

DES MOINES DEFENDER

Community Zine



AN ODE TO EDNA GRIFFIN

BY MATÈ MUHAMMAD

Freedom fighting mutates the soul. I mean really, to struggle for that most basic principle of the human condition - freedom - really does something quite remarkable, quite demented yet altogether sacred to the soul.

First the spirit fills with rage. This is the primordial battle. The process of rage is the journey we take as we commit ourselves to the fight and figure out exactly how we are going to struggle.

Then the spirit cools. After it has burned out it can begin to collapse under its own weight. Our spirits become depressed, isolated and lonely: these are spiritual realities that every self-proclaimed Black activist and organizer has become intimately acquainted with.

And yet we fight on to find more passion and more love because the love is endless. That love is contorted back into rage inevitably again by a system which has been doomed to injustice: and so the cycle repeats.

The souls of most folk cannot bear the constant nature of this vicious dialectic and therefore experience it only when they are absolutely forced to by the parameters of their existence. When circumstance forces them to look inward and fight back. There are others though who seek out this cycle. Whose souls are made of iron. Forged against the anvil of poverty and the hammer of death. Weathered by the intense heat of persecution, the soul of the survivor of this cycle becomes a weapon. The wielder of that soul becomes a Warrior. A guardian. A hero. An inspiration and guide for generations to come.

All these titles and more are held to this day by the legacy of Edna Griffin. We must begin to grapple with the magnitude of

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PRINCESS AT YOUNG WIVES' RALLY



Katz Drug Store Lifts Bars At Luncheonette; 8 Civil Rights Cases Dismissed

Jim Crow at eating places in Des Moines suffered another fatal stroke on December 3 when Negro patrons began receiving courteous service at the Katz Drug Store luncheonette.

Negro and white members of a recently formed "Committee-to-End Jim Crow at Katz" store, which is one of a chain of drug stores with headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., visited the Katz luncheonette, where Sixteenth street, who filed two damage suits; Arthur Bryant, 945 Twenty-third street; Mrs. Barbara Williams, 849 Sixteenth street; Gordon W. Jasper, and Leonard Hudson, 77

our ancestors if we are to ever understand their power, let alone realize our own.

Edna Griffin's humanity cannot really be measured by words. Her humanity is the fear she struck into the heart of this power system, for example, when she organized a handful of Black people in 1951 Des Moines, with the support of both the Communist and Progressive Parties, to take down Jim Crow in IA by targeting Katz drug store.

Edna was a dynamic activist who was prolific at catalyzing passion and movement. She didn't just believe in freedom; she had found freedom within herself. She found a place where she could find joy in the struggle, happiness through the pain. She wished freedom and love in others at the end of her handwritten letters. She gate kept loyalties. She taught Black people and ALL people how to fight for themselves. She refused to be just a quiet housewife (although she took advantage of its disguise) and helped Des Moines realize that strong communities find their full potential when they fight back against their problems. This is exactly the type of Warrior spirit that had the FBI keeping close tabs on Mrs. Edna Griffin.

White supremacy thrives on dousing the urge inside the human being which pushes them to fight. In fact, colonization only begins to operate when the subjects themselves have accepted the fate they've been assigned. But what happens when the burning desire to fight cannot be put out, even if in just one of the subjects? That desire spreads, like wildfire.

It begins to burn on in others as they too become conscious of their condition. The fire builds into a rage until rage explodes from the collective hearts and minds and escapes the body of the colonized before it proceeds to destroy the colony itself.

There is another way to refer to this destructive process by which freedom is created: Love.

Love is necessary to fight with the ferocity of such a Warrior as Edna Griffin. In fact, it is essential. After all it is our interpersonal relationships which have the most to gain from freedom.

It is our relationships, with each other and ourselves, which stand to lose the most under the regimes of whiteness, capitalism and patriarchy.

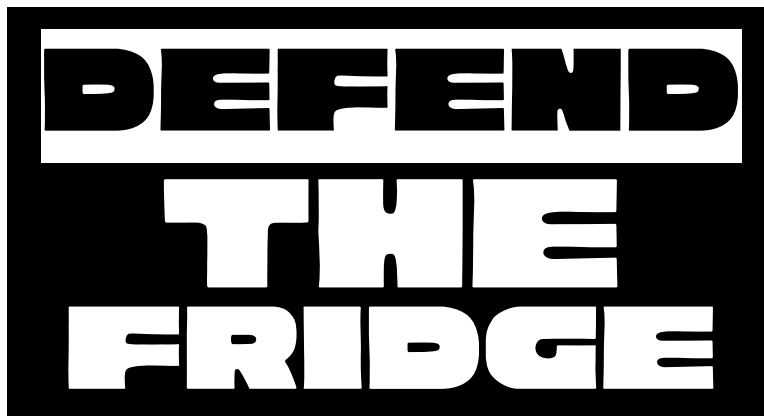
Edna Griffin fought so that we could be together, heal together, fly together and love each one another. Indeed, no other fight could ever yield such a beautiful warrior, activist, mother and woman.

