

**Harvard Journal**

*of*

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**Public Policy**

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The *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* is a student-run, non-partisan scholarly review published annually by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Our mission is to educate and provide leadership that improves the quality of public policies affecting the African American community. In so doing we hope to further the economic, social, and political empowerment of African Americans.

We seek to open dialogue on various policy sectors as well as topics ranging from philosophy, urban planning, and even literature, as they all inform our sensibilities when it comes to developing policy that affects African Americans as well as all Americans. Manuscripts are accepted from all policy areas, academic disciplines, and related organizations. In addition to articles, the *Journal* welcomes essays, lectures, speeches, community-based initiative profiles, photography, symposia, position papers, art, illustrations, poetry, interviews, short stories, photo essays, and book reviews. The *Journal* seeks innovative and solution-oriented strategies that address the relationship between policy making and the political, social, and economic environments affecting African Americans at local, state, and national levels in the United States.

# Submission Guidelines

To be eligible for the editorial review, please use the following guidelines:

- Articles must be original and unpublished
- Any work of art/photography/design can be published elsewhere but the submission must be the sole property of the individual submitting; all other places where the piece is published should be noted
- Commentaries should be 400-600 words; longer commentaries should be cleared with editors beforehand
- Articles should be 1200-3500 words
- Articles should be formatted in any version of Microsoft Word
- References and endnotes should be formatted according to the guidelines and author-date system of *Chicago Manual of Style*. Footnotes will not be accepted. All figures, tables, and charts should be submitted as entirely separate files.
- In addition, we request that all authors submit the following:
- A cover page with the submission title, author's name, mailing address, e-mail address, daytime telephone number, and a brief biography
- A 100-word abstract
- Authors are required to cooperate with editing and fact checking.

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# Table of Contents

Editors' Note, <i>Patrick Boateng II</i>	xii
Understanding the Local Context: Should We Replicate or Innovate? <i>Deloris Wilson</i>	1
slaves for sale, <i>Ashley M. Jones</i>	4
Sojourner Truth Speaks to Her Daughter, 1843, Ashley M. Jones	5
Combating Poverty within the Black Community: Conservative Policy Initiatives Hold Potential Solutions, Mary Elizabeth Taylor	6
Art, <i>Lionel Daniels</i>	11
The Fifth Pillar: A Case for Hip-Hop Architecture, <i>Sekou Cooke</i>	15
What the Glass Eye Saw for Sammy Davis, Jr., <i>Ashley M. Jones</i>	19
Phonotropolis: Designing a Sound City, <i>Héctor Tarrido-Picart</i>	21
Robot, <i>Lynch</i>	29
Cobo's Ragweed Acres and 49 Million Alternatives: Examining Land Use Policies in Detroit's Paradise Valley and Surroundings, <i>Vaughn Thomas Horn</i>	31
Art, <i>Lionel Daniels</i>	43
Race to Sustain: The Policy Implications of Racial Differences in Climate Change Public Opinion Attitudes, <i>Jonathan Collins</i>	45
Elegy, <i>Ashley M. Jones</i>	61
Wandering in the Wilderness: Where Do We Go from Here? Genesis 21:9–19, <i>Nyle Fort</i>	63

# Editor's Note

When I took over as Editor-in-Chief of the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* in the fall of 2012, I wanted to see the journal surpass all other student-run publications at the Harvard Kennedy School. I feel that pushing the issues that our journal addresses to the forefront of the wider policy discussion is and will continue to be absolutely critical. Through two years of this process, I've come to realize that the ambition should be higher, with a goal to become the best publication at the Kennedy School. Making that possible requires a serious reexamination of the elements that go into creating the journal. The 2013 edition of the journal provided us with the opportunity to explore new ideas in terms of content mix and layout, offering commentary that was more accessible to our readers and a design that was a welcome departure from what was expected. Our inclusion of creative work also facilitated the journal's move into a new space. The end result was fantastic, and the journal's reception reflected that sentiment. This edition is yet another step in the right direction.

The 2014 edition of the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* brings some familiar and some new voices to the discussion on how we might improve the lives of Black Americans and, subsequently, Americans overall. This year, we had the opportunity to look at issues on environmental policy, urbanism, futurism, and public health among the usual fare of politics and social policy. I believe that our shift to new areas is representative of the now-mandatory inclusionary nature of broader thinking on these issues. Structurally, our journal comprises three sections: *People*, *Places*, and *Voices*. Each of these sections brings a set of interesting perspectives that contribute quite well to the overall discourse on policy that affects African Americans.

*People* focuses on connecting individuals in different ways: politically, socially, and digitally to think seriously about policy outcomes that can provide an opportunity to create societies that are more equitable. Deloris Wilson reflects on her experiences in the former Dutch colony of Sint Maarten, where she was tasked with helping the local government achieve greater success through a focus on innovation. Mary Elizabeth Taylor offers an opportunity to explore important bipartisan possibilities for dealing with poverty from a national policy level, specifically targeting Black Americans affected by the 2008 economic crisis.

*Places* features several articles that look at how we can rethink the elements that comprise our living spaces at multiple scales to realize a better future. Sekou Cooke posits architecture as the "fifth pillar" of hip-hop, highlighting its influence on the factors present and necessary for the genre's birth while offering a way to incorporate it into thinking about how to build a more responsible and equitable future for marginalized communities. Hector Tarrido-Picart's stunning "Phonotropolis" undertakes the tremendous task of building a city from scratch, literally and figuratively, which places the idea of urban formation and development at the intersection between jazz music, history, technology, and critical social issues that affect people of color. The concept and imagery are both incredibly compelling. Vaughn Horn looks at the Paradise Valley section of Detroit, a city that is often portrayed as a poster child for a specific kind of urban disaster (and recently, opportunity). The growing Black population

within Paradise Valley, as a result of the Great Migration, found economic successes but ultimately fell victim to the all too familiar social and urban policy tools that disenfranchised and eventually decimated many other communities throughout major metropolitan areas in the United States. Mr. Horn delivers a critical inquiry that offer ways of thinking about how we might begin to offer a remedy to a place like Paradise Valley. Jonathan Collins, whose work was also featured in our 2013 edition, examines the voting preferences and attitudes of minorities on the issue of climate change, which is normally portrayed as a “White issue.” Mr. Collins offers evidence of an actual opportunity for both courting minority voters on the issue and its implications for the future of policy making in the realm of urban and rural risk and resilience.

*Voices* has grown from our initial efforts at featuring creative work that provides social commentary in last year’s journal to a fully fledged section that on its own makes compelling arguments, provides expression, and delivers critical examination of the lived experiences within our community. Nyle Fort provides a unique piece that is more likely to be found ringing in the ears of a congregation. Mr. Fort, who contributed to the 2013 edition of the journal, offers a call to work toward social justice with a voice that incorporates perspective on serious social and economic issues framed within a sermon. I found this format particularly compelling, given the historical significance of the relationship between the Black community and the church. We are privileged to again feature Ashley M. Jones’ beautiful, emotional, and visceral poetry, which also graced the pages of last year’s journal. Ms. Jones’ poetry alone would make a brilliant volume and we are deeply grateful to her. Kerby el Lynch, an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley, is also featured here with her poetry, which she forcefully and gracefully delivered before hundreds at Harvard Kennedy School’s Apollo Night event in February. Lionel Daniels, who paints as performance, rounds out our *Voices* section. Mr. Daniels shares some of his impressive work—the result of an incredibly meticulous public process—with the journal and its readers.

The 2014 *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy* is deeply grateful to all the contributors who have played such a key role in its publication. The journal is also in its twentieth year, an impressive feat that speaks to the level of dedication and commitment to its publication from previous editors, funders, staff, subscribers, and the Harvard Kennedy School. Without their contributions, none of this would be possible. Our most sincere hope is that the voices found in this journal and in both past and future editions serve as catalysts for productive discourse that can lead ultimately to outcomes that improve circumstances for all of us.

Patrick Boateng II, Editor-in-Chief  
*Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*

**Welcome to the**  
**20th edition of the**  
***Harvard Journal***  
***of African American***  
***Public Policy***

# Understanding the Local Context: Should We Replicate or Innovate?

*Deloris Wilson*

*DELORIS WILSON is a concurrent Master in Public Policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and Juris Doctor candidate at Georgetown University Law Center. As a 2012 graduate of Spelman College, Wilson's studies focused on international relations and the African diaspora, taking her to both Ghana and the Netherlands to study issues of human rights and discrimination. As the previous vice chair of marketing and outreach for the 2013 Black Policy Conference, as well as first attendant to Miss Spelman College where she advocated against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, she is committed to pursuing a career at the nexus of innovation and corporate social responsibility. As an avid fan of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and Toni Morrison, Wilson also enjoys performing spoken word and traveling.*

**F**rantz Fanon, a French Creole psychiatrist, philosopher, and critic of post-colonial studies, wrote extensively on the importance of “decolonizing the mind.”<sup>1</sup> At the very essence of colonialism is a relationship, often oppressive, that looks to the colonizing country as the keeper of all answers, the source of what is good and therefore, right. He concludes that such a mentality develops (even unconsciously) in the minds of those colonized, which renders a psyche that deems “more worthy” what is across the water and “more inept” what is on native soil.

The Ash Center Summer Fellowship, sponsored by the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, allows students to work in a variety of public sector agencies around the world. As a 2013 Fellow, I deployed to the island of Sint Maarten—a Caribbean microstate now an independent nation within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. My charge: to help develop a national innovation strategy under the authority of the Office of the Prime Minister. I began, perhaps naively, hoping to learn the ropes of a new government, to navigate political intricacies, and to transfer as much knowledge from my first year of studies

to anyone willing to lend an ear. However, I concluded the experience with just as much knowledge gained as shared, as well as a deepened understanding of the importance of self-empowerment and assuredness in tackling local problems with a global perspective.

My past experience working with government officials and studying post-colonial development has seeded much skepticism, as efforts to change operational norms are often paralyzed due to suspicion or resistance to change. As a newly independent nation, Sint Maarten faced these and additional challenges including changing governments, a deficiency of trust, and the need to increase awareness of certain strategic principles of management and communications.

With a new government, Sint Maarten provided a prime opportunity to learn about the process of public sector innovation. While helping to train civil servants, I identified priority areas, analyzed existing innovations, and conveyed tools of problem identification/policy analysis to program participants. In addition, I spent time briefing and crafting the innovation strategy with both the Ministers and civil servants. Through this process, my biggest realization was that innovation is not as much about replication as it is about homegrown

solutions and ideas.

With so many organizations developing innovation strategies—in both the public and private sectors—an Internet search for “innovation” quickly yields thousands of documents, case studies, policy proposals, and more dictating the merits of a particular innovation: whether a one-stop shop for government services, a creative public-private partnership to address youth violence, or an integrative approach to data collection. Unfortunately, the pursuit of innovation often ends in replication: where innovators adopt a particular solution just because it was successful elsewhere. But what happens when there is “innovation overload”? When so many ideas of others’ innovations cloud one’s own ability to determine what solutions and strategies work best within his or her particular context? Or, when innovation overload clouds one’s ability to communicate his or her own ideas due to the belief that ideas from elsewhere are a “better fit” or “more worthy”?

Innovation overload proved to be one of the challenges during my time in Sint Maarten. While some in city governments within the United States are actually resistant to outside ideas, a history of colonization complicates the attempt to convince public sector innovators that replication is not always the best solution. The post-colonial environment makes it particularly challenging to disassociate innovation from replication, and thus have a truly nuanced approach to the analysis of best practices. While some participants in Sint Maarten disregarded innovations from abroad and immediately requested examples of successful innovations in a more relevant context, others had a hard time disengaging with international innovations in order to develop their own.

Though we often look to “best practices” when beginning a course of change, they are most useful for kick-starting the brainstorming process rather than providing end-all-be-all solutions for local concerns. While cultural particularities, budgets, administrative capacities, and the like differ among contexts and thus must be taken into account, it is also important to not let such an approach stifle ideas that are of equal, if not more, value as they come from the individuals who have the most contact with the issue and likely know the best solution. Further, through homegrown ideas, individual ownership, and personal ingenuity, a culture of innovation can be engrained into the culture of the government itself. Such a strategy might even inspire

future ideas with revolutionary impact.

This shift in mindset from replication to homegrown innovation is not easy, but it is necessary in order to sustain a long-term innovation strategy. Politically, socially, and economically, the island appears primed for such an organizational shift: with dedicated civil servants rallied behind the effort and a dynamic leadership team, Sint Maarten has the capacity to achieve greater public value through innovation. The momentum gained through the summer months, however, must be coupled with a critical analysis of the present context and an assuredness of self—the belief that *you* can engineer the solutions that are best for *your* public’s concern. A culture of innovation requires a culture of empowerment—and this is true outside the post-colonial context, as well—especially in the African American community where socioeconomic status and political impediments sometimes stifle political or social action. Rather than wait in expectation for the delivery of a solution, or seek the organizations that have provided relief for years, or feel stifled for reasons of bureaucratic dysfunction or job assignment, communities of color must realize the capabilities of their own right and use this realization to motivate, coordinate, and acquire uncommon resources to attain the result we seek to claim.

Any community looking to promote and support innovation requires a focus on collaborative effort, self-empowerment, determination, and cross-sector communication. These tasks rest deeply on ownership: the notion that “I *can* make a relevant contribution to my community or organization’s actions.” If one always looks elsewhere for solutions—believing that someone else has the better idea, is more equipped, or better suited to carry the plan—the community (or nation) will never achieve the greatest public value.

## ENDNOTES

1. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 1963.



ASHLEY M. JONES is a James L. Knight Fellow and poet in the Creative Writing MFA program at Florida International University. She is originally from Birmingham, Alabama, and her poetry has been published in *Aura Literary Arts Review*, *Sanctuary Literary Magazine*, and the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*. She currently serves as the Official Poet for the Little Free Libraries Initiative in Sunrise, Florida, where she teaches poetry workshops to elementary and high school students.

# slaves for sale

*Ashley M. Jones*

“In the land of the Ibo, the Hausa, and the Yoruba, what is the price per barrel of nigrescence?”

—*Harryette Mullen, “Denigration”*

come all come one come all. this one’s twenty this one’s young this one’s got curls for days days days mornings curls eggs and toast curls toast and jam curls pretty little pancake breasts curls afternoons curls nights curls curls and they’re everywhere.

shuffle hop step shuffle hop step

one is tall one is strong how many are black black blue black? i’ll give you three dark for one light. this one talks jungle talk ooh oohs and aaah aahs. monkey talk. banana talk. blues talk. grasshopper jumpin’ jive. shuck jive jive turkey.

flap hop step flap hop step

and now for the kiddies: bill tim bill tim tom tom tim. a buck a piece. a buck a piece. a buck. a buck. strong buck black buck. get em while they’re hot sirs get em hot sirs they’re hot. buy one none free.

shuck jive shuck jive and it don’t stop

# Sojourner Truth Speaks to Her Daughter, 1843

*by Ashley M. Jones*

My girl, you do not want to repeat my life.  
I birthed you kids, standing up, right here by this stove.  
I watched one die still dressed in my blood.

I saw them beat your father  
because owned things can't love on a plantation.  
I saw welts volcano and spurt out all over him.  
I watched his love slide out like puss.

You do not want my tall, my strong,  
you do not want the wrinkles on my face.  
People say I strolled away from slavery  
like it was a Sunday matinee.  
I made speeches, I made words that boomed.  
I can make a mean pan of biscuits. Thick gravy.  
I can feed five children from a single cut of pork.

You do not want too many children  
from a new husband shoved into you.  
You do not want unlove.  
You do not want to sop up the afterbirth  
with your own mop and pail.

You want to know the secret to birthing on your feet?  
Just squat real low, and when you feel it,  
honey, let the tide flow.

# Combating Poverty within the Black Community: Conservative Policy Initiatives Hold Potential Solutions

*Mary Elizabeth Taylor*

MARY ELIZABETH TAYLOR is entering her third year as a member of the Senate Republican Cloakroom staff that is charged with the coordination of policy and floor activities for the Republican leader and his caucus colleagues. While work remains her primary focus, she is also involved with The Fund for American Studies (TFAS), a networking and education program designed to develop young leaders with a shared commitment to helping improve public policy. She was a TFAS Public Policy Fellow in 2012 and continues to serve in various alumni capacities. She holds bachelor of arts degrees from Bryn Mawr College in Spanish and political science with a concentration in the United States governmental system. Her studies culminated in the completion of a year-long senior thesis analyzing the nexus between business and the U.S. federal government and investigating its uses through Sarbanes-Oxley and Dodd-Frank, two laws that regulate the financial system. A native to the Washington, DC, area, Taylor grew up in Great Falls, Virginia, where she attended the National Cathedral School for Girls. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, honing her cooking skills, and pursuing her lifelong love of dance.

## ABSTRACT

The 2008 Great Recession disproportionately impacted Black Americans, resulting in higher poverty for communities that were already impoverished. Traditionally, policies intended to combat poverty have been generated by Democrats; but the trillions of dollars spent have garnered very few positive results. Given the severity of poverty experienced by Black Americans, it is essential to explore new policy options, even if they derive from unlikely sources. In order to effectively alleviate poverty for Black Americans, elected officials need to both explore bipartisan approaches and rely heavily on insights from local community leaders.

While the 2008 Great Recession rocked the world's fiscal foundation, certain sectors of the U.S. population disproportionately took the brunt of the hit and have been supremely disturbed. Black Americans have been particularly impacted in a remarkably short amount of time. According to the University of Massachusetts' Political Economy Research Institute, "The Great Recession produced the largest setback in racial wealth equality in the United

States over the last quarter century." With more than one-quarter of America's Black population currently struggling with poverty, this issue requires an immediate and thoughtful response from policy makers.

In order to combat the truly staggering poverty levels, it is essential for policy makers to reevaluate the causes of poverty in order to determine more effective means of combating it. To create a successful strategy for decreasing poverty levels in African American communities, major federal policy initiatives should include two groups whose voices have not been heard in the past: conservative politicians and local community leaders. Political dialogue between conservatives and liberals must be dramatically improved especially since conservative leaders have demonstrated an ability to foster particularly useful approaches in the battle against poverty. Individual grassroots leaders have employed techniques based on firsthand experience that have also proved successful. Local community leaders' personal experiences provide valuable information that must be incorporated into efforts targeting poverty. The poverty experienced by Black Americans is simply too drastic to ignore. Future poverty campaigns should utilize knowledge from both sides of the nation's political

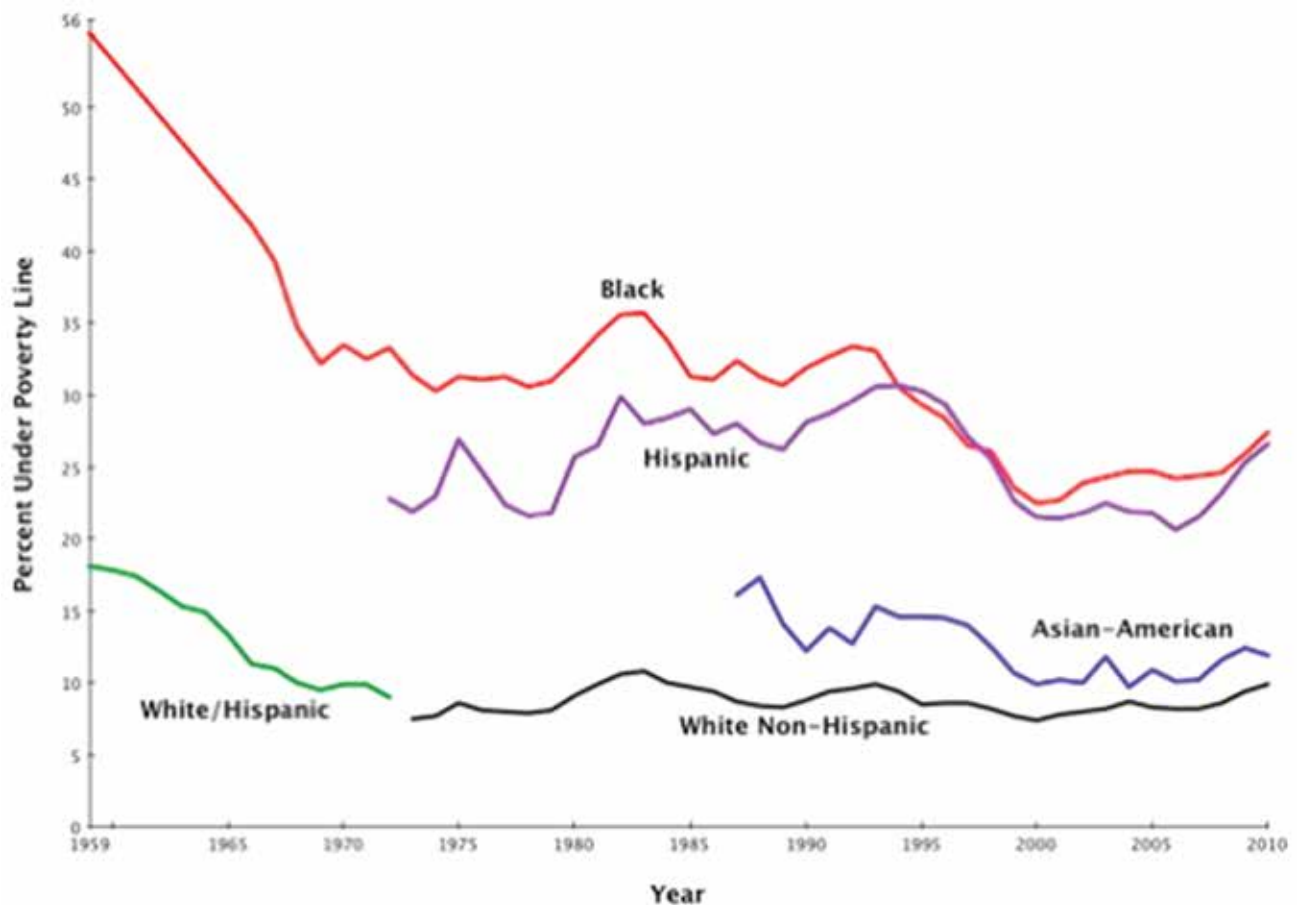
spectrum and incorporate this community knowledge-base.

Economic data reveals the harsh impact of the Great Recession of 2008 on Black Americans. A 2013 U.S. Census Bureau study focusing on poverty rates by race concluded that 14.3 percent of Americans fell below the poverty line between 2007 and 2011; however, while 11.6 percent of White Americans currently struggle with poverty, more than a quarter of the Black population has fallen into poverty at a whopping 25.8 percent.<sup>1</sup> According to an analysis of Federal Reserve data by the Economic Policy Institute, in 2004, the median net worth of White households was \$134,280, with Black households' median net worth at \$13,450.<sup>2</sup> Come 2009, the median net worth for White households had fallen only 24 percent, compared to Black household net worth, which plummeted a full 83 percent, to \$2,170. Historically, when it comes to the Black community, poverty rates and national economic status are closely aligned. As noted in a Washington Post article on 11 July 2012, White poverty rates remain

steadily withstanding the influence of larger economic trends while Black poverty rates are linked with the nation's fiscal standing. As illustrated in Figure 1, the number of Blacks below the poverty line fell and rose in concurrence with both the economic boom of the 1990s and the 2008 recession. This suggests that when the nation undergoes economic strain, Black Americans take the brunt of the hit.

Black Americans' economic susceptibility to downturns appears to be due to a host of related challenges, including a high rate of concentrated poverty. According to a 2013 article from the Economic Policy Institute, 45 percent of poor Black children live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, compared to only 12 percent of poor White children.<sup>4</sup> This article further highlights that concentrated poverty is coupled with a variety of severe social issues currently plaguing the Black community. Children living in these conditions not only "experience more social and behavioral problems, have lower test scores, and are more likely to drop out of school,"<sup>5</sup> but also are exposed to various "environmental hazards that impact health."<sup>6</sup>

**FIGURE 1 — POVERTY RATES BY RACE FOR THE PAST FIFTY YEARS.<sup>3</sup>**



Another severe issue within poorer cities is heightened crime rates, which explains why Black youth have some of the highest homicide mortality rates.<sup>7</sup> The overwhelming poverty issue currently affecting Black America is quite literally a matter of life and death, and subsequently requires immediate and effective policy attention.

