God's sake, and non-union. But it's an initiator of economic development.

The white working class, they were involved in politics, because most of the community had steel jobs. So they were activists on their own, through unions and for the love of politics. It was like a sport here. They owned homes, most of them, their kids went to school here. The only reason I won was that I went door-to-door and was a head football coach. Otherwise, they will pretty much vote with the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party was under a bit of fire then because Jim Traficant was in a fight with Don Hanni the old party chairman. So it was a bad decision and I never ran with the party again after that.

I don't know but there's not a lot of voting. And I don't know if it's just apathy, or a lack of confidence in government, no matter who you elect, that they're all the same. I got 7000 votes in one ward. I'm not sure if 7000 voted period in the whole mayoral primary last month. Youngstown was a hot political community, the Democrats were dominant, and they had a good organization. They had constituent with money, with jobs, and they felt like they had a stake in it.

The mafia had a lot of money in grassroots politics. You couldn't separate the mob from politics. They're involved one way or another today. I know people who I went to high school with. You have all the press about what was really going on back then, and there's a lack of confidence. Government was like, holy.

I could have been shot and killed, and that hurt them when I had my police chief pick up all the poker machines, when I didn't listen to them. Everybody respected the mob. I don't care if you were a billionaire. You didn't fuck with the mob. People of money, they were all pretty much the same. Washington sent in their people and indicted the prosecutor, the congressman... They tried to dirty me up too.

I don't now why they didn't shoot me. I guess because they still wanted business in the county. They moved their gambling outside the city, like at the Liberty Ramada Inn. We're talking about gambling and maybe drugs. They also controlled the construction companies and the inspectors, so we were going to get \$10 million for two inches of asphalt. They laid one inch and kept the other \$5 million. It rained hard a year later and the street looked like hell. They might as well of just painted the street. If they didn't control you, they could intimidate you. I don't know why but I wasn't intimidated. I was scared, but I didn't take any money. Maybe because I'm a mental case. But I'm like a cat in a fight. I've been threatened. The FBI told me that I shouldn't go out with my friends on Friday nights anymore.

[redacted]

The police used to arrest you for bookmaking unless you had paid Joey Naples. If they had killed me, it would have attracted strike force guys and the feds. They don't want the attention. It's an economic issue. They were losing money in the city, but they were still profiting in the counties.

When White working class people say that the mafia days were the Golden Days, they're full of shit. They didn't know half of what was going on, and the reason they were happy was because you had a paycheck every week. The mafia was doing their thing, and you didn't care because you had a nice house, a nice car and 50,000 jobs. Hell yeah they were the good old days, but not because of the mob. It's plain as my nose. 50,000 jobs made the mafia happy too. I hear that from good people too. But they're full of shit.

[redacted]

If you need a project, it takes wealth. It isn't done with just government money. If you want a job or to get off the hook with law enforcement, you might be able to do something like that. The higher you go, the more money has influence. And that'll be true in a hundred years. You need to go through Cafaro or Debartolo to get this or that. Public officials gave them sweetheart deals, and the county treasurer, county commissioner and county democratic chair (before Betras). Money, not even dirty money, it corrupts you. People expect something back. If you know someone, you can get something. If you have a traffic problem, you get the right lawyer. Anything here can be influenced by money.

Hanni was drunk and ran his car into the post office.

[redacted]

My philosophy, when you have a population of 185,000 people, and you're down to 85,000 people, you still have homes for 185,000 people.

We did things where you got the most complaints, or when there's an obvious need. Yeah you do favors, but not necessary for the kickback. This isn't just the mayor, there are plenty of superintendents and other officials who have eight hours a day to do what they like. I'm sure that happens, but I've got bigger fish to fry. A mayor's closer to these problems, but the higher you rise, the less connection you have with the people.

Youngstown is a big city that was always small enough to control. It was difficult to break into that. Everybody knows everybody and everybody thinks they do, even if they don't. It's very close knit.

Organizations like unions had a lot to do with people taking action, feeling like they had influence, and feeling a connection to government. Law enforcement, politicians, and unions though, they were all tarnished by relationships to the mob. Even churches were corrupted by the mob.

People here have been brutalized by the viability of politicians and the corruption. We had some wild things going on. You had a lot of public people held in high esteem who were indicted and went to prison—a country prosecutor, sheriff, commissioner, congressman. People get disillusioned with that and lose faith in government. They'll think you're a fucking thug too. But it was all controllable. The White working class didn't spend the money to control. They got the money. They were the ones being controlled. I got walking around money when I was 17, 18 years old to get my family and neighbors out to vote.

When the bug was playing, they had people organized to collect the money (bug runners) off the neighbors. They got the younger kids to do that, and assigned cops to different neighborhoods. Money was being spread around and everyone was happy.

The networks help more than it hurts. The more people you know can help move a project; you can get things done quickly by getting people on board.

I think about that every day. When all is said and done, over time we had more corruption. Some of it could be a cultural thing from our past, when it was accepted to be more normal. What's left of people to day from that era, people are still hung up on the reputation. If you have a reputation of being a corrupt community, that doesn't go away.

Working class people in particular are generally very racist. We are very racially divided. Why? Maybe people need to feel one up, or they see somebody not working and on welfare. But there are a lot of white people on welfare. The unemployment devastated everyone across lines.

The blacks are very protective of their kids, and are weaker on discipline. Consequently the white kids leave. There's a lot of black on black crime, and that dominates the news,

even though whites often do bigger things. There's a perception that blacks moving in to your neighborhood bring crime, lower property values and worse schools. How much of that is based on truth, I don't know.

White working class people don't feel like they can control Wall Street or big corporations. They can control their neighborhoods; that's an easier target for their anger. I think it's a psychological issue that you need to feel better than somebody. This goes back in history. We had a revolution in this country, and we oppressed people after fighting our own oppression.

In a way, they might be taking advantage of. They don't like subsidizing other people, as a general feeling. And it's interesting because the Democratic Party seems more in line with these subsidies, and yet they get working class white votes. It's the Tea Party; they're the ones who don't like that shit.

Everybody gets labor support but Bobby Hagan gets populist issues and from a political point of view, he's a people's guy. I don't know to many people who are really pro-working class. Trafficant. He was for the working guy. I was 100% for the working guy, but I tried to balance it with the corporate world to get job creation. Now everyone's doing that.

Pat O'Neal, 51, city official

There are some overarching vision goals that we've been fairly successful in achieving. We've made strides in changing the image and quality of life. We've aligned ourselves better with the regional economy, reinvented downtown and redeveloped brownfields to create jobs and incentives. I think the one thing that we have had struggles implementing was the concept of shrinking. And while that's how it's been reported, it more about having lost the economic base, population, and repurposing vacant lands; that's where everybody struggles. A lot of—I don't like to call it Rust Belt—older industrial cities have too. We need to embrace who we are today and develop strategies to deal with it. And some of those strategies are about decommissioning the sewer, water, roadways and services, but there really isn't any political will to do that. Nobody has the political will to force people out of neighborhoods.

There really isn't the will to do anything more than dealing with what happens as we go. Around 2000, the feds had just completed their sweeping investigation into corruption and crime. Judges, lawyers, congressman were indicted. This was a project for people to rally around, a movement. And I think we achieved that. And co-convening the project with YSU was done to make it bigger than city government. There were people who embraced it and still embraced it, but yes, some people have been disappointed. And that goes with the change in leadership. You can never tell when new officials. With [Williams'] departure, the plan has been put aside. The principles are still there, and we act in accordance with them but the plan should be updated. But we just don't have the capability of doing it because of funding.

We did pursue neighborhood plans, but it was four of them out of the 32 named. Idora, Borough Park, Garden District and uh, I forgot the other. But we need the resources to implement those plans. We came close to full implementation in the Idora neighborhood.

I can see how the system is built to allow favors. The Planning Commission is supposed to act as an impartial advisory board, but a lot of times they just go with whatever the concerned councilman wants. There's a perception that even if they opt for what they want, the councilman has the final vote anyway. That they are just a recommending body weakens their ability to resist influence. The system is supposed to have checks and balances and that comes from the commission's impartiality. But politically, the council tends to vote for whatever the councilman wants for his ward. They'll go along with it. So if the planning commission defies the councilman's interests, they expect the councilman to rally the rest of the council to veto the proposal with a supermajority. They're supposed to be independent thinkers, but they want to preserve their ability to whip others into line when a vote is pertinent to their ward. Looking out for their particular ward hinders any plan that is in the best interests of the city.

In some cases, if the complaint reaches the mayor, then he'll say get this house down. The one coordinating entity is the mayor's chief of staff. Orders can come from priorities established by city council and the mayor. And it seems that a lot of them are looking for parity among the wards. It is without a doubt an issue of 'I'm not getting my fair share' if you're a councilman. The Federal Government gave us \$2.7 million under HERA (Housing and Economic Recovery Act) in 2008, and HUD had criteria that had to be followed. We did that, but it was a constant battle because not all the wards fit HUD's criteria the same way. And I took a lot of arrows for that.

I was intimately involved in the demolition process, and it seems pretty arbitrary. There does not seem to be a whole lot of logic behind what the priorities are. And it's been a challenge to try and change the mindset. If we keep doing things the way we have been doing them—without any sense of benefit beyond political benefits—there won't be much left to argue over. Everyone wants a piece of the pie, but the pie is getting rotten. Decisions should be made with an overarching logic of sustainability, and without that, we are jeopardizing the future.

