

BYSTANDERS WHO LOOKED AWAY ARE NOT INNOCENT

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Twenty-one.

That's how many vicious blows Leonard Sims endured on May 4 from an idiot trying to take his car.

A heap at a bus stop.

That's what **Andrew Anthos** became last February when he was felled by what many believed to be a homophobic attack, but the coroner eventually said was a vicious form of arthritis that attacked his spine and caused him to fall and hit his head.

The two Detroit cases are linked by a common thread, a nagging fact, something more than the national attention each received.

In both cases, someone else was there, at the scene, near the victim. And in both cases, they did nothing.

In **Anthos'** case, a friend riding the bus with him said he heard a thump and turned back to see a man standing over his friend's body on the sidewalk. The friend watched that man turn and silently walk away.

In Sims' case, five people milled around the back of a car parked next to the one where Sims was trapped while a monster hit him 21 times. Even as Sims lay on the ground after the attack, the onlookers continued to look on.

Why didn't they intervene?

Police closed **Anthos'** case. They don't investigate accidental falls.

Police arrested Deonte Edward Bradley and charged him with carjacking Sims' car. That could net him life in prison. They also charged him with intent to do great bodily harm. That could get him up to 10 additional years after he's dead.

In both cases, justice still appears elusive. Something is missing. Or, more accurately, someone.

Police have not found the man who stood over **Andrew Anthos** that day. They also have not found all five people who stood watched a coward nearly beat an elderly man to death.

They should try harder.

In the **Anthos** case, only two people know what really happened: A stranger who disappeared and a friend who isn't talking.

In the Sims case, we all know what happened, but only five people can say why they didn't intervene.

The consequences of looking away

It's easy for us to question them. But think about it: What do you do when you see someone brutally attacking a helpless person steps away?

Do you run over and risk injury yourself? I mean, the guy apparently is either a lunatic or a mad dog. Do you climb into your car and ram Mr. Sims' car to stop the beating, risking the lunatic having a gun and shooting you through the glass? Do you find the nearest gun and shoot the assailant, something thousands of people wanted to do after seeing the video? Or do you wait until it's over because it's not the first or last time it will happen.

It is impossible to judge the people who stood and watched. Newspapers are full of dead Samaritans.

But the world also is filled with people who would not just stand by.

What is the penalty for fear?

It may be a lifetime of people questioning your judgment and your humanity, a lifetime of nightmares about what you saw.

Onlookers aren't always aiders and abettors. But in the case of Leonard Sims, they may as well have been.

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ILLUSTRATION: Photo

CAPTION: Leonard Sims, 91, and his 83-year-old wife, Nora Sims, in their Detroit home where Sims was recovering from a beating he suffered May 4 at a Detroit convenience store.

CAPTIONWRITER: BEN SCHMITT / Detroit Free Press

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