The severity of poverty that reigns within the Black community makes it even more essential that policy makers consider all initiatives with the potential to help the problem, no matter from which side of the aisle these ideas may originate. What some may view as an arena for political gamesmanship and posturing is in fact a daunting real-life crisis that hampers progress, dampens spirits, and suffocates financial growth and independence. The political gamesmanship in Washington has created deep “partisan divide . . . [such that political] parties are more polarized than they ever have been in [the past twenty-five years],” said Carroll Doherty, associate director of a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.<sup>8</sup> However, the Black community can no longer afford its economic well-being to be unduly affected by the political gamesmanship of Washington. The harshness of these economic times calls for bold, creative approaches that evolve from various sources and alliances.

In various fields and disciplines, oftentimes success is the result of collaboration. Historically, when the federal government has responded to the welfare of U.S. citizens with the input of politicians from both sides of the aisle, the result has been astounding. Revisiting this history provides an example of why bipartisan approaches to alleviating poverty in Black communities are not just a utopian idea, they are also a necessity. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act is an example of an initiative that was proposed by Democrats, but was based largely on the conservative value of limiting the role of the federal government and granting increased power to the states. The Welfare Reform Act was incredibly successful, and yet when a similar initiative was proposed by a conservative politician some years later, it was rejected. This example shows that bipartisan policy making has the potential to alleviate poverty in the United States; however, when one side is not included in the conversation, the nation’s poor are the ones who suffer.

Signed into law by President Bill Clinton in August 1996, the Welfare Reform Act was an enormous

fundamental shift in how the federal government managed poverty through policy. This law changed the foundation of how the federal government financed cash welfare to low-income families,<sup>9</sup> and Clinton promised Americans that the law would “end welfare as we know it.”<sup>10</sup> The biggest changes rested within the transformation of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program into the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.<sup>11</sup> Doing away with AFDC put to bed the practice of the federal government matching between fifty and eighty-five cents for every dollar the state government spent on these welfare assistance programs.<sup>12</sup> As opposed to the federal government simply matching these funds, TANF states would instead “receive block grants that were usually equal to the amount of federal aid a state received for its AFDC program in 1994.”<sup>13</sup> The new law gave extraordinary power to the states, granting them wider flexibility in how to implement their own welfare programs.

In the years following enactment, the Welfare Reform Act appeared to be a resounding success. After gutting the AFDC and giving significant power to the states, from 1994 to 2005, the caseload of welfare recipients declined by about 60 percent.<sup>14</sup> According to a Brookings Institution testimony before the House Committee on Ways and Means in 2006, just two years before the recent Great Recession, “the number of families receiving cash welfare [was] . . . the lowest it [had] been since 1969, and the percentage of children on welfare [was] lower than it [had] been since 1966.”<sup>15</sup> A Manhattan Institute for Policy Research study found that TANF “accounts for more than half of the decline in welfare participation and more than 60 percent of the rise in employment among single mothers.”<sup>16</sup> While the numbers suggest that Clinton’s Welfare Reform Act greatly improved livelihoods for a significant portion of low-income Americans, what is particularly astounding is the impact the act had within the Black community specifically. The same Manhattan Institute for Policy Research study also found that the severe decrease in welfare participation was largest among disadvantaged single mothers, including Black single mothers.<sup>17</sup> This law is a particularly poignant example of the type of legislation that can and should be used to eradicate poverty in the United States. Although it was signed into law by a Democratic president, the act was based on traditionally conservative ideals.

In January 2014, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Florida) proposed a policy initiative mirroring that of Clinton's Welfare Reform Act, in remarks delivered to highlight conservative reforms for combating poverty. Rubio proposed a "fundamental change to how the federal government fights poverty . . . [by turning] Washington's anti-poverty programs—and the trillions spent on them—over to the states."<sup>18</sup> Similar to the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, today's federal anti-poverty programs would be transformed into a revenue-neutral Flex Fund. Rubio suggested that the United States "streamline most of our existing federal anti-poverty funding into one single agency. Then each year, these Flex Funds would be transferred to the states so they could design and fund creative initiatives that address the factors behind inequality of opportunity."<sup>19</sup> The conservative foundation of granting increased independent power and wider latitude to the states significantly decreased the need of welfare assistance in 1996, but Rubio's proposal did not garner the same support a little more than decade later.

In today's remarkably partisan political atmosphere, too many great policy approaches are tossed aside without receiving due consideration simply because of their political sponsors. Particularly as it concerns the Black community, many conservative ideas are rarely given reasonable consideration. Rubio's proposal of turning power back over to the states has already been criticized, citing that when asked "what might be included in the Flex Fund, [Rubio just replied] that it was being 'worked out,'" and clearly, according to *Slate* writer David Weigel, legislation is not yet ready.<sup>20</sup> While Senator Rubio's initiative may not include the complexities of such large-scale laws as the Welfare Reform Act, it does employ the fundamental concept that helped to improve the lives of millions of Americans—specifically Black Americans—in the 1990s. When Clinton, a Democrat, supported the legislation, ninety-eight Democratic Congressmen and twenty-five Democratic Senators all voted to support the legislation.<sup>21</sup> Even though Rubio, a Republican, is offering similar ideas, solid Democratic support is nowhere to be found.

Even though poverty is such a widespread issue of concern at the national level, it remains an especially local issue in that its victims are affected on a particularly personal level. As opposed to solely large-scale challenges (e.g., macroeconomic shifts), it is

essential to understand the root causes of poverty from the local community level in order to pinpoint more effective solutions. The basic foundations that give rise to poverty may seem quite different while sitting in a politician's chair on Capitol Hill than they do while actually living in those kinds of conditions. The solutions to combating poverty effectively must ultimately come from within the communities themselves. From there, community leaders must work in conjunction with a larger, more expansive support system provided by policy makers. Federal policies to advance local change are most effective when they support the smaller-scale more concentrated efforts from within communities. These initiatives should be developed with direct input from community leaders and the individuals most closely affected by the crisis itself.

In September 2012, the Republican Study Committee launched its Anti-Poverty Initiative, which commenced by bringing together local grassroots leaders to Washington, DC, to work with lawmakers in identifying effective poverty-combating solutions.<sup>22</sup> Spearheaded by the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (CNE) and the Heritage Institute, the 2012 summit joined a group of members of Congress and local community leaders, working in a cooperative spirit on a nonpartisan agenda. Here, what impressed the national policy leaders was the depth and breadth of the community leaders' individual and collective experience and expertise. Many of these grassroots leaders spent their entire careers building their own organizations to help "overcome drug addiction, homelessness, poor education, criminal histories, violence, a lack of role models," all various causes and effects of poverty.<sup>23</sup> This particular nexus of people brought together for the Anti-Poverty Initiative summit provides a particularly useful perspective on efforts to pinpoint effective, timely means of reducing and eradicating poverty in our nation. During the conference, lawmakers listened to the message that the community leaders brought to the conference and aligned it with available research and statistical information.

One issue highlighted during the Initiative that drastically affects poverty within the Black community is the rate of married households versus single parent households. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between 2007 and 2009, only 7 percent of Black households with a married couple fell below the poverty line, while a staggering 35.6 percent of Black

households led solely by a female fell below the poverty line.<sup>24</sup> In a 2009 report, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimated that approximately twenty-five million children are living without their biological (or adoptive) fathers and have, on average, at least a two to three times higher chance to use drugs, face poverty, or experience health and emotional problems.<sup>25</sup> While there is no sufficient evidence to claim that a fatherless home assuredly leads toward poverty, there is undeniable data demonstrating that those children without an engaged father have a drastically higher rate of social and economic setbacks.<sup>26</sup> Grassroots leaders during the Anti-Poverty Initiative 2012 summit confirmed the numerical evidence that suggests that there are immense benefits to having a strong two-parent family.

A prime resource for information during the summit was Bishop Shirley Holloway, CEO and founder of the House of Help City of Hope, a substance abuse and homeless program providing assistance to men, women, and families, which has helped over two thousand individuals in Washington, DC, for more than ten years.<sup>27</sup> Holloway specifically highlighted the importance of creating and maintaining a strong family unit in her strategy to her long-standing, successful assistance. Holloway prides herself on simply providing those struggling with poverty the “building blocks” to mend their lives.<sup>28</sup> An essential building block involves sustaining guidance for men and women to help form and foster their marriages. Holloway has an impeccable retention rate: one hundred couples have married through her ministry, ninety-seven of which are still intact.<sup>29</sup> With several personal anecdotes about the importance of providing help to pull individuals up over the poverty level, a central factor remains that a strong, stable family with a two-parent household has been a particularly successful part of the formula.

Paul Echtencamp of the Youth Challenge of Connecticut program, another summit attendee, believes, “If you [want to] reach the addict, you have to reach the family.”<sup>30</sup> Roman Herrera of the San Antonio, Texas-based Outcry in the Barrio ministry echoed the efforts of Holloway: “We live in a fatherless society . . . and there will always be a hole in a heart where that relationship is missing.”<sup>31</sup>

The conclusions derived from discussions during the summit support one overriding message: the federal government must support the vital work that

local community leaders can and should initiate independently. As enormous as it is, the federal government simply does not have the resources to provide personalized care that is the true key to alleviating poverty. It is just too large, and programs at the federal level are too rigid. It can, however, help the fight against poverty by supporting the efforts deployed at the state and local levels. The success stories of Bishop Holloway, echoed by her peers within the field, are a testament to how fruitful and successful the local community can be when it is able to work independently of big government restraints. Grassroots initiatives have proven to be successful in the past, while many view federal government welfare spending as inefficient and ineffective. While well intentioned, founder and president of the CNE Robert Woodson believes that “[lawmakers] ask not which problems are solvable, but which problems are fundable.”<sup>32</sup> With federal funds on low-income assistance programs reaching \$746 billion in 2011, grassroots leaders want to ensure that the money is being spent effectively.<sup>33</sup> The root causes of poverty tend to rest in an individual’s failed relationships, which, to heal, ultimately take genuine and long-term personal commitment—two qualities the gigantic federal government may not necessarily be able to offer by itself.<sup>34</sup> The local communities are the best environment in which to immediately spearhead these efforts, which can be *supported* by the federal government. The federal government needs to take the lead from the community in combating poverty within the Black community—not the other way around.

The overwhelming poverty adversely affecting today’s Black population demands immediate and effective policy attention. Instead of throwing billions of dollars at what they *believe* will help alleviate poverty, lawmakers need to listen to local grassroots leaders who truly *know* the techniques that are effective at alleviating poverty. The people who have dedicated their lives to helping uplift individuals around them are the experts. These are the people who have identified and implemented successful strategies to do what the government cannot necessarily do on its own. While the federal government should support the efforts of local initiatives—perhaps helping to fund future fatherhood programs led by personalized institutions—it should caution against stamping its heavy-handed foot down in the way of local approaches. To be effective, partisanship should be laid aside, paving the way for both government

and community leaders to work in tandem to tackle the problem from both a macro and a micro level. Only then can the issue of poverty in Black America be vetted, examined, and, eventually, successfully tackled.

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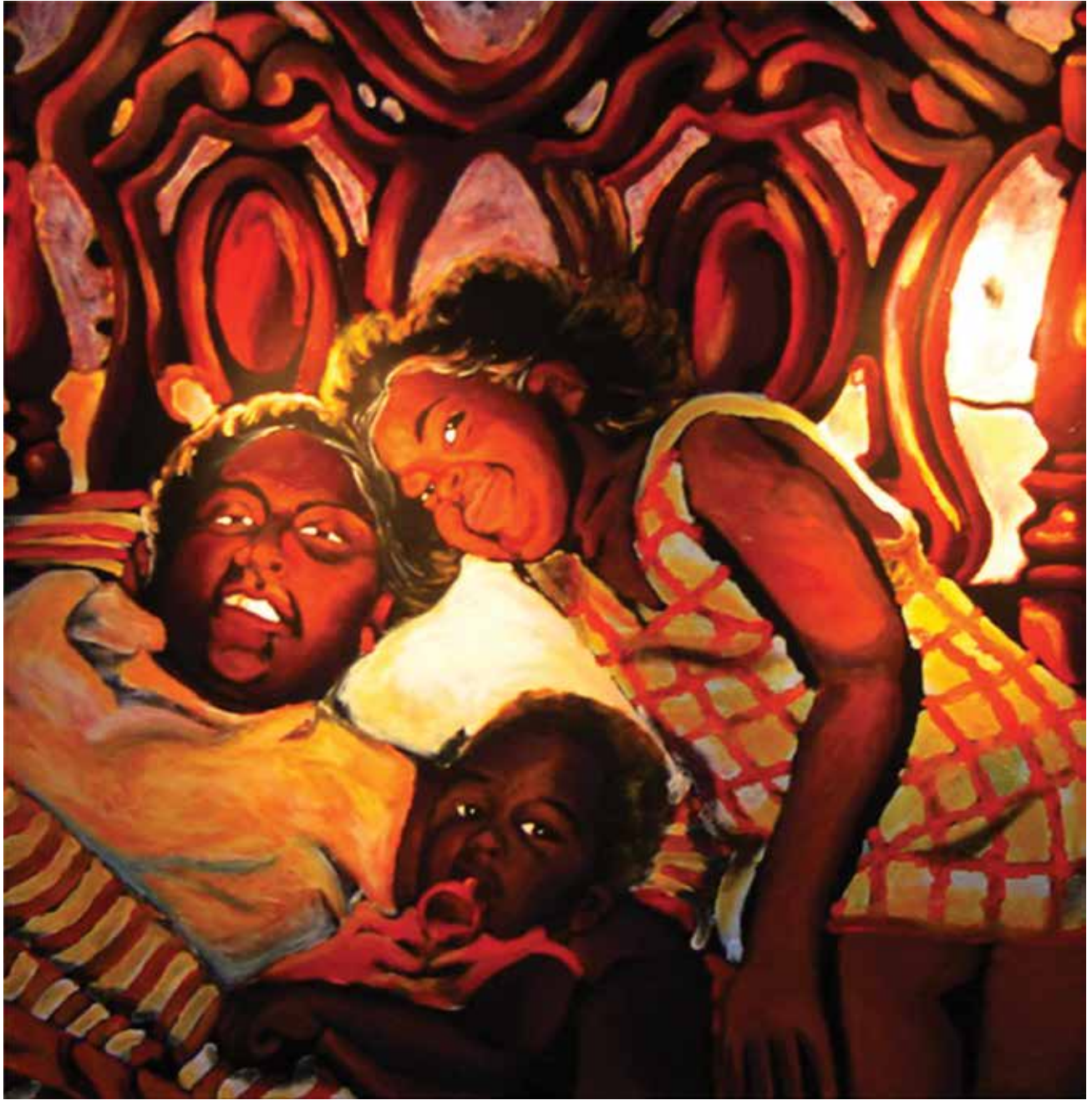


# Art

## Lionel Daniels

LIONEL DANIELS, *painter and performer, hails from Decatur, GA. He graduated from Morehouse College Phi Beta Kappa Summa Cum Laude with a degree in Studio Art in 2011. He earned the honor of being an Oprah Winfrey Scholar, Robinson Scholar, Morehouse College Presidential Ambassador, and 1st Attendant to Mr. Atlanta University Center.*

*A true finger painter, Lionel uses this technique in his performance style of painting as well as in his photo expressionist paintings. His performance work features painting, dancing, acts, and audience interaction. His intention is to inspire others to focus on their gifts, talents, and dreams. With the use of sepia photographs in his photo expressionist paintings, he focuses on people, color, and expressing the ambiance of the photo while still creating a mood of remembrance and tribute. Lionel has performed at numerous events in the Atlanta University Center, schools and churches in metro Atlanta, Alabama and Louisiana, and several festivals including the National Black Arts Festival (2012–2013) and Sweet Auburn Fest (2012–2013). He was featured on CBS Atlanta and Richmond as well as the Word Network. He exhibited work at Morehouse College, Spelman College, Roswell Cultural Art Center, and along the Atlanta Beltline. In 2013 he was recognized by the state of Georgia Legislature in Resolution 772. Lionel recently moved to Washington D.C where he will perform and exhibit his work fall 2014. | Website: [www.lioneld.com](http://www.lioneld.com)*



**3. Bedtime, 2010**

Finger Painted, Acrylic on Black Canvas  
48in x 48in



**Untitled**

Live Painting, Along the Atl Beltline

Finger Painted, Acrylic on Black Canvas

48in x 96in

2013



# The Fifth Pillar: A Case for Hip-Hop Architecture

**Sekou Cooke**

**D**J Kool Herc, the Sugarhill Gang, Crazy Legs, Cornbread. The DJ, the MC, the b-boy, and the graffiti writer follow the urban planner. Each has a legitimate claim of paternity, but the true father of hip-hop is Moses. The tyrannical, omnipotent, and mercilessly efficient head of several New York City public works organizations, Robert Moses, did more in his fifty-year tenure to shape the physical and cultural conditions required for hip-hop's birth than any other force of man or nature. His grand vision for the city indifferently bulldozed its way through private estates, middle-class neighborhoods, and slums. His legacy: 658 playgrounds, 28,000 apartment units, 2,600,000 acres of public parks, Flushing Meadows, Jones Beach, Lincoln Center, all interconnected by 416 miles of parkways and 13 bridges including the Verrazano Narrows and—his personal cash machine—the Triborough Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Ville Radieuse made manifest, not by Le Corbusier, the visionary architect, but by “the best bill drafter in Albany.”<sup>2</sup> This new urbanism deepened the rifts within class and culture already present in post-war New York, elevated the rich to midtown penthouses and weekend escapes to the Hamptons and the Hudson Valley, and relegated the poor to crowded subways and public housing towers—a perfect incubator for

*SEKOU COOKE is a Jamaican-born architect and educator interested in the overlap between academia and practice. His decision at the beginning of his career to focus on built works sparked a broadened perspective on the relationship between architecture's conceptual aspirations and the realities of construction and entrepreneurship.*

*He holds a bachelor of architecture degree from Cornell University, a master of architecture degree from Harvard University, and architecture licenses in New York and California. He has spearheaded a series of key collaborations for competition entries, building proposals, and building commissions in both states. He currently teaches design studios and seminars in the School of Architecture at Syracuse University.*

a fledgling counterculture. One need not know all the lyrics to Grandmaster Flash's “The Message” or Melle Mel's “White Lines” to appreciate the incendiary structures built by Moses and his policies. As the Bronx began to burn, hip-hop began to rise.

Each major cultural shift in Western society—Renaissance, Baroque, Modernism—has had its register in a plurality of creative outlets: theater, music, dance, fine art, and architecture. The first four art forms find their counterparts in the “four pillars of hip-hop”: deejaying, emceeing, b-boying, and graffiti writing. Architecture is lost. Hip-hop would not exist if not for architecture, urbanism, and city planning. So why does hip-hop architecture not exist? If it does, who are its practitioners? If it is yet to exist, how will it come to be? And, if we do eventually reconcile hip-hop's recondite relationship with architecture, how will communities, spaces, and lives transform?

Architecture has lived for most of its history atop the Ivory Tower. Though issues of diversity and underrepresentation in the field have gained increased popular attention, 150 years after the founding of the academy, power and control within the profession remain in the hands of white men with white hair and black



suits. Of all the creative forms, architecture was (and is) the least accessible to the denizens of the South Bronx. This academic mountain, as Architect magazine senior editor Kriston Capps explains in “Architecture Could Use Some Help from Kanye West,” can prove insurmountable

*The practice, profession, and discipline of architecture have not been particularly receptive to the hip-hop nation.*

*Conversely, hip-hop has embraced both the skill-set and mindset of the architect.*

to poor Blacks and Latinos faced with the five to seven years required for a professional degree program and the 5,600 hours required for intern development.<sup>3</sup> The absence of a significant minority presence in the field—less than required to muster a voice relevance—reinforces the disconnect between designers and users. Cultural influence and social agency is far easier to acquire via a set of turntables, a microphone, a pair of Adidas, or a can of spray paint.

The practice, profession, and discipline of architecture have not been particularly receptive to the hip-hop nation. Conversely, hip-hop has embraced both the skillset and mindset of the architect. The DJ's use of tracks as existing conditions and vocals as interventions structurally evokes adaptive reuse projects. Speaking over dance beats extracted from popular songs of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a practice Kool Herc borrowed from his Jamaican counterparts, DJs created an entirely new form of engagement with an otherwise familiar song. Remix is renovation. The MC's improvisational and iterative calibration of the spoken word in distinctive verse closely aligns with architectural design processes. The reciprocal nature of music and architecture has been canonized by Goethe's statement, “I call architecture frozen music”<sup>4</sup> and Le Corbusier's reference to jazz as “the music of an era of construction.”<sup>5</sup> Hip-hop's unique structure creates a framework for new spatial relationships, and its lyrics

(see “The Message”) continually reflect on the physical conditions of the urban environment. Rap is construction. Beyond the choreographic correlation of dance and architecture, the b-boy's appropriation of public space can be recognized as a space-making exercise similar to temporary installations and urban interventions. Breaking, which began as occupation of street corners, alleys, and subway platforms, marks territory within the city via the cardboard box and the dance circle. Breakdance is form. The graffiti writer's work, with its use of the built form as canvas and its inherently projective representational logic, carries more architectural gravity than any of the other pillars. The perceptual environment of New York, Philadelphia, and many urban cores, first in the United States and later internationally, was systematically and permanently altered by tags, throw-ups, and more elaborate pieces on street walls, bridges, billboards, and, most dynamically, on subway cars that painted the city's overpasses and tunnels during the 1970s and 1980s. Graffiti is surface.

Michael Ford, adjunct professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture, who first positioned Le Corbusier and Moses at the origin of hip-hop culture,<sup>6</sup> has created a body of research dedicated to hip-hop architecture. His work cites a series of examples that hypothesize where hip-hop architecture, if it exists, might be found today. These range from architecturally inspired logos for sports brands, to surrealist building typology depictions, to partnerships between pop-culture

*Hip-hop architecture, in its new definition, will embody the spirit of hip-hop's birth, and use the tools of the architect to create structures and built environment.*

icons and prominent practitioners. However, graphic designer Darrin Crescenzi using orthographic projections of a basketball court to design LeBron James's new logo is not exactly hip-hop architecture. Artist Filip Dujardin remixing photographs of buildings comes close, but is



not hip-hop architecture. Pharrell Williams and architect Zaha Hadid, both of whom operate at the leading edge of their respective fields, collaborating on a design for prefab houses has a little hip-hop and a little architecture, but is still not hip-hop architecture. These examples have yet to synthesize the disparate elements of an unidentified form into a cohesive whole.

Some have come closer than this, over the years, attempting to bring architecture in alignment with the hip-hop revolution. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) of the 1970s, the architectural job market of the 1980s, and the academic discourse of the 1990s each mirrored the conditions that birthed hip-hop. When the twelve Black practitioners who founded the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) took a revolutionary stance and seceded from the AIA during their 1971 convention in Detroit, Michigan,<sup>7</sup> they focused more on professional recognition than protestation of an oppressive system, and thus remained excluded from the movement. Jack Travis, a young architect at the time of NOMA's founding, spent a significant portion of his career calling attention to the

work of Black practitioners, culminating in his 1992 book *African-American Architects in Current Practice*. Since then, his primary research has centered on the definition of an “Afrocentric aesthetic,” a stylistic model for Black architecture. Manifestations of this project have been limited to façade treatments or brick patterns, invoke formal and textural references to Kente cloth, yet lack an explicit response to social and environmental conditions, removing his from inclusion as hip-hop architecture. *Appendix*, the short-lived journal edited by Darell W. Fields, Kevin L. Fuller, and Milton S.F. Curry, set the explicit intention of presenting a counterpoint to “individuals and institutions involved more in maintaining social codes rather than in providing substantive insights, no matter the cost to existing traditions.”<sup>8</sup> The confrontational arguments made for the publication's right to be have the vitriol of hip-hop coursing through its veins. Despite these intentions, the pedigree of its contributors—including Cornel West, Preston Scott Cohen, and Ila Berman (who contributes a critical review of Travis's book), most with master's degrees, PhDs, or faculty appointments from Ivy League

universities—strips the journal of its street cred. As such, the endeavor is recognizable as an affront to the academic rather than a constructed environment.

