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### Vigilant citizenship

*Legal imaginaries and political subjectivity in Miami*

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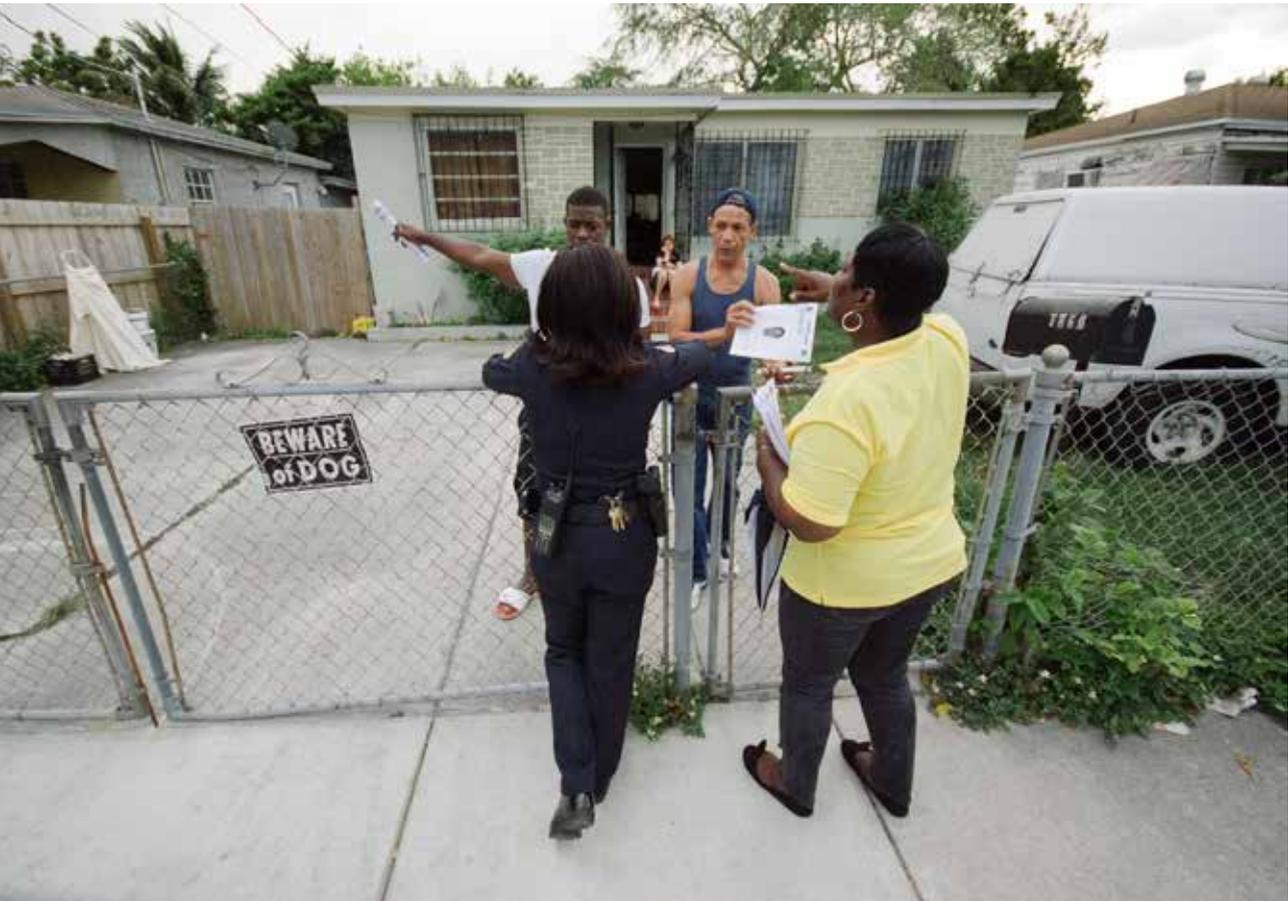
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Chapter 5  
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SECRETS

*Figure 5.1. MPD police officers look for information after the murder of Marlon Eason in Over-town, March 2015.*

## A SLICE OF CITIZENSHIP

In a cold conference room at the MPD, children and their families gathered with numerous police officers for the Do The Right Thing (DTRT) award ceremony. During this monthly ceremony, the MPD issued awards to children for their good citizenship and to police officers for extraordinary deeds in the line of work. Once everyone in the audience was inside, the ceremony began with a pledge of allegiance to the US flag on display on the podium at the front. A commanding officer introduced the different cases and presented the individuals who had been nominated, including a police officer who while responding to a different situation had gone beyond the call of duty to save a man who was choking, and a young girl who had proactively assisted a police officer when her friend ran away from home. Campaign leaders nominated and awarded children and officers whose behavior they considered to be exemplary for their peers. In many cases, the nominees had shared secret information with local authorities without the consent of other residents. That month's award winner was a young girl who had contacted the MPD after her friend had run away from home. Although her friend had explicitly said that it was a secret, and that she should not tell anybody, the girl had ignored her request and notified her friend's parents and police officers anyway. The involved police officers explained that they had been able to respond promptly, and had brought the runaway girl home before anything could happen to her. The audience applauded as family and friends took pictures of the girl with the involved police officers at her side, and the US flag in the background.

The DTRT campaign was a part of the activities of Miami's police departments and was financed through confiscated drug money. It usually received around US\$1 million per year and was specifically set up to involve children in primary and secondary schools. According to the founder, its aim was to improve "relationships between the youth and the officers" in the city. During the summer, when campaign leaders believed it was especially important to keep children from hanging around and thus getting into trouble, police officers handed out coupons entitling the recipients to free pizza. These coupons were handed out whenever an officer felt that someone had displayed behavior that was reflective of good citizenship. MPD police officers explained to me that this evidence of being a good citizen generally involved an active collaboration with law enforcement officers. The coupon, as shown in Figure 5.2, was jokingly called a "citation", but instead of having to pay a fine, the holder could order a small pizza from Papa John's Pizza company.

The DTRT campaign illustrates how the relationship between police



Figure 5.2. A "ticket citation" from the MPD providing free pizza, August 2015.

officers and local residents is framed in terms of "good citizenship". It suggests that the duties of the ideal type of citizen include informing and collaborating with the authorities. MPD police officers and DTRT campaign leaders suggest that such actions should be rewarded. Likewise, many programs in Miami that promote the involvement of residents in security-related matters also commend and reward those who provide essential information.