We have had a pay-to-play mentality and some people just walk away. Internal politics is just as toxic now. It used to be that you were expected to benefit somebody or you weren't going anywhere. Now the internal political powers have the same effect. So there isn't much different. It's even more toxic today because the city isn't as healthy economically, and as a result it's not as healthy politically. It gets at the leadership vacuum taking place. It used to be honorable to serve the city as a councilperson, now they're drawing a healthy salary and benefits. It's a livelihood, not a service.

The money is no longer in private hands. The government is the biggest fish left in the pond.

It depends on who's counting the beans. There are some who argue that minorities are not getting a fair share.

With this administration, I've learned to keep my head down. It has to do with threat and fear of you being the next target. We've all been written up. The mayor writes letters of reprimand over things, threatening to give you three days off or fire you for silly things. I got written up once. He said I approve all the contracts; you have nothing to do with it. And we looked for entering a professional service agreement for a company to monitor our emergency shelter program. I sent it to the board of control for approval, and when it got onto the agenda, he called me up and said that.

I should have spoken with him prior to making the proposal. There are things like that that are intimidating. So now we just do most things internally and not enter into any contracts.

It's an effective way to govern. Water, public works and building all have a lot of money, so if there were skeletons, that's where they lie.

The MVOC's power is used for pimping. They rally the same people over and over about the same issues, but why don't they rally people over the charter amendments? Where has the outrage gone? I thought that's what the MVOC was there for. They're more focused on statewide issues of health care and I wonder if they're also trying to duck local politics. I really felt that was one of the keys to the Youngstown 2010 plan—getting the neighborhood groups organized. I thought we were heading in the right direction.

Sam Szabo, 46, city official

Demolition is part of the Youngstown 2010 plan, which recognized the importance of the city shrinking. We've had success over the last few months taking people to prosecutor's court to get them to tear down their house. It's a matter of paying \$25,000 to recoup the city's costs versus \$3,000 to do it yourself without asbestos abatement.

To save costs the city now concentrates its demolitions on certain neighborhoods, prioritizing complaints and the need for asbestos abatement. But it's difficult at times and can get pretty political. [Is the system fair?] ...I don't think it's fair or unfair. [Would you call it arbitrary?] No. [So it's systematic.] I don't think it's arbitrary or systematic.

My theory is to start on the outside and work your way in. You can't use the same strategy with every neighborhood. Some neighborhoods are stable and if they have an isolated building, I think that should be a priority. That's not to say you let a bad neighborhood become terrible. We just need to stop the—I don't want to call it cancer, but—the bleeding elsewhere.

[Mayor Jay Williams] wanted to relocate people and shut entire areas down, to return them back to nature. But you can't apply the same strategy to stable and unstable

neighborhoods. I think you need to circle the wagons, and play some defense, whatever you want to call it. Just don't let good neighborhoods go bad.

Rebuilding downtown is sort of starting to happen, but that that really began before the plan. Still, it lacks private investment. Shrinking the city is a controversial topic. People don't want to hear that administrative resources will be cut and their neighborhood will be abandoned.

Idora's neighborhood group did a good job rebuilding properties, getting rid of blight, opening gardens and a new park. But that was mostly done on their own because they have a strong neighborhood association. We try to help by paving the streets but it's mostly them. The problem is that no other neighborhoods are really doing that.

Tank Schumaker (and his friend), 38, construction worker

In the eighties and nineties, we were never off and we made good money. We were doing big projects, building schools and government offices. I know a little about everything—landscaping, foundations, equipment.

Today, everything is getting subcontracted out. As long as the job is cheaper, that's all anyone cares about. But then we have to go back and fix whatever they fucked up. It's really a struggle around here. Spurts and draughts. It like a parabola.

As soon as the weather gets warm, the niggers go out and start killing people. It's like the Wild West. The heat brings them out like bees. I'm not a racist. A nigger can be a black or a white person. But that's why we put up that fence back there last week.

It's an honor to be from Youngstown. People around here will do anything for you. They're true Youngstowners, all these guys around here. If they don't have it, they'll try to get it for you—if they're one of the good guys. It's very tight-knit circles. It's just the way it works.

If you're short on your bills, can you spot me a fifty? If you need help with your yard—[Manny] took me to Vegas twice for all the work I've done for the place. That's Youngstown. But, don't ever fuck em. You fuck em and you're out. Here are second chances, but don't fuck em.

Nobody looks out for us. We look out for each other. Corporations get fat off our backs.

These stupid fucking blacks don't care. They'll just shoot people for nothing. They're just kids but they have a mentality. They don't think. If there were more jobs, we could get them working. I was in the social security office and they're in leather jackets and jewelry, with Cadillacs in the parking lot. I don't make a lot of money, but I'll be damned if I'm just going to take it off the system.

I should be right in the fucking middle. I've done a lot for Youngstown, built a lot of shit here and damn near killed myself a few times doing it. But I'm probably closer to the outer tier.

The majority of black people are lazy and they'll take the easy way out. There are a lot of great hard working blacks, but the majority shoot each other and push drugs. There are black niggers and white fucking trash.

I'll never be on the outside. I've got good people around me and good family. If there's one thing around here, it's pride. Why do you think I come here every night? I'm off work, I'm bored. I come here, have a beer, and build stuff.

My work ethic is great. I bust my ass. But if you don't have the money, you're not moving inside. It's tough to keep up with the bills.

Hard work pays off because I can look at different jobs I did and say 'You know what? I built that.' [Manny] calls me his right hand man. A little pat on the back makes all the shit worth it. This shit wasn't built by God. I like being part of a team and helping brothers out. It's a blue-collar mentality. Party all you want, but get up and go to work.

The American Dream died years ago. Greed, loss of religion, liberal political correctness. You can't do anything anymore. People can't get or stay married because it takes so much effort to survive. My ex-fiancée said, 'You're never around.' But I was working to get a better life for us. No one has time for their kids. It's the American Nightmare.

The way I see it, you don't have a fucking shot. But it's people like us who make this country go. It's the greed of a few that fuck the masses.

I'm a single, white male. I get fucked left and right. Taxes. Political correctness. You got to be black or Hispanic to get a job.

I should have pursued my dreams, but I was born into a construction family.

Natasha Jackson, 52, building official

I never had any pressure like I did with this particular property. My boss came into my office heatedly telling me that I had to pass code non-compliant plans, and when I refused to do so, there were literally screaming matches. I'm not much of a fighter, so it was enormously stressful.

I met with the Mayor once, when he first came into office. I told him about our inter-departmental collaborative work and training. We had created a new division to consolidate all building code enforcement. He yessed me to my face, and he canned everything within a few months. He had the law director's wife in line to take over half the duties—the property maintenance code—of that new division.

There is blatant, just blatant nepotism. I wanted to submit a public records request of her contract, but I'm too afraid to send it. I'm afraid of retribution. I don't know what kind, but we joked about attaching a mirror to a stick to look underneath my car before starting it. I literally had anxiety attacks before going to work.

The mayor pinned my colleague up against the wall, stuck his finger in his face and yelled 'I own you, motherfucker. I own you.'

He micromanages everything to the point that you can't do your job. He told my supervisor that if it were up to him, he would fire all city employees except for the police.

We gave [my supervisor] a bottle of anal lubricant because we all knew he took it up the ass so much from the mayor. We'd have meetings where he'd hang his head and preface the mayor's instructions by saying 'I can't believe I have to tell you guys this, but...' He forced me to do inspections without being certified. The chief fire inspector and I were both explicitly told not to inspect a property. They understood I used email to create records, and I was told not to send any further emails without approval by my supervisor. My email was monitored daily. We had to cancel our department's Friday lunches for fear that the mayor would barge in and accuse us of conspiring or not working.

Youngstown is the only government I worked in until moving to my new job.

I was gently encouraged to treat certain people differently. The Cafaros were treated like royalty. High officials would attend meetings when they came to City Hall. Whenever I tried to enforce code on a Frangos property, he would call the mayor directly. He made excuse after excuse, and to my knowledge a variety of structural repairs have not been done in parking structures he owns. So here's a Cleveland developer who pulls all these favors, and then a very responsible local developer, Rich Mills, is pretty much ignored.

[What do you have to do to get special treatment in Youngstown?] Have a name that ends in a vowel.

The building code was the Bible to me.

Frangos received enormous tax credits based on luxurious designs for new developments that either never came to fruition or were completely misrepresentative of the final structure.

The city gave Imbibe and the Lemon Grove significant grants to develop their properties. Another property owner received a \$100,000 grant to renovate a building's exterior, and never fulfilled the plans. Others received federal tax credits. All the rest of the developments are public institutions, and the bars are all in trouble. Several have closed.

I just stopped raising anything that was contentious. You lay low and try to be invisible so that you're not the target.

Sammarone was a former gym teacher, who did nothing for years as council president but bang a gavel and collect \$30,000 a year. I don't think he's smart enough to have an agenda.

He was so worried worrying about timecards and secretarial work that the city has barely applied for any major grants in the past few years. We run in circles without ever knowing what we're chasing.

This has destroyed my love for this city. I want nothing to do with it any longer.

Bryant Daniels, 44, lawyer and former state official

It's a little like Chicago here. Politics is entertainment, so I try to stay away from here. There are long memories and everything is based on personalities and relationships. It's a very self-defeating place. As brilliant as Jay Williams was to pursue change and programs, I knew it wouldn't come to fruition. It doesn't get better because people don't want to get better.