To properly define hip-hop architecture, we must first define each of its component terms. Definitions of the word “architecture” tend to be vague and cumbersome, even when they exclude misnomers like “Web architect,” “information architect,” “lash architect,” or “architect of the Iraq war.” For example, the *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture* provides a 200-word explanation of the term, beginning with a reference to an 1849 work by art critic John Ruskin and ending with a cynical quote from architect Philip Johnson defining architecture as “the art of how to waste space.”<sup>9</sup> A singular AIA-sanctioned definition is difficult to find. The preface to the 1951 edition of the *Handbook of Professional Practice* refers to “the science of building” and excludes any aspiration toward “architecture as an art.”<sup>10</sup> However, in his introductory essay to the book *Architecture: Celebrating the Past, Designing the Future: Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the American Institute of Architects*, Robert Ivy, Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, calls architecture “the art of building.”<sup>11</sup> Additionally, no consensus is found in the definitions posited by the representative licensing boards in each of the United States. Most refer to buildings or groups of buildings, some include evaluation, planning, and teaching, in addition to design service, and many are concerned with the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Jody Brown, AIA, on his “Coffee with an Architect” Web site, proposes several alternative definitions including “homes that hipsters admire,” “the solid form of angst,” and the equation “Architecture = Career – Relevance.”<sup>12</sup>

Hip-hop’s definition is far less vague. It is unanimously recognized by reference standards, from *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* to *urbandictionary.com*, that hip-hop, though exemplified by rap music, includes all four stylistic elements or “pillars” previously listed. Hip-hop is a subculture—a movement that comprises an entire generation of performers, artists, thinkers, and designers, and began with young urban Blacks and Latinos. Even as the art forms find acceptance and legitimacy within contemporary culture—in fashion, film, television, literature, poetry, and education—there is a core of hip-hop that preserves its counterculture status. DJs now come from upper-class neighborhoods in European cities, MCs now perform in the Super Bowl halftime show, breakers now sell “hip-hop aerobics” workout programs, graffiti is now displayed in the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, and the hip-hop

lifestyle generates more than ten billion dollars per year.<sup>13</sup> Hip-hop has evolved beyond the limits of Black music, indeed beyond the musical or artistic forms, into a global phenomenon.

Hip-hop architecture, in its new definition, will embody the spirit of hip-hop’s birth, and use the tools of the architect to create structures and built environments. It will be practiced by those raised in architecture’s traditions and hip-hop’s realities. It will be both antiestablishment and socially responsible. It will embrace the contradiction of conditions through which it emerged—idealized communities envisioned by a celebrated architect and executed by an infamous planner—and take a revolutionary stance toward the preservation of public health, safety, and welfare. The fifth pillar will be built by, for, and upon the hip-hop generation.

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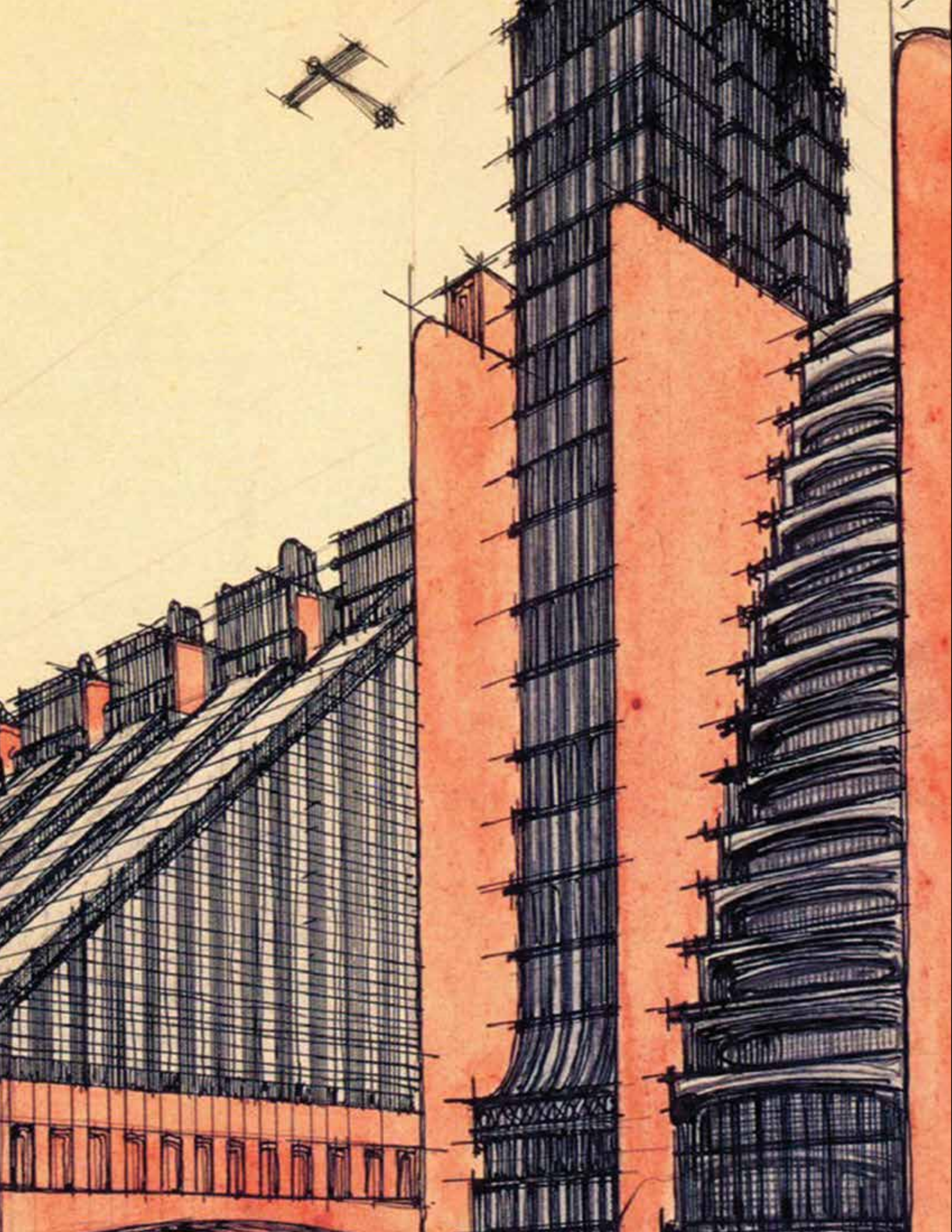
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# What the Glass Eye Saw *for Sammy Davis, Jr.*

*Ashley M. Jones*

Back doors, wood floors.  
The scuffs taps leave on stages.  
The twinkle in Old Blue's Eye.  
Temples and steeples and millions of men.  
Rubies and diamonds on ten nimble fingers.  
The curve of a dancer's back  
and how it fits softly in a palm.  
Towers of pomade jars  
and scented oils  
and glasses and glasses of brandy.  
Piles of cigarette ash  
and the doctor's nagging eyes.  
The waiter serving sherry  
and the piano player's thick brown hands.  
The mirrored, metallic, blackskinned  
shoes for tonight's all new revue.  
The black backsides  
of the world's smiling white teeth.





# Phonotropolis: Designing a Sound City

## Héctor Tarrido-Picart

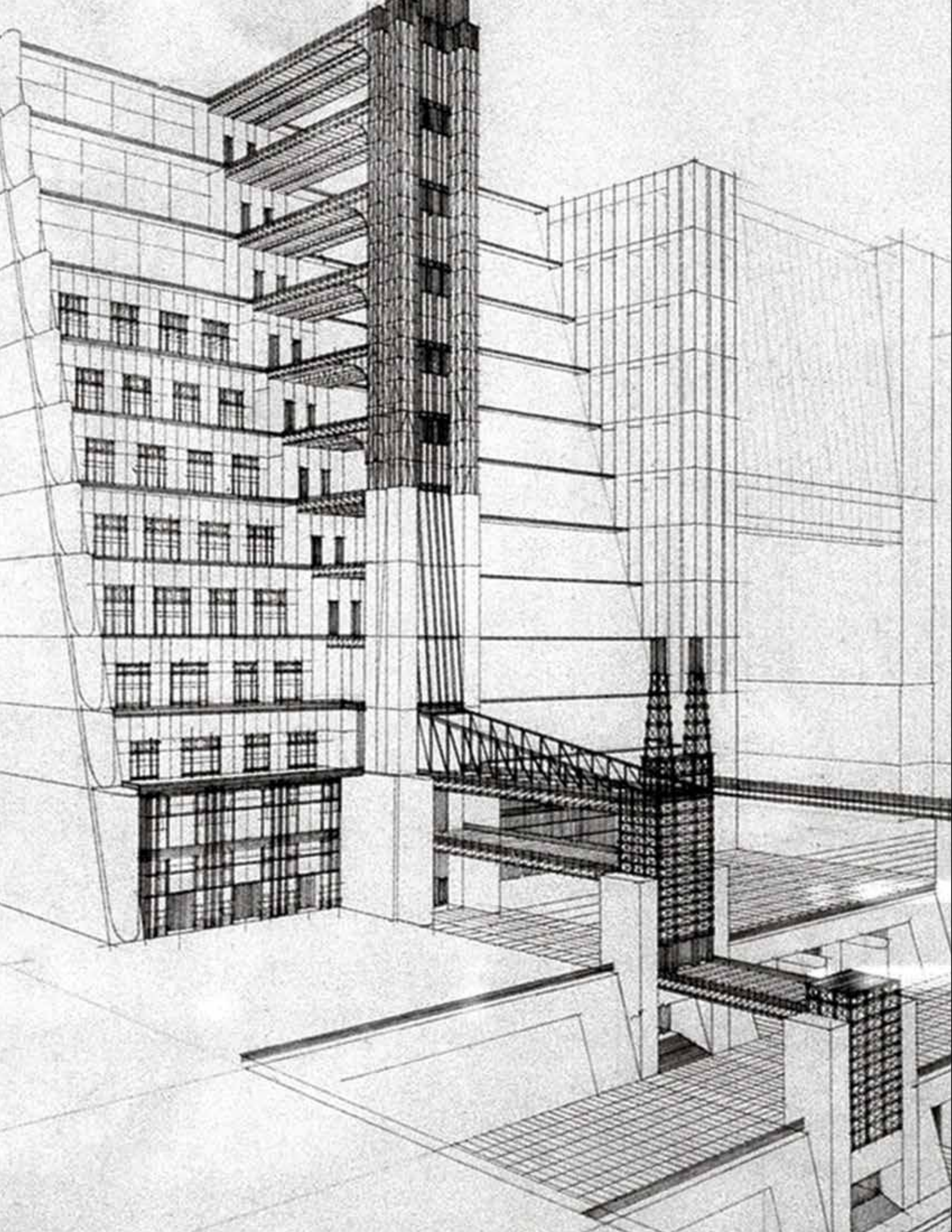
HECTOR TARRIDO-PICART is a designer from San Juan, Puerto Rico. He is copresident of the Harvard University African-American Student Union and previously served as its secretary. As part of Neil Brenner's Urban Theory Lab, Tarrido-Picart is currently researching urbanization processes that are transforming the Pacific Ocean. He is also a founding member of the Urban Wild Lab, a research laboratory that is exploring the field of remote sensing, urban ecology, and landscape architecture through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles. His work has been exhibited at the Cooper Union School of Architecture, the Global Urban Humanities Initiative at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University's Loeb Library.

He holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from Cornell University and is currently pursuing a master's of architecture in urban design and a master's degree in landscape architecture at Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Jazz . . . that's right, jazz; lately that has been the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of cities. Some people see brick and mortar, some people see transportation infrastructure. Some people see culture, shopping malls, parks, cars, and taxis. Lately the way I see and think about cities has changed. I see tonalities, colors, shades, and notes. Not only do I see jazz, but other types of music as well: hip-hop, rumba, salsa, blues. I hear them all. But not as notes, I hear them as noise—urban noise. The too-tooms, too-tooms. Taac tacs, taac tacs, tac tacs tact tactactac tac taatac taatac. HUUUUUNK, hUUUUUNK. Shhhhhiiiiwaooooo. Different musical instruments represent different city phenomena: subways, airplanes, buses, cars. One could say I have adapted from having an optic approach to a phonetic approach. To me, it is of immense importance because my background as an architect has trained me to, first and foremost, approach everything I sense through my sight. I have come to see music in cities and cities in music. It has pushed me to think that, rather than music existing within the framework of cities, cities exist within the framework of music. Jazz, with its birth and development intricately related to the development of cities in the United States, holds a particular position

in this dialectic between music shaping cities and cities shaping music. African Americans, as the chief creators and innovators in the field of jazz, have provided the theoretical framework to further innovate the design of cities. Hence, music can become an organizer of a city and not just something that inhabits it. But in order to see the contributions jazz can make to the design of cities, we first have to learn how to *listen* to jazz.

Cities are all around us. Cities are part of most of our experience as members of the African American community. Rarely do we get to discuss cities and, more specifically, urban planning outside of our lived experience. We encounter policies like stop-and-frisk, being priced out of a neighborhood by high rents, or being deceived into accepting a subprime loan for a mortgage. We also deal with lack of materials and clean facilities in our schools as part of the broken education system as well as lack of access to adequate health care facilities and nutritious food. These are headlines we are all too familiar with, and these are issues that we should continue to fight in order to provide adequate solutions for people inside and outside our community. In spite of these urban hardships, we are also individuals that dream and imagine. The harsh reality and the





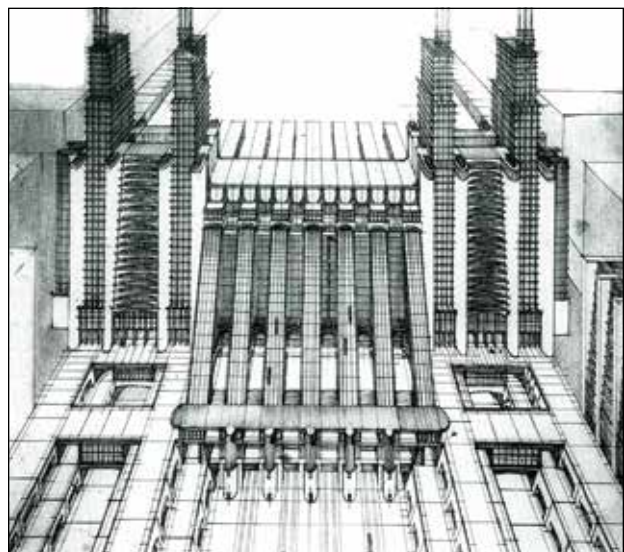
dream of a better city exist as two polar opposites, but not as two mutually exclusive moods. The musical contributions that African Americans have made in the United States are a testament to that. Blues, jazz, and hip-hop are all born out of that contradiction; often expedited by migration from region to region, from a city in the South to a city in the North. All had in common the expression of both the suffering and also the hope and imagination of the musicians.

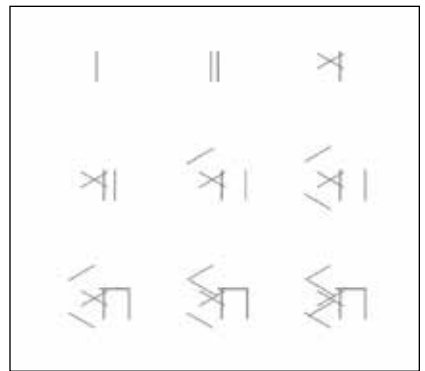
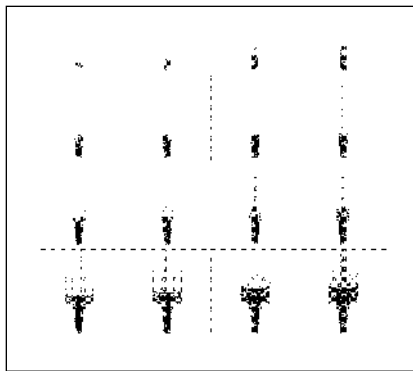
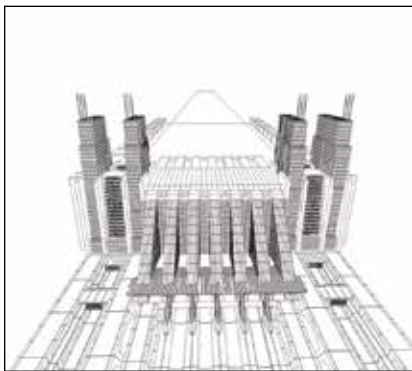
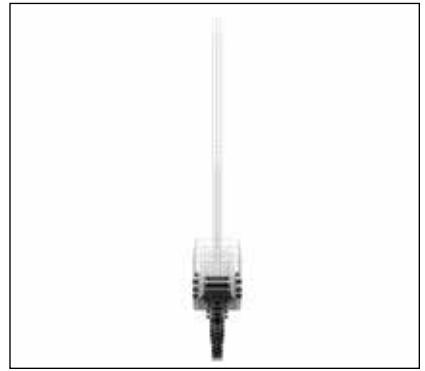
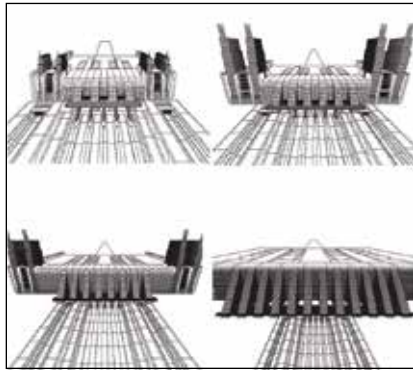
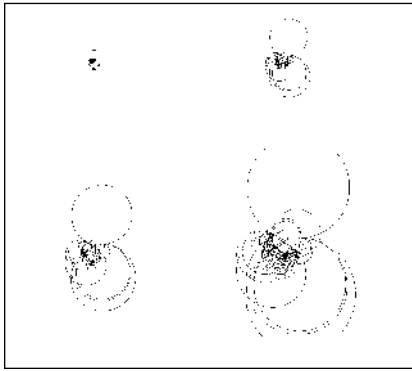
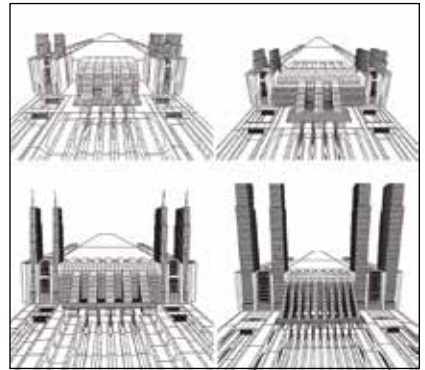
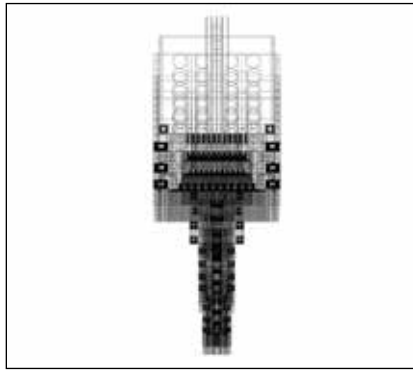
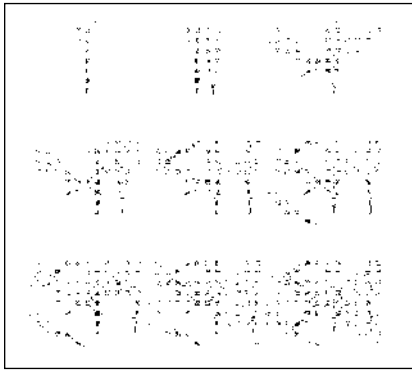
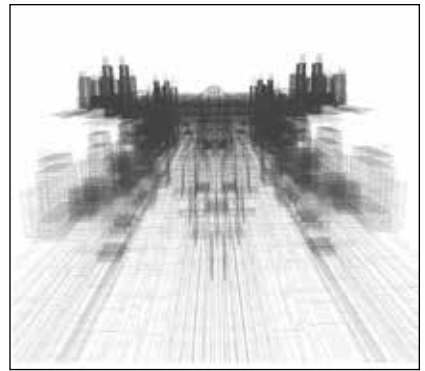
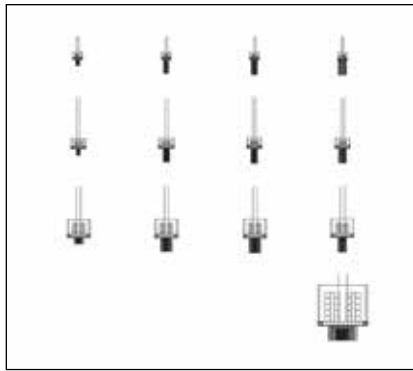
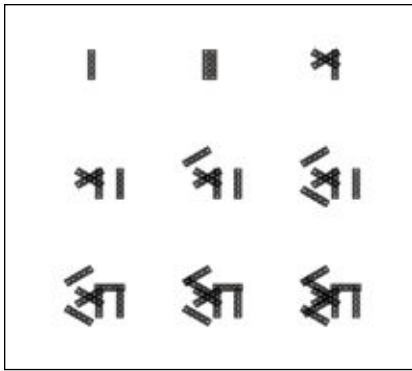
Last semester I decided I needed to allow my imagination to let go. Rather than think of how I would improve Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York with traditional urban design interventions like a new park or a new district, maybe what I needed was to think of a city driven by both my imagination and my growing interest in its phonetical components. I based my imagined city on the work of the Italian Futurist architect Antonio Sant'Elia. As a member of the Futurist movement, Sant'Elia produced some of the most amazing renderings of what contemporary Milan would look like if it were to be modernized back in the 1910s. Apartment complexes were integrated into subway systems and towers with elevators. The centerpiece of the project was an airport and train station that allowed for a seamless transition between the terrain and the air. Sant'Elia's airport-train station was truly revolutionary because it predicted the emergence of intermodal hubs that now tend to characterize international airports and train stations.

The objective that I set for myself was to use the text and Sant'Elia's renderings as a basis to translate and transform *La Citta Nuova's* airport-train station; to

*African Americans, as the chief creators and innovators in the field of jazz, have provided the theoretical framework to further innovate the design of cities.*

construct a new city based on sound and noise rather than buildings. *La Citta Nuova* would become *La Citta Rumorosa*—the city of noise. I took as the point of departure the centerpiece of Sant'Elia's project, the airport-train station and used the variable parameters of the machines that the station would house as the basis for organizing this new city. In order to limit the possibilities, I limited the machines to four of each kind. For the airplanes I used the metrics of a cross-continental A380 jet, a medium-sized E190 jet, a private Beechcraft 1900 jet, and a two-person Cessna 180 airplane. For the trains I used the metrics of a TGV bullet train, an Amtrak Acela Express train, a Renfe 130, and a Renfe 490 commuter train. The decision to choose the types of airplanes and trains was simply to have a cross-spectrum range of the different planes flying or trains traveling today. One typically takes an A380 when going for a trip to Spain or Nigeria, while Cessna's are usually piloted by people who have





a passion for small-scale aviation. You would take the TGV bullet train if you were traveling from Paris to London (it will get you there fast, very fast); on the other hand, you would board a Renfe 130 or a Renfe 490 if you were going to visit your grandmother in the suburbs of Spain. In any case, the decibel limit that a human can withstand became the new zoning and city layout mechanism. The physical contours of the airplanes and trains would organize the city. Industrial parks were placed most proximate to the airport given that they share similar decibel levels during production. Residential blocks were placed at the most distant areas to accommodate for acoustic comfort. Everything else lied in between.