Campaigns such as the DTRT are a form of "civilian mobilization": they use and rely on civilians to collaborate with police officers in dealing with a range of security concerns, both domestic and international. Joshua Reeves (2017) conceptualizes this as "lateral surveillance", a form of surveillance in which civilians watch and report on each other to authorities. The concept of lateral surveillance is useful for unpacking how citizens have been enrolled in a larger project of security, and for understanding the concomitant shift in responsibility for security and how this is framed in terms of political belonging to the nation-state. Reeves provides an extensive historical overview of the numerous ways in which civilians have been mobilized for surveillance purposes throughout the US. Indeed, academic literature has long recorded such forms of lateral surveillance, focusing on the performance of surveillance in the case of neighborhood watch groups, for example. Much of such work aims to understand the power dynamics inherent to such programs in the US and beyond. My

interest, however, is to address how people experience and articulate these forms of lateral surveillance in terms of rights, responsibilities, and political subjectivity. Where Reeves' and related work establishes a relationship between security provision and top-down citizenship agendas, my focus is on how security-related secrets in particular shape acts and experiences of citizenship.

This chapter, then, seeks to enable a better understanding of the everyday realities of lateral surveillance. Since secrets are central to practices of lateral surveillance and security more broadly, my analysis is concerned with how state agencies politicize security-related secrets, but I focus on the everyday experience of having or action on security-related secrets. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with somebody calling the police in order to deal with individuals or groups who jeopardize public and private safety. However, the solidarity rooted in actions of lateral surveillance speaks primarily to an idealized political community. These assumptions shape how Miamians experience political subjectivity, as overlapping and conflicting allegiances to the nation-state and to more local communities.

I suggest that Miamians interpret and navigate security-related secrets through legal imaginaries, which make secrets meaningful in everyday life as they shape acts and experiences of citizenship. First, a specific legal imaginary informs how Miamians experience political subjectivity, as a form of belonging to a political community of vigilant citizens. As I explained in earlier chapters, vigilant citizens are watchful and expected to report anything that has a whiff of illegality, including other people's security-related secrets. Revealing such secrets is a way to enact good citizenship. Second, my analysis of secrets shows a more complex interpretation and articulation of vigilant citizenship, focusing on everyday realities in which, for various reasons, Miamians do not want to, or cannot, reveal their own or others' secrets. Yet how Miamians understand and act on secrets remains informed by notions of legality and legitimacy. A concealed weapon for example, legal or not, illustrates how Miamians use secrets to "do the right thing", as they seek to contribute to public and personal safety while faced with conflicting laws and non-legal norms.

In exploring these acts and experiences, I draw on Taussig's (1999) examination of "the public secret", which involves knowing what not to know, and what is embedded in the sociopolitical right to discuss it. The notion of public secrets therefore "provides a set of culturally familiar, and convincing, tropes to help people navigate the ordered disorder of their lives" (Penglase, 2009: 59). Secrets are often important for individual

protection, and sometimes it is better not to share information with others, let alone police officers. Beyond looking at the power dynamics inherent to lateral surveillance (who watches whom), I am also interested in the everyday realities of living with various types of security-related secrets. By including a discussion of how Miamians experience and employ such secrets, this chapter provides an additional way of understanding of the articulation of citizenship through everyday security provision.

The three cases I discuss in this chapter illustrate how Miamians navigate security-related secrets in everyday life, as government agencies aim to convince them that their involvement is essential for efficient law enforcement and security provision. This involves attempts by police officers and security agencies to convince residents, especially those living in low-income neighborhoods, that sharing secrets is an act of good citizenship. These residents, however, might distrust local police departments, consider them to be incapable of providing security, or even experience their involvement as the actual source of their insecurity. In addition, secrets are also a necessary and fundamental part of everyday life (Birchall, 2016). How do residents, private security guards, and police officers use secrets and how do they believe that this helps them? And how do relationships between state agencies, local communities, and individuals shift when gathering and disseminating knowledge about your neighbors become framed as an essential citizen duty?

Proponents of lateral surveillance suggest that the authorities, given the opportunity to investigate, will make assessments of guilt and innocence in a legal and just fashion. Given the racialization of police reactions, as the previous chapters have also shown, I suggest that lateral surveillance programs are as likely to cultivate distrust, fear, and alienation. State agencies articulate citizenship agendas that emphasize the contributions of a community of vigilant citizens to public safety, a community whose members ideally investigate and reveal each other's secrets or suspicious behavior to local police officers. This results in tensions in contexts where such ideals are contested and residents shift and connect with multiple political communities across different scales. I also explore secrets outside the context of lateral surveillance. Focusing on private lives and experiences, I show how state agencies can expand the notion of what constitutes security-related secrets, blurring the boundaries between secrecy, often considered a threat to public safety, and privacy, a civil right.

The following section sets out the socio-legal approach to security-related secrets that frames this chapter theoretically. Next, I analyze three cases involving Sarah, Lux, and Darius, all of whom have secrets of

their own, and navigate the use of these secrets in their interactions with neighbors, police officers, customers, and colleagues. Sarah and her dog lived in an apartment next to a man who appeared to be involved in local drug trafficking. She found it particularly complicated to interact with him because of her involvement in local politics and her relationships with police officers and city officials as an activist. Sarah's story illustrates the tensions of living in a neighborhood where state agencies urge residents to "break the silence" and disclose criminal activities to the police. Second, the case of MPD police officer Lux suggests how easily secrets can become a security concern whenever authorities understand them as such. It shows how private matters can be identified as a threat to public safety, and how the balance between the right to privacy and the responsibility to reveal secrets shifts as a result. Finally, as a private security guard at a South Beach bar, Darius saw his secret, an illegally concealed gun on his ankle, as an asset; he drew on a specific legal imaginary to legitimize this secret, to justify, or even legalize, his behavior as an act of good citizenship. Together, these cases suggest that when security practices increasingly emphasize the transactional dimension of secrets, and the role of the individual in such transactions, many citizens find themselves increasingly isolated, rather than sustained by their belonging to a larger political community.

### A SOCIO-LEGAL APPROACH TO SECRETS

During the First World War, public vigilance campaigns emerged in the US. State agencies created posters and distributed them amongst residents, who were instructed to watch out for and report suspicious activities (Larsen and Piché, 2009). Government agencies aimed to create a kind of resilience and a general level of preparedness among their constituents. US residents were expected, encouraged, and required to be vigilant, to develop a heightened alertness and awareness of their surroundings. As a result, people were not only monitored by public and private organizations, but also by each other. In Orwell's famous novel *1984*, the main character Winston Smith is not just afraid of Big Brother and its technologies and employees, but also of his fellow citizens, who monitor each other and report "symptoms of unorthodoxy" (Larsen and Piché, 2009: 187). According to Larsen and Piché (2009), Big Brother's gaze is actually a diffuse one, in which fear and suspicion reinforce the authoritarian status quo. In light of recent perceived terrorist threats, discussions of such "citizen mobilization" only have become more common.