The fact that politics is such a pervasive entertainment component of people's lives, the need for governance aside, there are all these miniature township governments with hundreds of people in their bureaucracy. There is such a high cost to government. Liberty is a 5 by 5 mile township. They then carved Girard out of it and incorporated it. Now you have two separate police departments, two separate school districts, and two separate bureaucracies. As a result, there is a huge protection of the status quo until, in Youngstown, there is nothing left to fight over. Then everyone just leaves, with the exception of people who can't get out.

One of my greatest frustrations is working class people who vote against their best interests. I was so frustrated that I aligned myself with the NRA on several issues because gun issues drove so many people away from what's right for them. The big elephant in the room is race, and no matter what anybody says, it always has divided this city and it always will. In a city that is exclusively Democratic, we used to think of ourselves as two parties—the white and the black parties. And this has been accelerated by having a black president—positively in the African American community where there is more interest and participation. But I still marvel at the extent that race drives so much of what everybody does. Look at how the city has spread with the departure of economic centers. It's all about race.

I can't sell my house in Liberty because it is where striving African Americans found a place to belong. It was fine when they were 15 or 18%, but not more than that.

The founders of this city built an amazing city. Water infrastructure, bridges and streets, parks and trails, they were all designed by visionary people. But none of it matters to our ability to preserve the city. Anybody who works in the city drives out to the suburbs.

They are people looking for someone to blame for their problems and their disappointment. Government is an easy choice. Their former employers are too. The African Americans who are competing for their jobs and rising up because of the imaginary advantages of affirmative action. One person attested that there were classes offered in Campbell on how to access social benefits. I don't even try to talk them out of it, because they're embarrassed by how significant race is in their decision-making.

They know enough that it's not okay to call someone a nigger or be openly racist. They know to be outraged if their child says something prejudiced at school. They could have put that anger into changing something politically instead of directing it towards other members of their subclass. It has caused a disassociation from politics for White working class people, because the Democrats and Republicans are both afraid to turn them out. Both are scared they may not vote for them.

Many are registered as Democrats, but will absolutely vote Republican for the presidency and senatorial campaigns.

Fundamentally, blacks and whites are in the same predicament, but they have absolutely no sense of that. It is such a racially divided place.

Unlike Cleveland where you have suburban kids who move into the city to run for city office, a lot of the politicians here are White working class people. Since there's nothing for labor left to fight over, they have made book with big business here to the extent that there's anything left to fight over. At the county level, these Westside White working class votes are very insignificant, so the county officers don't care at all.

You can't underestimate the importance of organized labor, because they are the only enterprise with any resources to mobilize voters—to the extent that any remain. There used to be tens of thousands of unionized workers, but now it's mostly just the government employees and some tradesmen who work on fracking-related jobs. But somehow, the union folks have become closely aligned with the Chamber of Commerce in a very odd way.

In 1999, there was a real chance that Lordstown was going to close. The local bargaining agreement was terrible for GM and worker productive was objectively bad. [redacted] And we brought business and labor together to convince the community to persuade the GM workers that our future was in their hands. They needed to change their attitude. There were literally people sleeping in the factory when we walked through it. These were guys with boats in their driveways and great benefits. We had to create the distance to convince labor to do this. That may have been the beginning of the labor-management collaboration. There's now just less to fight about. The industrial workers are at the mercy of the world economy and the tradesmen are governed by state law, not bargaining agreements. They had nobody else to fight with, and there was no one else to dance with. For either of those groups, there is no space for non-unionized working class white or

black people. They weren't on anybody's radar screen, and they never did anything to put themselves there.

Outside money. Everybody wants the big stroke. There have been scrambles for a Lufthansa air cargo hub here, the world's first indoor NASCAR racetrack, an Avanti car body factory. That drives things. Somebody from the outside is going to rescue us and make it like the steel mills again. There is very little local innovation.

Don Hanni was the master of bartering. He was a network of bankshot favors. If you were in that network, someone would automatically do it. You never had to fix a case or tell anyone what to do. If a certain lawyer appeared before a judge, he knew how to rule. The local civil engineering firm got every contract available. Other firms would try to come in here, receive a great deal of courtesy but no contracts. County offices were placed in Cafaro real estate. It was an incredible network of favors. There was so much investment in the status quo, there was no coin in getting something done. All that could do is introduce risk into your well of favordom. I was on the mental health board, and I started asking lots of questions about contracts and was abruptly pulled off the board. But not before the director asked for help with making a legal problem go away. That was the expectation. Things have only changed today because there is so much less to allocate, steal or fight over. Government jobs are still allocated that way, but there is a little more transparency.

What people call the mob today is a more innocuous favor-sharing network. There was always a looming threat of violence, but that was unlikely because the heart and soul was commerce. It was an economic device. And it was actually fairly democratic. There were low barriers to entry. You do your part and you get your part. So there's no incentive to do things differently. We're not exactly spawning entrepreneurs

There's not a market for cool in Youngstown.

The attachment here is to family, familiarity, the ease. There's no traffic.

Whatever it takes to take care of yourself and your family. Jay Rockefeller once asked coal workers why they are working four days a week, and a miner replied, 'Can't make enough money in three.' There is a contentment with a big screen TV, a big family with Sunday dinner, and a vegetable garden in the back. In some ways, I envy that.

Motivating White working class people to vote is impossible. You can't get them out. They don't even have the illusion that government can help. They're just waiting til that \$25 an hour job at the mill comes back, til they get rear-ended and can collect disability, or til they hit the jackpot at the casino.

There's a lot of underground economics going on. People fix cars in their yard. They exchange second hand. If you're not paying taxes on your income, you have less of a stake in your government too.

They don't view social programs as government assistance. What are you going to do? To mobilize them, we should figure out who gets food stamp cards.

Katherine Kemp, 48, city planner

We will give away the farm. We got V&M in the ballpark of 30m to locate to a place that they were probably already going anyway. We scrambled and pieced together tons of incentives during the federal stimulus. Sometimes I wonder if what we're doing has any effect, and then I spoke to someone a V&M and he said, "I'm happier than a slinky on a staircase." Usually I'm in the business of cleaning up the site, getting the financing, access to roadways and utilities, all that.

I started in the City doing grant writing in the mid-nineties. Then the county recruited me to do the same thing, but doubled my salary. Eventually.

[How do you compete?]

We don't. Nobody has any reason to relocate to Youngstown or the region. There may be a small reason for logistics companies because of our low overhead and placement between Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Chicago. Until the shale gas companies came along, there's no reason. Our workforce is not distinguished. Our university is lackluster. We do have an aging population, so we can attract some health care companies. When companies do come in, you Google their name and realize that they've been indicted in one state and barred by the Chamber of Commerce in another. We're a magnet for shady types. If there's an existing company populated by people who grew up in the region, they'll stay here because they are deeply loyal. The networks are so strong. My dream is that one of them goes Fortune 500, and just doesn't turn into an asshole.

There's a genuineness about the place. But don't expect to get a good workforce if you're going to pay them 9 bucks an hour. You gotta treat people well, or you're not going to do well. Youngstown has a real history of being exploited by employers. Originally, yeah, by the steel industry and the legacy is still here. There is still a strong mistrust of authority and in particular government. Ohio has weak governance structures generally. We sort of cater to companies' economic demands and this area is pretty much the same. City Hall is on a side street and you can't even see the sign. The government doesn't exploit working class people; we just go along with employers' every demand.

When John Kerry was running for president, he goes to launch his Ohio campaign in one of the huge abandoned steel mills in Struthers. One of the union guys there next to me wearing a bomber jacket and a hoody underneath with jeans on. He's a union guy. And John Kerry's got a brand new LL Bean jacket over a plaid shirt. Kerry was just using good grammar, finished his I-N-G's, and elongated his A's just enough to annoy Midwesterners. And the union guys turns to me and yells, "What a fuckin pussy."

They've got a good bullshit meter. They're genuine people. They've got strong loyalties, to unions, the church, their families and the Democratic Party. The guys still voted for Kerry. But they're straight up and they'll say what they think. They can live in just incredible world of cognitive dissonance and be completely untroubled by it.

Really bad nepotism. Government is a way to get jobs from your useless nephews, and there's tons of them out there.

The old story that Boston was run by seven cousins. It's the same thing here. People just stay here, and nobody moves in. If you read the obituaries, you really see it. Everybody is interconnected. It's a culture of personalism. It's about who you know, relationships, your network of people.

Just a week ago, the county needed a new HR director. The commissioners interviewed a few candidates and one made it to the top of the pool without a high school degree but was very loyal to the Democratic Party. And one of the commissioners was adamant that he gets it. 50% of the time, a non-qualified person will be offered a professional position without the necessary credentials, and it is perilous working in that kind of environment.

[What does that mean for someone who is not plugged in?]

I don't know anyone like that. I'm in the government. By the time they get to me, they're knee-deep. They've got Stockholm syndrome.

The reason we redo brownfields is to get people like that jobs. But it doesn't work. First, we don't employ that many people. You can spend half a million dollars to get a company here, and you're lucky if they employ 35 people. It's the law of diminishing returns. Second, the companies that do come can't find employees with skills and can pass a drug test. It's unfathomable, but people aren't passing drug tests.

Being the mayor of this city is like being Mother Robin with all the babies constantly crying out for you to regurgitate whatever you just ate for dinner.

If you're black from the Southside, you're going to be elected by blacks from the Southside. You need a handy enemy and handy friends. Race is convenient for that. Some of the folks who got good positions in City Hall grew up under parents who had similar positions within the city's legacy of racism. Everyone's racist. I'm a racist. You can't help it.