With modern standards for aviation and rail in mind, I created a new phonetic city. Air speed, dominant winds, sound contours, airplane capacity, train capacity, turning radii, sound of speed—these formed the basis for how to create a city that is in constant motion between airports and train stations. The different volumes, tempos, and tones of the machines created the fabric of the phonetic city. One would think that a city organized through the logic of these two machines, airplane and trains, would produce a highly ordered city. Instead, the phonetic city created an urban fabric that tended toward higher degrees of entropy as the capacity of the machines grew. Rather than organization, the city became increasingly disorganized as more machines and metrics were added. City street grids did not align. Corridors tended to collide. Urban blocks shifted ever so slightly to create fuzzy conditions where it was not clear where a block started or ended. This city was beyond the cleanly organized layout Sant’Elia envisioned. It was a city that for all intents and purposes became more than its initial constituent parts. *La Citta Rumorosa*, the city created by the noise of the machines, became a Meta-Futurist city.

*La Citta Rumorosa* came as a surprise and completely contradicted the assumed Futurist potential of the world being organized completely following the mechanical logic of industrial production. But while the revelations of *La Citta Rumorosa* went against the Futurist logic of order, it pointed toward a much richer conclusion: *La Citta Rumorosa* assimilates the complexity of contemporary cities we find all around the world today. Unfinished grids, collage portions of cities, overlapping districts, these all exist within cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. And it is in these conditions

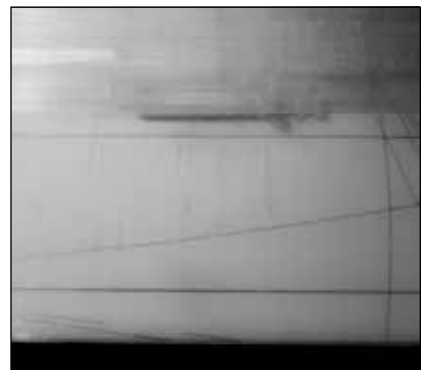
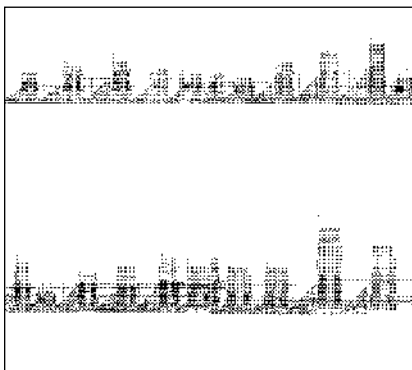
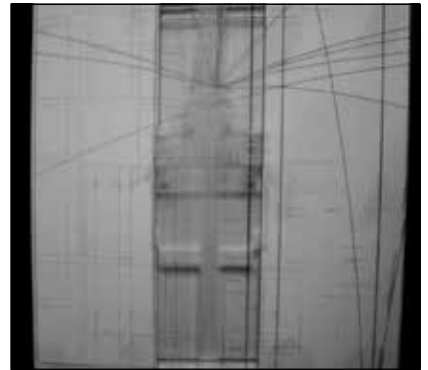
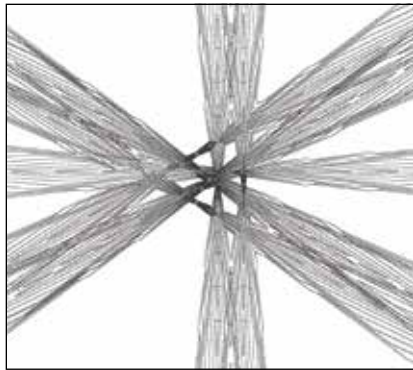
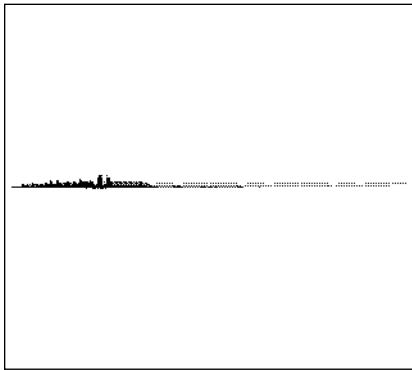
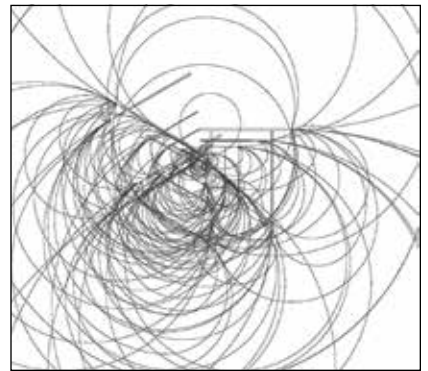
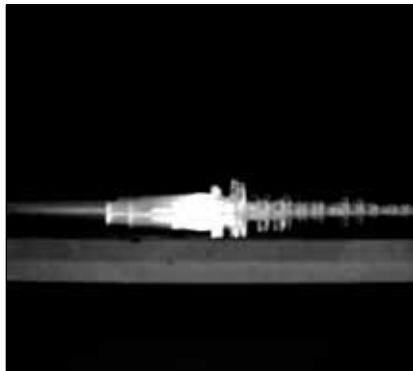
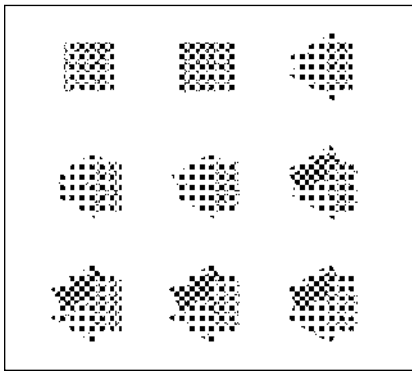
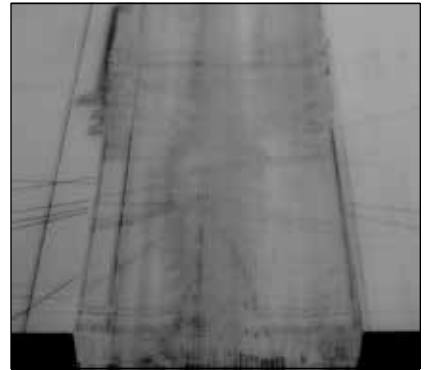
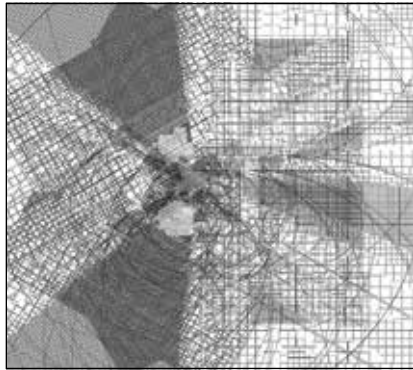
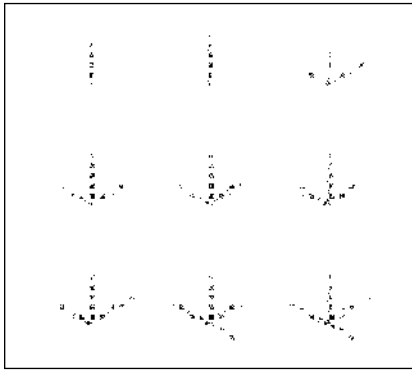
that one starts to find the texture that makes up cities at the scale that we experience them. It is here that the city becomes the infrastructure for the cultural phenomena we partake: dead end streets that lend themselves for block parties or a good domino tournament or the location of a node or a plaza that allows for public gatherings like a protest or an impromptu concert are but two examples. *La Citta Rumorosa* was starting to look like a city that, unlike master planned cities in the past, could have actual cultural richness.

But, there was another revelation embedded in *La Citta Rumorosa*. Entropy would not make *La Citta Rumorosa* rich. In order for the city to be truly alive and rich, it needed to register itself through its main mechanisms of reproduction and through culture. It was not simply that the fuzzy spaces in *La Citta Rumorosa* could be inhabited, the inhabitation was a given, rather the challenge was how that entropy would manifest through other means. Obviously, that was outside of the scope of *La Citta Rumorosa*, but it made me think of how we inhabit cities today and how a city could be captured through noise and music. I remembered a passage by the architect Le Corbusier from a memoir of his travels to the United States. In the chapter titled “The Spirit of the Machine, and the Negroes in the USA,” Le Corbusier states that in order to understand the complexity, the energy, the sheer innovation, and the awesomeness of New York City, one just needed to go to a live show of Louis Armstrong. He writes:

*When the train goes through a tunnel, I am sure that you have been struck by the heroic music that seems to come from inside you; the mechanically precise rhythmic armature formed by the walls of the tunnel is such that you cannot be unaware of the music. As the minutes pass, the cadences vary like the textures of a great symphony. An admirable subject of study for anyone interested in classifying the creative forces which are always available.*

*I say Armstrong has recognized these ever-present voices and his genius has put them into music. In an excited Manhattan, the Negroes of the USA have breathed into jazz the song, the rhythm and the sound of machines.<sup>1</sup>*

Indeed, Armstrong at the time did capture the energy of the city through sound. He had captured the entropy of New York City through music. Armstrong





understood what cities were made of. He was able to capture the city phonetically, with all its fuzziness, all its contradictions, all its entropy. Armstrong, coming from a tropical urban environment in New Orleans, developing his craft in Chicago, and becoming a master of his instrument in New York, was a better urban theorist and designer than any architect in his time. Le Corbusier also saw Armstrong and jazz at that time as being ahead of architecture:

*Jazz, like skyscrapers, is an event and not a deliberately conceived creation. They represent the forces of today. The jazz is more advanced than the architecture. If architecture were at the point reached by jazz, it would be an incredible spectacle. I repeat: Manhattan is hot jazz in stone and steel. The contemporary renewal has to attach itself to some point. The Negroes have fixed that point through music. Their simple spirit has caused the reformation to spring up from the depths and has situated it in our own times.<sup>2</sup>*

For Le Corbusier, Louis Armstrong and jazz were both shaping New York City and its skyscraper landscape. Le Corbusier also identified what Armstrong had already recognized through his music: cities perform like jazz. With this in mind, and with the cultural richness many American cities have, we can say that cities have notes. These notes are not musical notes, but rather notes that get inscribed in the everyday living of the people that inhabit them. And they are generated by the same machinery that generated the fabric of *La Citta Rumorosa*. But the urban notes that existed and continue to exist in cities can feed back into musical notes. Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane could all be described as musicians that tried to translate urban notes into musical notes. These key musicians also helped develop an entropic approach to music. And for whatever reason, every time I hear any of these musicians, I hear the complexities, the colors, the grids. I hear the city—the city that I never got to hear when looking at what is taught to us as canonical master plans by Le Corbusier, Baron Haussmann, or Peter Eisenman. In designing *La Citta Rumorosa*, I was observing the same reality that Le Corbusier was observing when he travelled to New York City. And this is because the entropic state and complexity of the city share many similarities to the revolutionary contribution African Americans have made to music. Armstrong's

introduction of swing, improvisation, and the twelve-bar blues to jazz, Parker's expansion of the chromatic scale and unmelodic improvisation, and Davis's modal playing were musical contributions that were unheard of.<sup>3</sup> These were also musical contributions that European composers at the beginning of the twentieth century were theorizing but were having trouble implementing. For example, Futurist composer Francesco Balilla Pratella was actively experimenting with atonality and subchromatic microtones.<sup>4</sup> Luigi Russolo, another Futurist composer, organized orchestras that played the sound of the cities using specially constructed instruments that captured Pratella's atonalities and noise of the city. But while these European composers were theorizing and trying to revolutionize the classical framework that existed in Europe, African American musicians were approaching similar conclusions about music in a more organic matter. The musical base of the blues combined with the alienation from classical forms of music probably laid the foundation for these conclusions to be naturally reached by Black musicians. Le Corbusier was, most likely, aware of this; he was heavily influenced by the Futurist Movement and was in close contact with the artistic and musical avant-garde movements. When Le Corbusier heard Louis Armstrong on stage, he probably recalled Russolo's noise and music manifesto, *The Art of Noises*.<sup>5</sup> In any case, I think that what *La Citta Rumorosa* and Le Corbusier's statements call for is a shift away from looking for urban precedents in European cities and toward American cities through the lens of music and noise. And though usually the narrative that accompanies the creation of American cities revolves around the pressure of capitalist development or the *American Manifest Destiny*, I think we need to approach it from a different perspective and propose the following: African American musicians as urbanists.

. . . and why not? Today, hip-hop and rhythm and blues are rapidly becoming the dominant popular music not only in the United States but in the whole world. And hip-hop is rich with content that remains to be explored. Collaged sample beats and songs, lyrical manipulation of the English language, domination over visual execution of videos. Hip-hop is a gold mine when it comes to shaping existing and new urban environments. I propose that we don't get stuck in the past, exploring contributions from the twentieth century. That work certainly needs to be done and much remains to be

researched. But I also think the approach to cities phonetically needs to be applied now as part of our vision toward a richer and better urban environment. If *La Citta Rumorosa* could be the American city of today, and the American city of today musically is dominated by hip-hop, then why not use that as a starting framework for future architects, urban planners, landscape architects, real estate developers, and urban policy makers? At the very least, we owe that to Armstrong, Parker, Davis, Coltrane, and Le Corbusier.

## ENDNOTES

1. Le Corbusier. *When the Cathedrals Were White: A Journey to the Country of Timid People*, trans. Francis E. Hyslop. Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947, 164.
2. Ibid, 162.
3. *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*. PBS, 2001.
4. Sitsky, Larry, ed. *Music of the Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde: A Biocritical Sourcebook*. Greenwood Press, 2002.
5. Le Corbusier was most likely attuned to European contemporary music. This can be seen in the following passage from *When the Cathedrals Were White*:

*Where are the professional musicians? At their concerts and they are not very gay. So-called "modern" music is nearly always deliquescence: a kind of contrapuntal noise cleverly combined with the rinsing of bottles and the clatter of glasses. How bored those people are and how they bore us! . . . Music! The modern world vibrates with new sounds. Our ears have become much more sensitive than those of our ancestors. Does the sound of the world have no useful effect on works of art? I shall answer thus: it is a function of our existence; hence it is the very tissue of music. Already Satie and Stravinsky have revealed new harmonies and rhythms. Curious and patient men who record the music of men and who have filled our record albums, there is still a job to do. Record the sounds of the world. Engrave mechanically on the record what fashions our ears: the sounds of the street, a symphony. The uproar of crowds at games, at mass meetings, in parades. The companion of so many*

*of us: the cadence, the slight or titanic rhythm of machines at work; on the sea, through the purring of the engines, the sound of the stem cutting into the water, the Aeolian chant of the rigging against the wind, the great voice of the siren. The roar of the airplane, the ticktock of the clocks, the sounding of the hours in silence. The surf of the sea. The Homeric braying of donkeys, the sound of a great speech; the roaring of lions, the song of the nightingale, the rasping of grasshoppers, the chirp of the cricket, the croaking of frogs, the shrill note of tree toads, the barking of dogs at night. What you will. Mechanical devices will isolate for us this immanent music which our thoughtlessness keep us from hearing . . .*

# Robot

## Lynch

I remember this  
I remember that  
I remember black  
I remember me  
I remember ida b marcus garvey booker t's airmen  
there it goes again  
my inner slave feenin for that change  
this is nat turner behaved  
this is multiple personalities  
the inner nigger is coming out in me  
releasing the anguish and the allergy  
to this young forced ratchet mentality  
and she knows  
anna cooper is looking down  
weeping a tear for my growth  
as she sees and believes  
im possessed by these culture thieves  
who want to make a consumer out of me and they take her  
relaxers and sew ins to represent europeans and i worship this beauty this consuming  
    morbid reality known as my existence thats the revolution im a changed man  
    malcolm x in me  
but still in attitude  
i resemble john legend for their validations and privileges oh no im not that white i'm  
    not that white im not that light i'm not that animal, im not that hypersexual im not  
    that black scum now thats the angela davis my black is beautiful inside of me  
but you can't touch me  
you can't gentrify me oakland  
you can't sweep me to the side after i give your land property value  
manifest destiny let west oakland reflect you  
from hooptie hondas to subarus  
im not racist  
im not racist  
just racially insecure  
because i have been here before

and the vision seems clearer than ever before within myself  
how i would rather play with a white barbie than a black one because i was afraid id see  
    an ugly reflection of myself.  
thats the imitation of life in me  
imitation of life  
imitation of lies  
like i see why  
like i see why i do what i do  
like truth seek pain  
like this cannot change  
like this cannot change  
there is a dysfunction in me

this is a protocol  
we are protocols  
designed  
for a example a nicki to a minajie we women us to be beautiful within our needs  
i fiend for white privilege  
while there is a generational gap that can be bought at education is for the white girl and  
    jungle fever is for the sell out  
they take goals and principles  
and make us look a mess  
and deep down inside myself  
there is a dysfunction as burden  
stand for nothing fall for anything  
fall for anything when you stand for nothing  
we are new age  
modified  
designed to not be inclined to curiosity and why systematically things do not work out  
    for you and me  
there  
is a dysfunction in we  
and i am a robot  
i am a robot  
and you  
you are too.

# Cobo's Ragweed Acres and 49 Million Alternatives: Examining Land Use Policies in Detroit's Paradise Valley and Surroundings

Vaughn Thomas Horn

VAUGHN HORN is a current Doctor of Design candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. He is an NCARB-certified LEED-accredited professional and licensed architect in his native California, who has presented and published research on integrating the UNITY-3D gaming engine for Building Information Modeling, as well as sustainable solutions for Olympic and World Cup venues, and disaster-resistant portable structures. Currently his focus examines how quality of life in cities is affected by Fordism and post-Fordism, including adaptive reuse of defunct automobile assembly plants and dealerships.

Throughout his career, Horn has maintained membership in the American Institute of Architects and the National Organization of Minority Architects, and he has amassed pedagogical and practical experience on an array of projects including stadia, residential, educational, commercial, and retail buildings. In 2002, he earned his bachelor of architecture degree from the University of Southern California. He then earned a master of architecture degree from Syracuse University in 2005. Moreover, he became the first Tuskegee University professor to be named Educator of the Year by the American Institute of Architecture Students, bestowed at the 2012 ALAS FORUM in Savannah, Georgia.

## INTRODUCTION

Detroit's post-World War II Paradise Valley, including the former Black Bottom neighborhood and Hastings Street business and entertainment corridor, was the embryo of a "legacy city," which, though it incubated, also fell victim to slum clearance, Black and White flight, and predatory policy implementation. This article will examine past decisions, present situations, and future alternatives in a geographic sweet spot for Great Migration African Americans that quickly became a sore spot for the "Fair Deal." This article does not seek a totalitarian solution; rather it sets forth a series of inquiries that attempt to underpin the challenge of future policy implementation in Paradise Valley.

## DETROIT: LEGACY CITY

The term "legacy city" derives from the 110th American Assembly, which occurred in Detroit, Michigan, in April 2011. It refers to American cities that were once industrial powerhouses and hubs of

business, retail, and services scattered across New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and the Midwest.<sup>1</sup> In a report, Alan Mallach and Lavea Brachman explained that factories in legacy cities provided jobs, and downtown areas contained department stores, professional offices, and financial institutions that served large regions. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, job and population loss have yielded daunting economic, social, physical, and operational challenges.<sup>2</sup> Previous work on legacy cities has brought to the fore significant patterns of successful and catastrophic attempts at vertical integration, and subsequently massive disintegration, which especially plagued the urban fabric of Detroit since the mid-twentieth century. After decades of disinvestment and failed attempts at redevelopment, legacy cities face critical socioeconomic challenges, along with depleted human resources, weak market demand, and inadequate land use strategies. Even though many policies throughout much of post-war Detroit attempted to stave off the effects of the impending collapse of the auto industry, it is evident that leadership foibles, both corporate and municipal, have led to incapacitation.

## DETROIT'S LAND USE CHALLENGE

Detroit's automakers had given little thought to affect the processes, systems, and allocation of resources required to carry out strategies that would have protected employees in Paradise Valley and beyond from the impending doom of corporate downsizing. Instead, either a lack of sense or blatant unwillingness crippled Detroit's ability to adapt quickly to rapid socioeconomic changes. Although much of what is today's fallow land in Detroit served a manufacturing purpose, simply reestablishing corporate gigantism of automakers will not work because autarchy in today's world is not a recipe for economic success.<sup>3</sup> Instead, Detroit must assess its "legacy" of labor and take stock of the city's physical assets, which includes acres of Brownfields, or sites that require remediation prior inhabiting. On the other hand, introducing new policies to solve Detroit's land use problems without a viable housing policy is futile, especially if short-term and long-range plans ignore absentee landowners' effect on property values, urban blight, and declining tax revenue from foreclosures.

### PARADISE VALLEY BEGINS

Although Henry Ford may not have known the consequences at the time, ever since 1909 when Ford Motors adopted the assembly line, the auto industry exploded on a monumental scale. In 1914, Ford Motors offered all employees a living wage of five dollars per day, sending droves of people to Detroit, seeing it as the Promised Land to escape poverty. As a result, the Great Migration bore witness to nearly 3,500 African Americans relocating each month from the Deep South, many of whom traded grave social injustice in the South for better yet still segregated conditions in Detroit. In fact, during the prewar 1920s, Detroit's Black population swelled from 41,000 to 120,000 as Blacks sought automobile industry-related jobs. Overall, Detroit's population grew from 285,000 to 2 million from 1900 to 1930, and the amount of Ford employees specifically mushroomed from just 31 people to more than 56,000 in that time span.<sup>4</sup> As Detroit experienced a rapid population influx, Black, entry-level, low-wage earners occupied ubiquitous wood-framed, weathered houses in what was called Black Bottom, a neighborhood that eventually fueled the growth of what became Paradise Valley, a vibrant and predominantly

Black-owned commercial, retail, and entertainment corridor along Hastings Street.

Previously, the Black Bottom neighborhood housed German immigrants, many of whom sought better living conditions in the nearby Detroit suburbs; during the Great Migration, Southern Blacks inherited this neighborhood, which quickly became slum conditions. In spite of the many public health issues associated with slum living, Great Migration Blacks believed the prospect of improved lifestyles through manufacturing outweighed any health and social risks and most certainly outweighed the slave legacy of the South. Seemingly, throughout Detroit's history, an inextricable link between economic stability and ethnic or racial harmony persisted, and it is difficult to imagine implementing future policies without placing this duality in perspective. It is at the heart of human self-reliance and the calculated risks of pursuing generational wealth. Nevertheless, as long as manufacturing persisted, the propensity for civil unrest subsided.

### DEMOGRAPHICS JUSTIFIED PARADISE VALLEY SLUM CLEARANCE

Absent from Detroit's expansion during the Great Migration was a master plan, a means to properly house and set up infrastructure including roads, schools, and public transportation. In addition, building code compliance for multifamily housing in facilities meant for single families fostered a slum culture. Specifically, monotonous and mass-produced workingman's bungalows, often unsanitary and shut in, forced citizens such as the burgeoning White middle class to move beyond the urban boundaries, beyond Paradise Valley, and toward the fringes for more sanitary conditions. In fact, 6 Mile, 7 Mile, and 8 Mile Roads are all named according to their distance from downtown. However, city planner Josep Lluís Sert (1942) foresaw the burgeoning slum problem and rested the blame for blight on real estate speculators and government officials. Sert categorized slums as blighted dwellings incidental to rapid growth and decidedly aggravated by the extensive use of frame construction, of which Detroit contains a vast area of highest densities, adjoining industrial and business sections. Much like the automobile, mass-produced wood-framed bungalows bore cheap rents, and aggravated social conditions of the welfare system compounded oppressive segregation. Sert also

claimed that sanitizing the resultant housing by mere slum clearance fell short, and the “want” of a master plan would jeopardize the fate of new dwellings, often placed on land that should have mixed uses, including industrial and commercial. Ignoring warning signs from experts such as Sert, Detroit’s newly constructed yet still segregated neighborhoods popped up in response for increased demand, without adequate public policy, without viable public works like parks to break up the neighborhood, and with continued apathy toward social injustices embedded in local and national legislation.