As noted above, the mobilization of local residents for the purpose of surveillance has been described as lateral surveillance. Reeves (2017)

discusses the cultivation of such forms of surveillance by exploring the genealogies of neighborhood watch groups and the histories of citizen surveillance programs throughout the US. He argues that the practices of vigilance, suspicion, and snooping have become rooted in US society and culture. As a nation state, the US has a long history of mobilizing its citizens against a diversity of perceived enemies, both domestic and international. According to Reeves, lateral surveillance has often resulted in expressions of fear and mutual suspicion, and sometimes lethal violence. He discusses the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2012 to illustrate his concerns with the underlying premises of lateral surveillance. According to him, people like George Zimmerman, the man who fatally shot Martin, feel that it is their civic duty to scour their surroundings and respond whenever they identify something or someone as suspicious. Zimmerman's actions could therefore be understood as an act of citizenship. This duty of vigilance that has been cultivated by various public and private organizations, which attempt to mobilize residents against various domestic and international threats. As Reeves argues, the impulse of citizens to police each other is more "socially destructive than the merely symptomatic threats of crime, petty immorality, and terrorism" (2017: 180).

Recent analyses of surveillance have shifted to focus on digital technologies, which surpass the human capacity of people in both speed and scope. However, while such technologies – like the video camera – might dominate the security landscape, a purely technological view of surveillance limits the possibilities of understanding it in terms of citizenship and of formulating political critique. Accordingly, Reeves advocates for a focus on people as agents of surveillance and on their communication. This helps to explain why lateral surveillance programs are becoming increasingly popular: people are able to uncover and interpret intelligence in ways that most common (digital) surveillance technologies cannot, which is why citizens are mobilized to complement them. In other words, government agencies are convinced that citizens are good at finding out each other's secrets and reporting them to authorities.

In Miami, I observed how residents were notified of their responsibility to reveal secrets in various ways, especially through the news media. Local 10 news, a popular broadcaster in the metropolitan area of Miami, had a special item called "get them off the streets". In this item, a special crime reporter informed the audience of any local residents who broke the law and were wanted by local police departments. He introduced the respective cases and urged viewers to contact authorities should they have any relevant information. I transcribed the item that was broadcast on May 28, 2015

(Local 10 News, 2015a) as follows:

From a heroin dealer to some very dangerous drivers, they are all out there and we need to 'get them off the streets' [as the large text behind the anchorman indicates]. Here's crime specialist John Turchin [camera switches to John]. Some are hardened criminals, some could still find the right path, but all of them are accused of breaking the law. So, let's help police get them off the streets. Alright, we're going to begin tonight with this guy, Kristopher Barlitt, take a good look at him, he's from Davie, he's accused of driving under the influence, but never showed up for court. Next on the list, Keith Clark, he's wanted for trying to pawn stolen property, Clark is from the North Palm Beach area, if you see him make that call. How about this guy, Roberto Guerrero, he's a Miami boy and an alleged pot dealer but he's on the run right now, let's try to find him. Our next fugitive is this guy, a babyface-looking guy that is, his name is Gordon Council, he's only 21 but wanted for Grand Theft. He was last seen in Islamorada. And you've got to help cops get this guy, Delarrian Black Senior, he's accused of a whole lot of things including dealing both heroin and opium. He needs to be locked up, folks. Another guy from the Florida Keys, Scott Purvis, he's wanted for driving under the influence as well and used to live in Tavernier. Also, and finally our last one, a woman, Laura Ann Rager. Well, cops say she's trouble folks, wanted for her third DUI and assault with a deadly weapon. It's time Rager sees the inside of a jail cell. OK, now remember now, the police need your help get them all off the streets, and here are some of the numbers to help you remember: Miami-Dade Crimestoppers, 305-471-TIPS, Broward County Crimestoppers 954-493-TIPS, and you can see all these guys again, and this woman, on local10.com. I'm crime specialist John Turchin, Local 10 News.

Like John, police officers, journalists, and local politicians considered the involvement of residents necessary in order to provide law enforcement with probable cause and legal evidence, and in so doing enabling police investigations and legal prosecution. This is not to say that police officers were completely unaware of "secret" criminal activities. It was widely known by police officers, residents, and even movie directors that drugs were dealt and used in Overtown. This common knowledge was also reflected and reproduced in popular culture, as Sonny Crockett and Ricardo Tubbs

visited the neighborhood to look for illegal drug transactions in the motion picture *Miami Vice* (Mann, 2006).

In order to pursue judicial action, however, state agencies need local residents to actively share such secrets with them. In order to encourage local residents to do so, they have attempted to influence the legal dynamics that frame such political and contested forms of knowledge. The US government has changed federal law to protect those who participate in lateral surveillance. Before such measures, whenever a person falsely accused someone of terrorism, for example, the accuser would be at risk of legal prosecution. This changed as the act of "saying something" was increasingly framed as a citizenship duty, and lateral surveillance was identified as a means to counter domestic acts of terrorism and organized crime. Especially after 2011, when the "See Something, Say Something" act was introduced and passed through the US Congress, US citizens became protected from libel action should they falsely accuse their peers (Reeves, 2017). The idea behind this shift was straightforward: the law needed to protect those who had a vigilant mindset, instead of discouraging and punishing them.

In studying secrecy, many build on Michael Taussig (1999)'s concept of the public secret, which refers to the knowledge of what not to know, and of what is embedded in the sociopolitical rights to discuss a secret. People may have knowledge of certain (illegal) practices, but this does not mean that they are allowed to express this knowledge. Taussig points out that even though people may know of corrupt or illegal practices, i.e. secrets, there may be no easy way of saying so, "especially on the ground, face-to-face" (ibid.: 6), and not being able to speak about the public secret is testimony to its power. Anthropologists using this concept have emphasized that both state agencies and criminal authorities legitimize themselves and exercise control through public secrecy (e.g., Weegels, 2018; Penglase, 2009).

Rather than analyzing public secrecy primarily as a mode of security governance, I am more interested in the everyday experience of having and acting on security-related secrets. Drawing on a socio-legal framework, I examine how secrets become meaningful in relation to notions of legality, and how Miamians experience and enact responsibility and political subjectivity through secrets. Part of this framework builds on the normative and legal framing of those who reveal secrets. In the context of security, journalists and legal professionals tend to perceive secrets as carrying a negative connotation. Secrets corrupt and lead to conspiracies, preventing a so-called healthy culture of transparency and accountability. Secrets are associated with lying, scandals, spying, and cheating. There are different ways in which individuals who reveal secrets to outsiders are framed. Some

are considered traitors, snitches or spies, while others who address serious misconduct or illegal behavior may be called whistleblowers, a category of secret-sharers that is in theory protected by law. In practice, those who reveal secrets to others face very different reactions and accusations, as the cases of Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange illustrate.