In the 1920s and 30s, the first housing development in the nation was established in Youngstown to attract blacks from the South in order to work in mills and bust the unions. What did those people know about the situation they were entering? Nothing. They just wanted a job and out of Jim Crow. But they were hated by the Italians and Irish steelworkers, who never forgot. In the 70s when the blacks were getting radicalized, the whites got scared and Youngstown was like something out of Dirty Harry. Belligerent minorities, block busting, real estate people trying to get white people out of the city by

telling them that black people are buying their neighbors' houses. The educated African American population from the 70s was part of that, and their kids became the professional class in Youngstown. So you have the residual carryover of resentments. On the white side on the Westside, there a lot of scorn for the listless, stupid, thoughtless black person who doesn't want to work. The problem is that City Hall is generating more resentment by exploiting racial politics. They use big-time code. Black politicians will say 'It's our turn,' or it's just tone. You can tell when a black person is on the phone with a black person, and a white person is on the phone with a white person. People think that they need to speak with someone inside their group to eliminate the possibility that rejection of their request is due to racism. Then if it turns out there really is a problem with the traffic signal, then you know. It's part of a legacy of mistrust that goes back 100 years misused by steel mills and now politicians.

There's a divide between elected officials and bureaucrats. I was never more than a bureaucrat. Whenever a prospect comes, I'll Google them, figure out what their background is, and most of the time, it's legally complicated and unfavorable. And what almost always happens is when I or one of my colleagues decides not to recommend partnership or incentives because of the risks, then the prospect will hook up with somebody from the Democratic Party and start bullying me. And I've never been in the room when it happens, but kickbacks are a big part of the way Youngstown does business. And the kickbacks are usually small. A few thousand bucks, that's part of the game. The Youngstown Initiative is a perfect vehicle for it because you can shave off a few grand in the cash you hand out.

[Why do politicians sell off their integrity so cheap?]

Half of those guys have debts up the yin yang. Holding public office, you're expected to buy dinner or a round of drinks wherever you go. Being a politician is a net loss around here. A lot of those guys have had real estate deals go sour. You look into their tax delinquencies, and you see that they have messy financial problems. So they're desperate and that results in dinky \$3,000 deals. A lot of them get into the business because they think they can make money off of it.

She's a huge thief. I'm still letting Annie [Gillam] steal. It promotes world peace.

Buzanich is an example of what working class Youngstown really is. Grew up on the Westside, an Eastern Orthodox family, racist as his schoolyard buddies. He got the ambition bug in college. He wanted a trophy wife. Tremendously cagey, but on the other hand, he develops loyalties that are indestructibly strong. When he talks fast, you know, he's lying. Once he decides he likes you, he loves you forever. He knows exactly what goes on and makes sure that everyone wins on every deal. Multiple winners and no losers. The tax base is increased, the work force benefits, the employer benefits, the development costs are brought to a minimum, and the politicians are happy because they're pockets get lined. But the real loser is you and me when we pay property taxes, gas taxes, license plate taxes. He sees the political kaleidoscope. Look, this is a capitalist

system. There isn't a deal that doesn't make me want to take a shower and drink seven glasses of wine. And I'm not even religious. It's just messy.

[How much does that have to do with politicians' propensity to expect bribes?]

Most companies that are decent won't do stuff like that. So it's a detriment. Word gets out about stuff like that. Cheap whores don't get classy johns.

Every kickback story I ever heard, the mayor was the one doing the talking in the room. And his minions are the same. He's old school.

It's an Eastern European thing. There's an infinite web of advantages. It's the taxpayer, and we're hemorrhaging them. They're all leaving the city. It's a chain reaction. The lead corrupt politician surrounds himself with useless sacks of shit minyans who are loyal. They're not visionaries; they do what they're told. And as the big kahuna stays in power, he accumulates them. And when it's time to repave the roads, there's no money left. Buzanich is just like a mobster. He has a running list of what everybody wants and who is owed what.

One out of every 20 deals gets closed. By the time it's secured, you fucking hate these guys.

The ones who accomplish things around here are deep under rocks. Once you get into a technical field where you need to get things done, you just don't want the politicians around you.

Don Hanni created Youngstown's version of the Chicago Machine, and we are still living in it. He created the coalition building by giving people jobs, following the old steel mill model and just imported it into the political system. This perpetuated the mistrust between the different groups. He kept them separate, and talked about the Irish to the blacks, the Greeks with the Jews, et cetera. If I got a job, it was because I was the WASP they needed, and he would tell you so. The black community still repeats what he used to tell them: 'Now is our time. If we don't get the goodies now, we never will.' It was always about getting the goodies.

If we're talking about climate change, we have water in several different locations thanks to microclimates that are more severe here. And we have preserved many small reservoirs.

We have addressed certain environmental impacts. There's only so much we can do though, because the state controls much of the land and railway infrastructure. And those laws were written back in the day by oil and gas prospectors. And the fracking industry is vicious too. These companies have hired land men who are scruffy lying pieces of shit, except for BP. Their land men are suited yes ma'ams, and you can't tell they are lying as easily. They have screwed Trumbull County so bad that one of the commissioners suggested that they consider putting the BP logo on the façade of County Hall. He

thought it was a brilliant idea. I drank a lot for several days after that. And Ohioans have not figured out that the fracking industry jobs aren't going to them. Truly.

I use big words. I'm a white girl. And this area hates women, especially ones who talk fast. But we got the Mahoning River corridor and it's got a mother load of brownfields and jobs. It's nine cities long, and we're trying to locate petroleum equipment companies and suppliers here.

White Working class are becoming an endangered species. And some of them are very sexy in jeans, plumbers and pipefitters. I'm middle aged but I have a connoisseur's eyes.

Because I don't want to go to jail, as soon as I get circular answers to straight questions, I get out of there. I guess I have a nose for corruption.

Building inspection is a payola business. Landowners pay to not get their businesses inspected. They pay code enforcement officers, and the politicians get a piece of that.

You don't understand. He doesn't know the difference between the truth and bullshit. It's semi-true and semi-false and you don't feel any sense of conscience about it. All these years of desperation, it changes you. You just do what you can to get by. Twenty years ago, would I defend a guy like Buzanich? Probably not. But it makes the city work. Meanwhile, we keep inventing new lows. The world of financing innovates to make this stuff possible. And everyone else is doing it, and other disenfranchised communities aren't seeing any money. Meanwhile we use all the tricks available to make the bottom line work.

Our city bond rating went up in 2010. And the analysis said, yeah we know your population, employment and commerce are going down, but you have a nice mayor. You gotta work it. There's not a lot of goodness to it. But it gets the job done.

Marty Nash, 58, party official

They're socially conservative, slightly racist, with a huge chip on their shoulder, distrustful of most public and private institutions, extremely cynical, and extremely susceptible to demagoguery. They have a chip on their shoulder particularly as it relates to private institutions like the steel industry. This is an immigrant community that had difficulty with work and discrimination. This was such a tough town that it's in our culture. In the mills, it was one ethnic group against another and everyone against African Americans. So it remained balkanized for a long, long time. Having a chip on your shoulder is a prerequisite for living here. Black Friday saw people lose all of their livelihood in the space of a day, and our inability to recover created a pervasive sense of hopelessness that is also part of the culture. The distrust of private institutions goes back to the way industry treated workers until the union movement formed, and even thereafter. Banks and powerful institutions were always ran by white Anglo-Saxon protestants. We have a reputation as a tough union town, but that's only necessary when

you have tough management. They were basically killing workers and the workers rebelled. It all goes back to what you had to do to earn a living. Distrust of public institutions was after a demonstrated inability to cope with the destruction of the steel industry, the incompetence of political figures, and the fact that most people accepted their corruption. That didn't matter when things were good, but it became a sore spot when things got tight and crime exploded, services weren't being provided, streets weren't getting paid and everyone was on the take. This city was wide open. You could do anything you wanted. People had money and they wanted to spend it in ways that weren't legal. When the jobs went away, there was a real resentment. The general lack of progress that we've made as a community, this place suffers from a lack of leadership at every level in a way that is absolutely incomprehensible. And a lot of people blame economic decline, but you look at Akron where they lost as many rubber jobs as we lost in steel. But they were blessed with real leaders who came together to find a solution to the problem. It's day and night. It's inconceivable that Akron is 40 miles away, had to deal with the exact same situation and are light years away. It's natural to distrust your officials when they can't get the job done. Jim Traficant couldn't get elected in almost any other congressional district, and this situation set him up to be the king. People feel like they've been failed, and he had a message of us against them. He made people feel like they were fighting back, despite the fact that he was one of the least effective congressmen in the history of the chamber. The guy was corrupt as the day is long, but Jimbo could get away with almost anything because no one here would say the emperor had no clothes.

[redacted] I told [Bobby Hagan], the city is cooked. This is not a job you want. I took him to see Don Plusguell. He said, "Bobby, I admire what you've done, but you're out of your fucking mind. I'm the best mayor in the United States and I have the plaques to prove it, and I can tell you that there isn't a damn thing you can do in Youngstown because it has been leaderless at so many levels for so long. It is an impossible job to do."

It started because for so long a time, it didn't really make a difference who was mayor. Before the steel industry left, you had a powerful congressman and a strong economy that would succeed no matter what you did, and a corrupt local administration who ensured the mob could run their operations. People were satisfied with that. And the Democratic Party was handing out hundreds of jobs at a time. Your cousin Tilly who couldn't count to ten could find work. It's patronage, so there was a lot of interest in maintaining the status quo. Then after it collapsed, because there had not been a talented infrastructure of public service, you didn't have anybody sitting on the bench who could check in and take on the tough issues. Then you had a brain drain, and anyone with an IQ above 80 got the Hell out of here. That convergence made it impossible to elect good people.