**DEFEND THE
FRIDGE!**

**SUPPORT THE
NORTH DES MOINES
COMMUNITY FRIDGE
& SHOW THE CITY
WE WILL NOT BE
INTIMIDATED BY
THEIR VIOLENT
LAWS & POLICIES**



FREE GROCERIES AVAILABLE TO ALL



**FULL STATEMENT FROM NDM
COMMUNITY FRIDGE:**

We regard today's threat against our community fridge as an act of violence by the City of Des Moines. Threatening to dismantle a food pantry during a global pandemic with record unemployment and food insecurity is a crime against humanity. North Des Moines Mutual Aid calls on the United Nations to investigate and denounce this act of genocide as a human rights violation.

This heinous act of violence impacts the most desperate victims of capitalism in the Merle Hay neighborhood. We have proven that food does not need to be commoditized on a local scale through our fridge and free breakfast program. There is plenty for everyone and that bothers the city because it calls into question the legitimacy of the entire system.

Any law claiming it is illegal to give away food is illegitimate. We demand the City of Des Moines change the policy and make the community fridge acceptable under code. They are familiar with these exceptions. It's the same thing they do for their landlord friends every month!

Otherwise, we will not appeal for compassion from the same institution enforcing this violence against the most vulnerable members of our community. We will chain our bodies to that resource before it moves an inch.

The fridge stays. We will defend it.

Des Moines Mayor Cownie pursuing smear campaign



Mayor Frank Cownie is attempting to smear Des Moines residents who participate at council meetings as violent, gun toting lunatics in a misinformation campaign launched right here by the Axios newsletter.

- The propaganda push comes in response to increased participation at council meetings by the general public.
- Cownie may also ask the council to ban public input altogether. If so, Jason Clayworth will be there to justify it.

Why it matters: The city wants to silence mild criticism from left wing activists and return to the easy days of 2019 where they spent time freely distributing favorable real estate deals to their landlord friends.

- Between the lines:** Cownie's move will allow an armed white supremacist gang to threaten members of the public who say very mean things during council meetings.

Flashback: DSM city council has spent the last 10 months re-writing their rules in order to silence negative feedback from the community and frequently resorted to dogwhistling as they became frustrated by political plurality.

- One council meeting lasted [14 hours](#) before the city attorney OK'd a last minute rule change aimed at residents that speak negatively about the DMPD.
- Suppression rules were adopted in August, limiting public speakers to a set time limit, dependent upon how white their name sounded.
- Overt racists were invited to speak openly during the public comment section of meetings without interruption.

Negative comments regarding DMPD and other members of the council were cut off mid-sentence, driving home the reality that the city council does not represent the working people of Des Moines and exists to serve the needs of real estate speculators.

- A sign of contention:** Axios writer Jason Clayworth spoke on record with a frequent participant at city council meetings, but instead chose to quote someone who declined to be interviewed for this story. The quote "Fuck you, Frank" was used in order to establish the preconceived narrative Mr. Clayworth had when pursuing this scoop.

Of note: Mr. Clayworth and Axios demonstrate highly questionable ethics in publishing this story without offering a secondary source or contradictory voice to counter the speculative nature of this piece, despite having interviewed sources.

What's next: Cownie is consulting with the city's legal team on the possibility of inviting "council approved" members of the community to speak in place of the people holding them accountable.

This story first appeared in the [Axios Des Moines](#) newsletter, designed in a shitty, unreadable format, only long enough to regurgitate the state's narrative..

THE PEOPLE'S CHURCH

CHARITY

MUTUAL AID

MEMBERS ARE DONORS

MEMBERS ARE DECISION
MAKERS

DAY TO DAY WORK DONE
BY PROFESSIONALS

DAY TO DAY WORK DONE
BY VOLUNTEERS

FUNDED BY CHARITABLE
DONATIONS & GRANTS

MEMBERS POOL THEIR
RESOURCES

CONDITIONS FOR
RECEIVING AID

GIVES AID WITHOUT
EXPECTATIONS

PRESUMES TO KNOW
WHAT PEOPLE NEED

ASKS WHAT PEOPLE NEED

SAVING THOSE IN NEED

SAVING OURSELVES

ACCOUNTABILITY TO
RICH PEOPLE

ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE
COMMUNITY

PUTS A BANDAID ON AN
UNJUST SOCIETY

TRANSFORMS SOCIETY



THE GOVERNMENT



DOES NOT CARE

**WE THE PEOPLE
MUST HELP
EACH OTHER!**



SETH

QUIT YOUR JOB!



ATTENTION DMPD!



UNEMPLOYMENT
RESOURCES



866-239-0843

www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov

Email: uiclaimshelp@iwd.iowa.gov

STOP SUPPORTING MURDERERS

STAND DOWN!

You are operating in
direct violation of your
constitutional oath
every time you turn
weapons against
civilians practicing first
amendment protected
activity.

History will remember
you.

END THIS WAR

DO NOT FIGHT THE
PEOPLE OF DES
MOINES WHO ARE
STRUGGLING FOR
INDEPENDENCE
AND FREEDOM

SAY THEIR NAMES

DAUNTE WRIGHT

ADAM TOLEDO

ANTHONY THOMPSON JR