Oddly, among Detroit’s urban spread, optimism remained at all levels of society that the manufacturing of automobiles would still transform life for the better. James Kunstler argued that as Detroit expanded, it was the city’s obligation to retrofit itself to be a model city for car culture.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, car culture liberated scores of Americans through a spirit of self-determination that eventually manifested as urban renewal and a series of policies currently embedded in Detroit’s DNA, such as the ill effects of “Fair Deal” legislation on Paradise Valley, discussed in greater detail below.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE FAIR DEAL ON DETROIT

Prior to the Fair Deal, redlining legislation of Roosevelt’s New Deal on the one hand mitigated a recurrence of the Great Depression, yet on the other hand prevented Black Americans from becoming landowners. Nationwide, a combination of policy and unevenly distributed access to education and capacity building yielded slum villages in the heart of many American cities, including Detroit, thus prompting the Detroit Plan. Further examining the Detroit Plan, Mayor Edward Jeffries called for acquiring slum clearance in the downtown area and replacing it with new business and government-related developments in the zone that borders Paradise Valley, in spite of its popularity among Blacks as a vibrant entertainment district. In contrast to the Detroit Plan policies, existing small businesses could have continued to proliferate under a Keynesian model, in which a mixed economy would help Detroit emerge from past and future recessions. Sadly, Jeffries’ myopic view of progression bulldozed the entire Black Bottom neighborhood, and with it all of the accumulated generational wealth created by the Great Migration.

More importantly, coupled with increased

marginalization, Paradise Valley continued to struggle with physical, social, and infrastructural challenges, and was the epicenter of the 1943 riots, exacerbated by escalating racial tension brought about by a post–World War II social and economic hangover and deepened by increased automobile industry labor abstraction and competition among automakers that carved a path toward obsolescence. Included in this strife was a key policy in the Detroit Plan urban renewal that targeted eliminating Hastings Street bungalows in addition to Black Bottom housing, and reinforcement came by way of the Federal Urban Renewal Program Standards for Healthful Housing in Planning the Neighborhood in 1948. In addition, subsequent policies such as the Home for Occupancy Standards in 1950 and Construction and Equipment of the Home Standards in 1951 provided inextricable prerogative for Jeffries to raze Paradise Valley and marginalize Detroit’s Black population simultaneously.

Utilizing the American Public Health Association’s appraisal method, which was the best known at the time, slum clearance by definition considered building deficiencies, neighborhood deficiencies, high population and building density, extensive nonresidential land use, inadequate educational and recreation activities, dangerous traffic, and unsanitary conditions.<sup>6</sup> Because of this, Paradise Valley fell, and though it supplied the economic machine of Fordism with much of the entry-level labor force that led to its proliferation, the auto industry itself began to fall. Meanwhile, White flight was in full swing, and rapid evacuation of what remained of areas adjacent to Paradise Valley, including mansions along Woodward Avenue, led to selling of homes at panic prices in order to seek a safer, more racially homogenous lifestyle in suburbs like Grosse Point. Once the American Housing Act of 1949 became law, Title I brought about federally financed slum clearance as noted earlier, and Title III funded the erection of 800,000 public housing units throughout the United States.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, displaced Paradise Valley Blacks who could afford a middle-class lifestyle occupied Woodward Avenue. Conversely, many that could not afford these homes were relegated to deplorable government project housing.

#### MAYOR COBO’S RAGWEED ACRES

In sum, over 3,500 dwellings came down during the





**FIGURE 1** — LAFAYETTE PARK.

(ethnic) slum clearance of 1949, and Detroiters again witnessed the implementation of predatory policy, in this case the Federal Highway Act of 1956. In fact, nearly 90 percent of subsidized costs allowed then Mayor Albert Cobo’s leadership to run roughshod over Hastings Street—the financial center of Paradise Valley—and create I-375 in its place. Despite Sert’s critique on project housing, the Highway Act that followed the Housing Act also funded the 164-acre Lafayette Park redevelopment project (see Figure 1). In the end, razing a fully occupied Black Bottom neighborhood quickly became “Cobo’s Ragweed Acres,” as dubbed by its vacant state for two years after Cobo had acquired the land at bargain basement price. From the ashes emerged a new vision driven by authoritarian high modernism and competitive civic prowess. The principals involved in creating Lafayette Park included Cobo, renowned city planner Albert Hilberseimer (visionary of the European model “High Rise City”), and architect Mies van der Rohe. The design of Lafayette Park successfully transformed social production and utilized modern technology to reify a seemingly more racially integrated,

bucolic, industrial-recreational lifestyle. Though the displaced Blacks moved to federally funded, austere, brick-clad housing, namely Jeffries Homes and the Brewster-Douglass Housing Project, Mies’ mid-century, modern, steel-framed, glass-skinned towers, combined with landscape architect Alfred Caldwell’s organized nineteen-acre green space, became a model for modern life in the industrial city. True to form, the apartment towers at Lafayette Park followed the standard ten- to twenty-story, bleak, high-rise slabs that deterred bugs and vermin, were insulated on all sides, and provided everything that a well-to-do family could demand.<sup>8</sup>

In all honesty, a multitude of Lafayette Park developments could have provided much-needed density and demand to justify mass transit, which categorically failed to take root. Unfortunately, Cobo’s vision did not include equity among living conditions in Lafayette Park versus scores of project housing. Arguably, ever since this urban renewal, Detroit never recovered, assaulted by a series of vast federally aided, gentrified building operations, which specifically under Cobo’s tenure offered a tax-hungry city the opportunity to



clear land and build for the wealthy using house money. Though decades apart, Lewis Mumford and Sert (1942) presented the shortcomings on slum clearance, and Mumford insisted urban renewal, when applied to a place like Detroit, offered large-scale projects with small-scale benefits. He continued by asserting that project housing, in this case designed for displaced Paradise Valley Blacks, included partial physical improvements as social conditions worsened and segregation proliferated.<sup>9</sup>

### MASS TRANSIT CONCEPTS IGNORED SOCIOECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Since Detroit had grown so rapidly from 1900 to 1930 and peaked in 1950, more people needed to get around, and incremental planning policies such as street widening and I-375 were reactionary measures instead of progressive strategies. Yet each of these policies

introduced more roads for cars instead of rails for mass transit. For example, Sidney D. Waldon, appointed by then Mayor John C. Lodge, fashioned a transportation scheme to create the “magic carpet of transportation for all mankind,” or what was arguably the “no-way subway” (see Figure 2). Ideally, subway tunnels would run for five miles outside the city center, underneath and sometimes through the middle of 204-foot-wide superhighways stretching over 240 miles into three counties. Absent from this scheme were inherited socioeconomic and cultural challenges that persisted since the turn of the century.

In addition, Kunstler brings to the fore the subway problem’s inadequacy amid Detroit’s low-density urban spread of single-family houses, and providing a system huge enough to serve it was mathematically unlikely to attract enough riders to pay for it.<sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup> In April 1929, 72 percent of Detroit’s voters unceremoniously rejected the bond measure for a proposed superhighway that

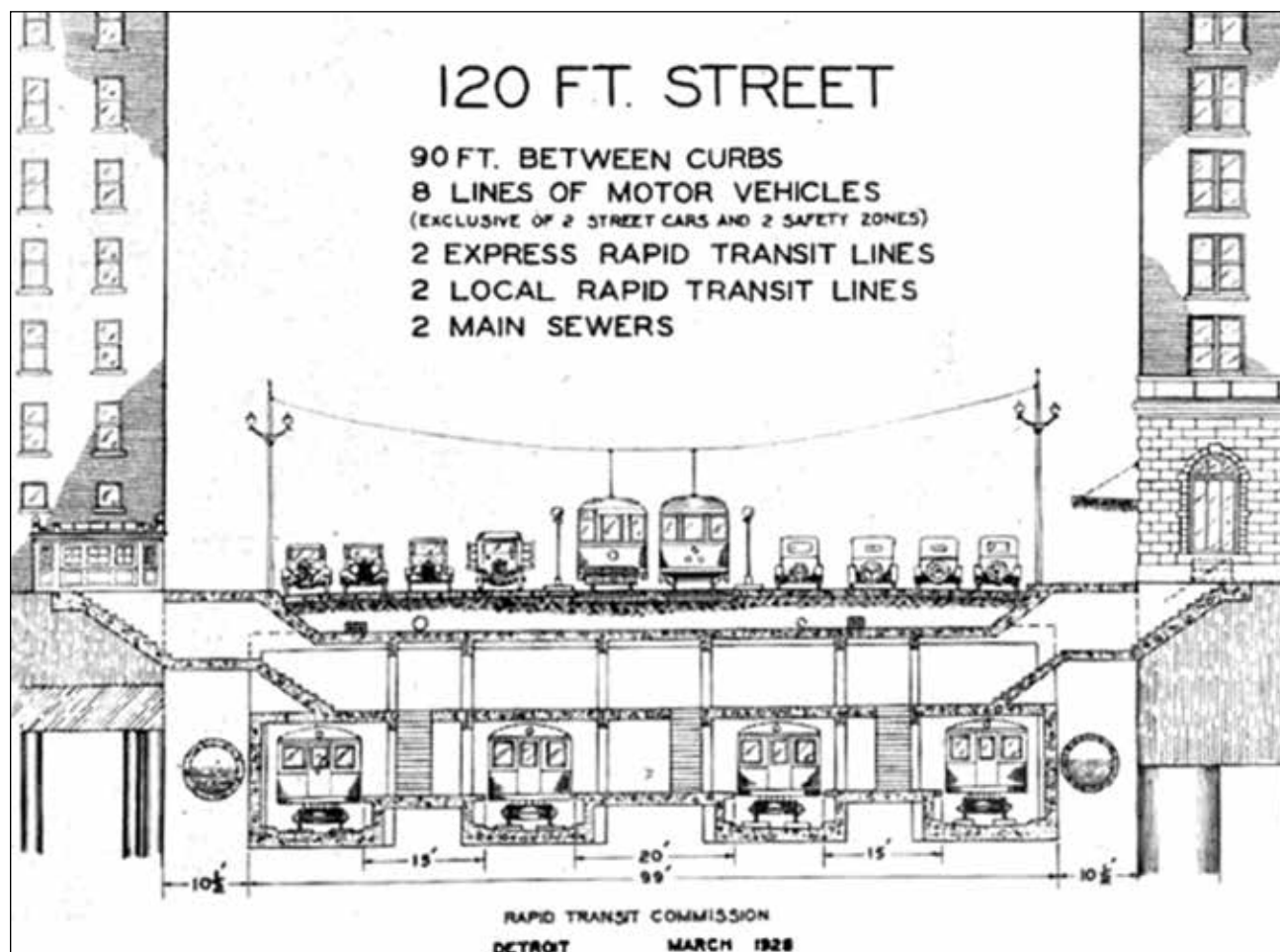


FIGURE 2 — DETROIT SUBWAY.

integrated rail and automobile traffic (see Figure 3), which made it obvious that the automobile alone was king. As a result, auto industry ubiquity quashed future public transportation schemas and eventually gave way to highway construction funded by post-World War II incentives. Yet despite unanimity in opposition, the no-way subway proposition emerged again in 1967 as part of Southeastern Michigan's Transit Authority (SEMTA) and the Transit Action Program (TAP) that outlines the transportation priorities for Southeastern Michigan for 1976 to 1980.

The five major elements of the TAP program included the development and expansion of a commuter rail, the construction of a 2.3-mile people-mover in downtown, the operation of the first segment of the rapid transit system in Detroit, regional bus expansion, and the development of intermediate-level transit.<sup>12</sup> It seems the no-way subway failed to get on track, and continued to be a road not taken, despite acknowledgement by the Detroit Department of Transportation of rapid transit's vitality to the redevelopment of Detroit. In regard to its effect on the

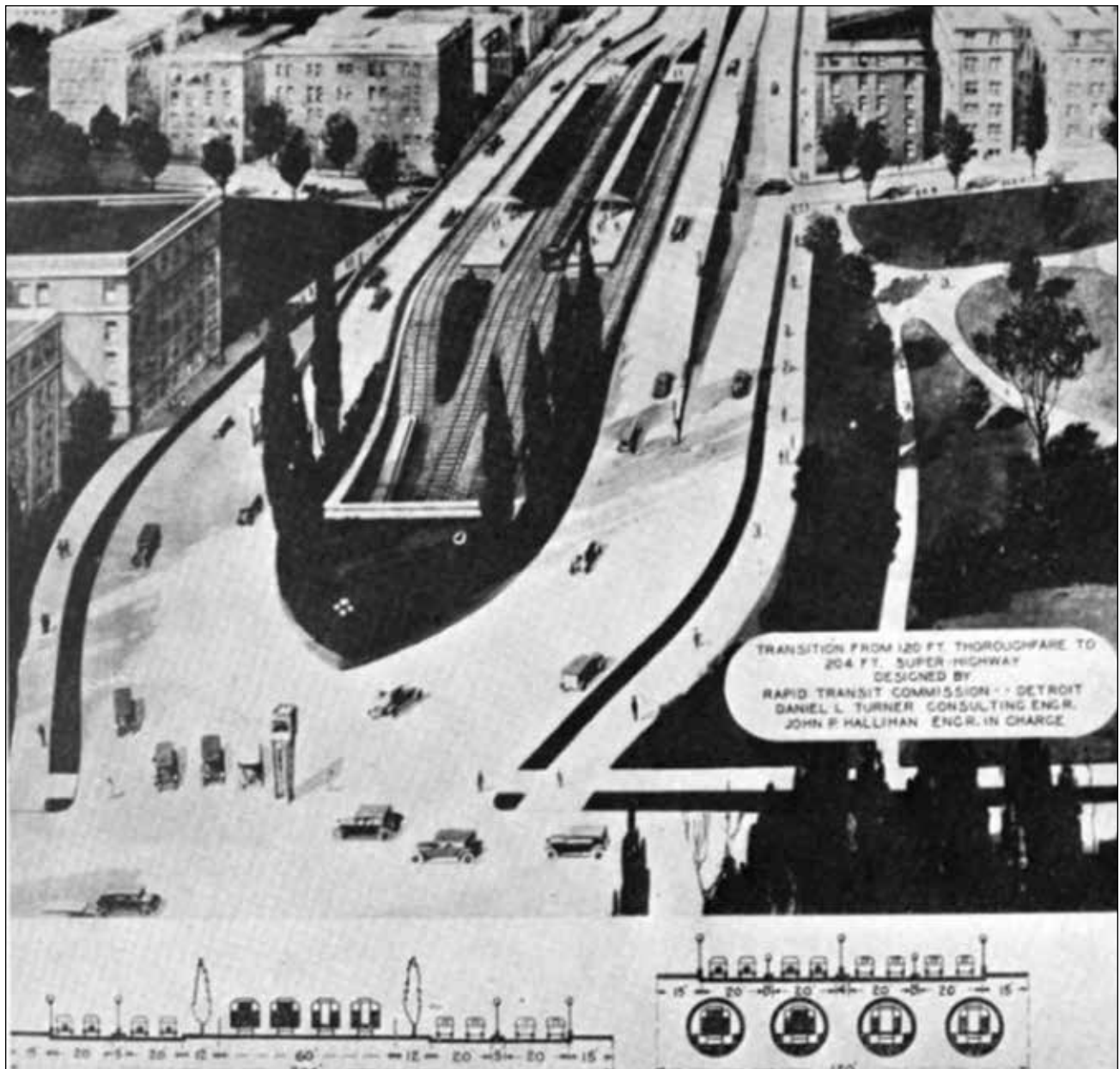


FIGURE 3 — DETROIT SUPERHIGHWAY.



# The Continuous And Long-Term Concept-Plan • UDA • Year 2100

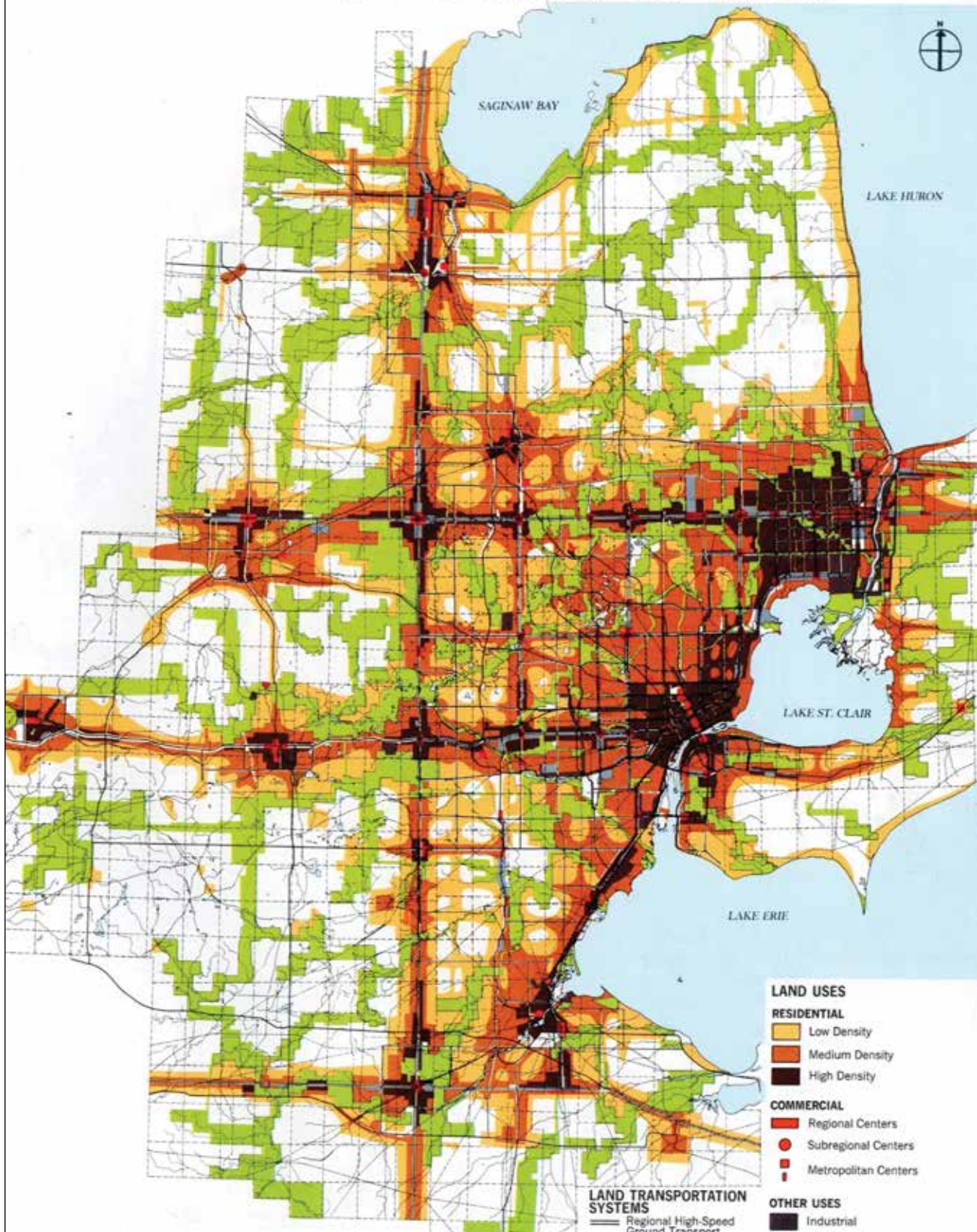


FIGURE 4 — TWIN-CENTERED URBAN DETROIT AREA.



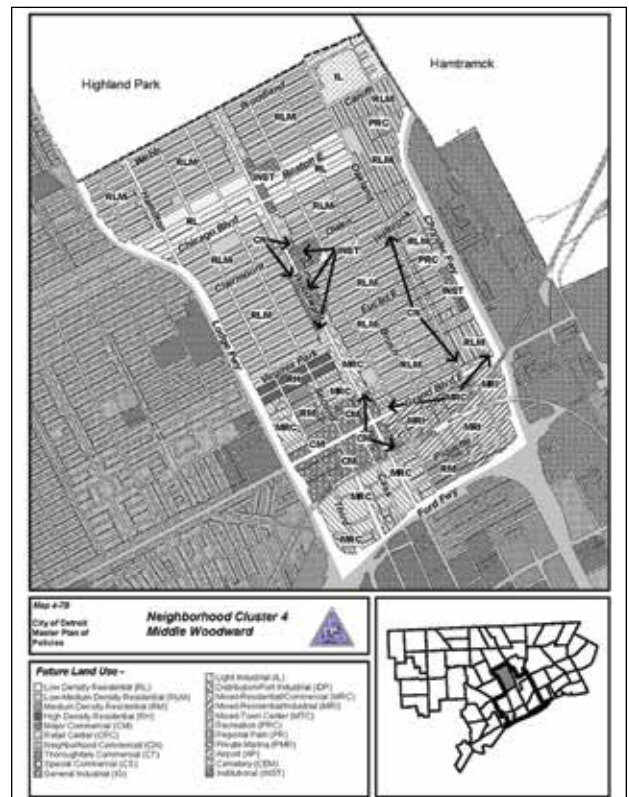
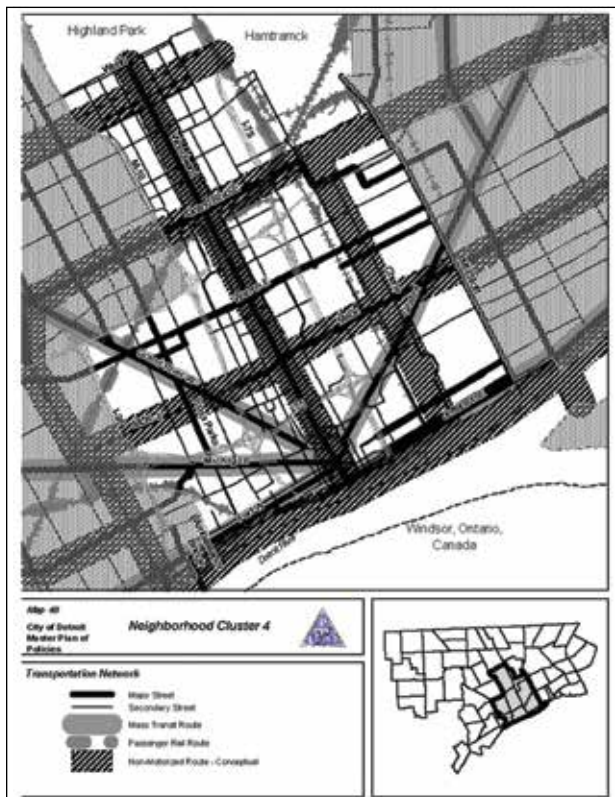
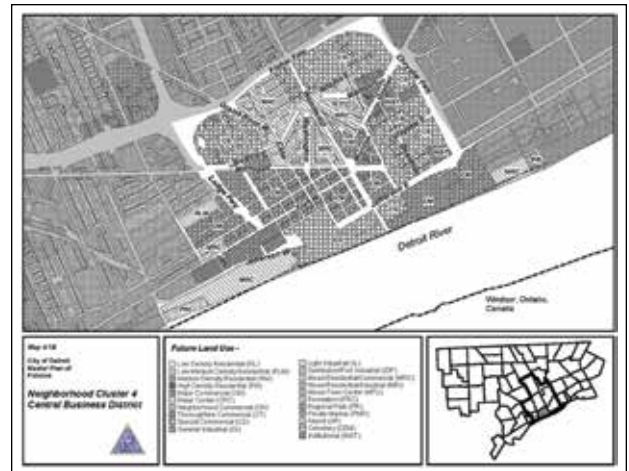
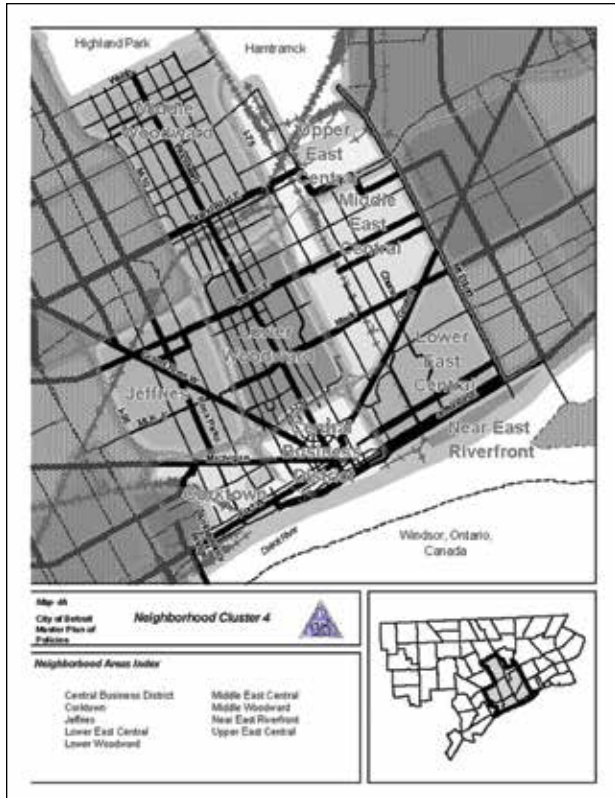
Clockwise from left:

**FIGURE 5** — MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES, NEIGHBORHOOD CLUSTER.

**FIGURE 6** — MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES, FUTURE LAND USE.

**FIGURE 7** — MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT.

**FIGURE 8** — MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES, MIDDLE WOODWARD FUTURE LAND USE.



legacy of Paradise Valley, TAP proposed to operate along a more fertile Woodward Avenue corridor and Gratiot Street instead of rethinking a solution for Hastings Street, built over by highway I-375 a decade prior. Certainly, the proposed \$891 million project funded almost entirely by the federal government would have brought increased tax revenues to help finance existing state and local programs. However, Detroit was shrinking in population and capacity to manifest ambitious transit-based remedies, and the city had never fully addressed a remedy to the Paradise Valley problem.