Now, more than ever before, there are fewer and fewer public sector jobs. So it's harder and harder to stick incompetent people in these positions.

I can tell you that the Democratic Party doesn't have much to do with it. The chairman can't go to someone like he used to and say this guy's been working in this ward forever, so give him a job. There aren't any jobs. I don't think people here get away with anything

near what they used to. It's tougher and tougher to get away with anything around here anymore.

If sitting down and talking to Cafaro's lawyers is a bribe, then everything I did as a lobbyist is a bribe too. The indictment [Oak Hill] on its face was ridiculous. And in the old days, you never would have heard about it. Yes, Mr. Cafaro had the ability to call people and talk to him. But if he had the power everyone says he had then the old HHS office would have still been at McGuffey. And it was a sweetheart deal. It was payback for years of political support. The Cafaros hate when people tell them no. And once you do, they hate you forever. ...They hate me to this day. On the political end, they ran things around here for so long, they just can't believe when anyone says no to them.

Vicky Sherlock got appointed on the commission and saw what was going on at McGuffey and started looking into it. The other two commissioners didn't want anything to do with it. It was overcrowded, there were air quality issues with mold, the roof was falling in. So she starts talking publicly about moving. She contacted the Strouss Building, and overnight, Cafaro bought the paper—the debt, of the building. I had never spoken to Tony Cafaro in my life. He went up to me and asked, “What does your girlfriend want? What does she want to get off this McGuffey thing? What does she need? We can work something out. Mr. Cafaro, I think you just violated state and federal law, and I'm going to do you a favor and not bring this up ever again.

With Oak Hill, he wanted to design the facility at Oak Hill. Would it have been a better building than the Southside Hospital? Yeah probably. But then you would have been in his pocket.

Bill Cafaro would hold court with judges, mayors, legislators, county commissioners. The place is owned by the mob. It's Lenny Strollo's joint, and everybody knew. Tony tried to keep it going by meeting at Anthony's on the river after [Bill] the old man died, but then the newspaper started covering it. Then with the corruption probes and the resentment about the economic decline, it was just too much.

Oak Hill represents the last kind of money guys blatantly trying to make public policy, or force public officials to make decisions. The mob's gone for the same reason the general population is gone. There's no money here and gambling is all over the place now. So there's just no more money to be made. There's a different class of public official in office, and I think the Internet and scrutiny holds people's feet to the fire.

[Who's looking out for White working class people?]

You know, to a great extent no one. There's a few guys like Bobby Hagan, even though in a lot of ways, because they're so socially conservative and racist, they have problems with him. They had better hope that organized labor exerts influence over the fracking industry. But at this point, the energy companies could care less about hiring local people. You can't get a hotel room in West Virginia right now, and that's going to happen here. Elected officials need to try to create a way for local people to get these

jobs. But in a lot of ways, everyone is scared shitless to say anything. The Chamber of Commerce, elected officials won't. But they're being short sighted. We're sitting on 1 trillion dollars; Where else are they going to go? They can't frack in China. We're sitting on the stuff and they gotta go through us to get to it.

We are so used to rolling over for anyone who wants to come in here; you don't have to do that with energy. Somebody has to take a leadership position on labor and environmental issues to make sure we get some benefit. Bobby was talking about regulating training and job allocation, and he caught hell from the tradesman union. It's a question of leadership, in a region where there hasn't been any. I know I talk a lot about Bobby, but for a long time, Bobby's been the only one who's had a pair.

It's analogous to African American voters, because they're gonna vote for us anyway. But that's not true. The Democrats drove white working class people away on guns because they weren't making it about economics. The Republicans just cherry pick social issues. And a lot of people just think they'll stay home, and that's the most frustrating thing of all. You're leaving votes on the table. They just get more and more disaffected and less and less involved. It's bad for us, and it's bad for democracy. And they're only getting more disengaged because, aside from fracking, there's nothing else coming down the road.

The Republicans don't worry about it because they think the turnout will stay low. And the Democrats don't have an answer. Kasich is bragging about the energy industry and jobs being up. Go stand in front of a wellhead, and show that there's no one from Mahoning County working here, and the Republican don't care. These companies are going to suck the energy out, not put anything back in, and we're going to be left where we were after steel left. But you don't hear that coming out of a Democrat's mouth. It's the job of the candidate to provide the nuance. That's why guys like me get paid. It's the party's job to provide the nuance.

The African American community has no influence at the county level. There's never been an elected county official. Their only power is in Youngstown, a shrinking city that is less and less significant. Statewide and nationally, the Democrats do what they can to mobilize them, but countywide, if you win the Democratic Party, you win. I think that people have a deep-seeded concern about them, but it's a numbers game. And the numbers are, they're an insignificant segment of the electorate outside the city. There's a little more dialogue than it used to be.

They don't treat each other as if their problems are different; they treat each other as if *they* are different. Richard Pryor used to talk about how immigrants take black people's jobs, at one point the Vietnamese. And they teach each group their first word of English: nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger nigger.

At least I'm not a dago, hungey, and at least we're better than the niggers and always will be. And to a large extent, it goes back to the Reagan days' stories about the welfare queen. It takes attention away from who the real enemies are and the Democrats can't

bridge the gap in reality. And it doesn't help when the trades and labor have been racist for so long. They've denied opportunities to blacks too.

People are more concentrated on maintaining their piece of a constantly shrinking pie, rather than working to try and make the pie bigger.

I'm from the Mahoning Valley. I can smell a scoundrel from a mile away.

Rick Hanley, 57, party official

The Obama campaign got really pissed off at me. Racial politics still plays here, and we are the only large country that has not elected an African American countywide.

You're in a very Democratic region. And most people think that that would make it better. The fact that the Green Party fields more candidates than the Republican makes things more difficult. The result is a lot of infighting and we fight amongst ourselves. That the Republicans are so inept means that the race is always the primary. It's like herding cats. Will Rogers said, "I don't belong to a organized political party; I'm a Democrat." You have a lot of diverse views that tug at the strings that hold it together. I'm pretty liberal.

I always tell people that the most diverse place in your life is the workplace and in politics. So I think that the African American community naturally migrates to the Democratic Party because we stand for a principle of fair play, equal opportunity, making sure that your status doesn't dictate your access to power. That's attractive to working class whites and black. But race politics plays in both people. But the only way we're going to field a good ticket is to pick the most talented person. I still think politics is noble, but the bullshit dissuades good people. The people who get involved don't have the highest calling. By the same token, the people in public service should realize the trust people are offering and not fuck it up. It's not a chance to get rich and otherwise benefit financially. I know right away when I meet some why they're in it. We've had a terrible history with corruption, so I have zero tolerance for it. It's held us back.

For the most part, people round here, most people, play by the rules, pay their taxes and they want their fair shot at a good job with a good wage and retiring with dignity. I think that the pressure of globalization has shrunk that American Dream.

America is still rough and tumble, where the fittest survives. Just because I strive to get everyone a fair shot doesn't mean they get one. They still gotta try. [So are they not trying?] The days of good jobs are gone. I think that globalization is pulling wages down. The days where you can go to high school, get out and get a good job are gone. That's the new reality. I think they all work hard, but this is where Republicans and Democrats are different.

The party and government can only get you a fair shot.

The cold reality of America is that you got to look out for yourself. You gotta work hard, have a little bit of luck, then you'll be okay. If you don't want to, then you'll be wherever your lot takes you.

The talent is on the sidelines. No one wants to put up with the bullshit. If I didn't want to give back, I wouldn't be involved. But democracy only works if people are willing to serve. The public vetting—which is a necessary evil—is something most people don't want to go through.

A prosecutor didn't want the bullshit, a couple people for judgeships didn't want the pay cut.

Politics is still a grassroots movement, but people want to just parachute into the process. Precinct committee person, learn how to build a campaign. You're not running for class president. A lot of people think the voters are stupid. I don't.

[redacted]

Money is the mothermilk of politics. I'd love to have exclusive public funding of campaigns. Political parties are the monks of the early Christian church. They make sure we follow the core principles. But in America, by only having two, we snuff out any competition.

At one time the party endorsed. Then there was the war of '94 when Mike Morley took on the machine and overthrew Don Hanni. He stopped the party from endorsing. And it rendered the party inept. [redacted]

If you're a good lawyer in this town and the job pays \$96,000, you're not running for prosecutor.

The current officeholders are paying for the sins of past officeholders. For a lot of years, the party was corrupted by outside influences. But that is a bygone era. And that's also why good honest people don't get involved.

Everyone says they believe in innocent until proven guilty. Until it hits them in the face. I read the indictment, and it was a pile of fucking shit. What's offensive is the whole process. John McNally wasn't proven to do anything. What he was alleged to have done happens every day in American politics. A wealthy guy lobbied a politicians and he listened to him. Show me a city where wealthy people don't have access. Money is the corrupting influence. It's got me by the balls, but it's got everyone by the balls. If somebody writes a big fucking check, let's be frank. I'm going to return their call.

Tip O'Neill said, 'If I can't eat your steaks, fuck your women, and then vote against you in the morning, I have no business in politics.' You gotta be beholden to the people, not

the wealthy. Wealthy people, if they weren't all Republican, are the best ones to run for office. Because they don't care about some puny fucking kickback.

Here's the difference between me and most Republicans. They think they have theirs, fuck you. On the other hand, I stood on the shoulders of a lot of people.