Having and sharing secrets, then, does not necessarily empower people – it can in fact be a risky endeavor. Security-related secrets have to be navigated, as the holders of such secrets may have to deal with legal liability and politically and physically threatening circumstances. At the same time, secrets are connected to privacy, which is also a legal right. Secrets make it possible to establish a boundary that separates public from private life, an understanding that builds on the work of sociologists and anthropologists who have examined how secrets influence interpersonal relationships and how they are embedded in specific cultural frameworks (e.g., Simmel, 1906; Piot, 1993; Marx and Muschert, 2009; Manderson et al., 2015). I propose a shift in focus from “secrecy” to “secrets” in order to understand how political and intimate knowledge shape lived realities and relationships in everyday security provision. The secret is the “very space of separation which keeps apart the individual from the collective, from anything to which they might belong, from any belonging whose demands might prove excessive or intrusive, and therefore from any belonging whatsoever” (Gilbert, 2007: 27).

In the next sections, I discuss the cases of Sarah, Lux and Darius, respectively. Although these three cases illustrate the differences in how Miamians can experience having security-related secrets, they also show how they enact and experience their citizenship through such secrets. My analysis shows how Darius is able to enact the responsibilities associated with vigilant citizenship through his secret, how Sarah’s secret shapes and interferes with her sense of belonging to different political communities, and how Lux’s secret has politicized her private life.

### THE SHOP NEXT DOOR

MPD police officers and state officials frequently encouraged Overtown residents to share information on criminal activities with the police. This message was communicated verbally during crime watch meetings and outreach programs in the neighborhood, during which police officers actively looked to interact with local residents to discuss security concerns. In March 2015, a ten-year-old boy was shot and killed in front of his house in Overtown, where he was playing with his basketball. Directly afterwards, MPD police chief Rodolfo Llanes released a statement condemning the



**City of Miami Police Department**  
**CRIME STOPPERS**  
**(305) 471-8477**



Flyer: 15-158  
 Issued: 3/25/15 alf  
 Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

# INFORMATION

**FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION**

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**INFORMATION**  
**\$3000 REWARD**



**MARLON EASON**  
**BM, 10 YEARS OF AGE**

The **City of Miami Police Department** is requesting information regarding the **Murder of Marlon Eason**. The incident occurred on **March 25, 2015** at **1975 NW 4<sup>th</sup> Ct (Overtown)**.

Anyone with information regarding the incident is asked to call **Crime Stoppers anonymously** at **(305) 471-TIPS (8477)** or visit the website at [crimestoppersmiami.com](http://crimestoppersmiami.com) and select “Give a Tip.” If the tip to crime stoppers leads to an arrest of the subject the tipster may be eligible for a **reward up to \$3000.00**. You can also contact the **City of Miami Police Department Homicide Unit** at **(305) 603-6350** and ask for **Det. F. Sanchez**.

This information is made available for investigative purposes only. Anyone with information on the incident is requested to contact **Crime Stoppers** at **305-471-TIPS (8477)**.

Figure 5.3. Document distributed after the murder of Marlon Eason, March 2015. Source: Miami Police Department.

murder, and expressing the difficulty he had understanding any violent act that resulted in the loss of children’s lives. In an interview with a CBS Miami reporter, Llanes explained that although he had directed police officers do to “all that is necessary to get to the bottom” of the incident, they “cannot do this alone: we need the help of the community that we have sworn to serve.” He urged viewers to contact the police with whatever information

they might have: “no matter how small you think it is, it may be a key part of our investigation” (Local 10 News, 2015b).

Over the next two days, police officers, supporting staff members, and residents walked through the streets of Overtown and the adjacent neighborhood of Allapattah. Their mission was to approach and speak to anyone they encountered. Even commanding officers visited certain apartment complexes to engage in a dialogue with local residents. Sometimes interactions were difficult, as most homes had an iron fence around the property, as a boundary between private property and public street. The officers were reluctant to venture into any front yards, trespass on private property, and to knock on doors, so they would hit the fence with their batons and raise their voices to notify anyone inside. If a resident did come out to talk (see Figure 5.1), officers would give them a document (Figure 5.3) with some details on the incident and the victim, encouraging anyone who had any information that could help the MPD find the perpetrator to call Crime Stoppers.

As the document indicates, the MPD sought to encourage anyone with information regarding the incident to call the Crime Stoppers phone number (the last four digits corresponding with the word TIPS), or to visit a website where crime could be reported anonymously. Tipsters were even eligible for a reward of up to \$3,000, should their tip lead to the arrest of the killer(s). It was common in Miami at the time of my research for police departments to hand out similar rewards to those who shared key information with them. Crime Stoppers, a national organization, is well-known in Miami, with signs throughout the city and in Overtown. While directly connected to law enforcement agencies, the organization was specifically created to encourage local residents who might be more hesitant to contact the police themselves to become involved in “crime fighting” by sharing knowledge. In order to guarantee anonymity, the organization states that they do not trace any calls and they hand out rewards in cash through a confidential tip number.

I met Sarah shortly after Marlon Eason’s murder, during the first crime watch meeting in Overtown in early 2015. She was actively involved in the neighborhood and wanted to share her concerns with the officers present that afternoon. The MPD officers explicitly stated, as they had done during similar meetings in other neighborhoods, that the involvement of residents was essential for law enforcement to be effective. Many residents seemed to agree, but others expressed their concerns regarding the MPD’s aggressive practices. Some also complained that Miami’s witness protection program was insufficient to ensure the safety of those who became police informants.

Many considered such programs crucial in overcoming the criminalization and precariousness of anyone who collaborated with law enforcement. The saying “snitches get stitches” illustrates that those who break certain socio-political norms and discuss local secrets with the police require legal and physical protection.

A couple of weeks later, Sarah invited me to her home in Overtown. At the time, I was unfamiliar with the neighborhood and felt uncomfortable walking and biking there. Police officers and local residents frequently told me that most illegal substances were sold her area, which had acquired a reputation for being a popular local drug market. Sarah herself had referred to it as “crack city”, while MPD police officers introduced me to the area during patrols in the neighborhood as the “swamp”, suggesting that it was some kind of urban jungle owned and run by those in the business of dealing drugs and those who were addicted to them.