#### DOXIADIS' URBAN DETROIT AREA MASTER PLAN: 49 MILLION ALTERNATIVES

As mentioned earlier, a comprehensive master plan helps guide resource allocation and mobilizes capital in order to execute grand plans with surgical precision instead of a butcher's hatchet, or at least regional macro planning foresight. In order to define the scope of exogenous challenges affecting Detroit, in 1966, Dr. Constantinos Doxiadis developed a three-volume, five-year study funded by a \$3 million grant to determine the Urban Detroit Area, and he proposed future alternatives that engage vital nodes within the Great Lakes megalopolis. Doxiadis' writings predated Detroit's full-scale deindustrialization, the 1967 riot, and the Big Three Automaker Bailout, and urged major changes to alleviate the pressure on Detroit to perform as the sole industrial portage and manufacturing hub. At first, Doxiadis developed the Isolation of Dimensions and Elimination of Alternatives with Continuously Increasing Dimensionality method, or IDEA CID. From this, he proposed a demographic and economic forecast to the year 2100, defining key elements of urban form including population, density patterns, transportation networks, speed patterns, and time travel characteristics.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, the generation of some 49 million alternatives was both hypothetical and meritorious, organized within a regional grid, and considers the process of mitigating urban erosion at a micro scale according to his Detroit Central City and Woodward Corridor conceptual plans.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, eliminating alternatives provided a final twin-centered (twin cities) development featuring Port Huron development, northwest of Detroit, and he predicted population

growth there to exceed two million, while Detroit would host seven million people (see Figure 4). Yet missing from this model were measures to prevent future erosion of Port Huron in the same manner Detroit's urban condition degraded in the fifty years prior to the study. By the way, this macro planning could have been useful in the 1920s during the Great Migration. Granted, his high-order multilevel and multimodal transportation facility envisioned for 1970-2000, similar to the 1929 proposal, did not happen, nor did the predicted 50 to 60 percent increase in employment levels among 49 million alternatives.

#### MAYOR BING'S MASTER PLAN OF POLICIES AND THE DETROIT FUTURE CITY PLAN

Whereas Doxiadis' land use policies offered a quantitatively rich solution, a high modern approach, in 2009, Mayor David Bing approved a Master Plan of Policies proposing similar macro and micro planning to rebrand Paradise Valley as Neighborhood Cluster #4 (see Figures 5, 6, and 7), focusing on underutilized commercial, industrial, and housing stock. Specifically, the Master Plan of Policies called for mass transit along Gratiot Avenue as well as intermittent nonmotorized routes. Moreover, future land use adjacent to downtown would combine special commercial and institutional purposes, and Lafayette Park's medium-density high-rise residences would remain unchanged. Meanwhile, the upper portion of what was Paradise Valley would become "Middle Woodward" district, with mixed residential/industrial, low-to-medium-density residential, institutional, and recreation (see Figure 8), taking a more mixed-use shape much like Sert would prefer.

To illustrate effective mixed-use alternatives, a multidisciplinary team of architects, planners, scholars, community leaders, academic institutions, public and private landowners, and concerned citizens drafted the Detroit Future City Plan. This strategic framework envisioned a future for Detroit along a series of time horizons such that social, economic, and lifestyle conditions would improve by 2020 and be sustained by 2030. According to the framework, 2030 would bring about nearly double the number of jobs available for each person living in the city compared to the present. In addition, the Detroit Strategic Framework (2012) establishes a set of policy directions and actions, and

is not a Master plan of Policies. Rather the framework promotes collective action, enabling different sectors in Detroit to act both collaboratively and independently over different periods.

More importantly, the aim of the framework is to recognize and adapt to an unpredictable future, calling for all public agencies that hold land to align their mission around a single shared vision. To date, a shared vision for land use is a road not taken in Detroit’s Master Plan. Furthermore, the framework reflects aspirations for a more equitable city that supports growth pillars that adaptively reuse existing industrial building, filled in with digital and creative jobs sectors alongside industry, and a return to entrepreneurship that once proliferated in Paradise Valley. Essentially, what remains of Paradise Valley will become the “Eds and Meds District,” or educational and medical institutions, plus digital and creative districts at nearby Eastern Market. At this rate, by 2030, Detroit’s density will be fifteen to twenty people per acre, and contrary to the numerous rapid transit schemes, a public transit route along Hastings/I-375 will include a carbon forest along an existing highway (see Figure 9). That is, a five-hundred-foot separation between highways and neighborhoods will contain lush planting areas, including embankments and vacant parcels, interwoven with blue infrastructure (water features) to help purify environmental air quality.

## CORPORATE DOWNSIZING AND URBAN APARTHEID

Alas, another misguided road trodden fell short of a totalitarian solution, which seems implausible for Detroit. Above all, Henry Ford stated, “we shall solve the problem of the city by leaving the city.” Ironically, Detroit’s exponential fifty-year expansion and retraction allowed Ford’s sentiment to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Whatever happens moving forward must allow Detroit the flexibility to deftly shrink and contract along with the ebb and flow of the economy without catastrophic implosion. To illustrate the severity of population changes, Mallach and Bachman wrote that in 1950, one in twenty-three Americans lived in Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland, or St. Louis, and by 2010, only one in one hundred and four people lived in these same areas.<sup>15</sup> In addition, massive deindustrialization had already coagulated Detroit’s industrial progress, as plants began to close, and the nation’s manufacturing might became its blight. During the 1970s, Mallach and Bachman also determined that Detroit lost nearly 40 percent of its jobs, primarily in manufacturing, and lost 500,000 people between the years 1960 and 1980, that led to middle-class flight, aggravated racial strife capped by the 1967 riot, and deteriorated the urban fabric.<sup>16</sup> On a macro scale, Detroit ballooned to the sixth

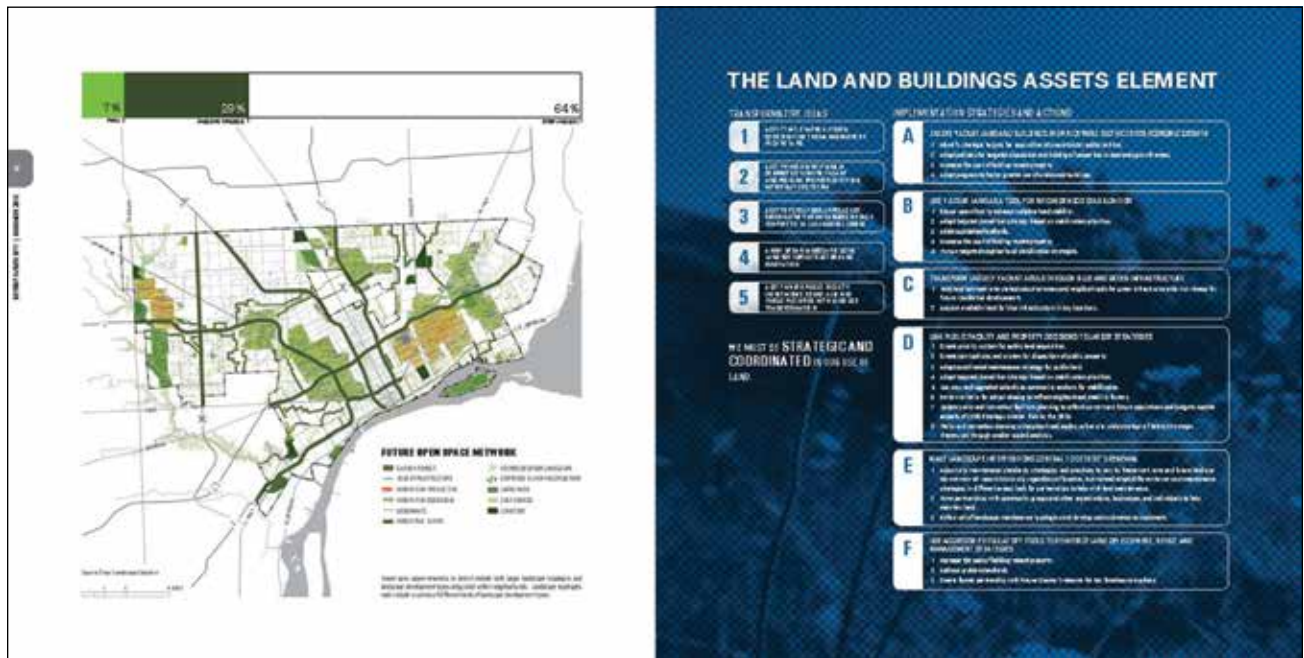


FIGURE 9 — DETROIT FUTURE CITY LAND ASSETS.





**FIGURE 10** — MIFFLIN STREET, MADISON, WISCONSIN.

most populated American city in 1950 only to decline 61.4 percent by 2010. This hollowing out of the city was devastating, especially tracing the social mitosis and economic turmoil due to industry dispersal, outsourcing, and increased competition from emerging Asian automakers. In fact, over a ten-year span from 1980 to 1990, Detroit’s population shrank by 20 percent and by 1993 the era of the car-based economy had ended.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, as Detroit’s population dropped 24.97 percent from 2000 to 2010,<sup>18</sup> the Great Recession of 2008 led to increased manufacturing plant closures, and further subsumed the Motor City. Even the warehouses along the northern portion of what remained of Hastings Street are vacant, a generational long-term dilemma.

**MAKE HASTINGS STREET A LIVING STREET  
(AGAIN)!**

Conversely, a highway clearance policy could restore Paradise Valley to its prominence. In other legacy cities such as Syracuse, New York, and Milwaukee,

Wisconsin, strategic elevated highways have been proposed or have already been demolished to make way for more pedestrian-friendly retail corridors. Under the direction of city planner Peter Park, Milwaukee’s Park East Freeway underwent a \$45 million replacement with a landscaped boulevard in 2002. Funded primarily through a variety of federal, state, and city sources, what is now McKinley Boulevard is a boon for Milwaukee’s economic development. Its location near downtown was ideal for Manpower Corporation, a Fortune 500 company, to move its headquarters to McKinley, a feat that could not have been accomplished under or adjacent to the Park East Freeway. As a result, assessed land values per acre have increased exponentially, in some cases over 180 percent, because of highway clearance. As a fellow legacy city, demolishing highway I-375 and restoring Hastings Street to its former glory remains a viable policy for Detroit. Even more, Hastings street can become more like the Dutch model “woonerf” (translated “Living Street”), which addresses the car-people problem and devalues speedy commutes in favor of proximal commerce and medium-rise, moderate-

density residential (see Figure 10). Compared to Doxiadis' Woodward Corridor concept, the Living Street at Hastings limits speeds by implementing curvilinear streets to reduce vehicle-born noise and traffic, encourage walking, and promote healthy lifestyles without relocating to the suburbs. In addition, the city of Madison, Wisconsin, has already successfully adopted the woonerf along Mifflin Street, which became a pedestrian center connected to the Capitol with the nearby Kohl Center. This higher-density neighborhood supplies the vibrancy that Detroit desperately needs to better connect Lafayette Park and downtown.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite its stony history and ambitious alternatives, implementing effective land use policies to help modernize Detroit remains a multimodal economic, geographic, social, and cultural challenge. Yet it is clear that any policies for Detroit's future must be part of broader macro planning assessments, while it is also crucial to address past social, racial, and economic challenges in order to foster an equitable future of Detroit, mightily, interpedently, and radically.

## ENDNOTES

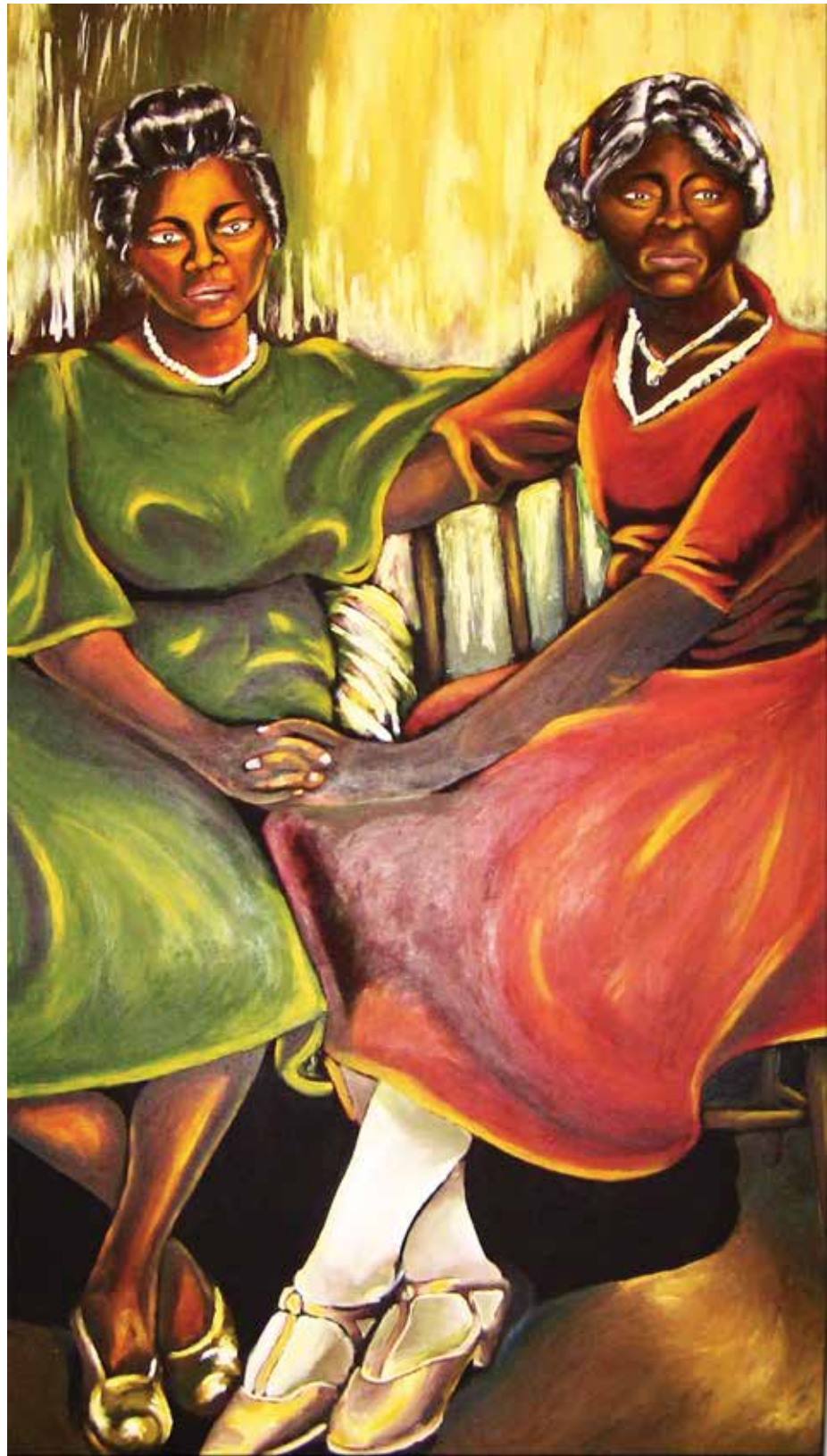
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**5. Early Sunday Morning, 2010**  
Finger Painted, Acrylic on Black Canvas  
52in x 60in



21. Distant Remembrance of Mama, 2012  
Finger Painted, Acrylic on Black Canvas  
62in x 82in

# Race to Sustain: The Policy Implications of Racial Differences in Climate Change Public Opinion Attitudes

*Jonathan Collins*

## ABSTRACT

While scholars in political science have argued that voters as a whole merely take policy cues from political parties and their elites, I perform a study to test whether or not race influences policy preferences as well. I, therefore, examine attitudes on the issue of climate change from Black Americans (a group that leans heavily toward the Democratic Party), Hispanic Americans (a group that also leans toward the Democratic Party), and White Americans (a majority group that, as a whole, leans toward the Republican Party). Controlling for the influence of President Barack Obama on minority policy preferences, I measure the effect of racial identity on attitudes toward climate change in 2004. I also analyze data from 2006 to show stability over time before Obama's rise. My findings suggest that Americans do indeed differ by race on climate change attitudes. I frame the theoretical explanation for race-based difference on climate change through my Prism Theory Model. Overall, I argue that, even with party identification held fixed, race can play a somewhat significant role in how Americans form attitudes about a policy, even if that issue is not racially primed.

JONATHAN COLLINS focuses on public opinion polling and data analytics. Currently, he is a political science doctoral student at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), who also works as a pollster for the Los Angeles-based Sankofa Group for Civic Engagement. He specializes his research within the areas of American politics, public policy, and race and ethnicity. In 2013, he published an article entitled "Toward the Great Society: Analysis of the Relationship Between Politics and Underperforming Urban Schools" in the *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*. His dissertation will explore the relationship between local level political participation and education in the state of California. Before entering the PhD program, he earned a master's degree in African American Studies, also from UCLA.

Born and raised in Jackson, Tennessee, Collins began his career as a politico, organizing programs that promoted college readiness to teens in his hometown. A graduate of Morehouse College located in Atlanta, Georgia, he spent his summers mobilizing college students in Jackson and his school semesters honing his scholarly skill set both as an English major and Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Research Fellow. In fact, through the aforementioned fellowship program, he traveled to Cape Town, South Africa, as an exchange student in the 2010 Mellon-Mays Cape Town January Institute and studied the history and culture of South Africa at the University of Cape Town. Prior to international travels, however, he studied intellectual property law during the summer of 2008 at the University of Iowa School of Law as a Phillip Hubbard Fellow. He also brought his research skills to formal politics in 2011 by working as a researcher and writer for Congressional Member and African American civil rights movement legend John Lewis.

Collins continues to commit himself to the concept of education. His role as a scholar keeps him positioned to learn constantly, and the ultimate goal of his research is to educate communities on ways to improve, not just politically, but socially, culturally, and multilaterally.



## INTRODUCTION

A persisting gap between policy and attitudes continues to exist when it comes to racial minorities and climate change. Although climate change has grown rapidly in salience throughout the twenty-first century, Americans still largely consider climate change a “White issue” nested within what people widely consider to be a White environmentalist ideology.<sup>1</sup> Such a misperception about race and climate change attitudes perpetuates this broader omission of racial minorities from the sustainability policy discussion. However, I argue that—based on empirical evidence—African Americans and Hispanics view climate change as more of a threat than do Whites, and because of such an awareness, these two racial minority groups in particular should be considered targets of sustainable environmental public policy implementation.

I frame my argument for the existence of differences in racial groups through logic of what I call the Prism Theory Model (PTM). PTM suggests that when Americans attach their experiences from their respective racial identities, then their knowledge of critical events, information taken from various media outlets, and cues from party leadership converge together. This convergence positions members of different racial groups to form differing opinions about a political issue even when race appears to be irrelevant. Because Americans interpret their respective relationships with climate change differently based on race, race should be considered when constructing environmental policy. More specifically, if African Americans and Hispanics see climate change as more of a threat, then communities where a large number of them live should be targets for the implementation of sustainability initiatives.

The link between African Americans and Hispanics to climate change emerges from the volatility of natural disasters. While threats of injury, death, and displacement as a result of natural disaster have risen tremendously over the past century, African Americans and Hispanics find themselves extremely vulnerable to Mother Nature’s tantrums. Geography data analytic firm Sperling’s Best Places released a study highlighting sixteen cities: the eight at highest risk of natural disaster and the eight at lowest risk.<sup>2</sup> Of the high-risk cities, African Americans and Hispanics on average make up 32 percent and 26 percent, respectively, of the

population. In fact, Dallas, Texas, the city with the highest risk of natural disaster has a population that is two-thirds African American and Hispanic. In contrast, while Hispanics make up a relatively proportionate amount of the population at 15 percent, African Americans comprise, on average, only 2 percent of the population for cities with the lowest risk of natural disaster. There is a clear connection between race and the potential dangers climate change.

Yet, thus far environmental sustainability measures have eluded Black and Brown people at large. The Sierra Club has been arguably the leading environmental organization throughout America’s history of environmental policy.<sup>3</sup> Founded in 1892 by Scottish conservationist John Muir, the Sierra Club grew into a national lobbying force for progressive environmental issues, particularly the land conservation.<sup>4</sup> The organization began promoting clean air and alternative fuel source policies in the 1970s. Despite this expanding of their ideology to champion climate change threat, the Sierra Club largely relegated their political activity to their predominantly White middle-class membership.

Environmental activism most notably collided with the lives and experiences of racial minorities when Van Jones, in 2005, launched a Green-Collar Jobs Campaign through the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights located in northern California.<sup>5</sup> Through the Green-Collar Jobs Campaign, Jones worked toward the goal of mitigating environmental concerns through improving economic conditions for racial minorities. Jones, both in work and speech, stressed the threat of climate change to Black and Brown communities. He also championed environmental sustainability as a technology capable of reducing the heavily racialized income inequality in America.

While he was not the only activist moving into the race and climate change space at the time, Jones became the most notable to do so. Giving the timing of his campaign, it is fair to conclude that Hurricane Katrina—which took place in 2005 and disproportionately damaged African Americans in the Louisiana Gulf—motivated Jones to highlight the link between race and climate change. However, was his activism capitalizing on a moment of salience, provided by Katrina, to change Black and Brown public opinion on the issue? Or was my fellow Jackson, Tennessee, native merely mobilizing minority sentiments that were already in existence? The evidence I draw suggests the

latter; thus, the type of work Jones has done needs to be extended.

## LITERATURE

Race, largely due to its ability to affect policy and policy attitudes, is a seminal concept within American politics and an integral part of American democracy. Scholars have proven that racial identity affects the way individual members of the American public internalize a range of domestic political issues: affirmative action, crime, immigration, and so on.<sup>6,7,8</sup> Scholars also deal with the way in which race becomes salient when not overtly connected to policy as well. Most of this scholarship comes out of the area of political psychology, and the leading doctrine is symbolic racism.

Symbolic racism is the measurement of racial attitudes, and it gained notoriety for its ability to detect explicit racism in a modern context—a context in which racial attitudes are often masked behind, among other things, political ideologies and policy preferences. Social structural theorists argue that these measures of symbolic racism are the most robust predictors of White opposition to racial policies such as affirmative action.<sup>9</sup> In fact, some political scientists treat the symbolic racism theoretical framework as central to the study of race in American politics.<sup>10,11,12,13</sup> If nothing else, the study of symbolic racism highlights the fact that, as earlier mentioned, race is a seminal concept within the study of American politics.

