

I'm Aaron Foley, Chief Storyteller at the City of Detroit, and I'm an author and writer. When I think about my family's path, they're all from the South. You know, they were part of the Great Migration... so that's sort of centers my story in Detroit, because I always look back to what my family has done here, what they've accomplished here. And we've lived the Black Detroit story. We think of The American Dream as being something very White and middle class and picket fence. Millions of Black people had the middle class dream here, but we don't always picture that as being the American Dream and the fact that I'm sort of a product of that, makes me feel like I'm a part of the American story. Definitely an African American story too. I mean, don't get me wrong, but I don't think Detroit gets enough credit as being a picture or a model of what we consider to be The American Dream.

I wrote my first 'story', when I was seven. I wrote this little fictional thing about me and my classmates and some of my friends around the neighborhood and at some point, you get to be an adult and you realize you have adult responsibilities. I wrote about Detroit culture... I wrote about the things I saw growing up. I wrote about the restaurants I used to go to that weren't getting any attention. I wrote about like people in Detroit that would never make it to the headlines of anywhere. Because I'm just like, these are the people I see every day. I was just always looking for ways to tell the Detroit story... and then here comes the mayor and he says, we like what you're doing... want to come work with us? And that's how I'm here.

Being able to tell Detroit's story... for one, it's an honor, right? We are a very sensitive city sometimes. Detroit is one of the biggest small towns... we're a little bit tribal. We're very protective of ourselves because this is one of the few places in America where you can walk anywhere and you see everybody is just like you. You feel like everyone's family.