In contrast to Overtown’s main corridor (NW 3rd Avenue), where cars were the primary mode of transport, in the streets around Sarah’s apartment many residents walked and biked. The apartment was located on the ground floor of a three-story complex. I had to drive around for a while before I was able to find a good parking spot. I called Sarah to tell her that I had arrived. My car, and certainly my appearance as a White man, attracted the attention of many residents. A group directly in front of me decided to split up once they saw me speaking on the phone. As I waited for Sarah to come out, a man walked towards me, quickly waving his arms, telling me to leave. He told me that “shop was closed”, and that I had no business here. Once she arrived, Sarah intervened, telling the man that I was her friend and insisting that she could invite whomever she wanted. She threatened to notify the police, who were parked further down the street, with a whistle that she always carried with her. He replied that it was his right to stand in public space and that he was doing nothing wrong, but he left us alone.

Sarah explained later that the man had been trying to tell me that no drugs were being sold by her next-door neighbor at the time: his shop was closed. This was because the residents in the apartment complex had been notified of an upcoming visit from code enforcement – city officials were coming to inspect the complex’s patio, as well as Sarah’s burned out kitchen – later that morning. Sarah’s neighbor, locally known as Dre (a pseudonym), had therefore decided to temporarily suspend his business. The man outside had mistaken me for a potential customer, and had wanted to warn me that Dre had stopped selling for the morning, or at least until code enforcement had finished their business inside the premises.

Over the course of the following months, Sarah kept me informed of all

the things she learned about Dre's business: where he stored the drugs, at what time in the morning he cooked his meth, and who his girlfriend was, who used and sold some of his product as well. Even in the couple of hours that I spent with Sarah that first day, once the shop was open again, I could hear many customers shouting his name as they walked up to the gate to complete their transaction. Sarah was frustrated by the situation. She felt as if she was being held hostage in her own home and that there was nothing she could do about it. In her words, she had to act in a way that suggested that she was "still cool" with Dre and had no intention of talking with the police. Sarah was scared of what could happen, and told me that the woman who had lived in her apartment before her had had to leave because of intensifying arguments with Dre. Instead of waiting for Dre to get violent, the previous tenant had decided to move to a different house. Sarah definitely did not have the means to afford another place, and did not want her relationship with her neighbor to reach the same level of distrust and aggression. Accordingly, she was very careful when interacting with him and his friends and contacts. Her involvement in local politics as an activist amplified her concerns and complicated her relationship with her neighbor. As I explained in Chapter Two, Sarah was an active member of Miami's local Black Lives Matter collective, but she also interacted with lawyers, politicians, and police officers for both personal and political reasons.

Sarah felt that she was increasingly subject to Dre's control, and that there was little she could do about it. Illustrative of her experience was the time that she had to store some of Dre's guns for him. Dre had told Sarah that he had gotten into a fight with his girlfriend, and wanted to make sure the weapons were out of her reach if things escalated. Before Sarah could comprehend what was happening, some of Dre's illegally owned weapons were behind her couch. Sarah explained to me that it had felt as if she had become an accomplice to his illegal activities, and that she could not inform the police about anything because of this. Sarah became afraid, and felt that she had to show Dre that she was not purposely looking to harm his business. She therefore spent less and less time on her front porch, where she grew tomato plants, out of fear of having to interact with him. It also became more difficult for her to invite me over, as I was clearly not a typical local resident. Sarah made several attempts to reassure Dre that she was not planning to reveal his secrets to the authorities. For example, she began to meet with Dre's girlfriend, taking her to some of the meetings that she frequented in Overtown. Hopefully, Sarah thought, his girlfriend would reassure Dre, and explain to him that Sarah's intentions and actions were not aimed against him.

As a final resort, Sarah decided she needed to own a handgun. She stored the .357 Magnum unloaded in a blue cotton holster under her pillow or behind her clothes in a cabinet. She purposefully stored the bullets separately from the handgun, out of fear that someone could break in, steal it, and use it against her or others. Sarah did ensure me that should she feel compelled to load the handgun and take it outside, there would be no going back. She would pull the trigger. I asked her whether she had every thought of taking weapons with her when she walked past Dre. She explained that she would not:

No, you gotta have a concealed weapons permit, I don't have one. You see, it's also so easy for me to be beaten up or assaulted, so my five-mile whistle and my mace is better for me. But he pushed himself on me, I told you. And I don't know why at the time I didn't think of taking pictures of him and again, writing the serial numbers of the guns. But you're just... thinking...

I asked her whether she would ever consider contacting the police. She demurred:

It would be seen like you're calling the police for help, but for what? Something someone did to you? So then you need to watch your back, because it would [be] like telling on someone, being a snitch. The police are not your friends over there because everybody's watching, and you might be a snitch, and you might end up dead. You don't [want] to be seen with the police or talk to them. It's unacceptable.

Sarah's experiences are illustrative of the complicated positions that people find themselves in when law enforcement organizations and international anti-crime organizations expect behavior that is not complicit with local norms and perceptions. Sarah's secret – the detailed information she had on Dre's illegal business – had clear legal implications. While it was possible that the MPD was unaware of the specifics of Dre's illegal business, it was unlikely that they needed Sarah to inform them that drugs were being produced and distributed in her neighborhood. Nevertheless, local authorities suggested that Dre would only be liable to criminal prosecution if Sarah contacted the MPD and revealed the secret information that she had as a result of living next to him.

Although the anonymity of informants was stressed and witness protection programs were available, these measures did not address the daily concerns of living with security-related secrets. Sarah lived under Dre's threat every day, a fact that affected the way she interacted with him,

with other residents, and the police, and shaped her experience of living in Overtown. As such, an important part of her daily life was characterized by the danger the secret posed to her. International anti-crime organizations, such as Crime Stoppers, and local police departments, such as the MPD, did not offer Sarah any opportunity to actually improve her daily life and safety, in asking her to reveal the secrets of others. Indeed, such attempts to create “good citizens” do not accommodate the local context, where secrets may cause tension and uncertainty in everyday urban life.

The secret of Dre’s business became an important lens through which Sarah experienced citizenship in Overtown. If informing police officers was a citizenship duty, and a requirement to be part of a national political community, Sarah was excluded. Her local environment made navigating her rights, responsibilities, and duties difficult, as nationally circulating norms did not match her neighborhood reality. As a result, Sarah did not feel part of a political community of vigilant citizens, and as an activist sometimes she even opposed collaborating with state agencies and government-led gentrification. But nor did she experience herself as belonging wholly to Overtown, a place where residents distributed and used illegal substances. Dre in particular made her feel excluded. Her life as an activist provided Sarah with new contacts and relationships, an opportunity to meet like-minded people to whom she could relate. For her, this citywide organization was a welcome alternative, a space where she did not have to deal with secrets, or the tensions that came with them, as both local and national actors expected her to deal with secrets in contradictory ways.