Probing further into symbolic racism buttresses the vitality of this measurement system to the study of race within the field of political science, particularly American politics. The original theory of symbolic racism was composed of three major tenets.<sup>14,15,16</sup> First, scholars argue that symbolic racism, this new form of racial prejudice and discrimination, had replaced the old-fashioned Jim Crow racism—a type of racism that embodied social distance between the races, beliefs in biologically based racial hierarchies, and support for overt racial discrimination and segregation. Second, scholars suggest that opposition to Black politicians and racially targeted policies were influenced hardly by realistic self-interest but by symbolic racism, perceptions Whites had of racial threats to their personal lives. Lastly, early socialized negative feelings about Blacks blended with traditional conservative values constitute the origins of symbolic racism, and “symbolic racism”

was labeled as such in order to highlight its roots in abstract moral values instead of overt racial threats. The study of race within a modern context is heavily fixated on the way in which the role of race in Americans’ perceptions about a wide range of issues has and has not evolved over time.

In practical terms, this evolution from overt racial discrimination and prejudice to symbolic racism has brought about the racialization of various public policies. Racialization is a process whereby racial attitudes influence political preferences, a process that is rather straightforward for race-specific policies like affirmative action and federal aid to minorities.<sup>17</sup> The two aforementioned policies are thought to reflexively affect racial dispositions because voters can make natural associations between policy concepts and feelings toward the groups who benefit from them.<sup>18</sup> However, because of the way in which mass communications—whether consciously or unconsciously—heighten voters’ associations between certain racial groups and certain government policies, issue racialization can occur even for those policies whose benefits are not as clearly associated with certain racial groups.<sup>19</sup> In fact, researchers have instances of racial difference or prejudice, symbolic racism, surfacing within studies conducted on a wide range of issues such as welfare, Social Security, crime, taxes, and the Iraq War.<sup>20,21,22,23,24</sup>

The more recent scholarship on race and political preferences stresses this role of the race of the leadership in shifting policy preferences and activating racial attitudes. With the rise of Barack Obama to the office of the United States presidency, the embodiment of race in accordance with the profound racial symbolism surrounding his position as first Black president gets cited often as the explanation for why racial attitudes had a larger impact on evaluations of him during his candidacy, first term in office, and reelection, as opposed to previous presidents and candidates.<sup>25,26,27,28</sup> Due to the shown importance of elites’ background features and characteristics, one would assume race would be a source of activation for racial attitudes against all public policy issues that Obama addresses through his agenda as president. Therefore, my investigation of the role of race in preferences concerning climate change and other foreign policy issues seeks to add empirical depth to questions concerning the salience of race in nonracialized areas of public policy.

Studies on race—in particular, symbolic racism—revitalized and nurtured the salience of race in American politics. Symbolic race studies surface the ways in which racial attitudes, particularly attitudes of racial prejudice and discrimination, affect the way in which Americans interpret and, consequently, either support or oppose certain policy stances. They also suggest that the identity or “face” of leadership sends cues directing political preferences as well. These race studies, however, limit themselves to policy areas where the presence of race is relatively clear (e.g., affirmative action, federal aid to minorities) or products of misperceptions generated by the often-misleading media coverage. Furthermore, they fail to grapple with the question as to whether or not racial group-based differences in nonracialized political issues occur before minority leadership figures emerge. And, if group differences in opinions do occur in nonracialized issues, especially before the rise of Barack Obama, how do we explain this sort of phenomenon? My exploration of policy attitudes, which engages racial identification as the primary explanatory variable in my model, addresses such a query.

## THEORY

I hypothesize that racial identity will have a statistically significant effect on Americans’ attitudes toward climate change. My reasoning for this claim can be explained, more broadly, by what I am calling the Prism Theory Model. PTM entails three phases: the policy issue, prism of racial identification, and policy attitude. The way the model works is that citizens of the country, as a whole, begin with a policy issue, which in this study is climate change. The policy issue enters the voter’s mind—this metaphorical prism, which, theoretically, is a triangular device encompassing, among a range of other influential forces, three “sides”: self-awareness of one’s racial identification, information outlets (media, school curriculum, community organizations, etc.), and party identification, which all connect together. While in the prism, the influence of one’s racial identification, information outlets, and party affiliation digests the policy issue and then dispatches the policy information outside of the prism into different policy preferences and attitudes, not just based on news attentiveness and party allegiance but also depending on one’s race. Therefore, one’s racial identification “colors” one’s attitudes toward a policy issue.

Each facet of the prism encompasses a range of influencing factors. Racial identity, for instance, connects not just to skin color but to community interactions, cultural practices, and social networks as well. Information outlets refers to the various ways that Americans receive ideas about politics, ways that extend from the nightly news to—especially for people of color—more informal places like churches, barbershops, and rides on public transportation. Then, party identification, which is the most straightforward, interacts with party cues that do not string together out of ideology but rather self-interest and randomness. In short, because politics can take place just about anywhere, the components of the prism stretch well beyond the measures I use to test my hypothesis. My project is but one of many possible ways to proxy the Prism Theory Model.

My theoretical construction engages with a core model within American political behavior. PTM finds basis in John Zaller’s RAS (receive-accept-sample) model, which argues that voters *receive* information, *accept* it based on where the information confirms their cognitive biases, and then, when making decisions about politics, *sample* from the accepted information nearest the top of their minds when expressing ideas about politics.<sup>29</sup> While Zaller places the biggest emphasis on the role of voters’ exposure to information on the political attitudes that they express, my study controls for interest in political news information, as well as party identification and socioeconomic status, and, from this model, I strictly argue that voters’ racial identification plays a role in the way in which they feel about the issue of climate change. As the literature on racial identity and political cues suggests, any model that aims to explain Americans’ political attitudes should involve race in the analytical process. I, therefore, add race into my policy attitudes model not to reject Zaller’s model but merely to complicate our understanding of the way in which voters receive information.

## DATA

In order to conduct this study on race and climate change, I perform an analysis of American foreign policy public opinion survey data. The initial data, collected in the year 2004 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA), provides responses on American foreign policy issues from 1,195 different Americans, and the second

data set this study employs comes from the same body but was produced in 2006 and contains responses from 1,227 respondents. These respondents were randomly recruited by telephone and by self-administered mail and Web surveys. They also performed an oversample among a stratum of telephone exchanges that have high concentrations of African Americans and Hispanic households based on census data. CCGA constructs a rich data set that opens up ample room for discovery.

From the CCGA survey data, I closely examine responses to foreign policy questions that relate to climate change. The first question I visit asks respondents to decide the level of threat they felt toward a list of foreign policy issues, with the ninth of nineteen being climate change. Their options for answers were: (1) critical threat, (2) important but not critical, or (3) not important at all. The second question I incorporate into my analysis is constructed in a similar way; it asks respondents, on the same three-point scale, to rate whether they deemed the action of limiting climate change: (1) very important, (2) somewhat important, or (3) not important at all. I use these two questions both as measures for climate change preference and my dependent variables.

I frame this investigation by conducting a statistical analysis based off what Benjamin Page and Marshall Bouton construct in their book *The Foreign Policy Disconnect*. Page and Bouton perform a set of analyses using data from the same source from which I draw for my own investigation—the Chicago Council on Global Affairs—but they pull data from 2002 instead of 2004 and 2006. The larger argument they make, based upon their research, is that “the American public has stable, consistent, and sensible preferences concerning a wide range of policies” and that “the officials who make U.S. foreign policy should pay more attention to what the public wants.”<sup>30</sup> My analysis takes their claim in a different direction by looking at a specific issue, climate change, and measuring whether or not, and to what extent, racial identity informs us about the way in which climate change resonates with Americans. Furthermore, because I perform this analysis on data from 2004 and 2006, I can determine whether or not race played a role in climate change attitudes before and after Hurricane Katrina took place in 2005.

This analysis stems from a relatively straightforward question: does race affect Americans’ opinions toward climate change? I hypothesize that race, because of the

rationale previously outlined through PTM, will have a distinct effect in 2006, and that, if Hurricane Katrina truly was the critical event that linked racial ideology to climate change, there will be either no effect or a weaker one in 2004. More specifically, I predict that identifying as Black or Hispanic will correlate with more serious attitudes toward climate change, especially in 2006. In mathematical terms, I am proposing that we will be able to reject the null hypothesis that race has no effect on preferences on climate change.

*H:0 = race has no effect on climate change preferences*

I, therefore, construct an investigation in which I test this hypothesis using statistical methods: descriptive statistic calculation, multivariate linear regression estimation, and ordered logistic regression estimation. I construct a set of formal models that I use in my attempt to explain Americans’ opinions on climate change, and I test racial identification as my primary explanatory variable. While conducting these tests, I introduce a set of control variables: party, news interest, income, employment status, and education level. Perhaps the most interesting relationship to which to pay attention is that between the two sets of variables for race(s) and party(s): one set that is, for the most part, predetermined (race) and another grouping to which citizens can willfully ascribe (political party). Because of the place that Blacks, and arguably Hispanics, have within the Democratic Party’s coalition, scholars would most likely assume that any performance by the race variables that aligns with my hypothesis must be a byproduct of the effect of party identification. While a valid claim, I turn to the empirical evidence in order to determine whether or not racial identification actually informs us how Americans’ think about climate change or whether racial identification is just an apolitical feature, when it comes to this issue, that gets usurped by these other factors that I use as controls. Thus, I turn to the data for answers.

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Before I offer any sort of significance test, it is important that I provide the descriptive statistics from the two data sets in order to establish a foundation for the formal modeling analysis. These calculated means highlight a key trend that appears frequently throughout the data: Blacks and Hispanics, respectively as aggregate groups,

Table 1: 2004 Attitudes by Race

<b>Climate Change Threat</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
Black	2.158	.698
White	2.462	.664
Hispanic	2.366	.671
Total	2.207	.699
<b>Improve Climate Change by Race</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
White	2.354	.615
Black	2.571	.586
Hispanic	2.391	.658
Total	2.378	.620

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs

both express climate change to be a greater threat than do Whites. Furthermore, when searching for factors that could be creating differences in opinion on the issue, these descriptive statistics also highlight, more broadly, different characteristics or behaviors of people based on how they view climate change. This surface data, therefore, displays two things: (1) the consistent difference in climate change attitudes undertaken by members of different racial groups, and (2) demographic information that provides a clearer picture of the types of lives people with differing opinions on climate change live. Furthermore, because this data comes from two content-parallel data sets from two different years, this descriptive analysis also projects a view of how these attitudes and demographics behave over a period of time.

Beginning with 2004, the data suggests that both people of different racial groups and members of different political parties exhibit the most distinct amount of difference on climate change positions. As Table 1 shows, Whites averaged a position of 2.462 on a 1 to 3 scale where 3 is the highest amount of felt threat toward climate change, and they leaned more toward the “not important all” position, on average, than did Blacks and Hispanics with average positions of 2.158 and 2.366, respectively. When examining 2004 attitudes on improving climate change (also on Table 1), the same trend persists: Blacks and Hispanics, on average, believed improving climate change was more

important than did Whites. With regard to party, both “threat” and “improving” attitudes phenomena surfaces distinctions as well. While Americans who viewed climate change as unimportant leaned Republican, those who viewed climate change as a critical threat associated more with the Democratic Party on average. Interestingly, Americans who chose the “important but not critical” options for both climate change questions sat slightly closer to the Republican average position than that of the Democrats.

The responses from 2006 show both an overall numerical difference from 2004 as well as more intricate changes in the makeup of climate change position takers. According to Table 2, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites all, on average, saw climate change as more of a threat in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina than before the storm. Unlike in 2004, respondents in 2006 who thought climate change to be unimportant were, on average, more educated (see Table 3 and Table 4). For both “threat” and “improve,” the respondents on the most extreme ends of attitude scale had consumed the most news on average. Contrarily, respondents taking the moderate positions in 2006 had the highest employment rate. Lastly, in terms of party, those with the polar positions maintained their same average party position as 2004, while the climate change moderates grew slightly more conservative on climate change in 2006 on average, but this is most likely because of the overall liberal shift that appears to have occurred after Katrina.



Table 2: 2006 Attitudes by Race

<b>Climate Change Threat</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
White	2.272	.699
Black	2.569	.614
Hispanic	2.437	.726
Total	2.322	.701
<b>Improve Climate Change by Race</b>		
<b>Race</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>sd</b>
White	2.451	.613
Black	2.624	.541
Hispanic	2.560	.596
Total	2.482	.607

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs

When examining the socioeconomic status variables as well as news consumption, the data from 2004 suggests that there is not much of a difference between those most threatened by climate change and respondents who are most apathetic (see Table 3). The average levels of news consumption, on a 1 to 4 scale, between people who reported climate change as a critical threat compared to those who felt that climate change was not important were fairly similar: 3.21 as opposed to 3.28. Education appears to have a positive, although slight, correlation with threat attitudes. Employment rates are relatively similar for respondents across the three different climate change threat responses, although those most threatened by climate change reported themselves as employed at a slightly higher rate than those who were apathetic. Education level, while showing a positive correlation with threat attitudes, also boasts modest differences between the two polar ends of the climate change attitude spectrums. The characteristics for respondents based on attitudes for improving climate change all follow the same pattern as well.

#### STATISTICAL MODELING

Now that I have displayed a general sense of the relationship between the respondents and climate change attitudes, I employ statistical modeling techniques in order to simulate statistical control over my analysis. My dependent variables are, once

again, attitudes on both climate change threat and the importance of improving it. My primary explanatory measures are the dichotomous race variables, and my control measures are a dichotomous employment variable and categorical variables for party identification, education level, and news consumption. While the findings from my control-based analysis reveal mostly the same patterns as the descriptive statistics, the regression analysis—through the linear model coefficients, risk ratios, and plotted predicted probabilities—add a layer of specificity to my overall measurement of climate change attitudes.

The most important revelation from the models of the 2004 data is that, even when one controls for party, Blacks and Hispanics saw climate change as more of a threat. As model 5.1 in Table 5 shows, identifying as Black as opposed to White caused respondents to see climate change as a threat 0.136 standardized units more (see Figure 1a). Because measuring difference in attitudes through ordinary least squares (OLS) standardized units is opaque for the analysis of outcomes that are ordered, categorical, and discrete, I calculate the same model (model 5.3 in Table 5) with an Ordered Logistic Regression (ORL) in order to generate odds ratios, and one can see that Blacks are 1.5 times more likely to see climate change as more of a critical threat than do Whites (see Figures 3a and 5). Furthermore, the statistical significance assures that we can be at least 95 percent

TABLE 3:

## 2004 Data Descriptive Statistics: Pre-Katrina

<b>Climate Change Threat</b>	<b>News</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Party I.D.</b>
1. Critical Threat	3.215 (0.830)	0.731 (0.445)	3.188 (1.240)	2.403 (0.808)
2. Important, not Critical	3.109 (0.800)	0.707 (0.455)	3.276 (1.148)	1.887 (0.876)
3. Not important at all	3.284 (0.774)	0.6743 (0.469)	3.3119 (1.211)	1.638 (0.777)
Total	3.191 (0.799)	0.699 (0.459)	3.276 (1.186)	1.876 (0.867)
<b>Improve Climate Change</b>	<b>News</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Party I.D.</b>
1. Improve Climate Change	3.011 (1.017)	0.753 (0.434)	3.135 (1.189)	2.191 (0.851)
2. Important, not Critical	3.143 (0.803)	0.696 (0.460)	3.302 (1.165)	2.029 (0.880)
3. Not Important at all	3.266 (0.760)	0.691 (0.463)	3.275 (1.209)	1.676 (0.814)
Total	3.189 (0.805)	0.698 (0.459)	3.277 (1.186)	1.881 (0.869)

Source: Chicago Council of Global Affairs

Note:

\*The race column calculates mean issue response by race

TABLE 4:

## 2006 Data Descriptive Statistics: Post-Katrina

<b>Climate Change Threat</b>	<b>News</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Party I.D.</b>
1. Critical Threat	3.265 (0.832)	.599 (0.492)	2.940 (0.961)	2.527 (0.727)
2. Important, not Critical	3.091 (0.817)	.606 (0.489)	2.706 (1.077)	2.107 (0.873)
3. Not Important at all	3.305 (0.774)	.587 (0.493)	2.679 (1.029)	1.685 (0.835)
Total	3.213 (0.805)	.596 (0.491)	2.726 (1.042)	1.971 (0.887)
<b>Improve Climate Change</b>	<b>News</b>	<b>Employed</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Party I.D.</b>
1. Critical Threat	3.306 (.866)	.528 (.503)	2.806 (.944)	2.347 (.842)
2. Important, not Critical	3.155 (.783)	.612 (.488)	2.781 (1.057)	2.214 (.872)
3. Not Important at all	3.257 (.807)	.590 (.492)	2.681 (1.038)	1.75 (.843)
Total	3.219 (.802)	.595 (.491)	2.729 (1.041)	1.971 (.887)

Source: Chicago Council of Global Affairs

Note:

Table 5: Climate Change Models from 2004 Responses: Pre-Katrina

	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4
	CC Threat (OLS)	Improve CC (OLS)	CC Threat (ORL)	Improve CC (ORL)
Intercept	2.272*** (0.129)	2.251*** (0.116)		
Black	0.136* (0.074)	0.142* (0.060)	1.556* (0.359)	1.604 (0.412)
Hispanic	0.124* (0.082)	0.039 (0.060)	1.504 (0.377)	1.140 (0.292)
Party I.D.	-0.178*** (0.024)	-0.116*** (0.021)	0.612*** (0.022)	0.686*** (0.061)
News Attentitiveness	0.067** (0.032)	0.096*** (0.023)	1.248* (0.120)	1.356** (0.148)
Education	0.023 (0.021)	0.015 (0.016)	1.081 (0.070)	1.050 (0.068)
Employment	-0.055 (0.054)	-0.011 (0.040)	0.846 (0.138)	0.956 (0.167)
Cut 1			-1.832 (0.471)	-2.088 (0.562)
Cut 2			0.612 (0.485)	0.580 (0.562)
Observations	1,123	1,128	1,123	1,128
R <sup>2</sup>	0.095	0.060	0.095	0.095
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.090	0.055	0.090	0.090
Residual Std. Error	0.667(df = 1116)	0.603(df = 1121)	0.667(df = 1116)	0.667(df = 1116)
F statistic	19.499***(df = 6; 1116)	11.15***(df = 6; 1121)	19.499***(df = 6; 1116)	19.499***(df = 6; 1116)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01			

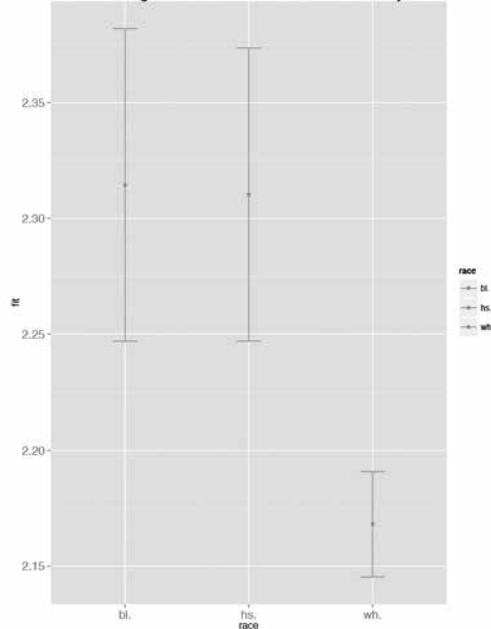
confident that identifying as Black does have an effect distinguishable from zero.

While Hispanics are less likely than Blacks to view climate change as important, they too are, nonetheless, more likely than whites to undertake such a view. Looking at the odds ratio estimate from the ORL model (5.3) in Table 5, Hispanics were estimated to be also around 1.5 times more likely to see climate change as a critical threat as opposed to Whites (see Figure 1a). Notice also that, like Blacks, the estimated effect of identifying as Hispanic produces an effect that is comparable to that of party identification. In other words, race, when looking at climate change threat in 2004, seems to be just as strong of an influence on voters' preference as party identification. Furthermore, the effect of race is just as robust as party identification

when one controls for news consumption and socioeconomic status.

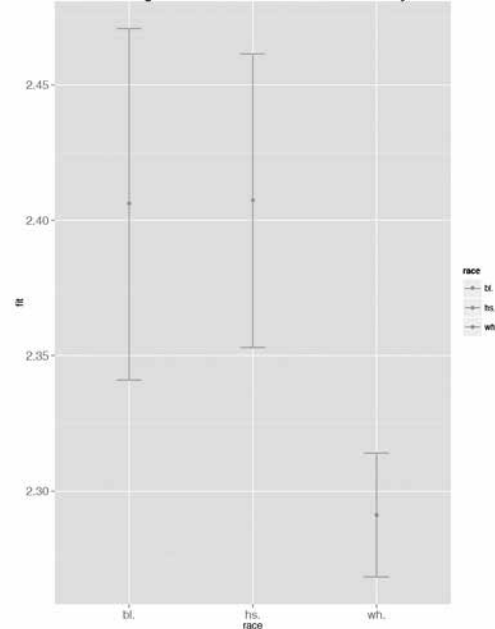
When measuring attitudes toward the importance of improving climate change, the results are slightly different. While Blacks also see improving climate change as more important than Whites do, the OLS estimate of identifying as Black reduces in size by 0.02 standardized units and the statistical significance reduces to a 90 percent level of confidence that the result is different from zero (see Figure 2a). Blacks are also 1.6 times more likely than Whites to see improving climate change as very important, but the estimation is statistically insignificant for the ORL model (see Figures 4a and 6a). Identifying as Hispanic not only loses its statistical significance but its estimated effect also reduces to zero. Party also experiences a reduction

2004 Climate Change Threat Attitudes Model Estimates by Race—OLS



(1) (a)

2006 Climate Change Threat Attitudes Model Estimates by Race—OLS



(b)

in its effect. Only news consumption has a stronger influence on “threat” than “improve.”

Overall, the message from the 2004 data is that race did affect climate change attitudes, especially ideas about climate change threat. While Hispanics appeared not as strong on improving climate change as they were for climate change threat, Blacks’ attitudes appear to form into more of a trend across the two dependent variables. Furthermore, how one identified racially in 2004 seems to have around the same amount of influence on climate change attitudes as party identification.

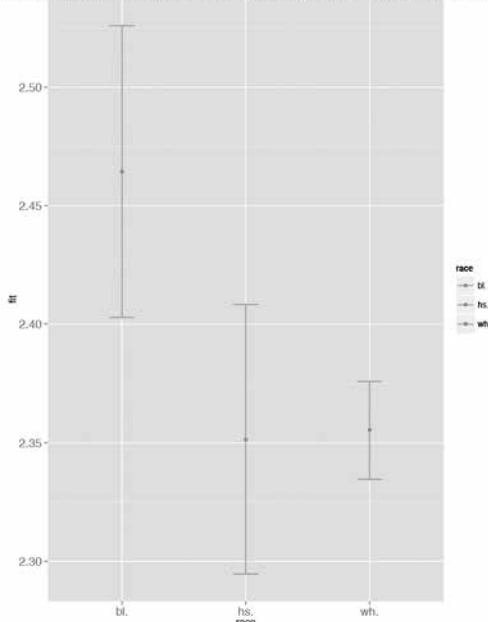
The results from the replication of my model on the same questions asked in 2006 suggest that there are three notable shifts. First, one notices that the effect of identifying as Black on climate change attitudes is, while not as strong in 2006 as in 2004, relatively intact. As model 6.1 in Table 6 shows, identifying as Black as opposed to White caused respondents to see climate change as a threat an estimated 0.115 standardized units more than the average White, which estimates to 2.635 on a 1 to 3 scale. The statistical significance accompanying Black identification assures me that I can be at least 90 percent confident that Blacks are different from the overall average on “threat.” Furthermore, the data suggests, in model 6.3 in Table 6, that Blacks are once again almost 1.5 times more likely than Whites to see climate change as a critical threat. For Blacks, their

attitudes on improving climate change, however, become indistinguishable from the average, a finding that carries implications that I will discuss in the next section.