There are people out there with a moral compass. They just don't want to be in the fishbowl and go through the bullshit. [What's bullshit?] It's scrutiny. It's a quid pro quo.

[Where's the space for the grassroots outsider who's not part of a precinct committee?] He's got no chance. But that's not Mahoning County. You can't be a fart in the wind and expect to be successful. Buy a fuckin helmet. Get skin in the game. If you don't want to get in the game, then fuck off. You can't win a boxing match without taking a hit. Try it out and see how it goes.

If you don't have a good moral compass and you're poor, then yeah, someone can be corrupted.

That's the problem. They're shitting on the very people they're there to represent. It's so wrong on so many levels, I don't know what to say. And it should not occur. There are people who go to work everyday and they don't have the time or attention to know about this stuff. These people should be taken out and shot. It's a cancer. It leads to a public distrust of the very institutions there to serve you.

Do I think Sammarone is clean? Do you want the honest answer or the really honest answer?

[Really honest.]

No.

[Okay, the honest answer.]

Yes.

[But the Party is endorsing him in for Council President?]

In a perfect world, I don't support him, but I don't have that choice.

[He has an opponent.]

He's not a member of the Party.

The party will not take more than \$10,000, because the perception is that we'll be beholden.

[redacted] The days when the party can hand out jobs are over. [Because you choose not to, or because they're no jobs?] Both.

If Joe Blow calls me, I'll call him back, but I won't return the call as fast.

This is a transition period.

Jim LoDuca (and his deputy), 43, County official

Political power? Usually it's abused.

It's different now, than it was in the day. Then, the party boss ran everything and your precinct leader was the big man in the neighborhood. The Democratic Party wasn't a player except for the select few in leadership positions. The leadership took care of their own people.

The power is not as ostensibly as centralized as it was. Every year that I ran, the Democratic Party did not endorse. That's not to say they don't make deals with people and discourage certain candidates. Speculatively, there must have been arrangements to allow people to run unopposed.

Things got to be very personal attacks.

You gotta understand, if you wanted to get a government job, you had someone in the Democratic Party sponsor you. This goes back to the 50s and 60s into the 90s. There was a lot of talk about getting the answers to the civil service exam the night before for a small fee.

[What names have you heard hold power around these parts?] Well the first name you hear is Cafaro.

The first words out of his mouth were "We need to see Tony Cafaro." The Democratic Party was Bill Cafaro's hobby. Christ almighty, Bill had Kennedy at his house when he was running in 1960. He was reputed to be influential in the appointment of federal judges. They invited county prosecutors and judges on private plane trips to see a swearing-in ceremony, baseball games, hockey games. The old neighborhood stuck together. The others don't inject themselves into these local races.

Other families may support candidates, but they don't put names into races. Most of the elected officials don't care for me to be in office. I don't socialize with them. I'm not a part of any country club. Everybody knows each other and then public officials use them to benefit their friends and hurt their enemies. That also means that my budget gets cut and I don't get much support.

That's been the secret to my success. Every person that's ever run against me has had their own issues. [Redacted], accepting bribes, nepotism, et cetera. [Redacted]

White working class person? My dad. Both parents are working at General Motors, a high school education, maybe some college. They're concerned about what their kids are going to do tonight, the ballgame they're going to, how they're going to pay for a graduation gift. They don't give a shit about politics. The only people who care are in the inner circle. So unless you see something in that paper or on the news repeatedly, they don't know any better. A politician has to run the same commercial three times for anything to sink in. White people—the few who vote—watch the news.

George Ellis, 55, business leader

We can't get the education system to move fast enough. We don't do that badly according to state averages. What concerns me is the number of kids dropping out of school. We're in a global, knowledge-based economy, competing against populations that are growing quickly namely China and India. For every engineer we graduate, China has 50. We're just not moving fast enough to transition to the 21st century.

I've pretty much given up on that 7% unemployment. Over the last three decades, our total population has shrunk, we are aged, but our poor and dropout absolute numbers have stayed the same. We have lost the capable work. They have gone to centers of excellence where they and their careers can prosper. People will move in here because of the demand for work and the lack of human capital.

I know we need 2,000 welders in the next 18 months. We're not going to get them. We're advertising in places like Connecticut, Philadelphia in shipyards, and we're doing interviews there to see if anyone is interested in relocating.

The best-case scenario is that the [fracking] study that Penn State and Ohio State did that estimates 240,000 jobs created. It's a huge, huge impact. And we hear people say that'll last 100 years. The worst-case scenario is that the test wells don't produce the wet gas they're expecting. If it's not in abundance, it'll slow everything down. 43% of all the work we're doing is in gas and oil. It's a little under what expectations are.

If you look at Chesapeake and the style of the management, they make reactionary quick decisions, while BP is more methodical and mature. They are slower because they operate in silos. So even though it moves faster than people think, they go at a slower pace.

With White working class people, they have a different perspective on politics and the global economy. There's not too many things we're number one in. It was steel and that was one time in the 20th century.

I think they'll have an opportunity to participate. It will come from the supply chain of that industry. Their jobs are in welding, factory work, you have to have satellite meter reading. It's not all blue collar, it's a gray area.

We would repeat history if we put all of marbles in it. But I see progress in call centers, food processing, entertainment, distribution—to give you another example, if you do some research on aluminum extraction, we're ranked number two in the United States. We're still a strong metals industry. I see this as a life cycle that is not just gas and oil. Who has an appetite for that opportunity? It's companies concerned about the cost and difficulty of logistics and cargo transport. There's motivation to bring stuff back on shore.

We have a reputation. We were always known for our labor unrest. But our private sector labor force is only 9% union. We've transitioned away from that. I think the culture is changing. [How is the culture changing?] Um, well I'm not sure it is. I think of the ethnic culture, arts, theaters and museums. [But weren't you talking about economic culture?] Well the attitude to fairness. I heard from a young person that my generation worked to live, while the younger generation lives to work.

You have a population that is not highly skilled, and you need to fill the food chain. People ask me to bring better jobs in, that they don't want that kind of work, well there's a price to pay. People need to get trained to do better work. Call centers are a place of entry.

I think they've changed, but I don't think it's measureable. I think we're starting to see the switch from a victim to a 'can do' attitude. Our political leaders led victims. We don't get any respect, the government doesn't do anything, when are 'the' going to bring the old way back. Walking along the sea, you gotta throw starfish back in the water.

Black Monday was so big and dramatic. Coming back will take on job at a time. [But isn't gas and oil being advertised as a dramatic boom?] I don't agree with that. How long did it take us to move all those immigrants here? It's not going to be a boom. ...If we look at what the gas and oil industry does, they are trying to paint that rosy picture, when we know that's not true. I don't have a lot of respect for public officials. They spend far too much time trying to get reelected than delivering services. Promising hope of a new day goes to that. They believe what they're hearing and want to be a part of it.

The biggest problem here is that public officials want credit for leadership and are worried about their constituents, but they slow the process down. They're well intended, but they don't know what the hell they're doing. Companies expect the world at their feet, and every politician bowed to this person's requests without actually having the authority to grant the requests. We'll give you this building, that tax break, this service. But they can't.

Giving away the farm may have been necessary. You're competing against other states. The exception is gas and oil. It's under us, but we're giving away the farm anyway. If I'm

competing against Akron, I have to compete. But not if it's under us. I play by the rules. I can't make them.

It's the frickin union that's inside the mayor's pocket. So when we have a big business come in here wanting to set up shop for millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs, I've got the mayor calling me to tell me which contractor I should use to put in utilities. [Who's going to work with a city like that?] Someone who has no other choice because we're near the oil and gas. How the hell am I going to diversify this economy if I don't play to my advantages?

I have had to put in burglar alarms, security in my house. My wife makes sure that no one sneaks into my garage when I pull out in the morning. I have absolutely had powerful people threaten me.

John McNally, 44, County Commissioner

[You're clearly a popular guy.]

It's like family here.

White working class: Proud, not only of themselves but also of their family and the area where they come from. Most of them have been there most of their life. Hardworking, wanting to work, wanting to put children through high school or college, and ultimately wanting them to come back to Youngstown and have them do good things here. I don't know if I can describe what their political thinking is. Strongly Democratic, yes, but also willing to express their displeasure—not at the local level, but at the national level. They've suffered through a tremendous amount in the last 35 years. Some see changes for the better, but many see the stain of blight, the effects of demolition and foreclosures.

I think everybody gets treated fairly. At a place like this, people working the third shift at the post office will have a cup of coffee with a lawyer or a future mayor. Towards government, they want people to put in their hard work just like they do. They recognize the need for services. They don't have much complaint unless the basics aren't done. Deming a home, water bills and returning phone calls. They just want an answer, yes or no, but an answer. As a public officeholder, you know they'll come after you. Toward the private sector, there's discomfort and frustration about the lack and fear of hiring. At a certain point, we got a lot of people around here who want to work and you got to reach out and hire us amid too much regulation. They have a difficult time figuring out that even while the local business sector worked hard, they're doing well. They think of banks, business owners.

I think they get 90% of what they want from the government. It frustrates me to no end when they see City Hall rearing to get out at 4pm sharp. The government has to work harder to provide those basics, when the taxpayers are keeping you employed. The public employee just thinks all their benefits are gifts from heaven. [But is the 10% shortfall

only attributable to the bureaucrats?]) It's across the board. If you're elected to a job, you're a 24-hour a day official. I can't tell you how often people approach me when I'm out with my family. If you're approachable, then you'll be approached. But I think we have too many elected officials. I'm talking more about the county level, like the recorder, treasurer, and other administrative positions. A mayor is very important as a figurehead, not a figurehead, but as the face of the area. And I'm not sure you have that with a city manager. That's why it's so important to have someone approachable?