Several days after Marlon Eason was murdered, his family members and other Overtown residents organized a vigil in a local park. Many residents attended, praying for Marlon and his mother, while lighting candles and releasing balloons into the sky. Many attending the vigil expressed emotions of sorrow and frustration, sad that a ten-year-old boy had been shot, but also angry that nobody seemed to know who did it. Residents wore t-shirts that read “stop the violence”, stating with certainty that finding the perpetrator and bringing him to court was the main way of finding justice for Marlon. But in order for that to happen, they reasoned, residents needed to feel empowered to “break the silence” and “take back the streets.”

Yet, as Sarah’s case illustrates, given the difficulty of living up to them, such expectations based on an ideal type of vigilant citizenship exacerbate the stress of having security-related secrets. In conclusion, the case shows how legal imaginaries shape political subjectivity, and more specifically how normative frames of legality and legitimacy overlap. Sarah did not feel she belonged to a political community of vigilant citizens, who were expected to

act in accordance with the law and collaborate with authorities when confronted with illegal behavior. Nor did she feel she was able to follow more local normative frameworks, which structured what was seen as accepted and legitimate in the context of Overtown. In her view, “Townners” were generally suspicious and violently opposed residents who decided to collaborate with law enforcement and anti-crime organizations. As a result, Sarah experienced having to navigate political subjectivity, citizenship duties, and local threats on her own, in an individualized fashion.



Figure 5.4. Vigil after the murder of Marlon Eason, March 2015.

## FROM PRIVACY TO SECRECY

Sarah’s case highlights how state agencies frame security-related secrets in terms of citizenship, how this emphasis on lateral surveillance reconfigures relationships and interactions in local communities, and how individuals navigate having secrets in their everyday lives. Yet what actually constitutes a security-related secret is subject to interpretation. State agencies in particular have the capacity to frame private issues as a problem of secrecy. This is clearly illustrated in the case of Lux, who was fired from the MPD in 2016, allegedly because of her secret involvement in controversial, but legal, activities. Like Sarah, Lux’s secret made her vulnerable and came with many tensions, and alienated her once it was made public.

In 2015, Miami news agencies reported that they had obtained

contentious news concerning a current MPD police officer. A video posted online showed local journalists attempting to approach Lux and get her to comment on this matter; other MPD police officers managed to get Lux somewhere inside, where the journalists could not follow or hinder her. Immediately after the story was published, Lux requested time off and worked from inside the MPD police station. I met with Lux a couple of days after her personal life had become a matter of public interest, and she had hired a lawyer to negotiate with the MPD. Lux explained that the main issue was not only whether and to what extent she had been involved in the controversy, but also whether or not she had disclosed this information to her employer before being admitted to the police academy several years ago. The legal affairs that followed from this disclosure primarily focused on the latter issue.

Over the course of two years, lawyers and internal investigators tried to figure out the legality of her alleged involvement in the controversial activities. Journalists reported that Lux had been associated with men who eventually attempted to blackmail her, seeking to get money from her in exchange for keeping her involvement a secret to the public. These men has also been convicted of serious crimes and sentenced to life in jail for those crimes. Lux had rejected their blackmailing attempts, but had not expected the impact that it would have once they revealed information to the local media.

Although Lux was initially allowed to return to her work as a patrol officer in Overtown, and also continued her off-duty position in Wynwood, she was eventually fired. Lawyers advised her not to share information on her case with others and this continued to remained a concern for her for long after. Although Lux allowed me to make mention of this very difficult time in her life in this dissertation, she initially thought of following her lawyer's advice and considered withdrawing all prior consent given to me to include references to our interactions and conversations. This illustrates not only Lux's continued experience of precarity, but also her understanding that the law is able to generate empowerment in dealing with interpersonal relationships and agreements. Because disclosing this information could indeed be harmful to her, I do not provide any specific details regarding her case. What I can say is that the termination of her contract appeared to violate her labor rights, and she sought financial compensation through a court case. Former colleagues told Lux that they had had similar experiences, and some had even managed to get reinstated as an MPD police officer. Even though it would be difficult for Lux to achieve reinstatement, she remained positive and found a new job as a security guard at a hotel.

"Police work in a bubble", she told me in a final interview in Miami in 2016.

Lux's case suggests that the problem was not only the secret itself, but also a concern regarding what constitutes professional conduct. Although state agencies framed the main issue as one of lying, of keeping information secret to the employer, the underlying question was to what extent the action of engaging in controversial activities was contrary to public interests or even damaged the reputation of police officers in the eyes of the public. In the last decades, another South Florida officer had also been fired from his job after similar allegations of involvement in controversial activities. It is likely that these activities were an issue because state agencies figured it did not match the public and idealized representation of police officers. Indeed, most discussions in the media and on online platforms supported this interpretation. On *leoaffairs.com*, an online forum in the US for members of law enforcement to voice concerns, gossip, and share information, MPD officers anonymously wrote violently abusive, sexist, and racist comments about Lux's case. Although several colleagues remained supportive, this anonymous backstabbing also alienated her from the department.

The police department had become a professional community where employees were increasingly worried about how their private lives could jeopardize their reputation and career. Although the MPD fired Lux on the basis of not disclosing her secret in her application, it is questionable to what extent the lack of transparency was actually the main concern in her case. In my understanding, the MPD used the secret to justify the decision to fire Lux, while she was first and foremost perceived to be a threat to the department's reputation. This was not surprising given the media attention Lux attracted. Yet, by focusing on secrets, and criminalizing her lies, rather than addressing the sexist and racist undertones of the controversy, the MPD reproduced the understanding that increased transparency was the police's main the concern.

Despite these distressing events, Lux managed to remain relatively positive. She was confident in the outcome of the legal affairs that she was involved in and had the necessary friends and family to support her during such uncertain times. Lux also really wanted to share her story, including through my research. She felt that her experience could serve as a lesson for young Miamians to realize how you can be manipulated, but at the same time remain self-assured that you do not have only yourself to blame. Lux wanted others with similar experiences to share them, and ideally wanted to set up a platform for victims of various forms of extortion and blackmail to have a voice.

A socio-legal approach sheds light on Lux's secret as a case of citizenship responsibilities and duties. According to the MPD, it was her duty to disclose her private and professional history prior to being hired as a police officer in the department. More importantly, the case shows how state agencies are also able to define what constitutes a security-related threat, and what this means in terms of everyday security provision. It also shows the workings of a specific legal imaginary, in particular the role of litigation. Lux's main, and perhaps only, chance of being reinstated as a civil servant was dependent on the outcome of litigation.