I don't think [Chuck Sammarone's] approachable. Some of the things he's pushing about accountability, time clocks and reprimands, that's well and good. I like him, but he's not approachable. He's a caretaker and that's about it. He represents an older way of politics. He's not looking at the bigger picture. I don't know that there's a Mahoning Valley brand of politics. It's rough and tumble. You have to provide services, and your constituents need to know who you are. Chuck doesn't care what anyone thinks of him and that's reflected in how he treats people. Sometimes he ignores me completely. He's more vinegar than honey. Politics is the art of cutting deals that make sense to everybody. Because we have a one-party system, we go after each other more. But I'm not sure that's different than areas with a 60-40 partisan split.

A lot of politics in this area is personal relations. To get things done, you need to know the people you're dealing with. You got to have a beer with people to figure out what they want, and some people say well you're not doing that publicly. Not everything is public. Personal relationships are one of the most important ways of getting things done. It's not rocket science. That's how I believe you govern. Do I know them? Have I talked to them? Not how much money have they contributed to my campaign. But have I met them?

I want to have personal relationships. The person who calls me to complain because of tax issues or child support, they get the same treatment as people I know. I think people's skepticism is overblown. Most elected officials like dealing with the public. I think I know every elected official at the county level and almost every one at the city and township level. I have to. I want to know who I'm calling when I make decisions. Some people think that's bad, but that's how things get done here. You can't always have a great debate on the senate floor.

Well I'm not sure what those things were.

I don't think [the Oakhill case is] personal relationships gone too far. I think my colleagues made an awful decision without political relationships. The fact is you had a plaza that should have been torn down, an empty building on Market Street. I think the move was a bad decision. I think it's inevitable that people see it as personal relationships gone too far. I think I was banged on because I said the Cafaros are my friends, because I went to school with their kids. [Is it a conflict of interest?] In the Mahoning Valley, I'd have to disqualify from every event if that was necessary when I had a friend that was involved. Where's the threshold? When I've been called for assistance 10 times? At what point are they a friend and I need to pass people on someone else?

[If you were the judge presiding over the Oakhill case, given your personal relationships, would you recuse yourself?]

I think in that case, you have to recuse yourself because of all the players. In the judicial scenario, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. That would be difficult.

[Why is being a judge making verdicts any different than the verdict of a legislator. Doesn't each role require objectivity?]

Yeah, you can say that. But the judge is not determining the best interests of the community. The elected official does.

[What are you not leaving office without achieving?]

Improving—I think the city needs a cross between Mayor Williams and Mayor Sammarone. Comfortable dealing with people of all colors and economic levels. The business community needs someone to work with, and the people need someone interested in getting their community safer and cleaner.

There needs to be an urgency to get things done. I don't think there's an urgency, the speed to demolish property, the speed to consolidate duplicative services, the urgency to help local business, to improve local neighborhoods. That's what we need. Being friends doesn't diminish the fact that people need to get things done. I think that at times there is a willingness to cut people a little extra slack. And quite frankly, I'm going to have enough people asking me for jobs.

At the top level, I don't expect to make many changes. I don't think there's enough turnover. But I'm going to put people in that I trust. I'm going to put people in that are qualified.

If the mayor's going to put together a charter review commission and they go through the process, you have to put them on the ballot. Why did you have all these volunteers waste their time? Let people tell you what they want.

None of us are reaching a crowd. The ten forums we had in the spring, we're talking to the same people. The same places have the same events, the same questions come up, and after going through enough election cycles, nothing new is ever discussed. It's a variation on, "what are you doing for us?"

I have a sense of frustration. You don't go to these events excited as a candidate. There's 99% of the city who you're never seeing.

Karen Amalfitano, 61, County official

When you first come to the Mahoning Valley and its 1958, you've come to an area that's thriving. Blue collar workers, factories, government, a downtown that's full swing. It was a little Chicago, filled with famous actors and singers, people came to Mahoning Valley. This place had university, young people going into the service and college, it had character. There was family structure, religious beliefs. Everything was so tight. Then as you moved into the sixties, the mills and everything else went into decline before finally shutting down in the late 1970s. And everything collapsed because we were so dependent on that singular type of labor and industry.

Everything was about respect and loyalty. In the game of politics, everything is loyalty, respect and integrity. And if you can't have that, than maybe you should look for another career.

In the early days, it was a different structure. The game's the same. The suits just change. Today it's all just modernized. The youth have their own ideas on religion, politics

It's someone who goes to work, and let me tell you, they aren't as liberal. They're the old Democratic. They are still having a hard time accepting same-sex marriage, abortion, health care reform because they don't understand it, a hard time with the way legislatures work. They want a person who actually goes to Washington and works for them, their way. They are very hard workers, will do anything you want, then go grab a beer, and pray their kids have more than they do. But their acceptance of alternative lifestyles, they don't get. It's because we have not properly educated them.

If you were coming to me and said I need something, and I don't know you but someone brought you to me. They come to me because they want to start a business. So we sit down and have lunch, and if it sounds like it makes sense, I'm going to help and I'm going to bring you to the people in government that can make it happen. And that's how it's always been. There was an open line. And people cry "oh, it's illegal." What the hell is the difference? If he's my friend and he thinks you have a lucrative idea and he gave me a political contribution, why shouldn't I listen? That's not anything new. Who should I listen to? Some guy off the street, or someone you know is reputable?

It looks like favoritism. But I would answer someone's call from off the street too. Is that how it used to be ten, twenty years ago? No. But we're moving forward now. We're leaving the economic slump.

Political leaders have a vision now, but the blue-collar workers are stuck in their old ways. They're not a lot of jobs here, and young people with skills are bailing out. There's nothing here for them now. The blue-collar folks are all that's left.

Politics is so male-dominated here. And they have maintained stagnant government, believing in the old tradition of bullying everybody. Bad-mouthing.

They're playing that race card constantly, and I don't know how we break through that. I got in her face and said, you bring those people to me. Where you wanna go? They're

trying to scare me. I don't get scared. I say, I don't get intimidated. When you say what you feel and are loyal, why should you be scared? I've got integrity. I'm not gonna go bullying, but I'm direct.

I'm a strict Democrat that way. I don't believe in that bullshit. If you want to run for political office, you go to the Democratic Party and ask for their support. I worked those committeemen. They should too. I told the chairman, I'm not just gonna beat my opponent, I'm gonna murder him. You do whatever it takes to bring the Party people to you. The new people trying to go around the party are missing the boat. They feel like they're independent Democrats. Well you can't be an independent away from the Party. You gotta do it from inside. Strength is structured by an environment where people believe the same thing. That's the loyalty. That's your people. And you're not going to win another office if you turn your back on those people. I will help my committeemen until the day I die. [redacted] X backed me in my run, I know his family, I knew him when he was in school. His family can eat at my table any day. He was loyal to me. I says to him, whatever you intend to do, I will help you. I wouldn't do anything that would impair my integrity. But there are factions.

Back then, handshakes were leases. Everybody trusted everybody. Now we have to have contracts with all the bells and whistles.

Look, I wasn't there, but do those things happen. Probably. I've never accepted a kickback. [redacted] I always wondered why there were always at concerts I went to at the Covelli Center. Gillam's husband has a minority contract, and so they ensure that any development hires minorities. It happens. I can't say it doesn't happen. But less today. Genuinely.

[redacted]

They're putting all their eggs into fracking. The public need to understand drilling, and as much as they think they do, they don't. But I don't think this is the same kind of industry as steel. But we need a plan for after they're done. That's not going to happen here. We have other options. Our unions are training our workers to do those jobs. We've got technical things at the business incubator, the arts, higher education at YSU, little family owned businesses, retirement.

Why are we a top retirement destination? Why? Because the cost of living is very reasonable. Mahoning County doesn't have a five-year plan. It doesn't even have a one-year plan. None of our departments know where we're going to be. We're shooting off the seat of our pants. I knew the 2010 Plan would never work, but it gave the area a vision, the hope that we can go somewhere. All it was was a plan. No plan in this country works. People say it was a waste of money and it didn't do crap. Yeah, but are you thinking about it? Are we talking about it? It's like the Bible for a Catholic. Is it all correct or is it God's plan, a set of guidelines for life? It's just a plan. We don't have to follow it to its full extent. Is everything in there real? I don't know. I wasn't there.

That's what this valley is about, mom and pop businesses.

[If you were a business, would you want to work with public officials here—your colleagues?] Yes, because I would be on the other side of the table. If this were 20 years ago, I would say, bring a bag [of money] with you.” Today, that doesn't happen, except for maybe one of them.

Joe Hinski, 50, city official

This was a town controlled by the blue blood faction, families that started here and came in the 1800s and hit big money in the steel business. The Wicks, the Tods, the Stambaughs, those were old families that controlled the wealth. But then they needed a lot more labor to run the mills and let ethnics in from all over the world. We went from a population of 25,000 people to 180,000 people in 25 years. And we had a political battle between the people running the business and the people working the mills in town. It was a situation here up until the 1950s that the blue bloods lost out to the mob and unions. It was a town that was run by organized crime up until the 1970s. In order for these guys to be elected mayor, these guys had to play ball with the unions and the mob. But all that has changed over the last 30 years. And I don't know if that was a matter of less resources, new ways to prosecute organized crime, and the highest unemployment in the country. And although the area did well, it probably could have been better because it's always been pay-to-play. So we had several mayors focusing on cleaning up the town. The only way you rebuild is by differentiating yourself from other cities. We redid four business parks in excess of about a thousand acres. Nobody came to Youngstown because they like Youngstown, but because we offered packages: free land, \$2 cash per square foot build upon, all utilities brought to the site, tax abatement, 0% float money [loan] for 18 months. And we proceeded to fill 4 business parks because no one was willing to do those deals. 60% of our projects today come from those seeds planted between 1985 and 1995.