### ( U N ) A R M E D S E C U R I T Y

Like Sarah's case, Lux's experience underlines how state security agencies frame and respond to secrets in a way that affects the everyday experience of citizenship, shaping residents' political subjectivity and their understandings of their responsibilities, while increasing their sense of insecurity. Unlike Sarah and Lux, Darius' secret actually improved his feeling of safety. It became, for him, a way to enact citizenship, to maneuver around state laws, and to live up to ideals of self-defense. As I explained in Chapter Two, Darius worked on Ocean Drive, South Beach's main boulevard, as a private security guard. Four days a week, sometimes up to twelve hours a day, Darius worked at a bar, either walking around or sitting next to the entrance where he and other security guards checked customers' IDs. Darius did not enjoy his job, and frequently complained about the long hours. There was not much for him to do but to sit and wait. Only on rare occasions did he actually have to confront a customer. Darius was a D licensed security guard, which meant that he could work in positions in Florida that did not require him to be armed. In fact, it was illegal for him to carry a weapon during work: only G licensed security guards could be hired for armed positions.

But Darius told me that he was not unarmed. Early on in my research, during quiet hours at work, he had shown me his knife and small electro shock weapon, and most of his colleagues knew about these. What most did not know was that Darius also secretly carried a gun with him on the job. I first heard about this gun directly after Memorial Day weekend, when he told me that he had carried the gun and worn his own bulletproof vest for four days straight. After meeting with Darius for several months, I felt comfortable enough to begin asking more about the gun: "Did you only carry something during that weekend, or...?" Darius kept his voice down, as the other security guards were sitting nearby and customers entering the bar were walking directly past us. "Nah", he answered, shaking his head and

sipping from a small flask filled with water infused with flavored syrup. "How about today?", I pressed him.

**Darius:** No, not today, man. I wasn't feeling like it.

**Thijs:** Sooo... normally you do bring it with you, or no?

**Darius:** Yeah. But look at these pants, man. [He stretched his left leg out from under the barstool and twisted his foot in circles.] Too tight. They'll see it, you know. I have it with me, but not on me, if you know what I'm saying.

**Thijs:** But if you wear those black cargo pants?

**Darius:** Yeah. I have it there. [With his leg still out, he pointed at his ankle on the inside of his left leg.]

Whether or not Darius carried his gun on him at work depended on which of his pants were in the laundry. When he wore pants that were loose enough, he could attach the gun to this ankle without anyone noticing. With tight pants, he would decide against having the gun on him, and leave it in his locker inside the bar. Apparently, the trivial matter of which pants he wore to work on a particular day determined whether Darius actually carried a gun on him or not. Growing up in a European country where guns are rarely owned, let alone carried in public, I was surprised to hear about Darius' secret. On the other hand, we often discussed weapons and it was clear that Darius understood them to be a primary source of personal safety. He told me about an occasion when his mother had called him after his shift had ended. She was scared at home because her alarm did not seem to be working. Darius was tired and wanted to go home. He told his mother: "Ma, you're going to be fine. There's a shotgun under your bed." Unfortunately for Darius, the weapon did not comfort her as much as it would him, and he needed to go over to fix the alarm that night.

Darius' main reason for secretly carrying a gun at the bar was that he felt uncomfortable in the environment in which he was working. He often complained about the behavior and appearance of the majority of the visitors to South Beach, primarily African-Americans and Haitian-Americans. Darius would sometimes insult them when he talked to me or with his colleagues, but never in his interactions with the visitors themselves. He called them "niggers", "idiots", and "clowns", especially when he witnessed behavior that appeared illegal. When we looked out on the people in the alleyways beneath us from the bar's balcony, smoking and dealing what seemed to be marijuana, Darius stated that they "had no respect for the law." Other security guards at the bar, all White, did not

comment on Darius' remarks, at least not in my presence.

For Darius, his secret, the gun on his ankle, was an asset. He carried it as a means to protect himself should he feel the need. Since few people knew about the concealed weapon, Darius figured it would give him some kind of advantage over others, an unexpected force. His secret, however, also caused tensions: it was important for him that he did not reveal it to others. Although he condemned visitors who did not follow the law, he sincerely believed that his secret was still lawful and considered himself to be part of a larger network of security providers. He frequently helped MBPD police officers set up the lights on Ocean Drive, discussing South Beach security concerns with them. Like many private security guards, Darius had also enrolled in various applications and trainings in order to become a police officer. During the time I knew him, however, he had not yet managed to pass any of the psychological and physical tests.

I was, however, not the only one who knew about his gun. Darius had also told Rick, the owner of Xecurity, the security company that Darius worked for. Rick, who was also an MBPD police officer, had been particularly concerned about the legal and financial risk this might pose to his company. But surprisingly, considering that Rick was also a law enforcement officer, he did not contest Darius' decision. Rick just told his employee that he was on his own if something were to happen. This did not bother Darius, who told me that he was more concerned with staying alive: "Shoot first, ask questions later", he joked.

Although Darius knew that carrying his gun on the job was illegal, and he was concerned with keeping it a secret, he believed that the concealed weapon could be justified by the circumstances in which he would use it. In other words, he legitimized his decision to secretly carry a gun by the threatening circumstances in which he would actually reveal and possibly use it. Darius thereby followed the idealized notions of self-defense and private gun ownership, even when it was illegal for him to do so. Darius' secret was informed by his understanding of legality and legitimacy, by his perception of what was the "right" thing to do given the circumstances. Without openly contesting state laws, Darius acted in correspondence with the ideal type of vigilant citizenship. By attaching a gun to his ankle, he embodied his secret. As this suggests, the body is not just an object of governance, but also a sensory subject through which citizenship is experienced and enacted (e.g., Hardon and Posel, 2012). Darius' experience was also a very individual experience; he became a single agent in claiming what he believed to be his rights, and was predominantly left to himself as others tried to distance themselves from him and his decision to carry a gun.

## BEYOND LATERAL SURVEILLANCE

In this chapter, I discussed how Miamians experience and use security-related secrets. Through a socio-legal approach to secrets, I have shown how state agencies frame revealing secrets as a civil responsibility, and essential duty for membership of a political community of vigilant citizens. Sarah's case in particular showed how this mobilization of local residents in programs of lateral surveillance creates tensions in terms of their sense of belonging to a political community. The three cases together have shown how, in the context of security governance, such citizenship duties cultivate feelings of suspicion, fear, and individualization – feelings that Reeves (2017) also sees as having become embedded in notions of citizenship in the US. The examples of lateral surveillance provided in this chapter, such as the DTRT campaign, are just a small selection of the various ways in which residents are taught and enabled to surveil each other. Fingerprinting your children – as is recommended by the FBI and local child safety organizations – might increase the chances of recovering your child if she were to go missing. But how might this affect relationships within a family or community, and how does it shape the child's perception of the world she lives in?

I have sought to address such questions by analyzing how Sarah, Lux, and Darius navigated security-related secrets in everyday life. To a certain degree, their stories illustrate the dominant understanding that transparency – not secrets or lies – will result in a just outcome, in an accurate assessment of guilt and innocence. Dre would never be arrested unless a neighbor, like Sarah, actively cooperated with the MPD. This was why police officers encouraged and sometimes pressed residents to collaborate and share security-related secrets with them. After the murder of Marlon Eason, police officers urged local residents to "break the silence" and share any information they had with Crime Stoppers. Informants could remain anonymous and would receive financial compensation for their "good citizenship" – the adult version of the free pizza offered by the DTRT campaign with which I opened this chapter. On the other hand, local residents expressed the need to create conditions in which "snitches" no longer had to fear for their safety. However, it struck me that the more that revealing secrets to local authorities is framed as an essential citizenship duty, the more tensions and feelings of alienation emerge at a local level.

A main aim of this chapter has been to look beyond the power dynamics inherent to lateral surveillance, and, drawing on a socio-legal approach, to explore how Miamians experience and use secrets. While Sarah's case is a straightforward example of how security-related secrets

shape the experience of political subjectivity and citizenship duties, Lux's case illustrates how state agencies also shape the boundary between secrecy and privacy. Lux had always expected this to happen, however, and had carried the secret with her for the eight years she had worked for the MPD. Even though there was no clear reason for the MPD to question her qualities as a police officer, the police department fired Lux soon after the revelations. This illustrates first and foremost the selective criminalization of secrets. These contradictions are often understood as legal concerns, as, for example, Lux's lawyers and the MPD investigated how she navigated her secret as a security professional. Lux was eventually fired and could no longer work as a police officer. For private security, however, this was not an issue, as Lux was hired as a security guard at a hotel soon after her dismissal from the MPD.

Darius' case shows that secrets can also be used to enact citizenship, to embody the ideals of vigilant citizenship. Understanding and claiming his rights to self-defense by carrying a concealed gun during work as a formally unarmed private security guard, he created his own room to maneuver in what he perceived to be a dangerous environment. Informed by racialized and stigmatizing stereotypes, as well as by notions of vigilant citizenship, Darius decided to illegally arm himself at the South Beach bar where he worked. As he embodied a "good citizenship" practice, he did not necessarily feel ashamed of his secret. This illustrates how security-related secrets are embedded in notions of legality and legitimacy, even when they entail behavior that is not in accordance with the law. Indeed, Darius' primary concern, and that of Rick, the MBPD police officer who owned Xecurity, was legal liability should he use the gun for the "wrong" reasons; that is, reasons that could not legitimize his actions in a court of law.

The secrets discussed in this chapter had clear legal implications, and revealing them could potentially be dangerous. While privacy is both valued and contested, state agencies politicize private information, framing it as essential knowledge for effective law enforcement. Politicians and citizens alike thus both seek to navigate between the "right" amounts of privacy and transparency. Yet Sarah, Darius, and Lux, but also several others, discussed their secrets with me. My relationships with them developed over the course of a relatively short period of time, but they felt still comfortable sharing their private information with me, information that could jeopardize their safety or make them susceptible to legal prosecution. Although qualitative fieldwork requires researchers to be attentive to their social environment, I find it unlikely that we discussed their secrets only because of my sincere interest in their day to day realities, or because there was nobody else they

could talk to. I was also objectively not a member of the two main political communities to which they felt obligated to be a part: I was not a US citizen nor a long-term local resident, but a visitor from Europe. Lux told me that this made it easier for her to discuss her secret with me. But at the same time, many of my interlocutors did not fully understand what I was doing in Miami, what exactly my role was, and what I was going to do with the information they gave me.

This suggests that sharing secrets also entailed an opportunity to experience a form of interpersonal togetherness. In other words, it was enjoyable for Lux, Sarah, and Darius to share and discuss secrets. They worked long days, either alone in a police car, or surrounded by unfamiliar customers, or they felt alienated in their own neighborhood. The fact that all three of them still trusted me with their secrets hints at a desire to share secrets. People do so to build a relationship, or as Gilbert (2007: 26) has put it, to "engage in a collaborative art of secrecy."

Throughout 2015 and 2016, Lux and Sarah became more involved in critical, activist organizations. Both began to interpret their secrets, and the larger contexts of the secrets and the problems that accompanied them, as something grounded in structural issues. The political and social consequences of their secrets were not necessarily their own fault, and they wanted to help others in similar situations, or at least to voice their concerns. Lux became a mentor at a club for young girls in Overtown, and continued to look to share her story with others, and to connect with women with similar experiences in the US. Although it was a difficult time for her following her dismissal from the MPD, she kept up hope that she would be reinstated, or at least that she could translate the experience into something positive. She explicitly looked to form a larger community based on her secret and personal history. Sarah spent a lot of time at meetings with local organizations and political leaders and attended demonstrations throughout Miami. She became especially active in a collective that sought to tackle "slumlords", landlords who neglected and exploited tenants primarily in deteriorating apartment complexes. Through such a collective, Sarah realized the scale of the issue, which was reflected in her personal experience of living next to Dre. Instead of looking to have drug dealers evicted or advocating for a more intrusive police presence and practices, Sarah sought to address more structural issues, such as the gentrification of Wynwood and the criminalization of Overtown by local state agencies.

Many Miamians, including Olaf and Marcus, told me that they had voted for Donald Trump in 2016 because at least they knew he had no secrets,

unlike Hillary. Trump's "anti-establishment" rhetoric, in which he proclaimed that he would "drain the swamp" of secret deals and conspiracies between government officials, was an important factor in his victory. It is indicative of a broader – but very selective and skewed – antagonism towards secrets, an antagonism that extends beyond electoral politics and security provision, to domains such as parenthood, sports, and education. Strengthened by technological developments that make it possible to uncover lies and secret lives, it seems that secrets will only gain importance in future acts and experiences of citizenship. This significance is entangled with understandings of legality that differentiate between secrets on the basis of the dominant framework of vigilant citizenship; measures of self-defense that are not necessarily legal, but which are accepted by police officers nonetheless, will more likely be viewed favorably.

In concluding this chapter on secrets, I have discussed the three main aspects through which I saw Miamians experience and enact citizenship in the context of neoliberal security governance. In the next chapter, the conclusion to this dissertation, I answer my main research question in detail, explaining how we can conceptualize guns, cameras, and secrets within a larger theoretical framework, and discuss the generalizability of my research findings within the national context of the US.