Most of the development that's taking place is a function of the oil and gas business. Up to 70% of the deals [redacted] are due to the oil and gas business. We try to capture diversification where we can, but oil and gas has the margins to pay for what they want. I've already witnessed three or four deals where buildings were for sale and oil and gas paid above the asking price, \$100,000 more. So we just let the free market roll. You can't pick what's going to be hot in the future. So we allow a shotgun approach to take place. We try to keep [companies and investors] out of the newspaper, because companies don't like that. They just want to do their job and make money.

[redacted] Guys [the companies] just want to know yes or no. [redacted] So we can get development done in a more seamless matter than most communities.

An environmental barrier between a project and a community, truck traffic limitations, hours restrictions. Sometimes there are special interests to the communities, but never anything to the particular. We've got a school system graduating 50% of its kids, and

we've got guys wanting to hire computer programmers. These guys are just not passing the tests. We want diversification to take place, but at the same time, how do you get these guys into the system?

If you have to pay someone off to get something done in the city, it gets around and nobody wants to work with you. We had two cases where a guy walked out of a meeting 15 years ago.

There's a councilwoman in the first ward who wants to get her husband hired on projects, and she's said some ignorant things. It's not at the point where I need to turn it over to the feds, but it's somewhat disturbing.

The mayor's an old school political guy. He wants to support people who support him politically. I assume that means campaign contribution. I'm just trying to caretake this, until we get a new mayor in. I don't know that this guy knows how to do projects, and yet he wants to be in control.

We're just playing four corners, like in basketball when you slow down the game waiting for him to get out of here. We run marathons here. Not too many sprints.

We just go to four corners with any project that you think she'll be involved in. In most cases—90%—she doesn't have the power to hold up a project. On the others, yeah, we have to put some relative on the payroll, hire the husband's company, or whatever.

It's in bizarro land.

The driver is the right labor force, the right environment, the site that's developed and the logistics.

The oil patch pickle formation is big enough that we need to compete.

From a personal view, in that class of people, America almost wants people to vote by relocating. They go where the work is available, just like when immigrants arrive. Government needs to intervene in a whole bunch of place. But for government, we would be walking around with loincloths on. We need to create the new investment to create the trickle down. Somebody needs to make money in order to hire for jobs.

It's all personal relationships, when it comes down to it. It's the deals I don't see that I worry about.

It's just a matter of ins and out. It is counterproductive in the long run. But if you're using it in the right way, everyone goes along with things and you have the ability to get stuff done. Concentration of power is good if it's being done for good. It's only bad when it's done for bad. Ideology is great if you can afford it. People want the trash picked up, the fireman there in time, and the wastewater purified. The government doesn't need itself

involved in theoretical debates better placed in the Supreme Court. Wherever I can be a dictator, I try to be benevolent.

Max Greenfield, 60, party official

They are typically very conservative. Five years ago, one study showed that the Mahoning Valley was one of the most conservative Democratic regions in the state of Ohio. High numbers opposed to abortion, for gun rights, very Eastern European and Irish Catholics. And really until the Obama era, we could predict what the family thought. They are very hard working, you're gonna meet a lot of folks who tell you how it is. There's a lot of anger in the area, stemming from the late 70s and the closing of the steel mills. I created a sign, 'Where were you when the Lykes went out?' about the company who bought out and drained YS&T. They just don't believe in promises, in the future of the community, leaders, they're very skeptical about everything. We do focus groups with White working class families and they're highly antagonistic and have almost a fervor to get into an argument. They have a feeling that they've been battered. There have been so many promises made since the fall of the steel mills, that's the root of it. This was once a wealthy community, and it ain't so wealthy anymore. People know it, and there's a tremendous amount of resentment between the haves and the have-nots. A good deal of people hate the rich and successful. There's always jealousy, but here it's more intense. And it's not on the surface. You hear it only after spending a half hour or 45 minutes with them, and I understand it. And they're upset that there just aren't any opportunities left. I have four kids and they're each over 8 hours away.

Here you don't just marry the girl; you marry the family. People are spread, and there's a vacuum. That's why there's so much hope for the energy issue here.

We've polled Mahoning and Trumbull County regarding natural gas exploration and gambling. 80% of the families in Trumbull County are for the exploration of natural gas done in a responsible manner. It's also heavily favored in Columbiana County. Less so in Mahoning County and even less so in Youngstown, but it's all over 50%.

They are salt of the earth people who have been wounded. You find a lot of convicted Christians, who, anywhere else, would be Republicans but are Democrats here.

Jim Graham, President of the UAW: GM was about to close Lordstown, and Graham went to GM and said what do I have to do to keep this shop open. They said you have to become the most efficient and productive plant in America. We don't want any heartache from your corps. He made that his mission. He worked with his leadership and came pretty close to being that plant. In the effort to save it, everybody had to come together to make the deal work. When he retired, he ran for Mayor of Warren and was not endorsed by the unions. So I asked them why wouldn't you endorse him, and they said 'he's a company man. If had been me, I would have closed it and let them go to Hell.' He lost that election, and it was because the unions worked tirelessly against him.

Before Obama, there was a resentment of Republicans by White working class people. It has now turned into a hatred of Republicans and conservatives. His campaign against Romney was so built toward absolute hatred, and it was incredibly effective. The impact here has been unbelievable.

Until then, Democrats did not talk about pro-gay or pro-choice or anti-gun perspectives, or they espoused the conservative view on every social issue known to man.

[What is the most powerful sentiment to cater or stimulate?]

Family values. They want someone tough on criminals, jobs, jobs, jobs, and leadership is not following through.

The organized crime made gambling, prostitution, drugs not only acceptable, but exciting and part of the social fabric here. Corruption is just part of the fabric, and there is a feeling that it's just right! That we were better off when organized crime was in control. People were being blown up right and left, and you become immune to it. There are hundreds of stories of people taking money under the table, and it disillusioned an entire generation.

**Steven Dettelbach, 43, US Attorney, Northern Ohio
(accompanied by Public Affairs Secretary, Mike Tobin)**

In law enforcement, we try to respond aggressively to the things that are brought to us. We have a significant history of pursuing corruption cases. We may be the only office that has pursued such cases over long periods of time.

That doesn't mean that there is no corruption in Youngstown, They had a lengthy history of corrupt activities, but it's not that easy to say that it's any worse than Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, etc.

If you talk to elites in Youngstown, particularly at the Vindicator, whistleblowing is not the same as evidence. And I have found some of the things written to be irresponsible. The big motherlode case was not there.

It's a city that has fallen on hard times, and right now, I would prioritize a crushing violent crime problem. The first Youngstown case I ever had was a simple gun case, but it spoke volumes about the nature of the city. He's out in Federal Street. His car is in the center lane, sitting there idling in park, and he is passed out at the wheel with a Glock [gun] in his hand sitting on the dashboard. That is endemic of a pretty fundamental law and order problem.

[Are you looking forward to working with John McNally?]
Who's that? ...I don't think I know him.

[He won the mayoral primary and is likely to be the next mayor of Youngstown. He is also subject to an indictment by the county for corruption charges.]
If there is a pending case, I personally don't want to comment on it.

[Are you not familiar with the Oakhill case?]
Hmm...no.

[Public affairs secretary, you really haven't heard of the Oakhill case in Youngstown? It's just been in headlines for awhile.]
I'm the one being interviewed here, Justin. You can direct the questions to me.

[Well I'm just surprised the US Attorney overseeing a region consumed by corruption cases doesn't know about this.]
Oh that's the one that might have involved the Cafaro family.

[Yes, Cafaro is one of the defendants.]
So I've been recused from any involvement in any cases dealing with the Cafaros. My law firm represented a member of the Cafaro family, so the Deputy Attorney General recused me.

The traditional *la cosa nostra* organized crime threat has been minimalized over the last ten years.

This community has been taken over by a violent crime problem. You'll see a really nice small house, where the people kept it up with paint and a porch. And it is surrounded by an endemic problem. And the people who own this house can't get out.

If people lose faith in their government, as a general matter, that affects our ability to engage in crime prevention. But the basic economic forces are the huge weight on the scale.

Bob Campanella, 52, Builder

The thing I like about Trump is that both sides hate him.

I guess I just want things back to the way they were, and in his odd, crude way, he makes sense. I know he's not a women hater and he's not going to reverse what liberalism has done for us the last 40 years. He just wants to get our country stabilized and back on track.

Bernie Sander IS part of the establishment.

I think them at you need to gltake certain steps. We can't just have open borders. People can just walk across with a nuke is their suitcase.

I know that it's never gonna be like the way it was. But we need to concentrate on this country. We don't need to be scattered on bases all over the world. We can take care of conflicts from a war ship docked here. We can be self dependent on natural resources.

We need to concentrate on business. And the laws have to focus on making businesses want to be back in this country. We're lowering our standards more than we're raising standards in third world countries. We don't have to be isolationist, but we need to concentrate on our country. We can't worry about other people's problems. I read a lot and listen to both sides of the debate.