The second change to notice in 2006 is that Hispanics make a noticeable leap in expressing attitudes about climate change that go beyond party identification, socioeconomic status, and news consumption. Looking at the odds ratio estimate from the ORL model (6.3) in Table 6, Hispanics at a ratio of 1.6:1, when compared to Whites, estimate to be slightly more likely than even Blacks to see climate change as a critical threat. When looking at attitudes toward improving climate change in 2006, Hispanics show the most significant difference. While identifying as Hispanic seemed to have no effect on attitudes toward improving climate change in 2004, Hispanics in 2006 asserted themselves much more on the issue, seeing the issue of improving climate change 0.135 standard units greater than 2.7, which is the estimate for the average White attitude on the issue. Furthermore, Hispanics are almost 1.7 times more likely than Whites to see improving climate change as more important. In fact, identifying as Hispanic estimates to influence voters at a level comparable with party identification. Therefore, the data reveals that one can be confident in the fact that Hispanics see climate change as more of a concern than Whites do in 2006.

The last result that emerges in 2006 is the slight growth in the effect of party identification on climate

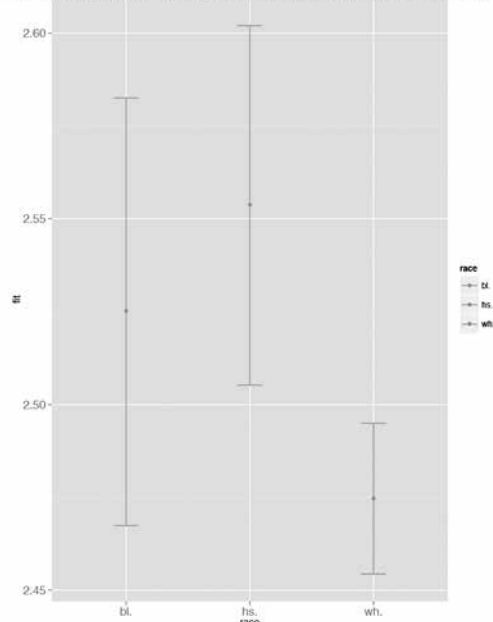
2004 Improve Climate Change Attitudes Model Estimates by Race—OLS



(2)

(a)

2006 Improve Climate Change Attitudes Model Estimates by Race—OLS



(b)

change attitudes. The boost in the estimated effect of party identification suggests that parties became a stronger predictor of climate change attitudes in 2006 than in 2004, and the increase reinforces the trend that Republicans are much less likely—actually almost half as likely as Independents and three-quarters less likely than Democrats—to see climate change as a critical threat or something very important to improve. Moreover, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level, I assume 99 percent in the assertion that party identification produces an effect distinguishable from zero.

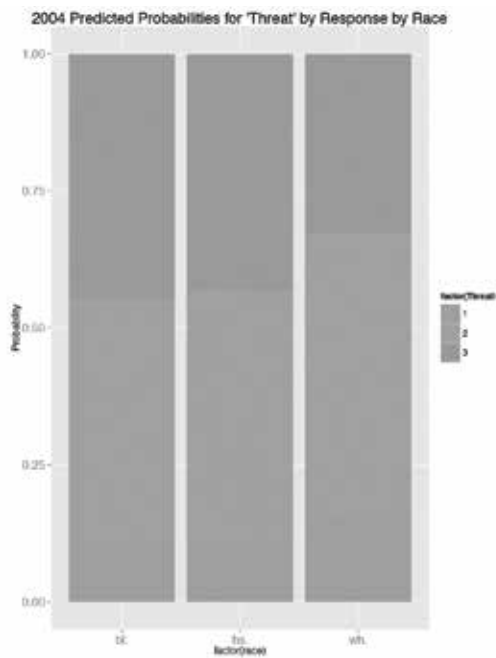
In 2006, the primary takeaway is that the trend of racial identity affecting climate change attitudes stays intact. Blacks remain higher on climate change threat than Whites, and Hispanics have strong feelings of threat as well. The slight decrease in the effect of Black identity that takes place in 2006 may be due to growth in the salience of party identification since Blacks have such strong ties to the Democratic Party. The predicted probabilities in Figures 5 and 6 buttress such an assertion because Blacks continue to have the highest probability of seeing climate change as a critical threat, despite a lower estimated effect in the regression models. In fact, while Blacks are the most likely to have concerns in 2004, Blacks have an even higher probability of seeing climate change as both a “critical threat” and “important” in 2006.

## FINDINGS

The evidence presented supports the argument that Blacks and Hispanics see climate change as more of a threat than Whites. This trend displayed by the two minority groups holds up both across dependent measures as well as time. The effect of racial identity on climate change also persists even when one controls for party identification, news consumption, and socioeconomic status. While the estimations for both the effect of identifying as Black and identifying as Hispanic are not statistically significant completely throughout this study, the results from the race measures maintain enough stability to highlight the fact that race plays a role in Americans’ attitudes toward climate change. Furthermore, Hurricane Katrina, among a number of other events that occurred in 2005, did not significantly change Blacks’ attitudes, although Hispanics’ concerns raised between 2004 and 2006.

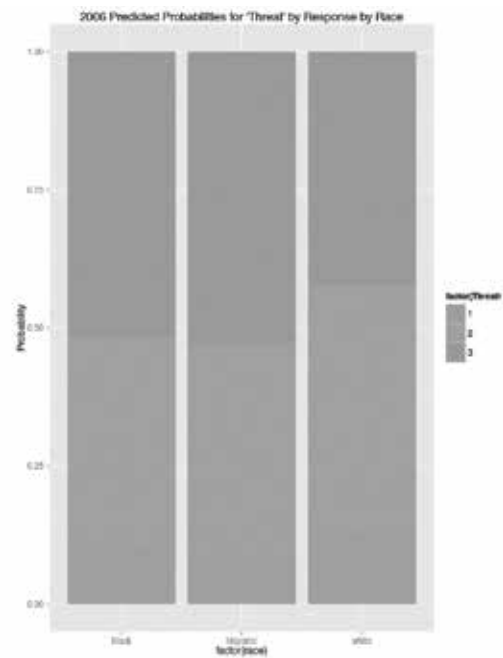
As for the Prism Theory Model, my empirical findings support the notion that race should be considered a primary explanatory variable for policy attitudes even when an issue is not racialized. Despite providing estimations, this work cannot definitely assert how strong of an influence race, or any explanatory variable, has on policy attitudes. Voters’ minds, as well as the institutional forces that affect voters, are much more



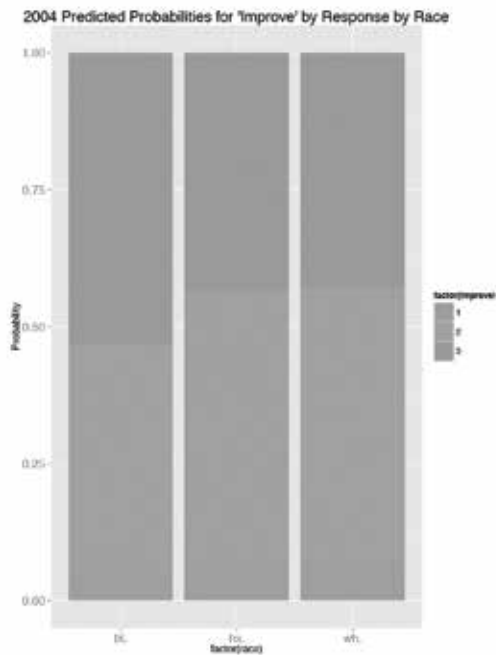


(3)

(a)

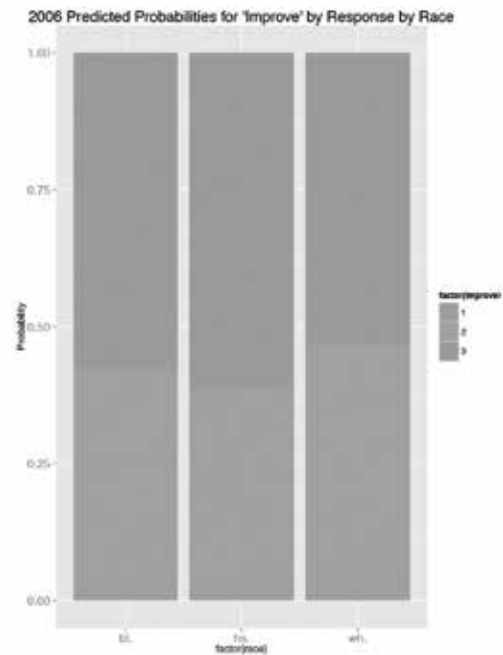


(b)



(4)

(a)

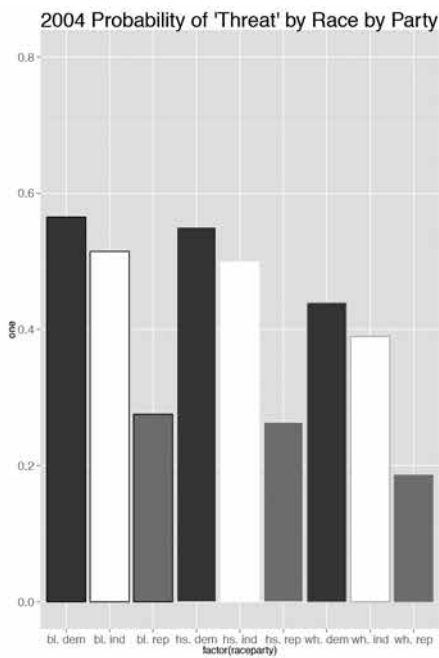


(b)

complex than my model shows. However, my findings do illustrate the existence of the relationship I theorized during the onset.

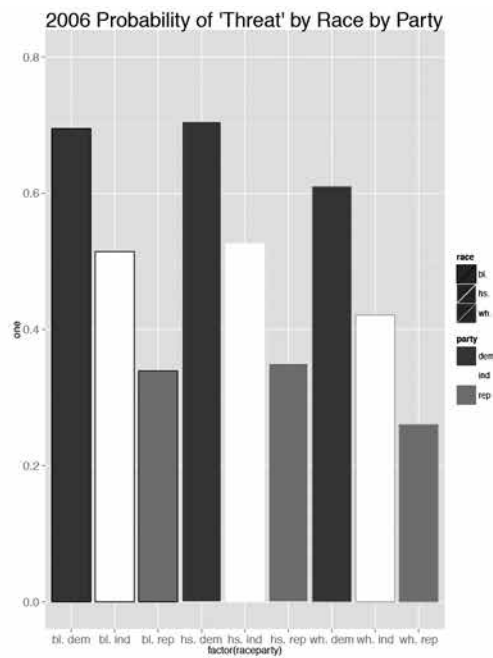
More research, particularly qualitative methods, is needed to better determine why race affects climate change attitudes. However, this work is important in surfacing a relationship that scholars within political

science regularly overlook. In particular, this work provides a foundation for the study of how race influences nonracialized parties. Such work pushes the boundaries of the notion of racial ideology to question how it extends into areas an area such as climate change.

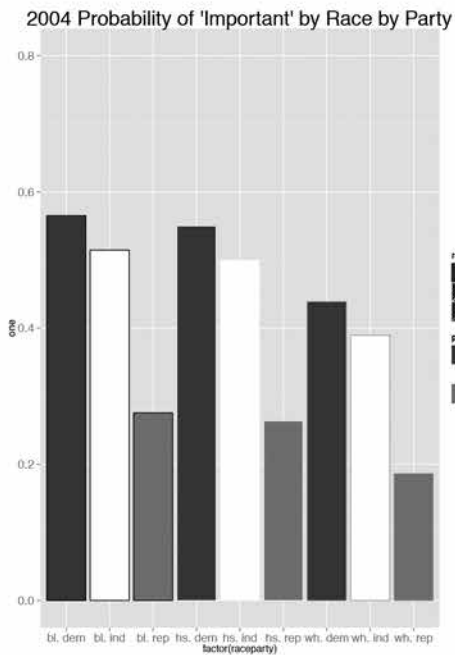


(5)

(a)

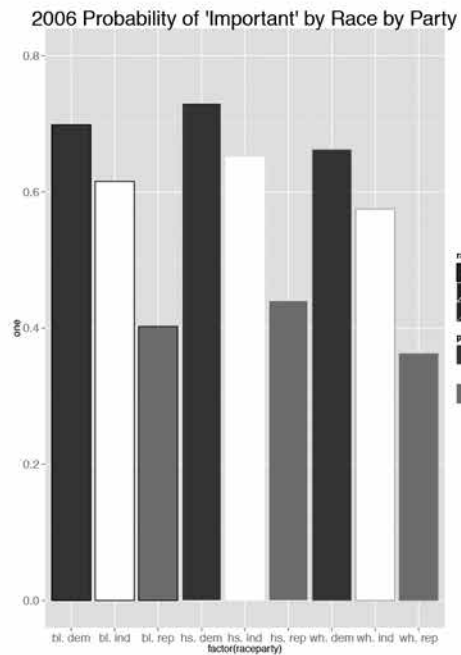


(b)



(6)

(a)



(b)

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given the findings, it is clear that localities and activists should be more aggressive about developing sustainability initiatives in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Because this larger feeling of threat extends to before 2005, there is room to believe that

Black and Brown climate change threat stems not from a specific event but from feelings of a cultural connection with the environment. Such an assertion explains the recent success of initiatives to build community gardens in African American neighborhoods. However, activists groups must build off of this foundation to create more sustainability measures such as sustainable food

	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.4
	CC Threat (OLS)	CC Improve (OLS)	CC Threat (ORL)	CC Improve (ORL)
Intercept	2.635*** (0.094)	2.703*** (0.084)		
Black	0.115* (0.062)	0.056 (0.055)	1.456* (0.335)	1.212 (0.281)
Hispanic	0.150** (0.057)	0.135** (0.051)	1.634** (0.339)	1.667** (0.345)
Party I.D	-0.250*** (0.023)	-0.161*** (0.020)	0.486*** (0.037)	0.567*** (0.044)
News Attentiveness	0.084*** (0.024)	0.037* (0.021)	1.332*** (0.0)	1.164* (0.098)
Education	-0.053*** (0.021)	-0.021 (0.018)	0.856** (0.055)	0.928 (0.064)
Employment	0.043 (0.042)	0.032 (0.038)	1.108 (0.150)	1.095 (0.154)
Cut 1			-2.806 (0.0326)	-3.644 (0.356)
Cut 2			-0.577 (0.323)	0.891 (0.357)
Observations	1,147	1,148	1,147	1,148
R <sup>2</sup>	0.132	0.077	0.132	0.077
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.127	0.072	0.127	0.072
Residual Std. Error	0.655(df = 1140)	0.585(df = 1141)	0.655(df = 1140)	0.585(df = 1141)
F statistic	28.893***(df = 6; 1140)	15.898***(df = 6; 1141)	28.893***(df = 6; 1140)	15.898***(df = 6; 1141)

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

**TABLE 6 — CLIMATE CHANGE MODELS FROM 2006 RESPONSES: POST-KATRINA.**

systems, product dematerialization (material reuse), and alternative fuel uses for both homes and cars. More sustainability can ease the feeling of threat.

African American and Hispanic communities also need progressive action undertaken by policy makers and their community leaders because they have been demanding it. My findings suggest that there is a relatively strong demand from these two non-White groups to improve the environment, and one can credit that demand to their overall economic disposition in America. So, another reason why Black and Brown

folks may feel threatened by climate change is because they see themselves as most vulnerable to the natural disasters that scientists link to climate change. Because they are more likely to live in poverty or at least without the resources needed to recover, adequately, from the ramifications of a natural disaster, they carry this sense of vulnerability.

Local activists and leaders can both meet the demand and reduce economic vulnerability by expanding the push for green jobs and training programs in Black and Brown communities, furthering the work started years

ago by Van Jones. African Americans and Hispanics should be trained for and given opportunities for more jobs that revitalize toxic wastelands in their communities. Employment opportunities also exist in the construction of green buildings and renovation of antiquated buildings that do not meet the sustainability goals of the twenty-first century. They can also be put to work harnessing renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectricity. These are the sorts of improvements Black and Brown communities are looking for.

As President Obama continues to tout environmental reforms addressing climate change in his presidential agenda, work needs to be done at the local level to ensure that any progressive policy reforms that take place permeate Black and Brown communities. Climate change threatens everything from standard of living to physical health to jobs and prosperity. It is clear that, for one reason or another, African Americans and Hispanics understand the significance. Give their communities the kinds of support they are asking for.

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# Elegy

*Ashley M. Jones*

*Let my poems be a graph / of me.*

—Amiri Baraka

Is it better to die  
a LeRoi  
or die the full Baraka,  
screaming bloody verse  
with your last black breath?  
How many more beats  
were in you  
on that surgery table,  
and will your heaven  
be powerful  
and Black?

Yours is a graph  
we'll trace in stanzas.  
The upward trend—  
power, metaphor,  
America arranged  
in shades of brown.  
The scattered points  
left out of the line—  
flame, discomfort,  
a potluck of politics.

You were not our flower,  
Baraka,  
but our fertilizer—  
not sweet-smelling  
but so necessary.  
So full  
and ready to shoot us  
full of juice—  
make us swallow you down  
and wait for growth.

I take you under my tongue, Baraka,  
and you are bitter,  
an aspirin chewed without water.  
But I will take you again  
and again,  
even if, sometimes,  
I chase you with something sweeter—  
a raisin from Langston,  
Zora's afternoon teacake.



*Following in the prophetic Christian tradition of social gospel preaching, this sermon (originally delivered 9 December 2012 at First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey) addresses an array of contemporary social injustices—from global poverty and mass incarceration to education inequality and the military-industrial complex—through the lens of Hagar’s experience in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. A combination of biblical exegesis, womanist theology, and critical-social theory, this sermon speaks to the power of the spoken word and God’s radical love amid, and against, systemic evil.*

# Wandering in the Wilderness: Where Do We Go from Here?

NYLE FORT is a graduate student at Princeton Theological Seminary and Youth Pastor at First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens. Alongside school and ministry, Fort is a community organizer in Newark, New Jersey.

Genesis 21:9–19

**Nyle Fort**

While a privileged minority lives in a world of luxury and wealth, the world’s majority wanders in a wilderness of oppression, lack, and fear. While the fortunate few enjoy Mother Earth’s resources—resources meant to be shared—the marginalized many face the reality that, no matter how much they work or how hard they try, they will never earn enough money or acquire enough power to live the quality of life God intends for them. Realizing that some of us, perhaps many of us, have fallen victim to corporate media myths that misconstrue this fact for fiction, let’s reevaluate where we are.

- According to the World Hunger Organization, out of the seven billion people living in the world today, approximately 925 million (nearly one billion people) are hungry everyday.<sup>1</sup>
- According to UNICEF, almost half the world’s people—that is, over three billion—live on less than \$2.50 a day.<sup>2</sup>
- Twenty-two thousand children die *everyday* due to poverty.<sup>3</sup>
- Out of the 2.2 billion children in the world, one billion live in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

- The poorest forty-one countries on earth possess less wealth than the richest seven *people* on earth. And the world’s eighty-five richest individuals are worth as much as the 3.5 billion poorest people.<sup>5</sup>

As the hip-hop adage says, “Men lie. Women lie. Numbers don’t lie.” But, perhaps you think these numbers don’t represent our nation that claims to be built on the ideals of liberty and justice for all. Again, let’s reevaluate where we are. The United States of America, home to 5 percent of the world’s population currently imprisons 25 percent of the world’s incarcerated individuals—constituting the highest incarceration rate in world history. According to the Pew Research Center, the United States currently spends \$30,000 to incarcerate an inmate while only spending on average \$11,665 per public school student. The United States, home to over 160 million Christians, is also home to over six hundred thousand people without housing and another twelve million without employment.<sup>6</sup> And currently, the country spends more money on our military than it does on education. That means the U.S. government is currently spending more money sending our children to war and to prison than

to college. It is within this context of world hunger and global poverty and from this sociality of mass incarceration and hyper-militarism that we enter the text today.

Today's scripture is what Biblical scholar Phyllis Trible calls a "Text of Terror."<sup>7</sup> It is a story about exclusion, economic injustice, and involuntary migration. Hagar, an Egyptian woman, sexual slave, single mother, religious outsider, social outcast, politically powerless, and economically deprived, is kicked out of Abraham's house with nothing but a bundle of bread, a jar of water, and her baby boy Ishmael. With nowhere to go and no one to help her, and with what seems like the weight of the world on her shoulders, Hagar finds herself wandering in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. While this story speaks to our contemporary situation in so many ways, for the sake of this sermon, I would like to focus our attention on two particular points in the text: the first initiated by Hagar with a response from God and the second initiated by God with a response from Hagar.

As our sister Hagar wanders in the wilderness—presumably lost, physically exhausted, and economically deprived—she begins to weep, to wail, to cry out! In the midst of a seemingly never-ending wilderness, in a place of neglect and abandonment, in a community of chaos and despair, Hagar utilizes the only resource she has left: her voice. While many Bible readers overlook Hagar's cry of desperation as meager and insignificant, I am inclined to believe that Hagar's cry is not only significant but is spiritually powerful and socially prophetic. Its spiritual power stems from Hagar's ability to cry out yet not cave in, and her capacity to weep yet not wither. It's socially prophetic insofar as it does not allow suffering to silence her story nor does it enable misery to mute her message. Hagar, in this sense, is the personification of the Hebrew proverb that declares, "There *is* power in the tongue."<sup>8</sup> Hagar, with no political power, no economic power, no religious power, realizes that if she's ever going to get out of this hell called wilderness, she cannot afford to be silent. Hagar realizes that if her baby is ever going to eat again, if her family is going to survive, if they're ever going to make it out of this situation, she cannot afford to be silent. Hagar realizes that if the future is going to be anything more than a fantasy and destiny anything more than a dream, she cannot afford to be silent. Hagar, oppressed, depressed, down-pressed, with no food, no water, no place to sleep, nowhere to go, and no family or friends

to turn to, turns to the only thing she has left: her God-given voice! Thus, Hagar's story serves as a commentary on our contemporary situation.

Here we are, approaching the dawn of a new year, a little more than a decade into a new millennium, one-hundred fifty years since the Emancipation Proclamation, barely fifty-seven years since Emmett Till's brutal murder, and only 253 days since Trayvon Martin's murder, and the Church<sup>9</sup> has been, at worst, asleep and, at best, silent. What happened to the cries in the wilderness? What ever happened to Hagar? I don't mean Hagar the woman in Beer-sheba, I mean Hagar the voice crying out in the wilderness. Where did Hagar go? Was Hagar's voice assassinated by the bullets that took Dr. King's life? Has Hagar's voice, like Assata Shakur's body, been ostracized by the forces of U.S. hegemony? Or, even worse, has the hypocritical Christian church that has done more crucifying than carrying the cross crucified Hagar's voice—nailing her prophetic voice to the crosses of religious traditionalism and political conservatism?

Hagar, a religious outcast, lifts up her voice and weeps over one hungry child. Yet, the Christian Church will not lift up its voice for millions of hungry children living with and dying of hunger every single day. I'm afraid too many Christians don't mind coming to church; we have no problem with paying tithes, but we are petrified to speak out against injustice. God forgive us! Hagar's voice not only grabs God's attention but it pushes the church out of its highchair of comfort and onto the threshold of tension. Let's be clear. Hagar held no degrees. Hagar didn't have a formal theological education. Hagar didn't even have a place to lay her head. But Hagar had a voice! Yet, many of us today walk around with two and three degrees, but no voice! God forgive us! It's time for us to stop arguing over petty church politics, stop debating trivial theological claims, stop fighting each other, and start crying out for social justice and spiritual liberation.

The good news today is that we are not alone, nor are our voices. Immediately after Hagar lifts up her voice and weeps, God responds with a message. God tells Hagar, "Don't be afraid."<sup>10</sup> Isn't it amazing that when we weep God has a word? And despite our misery, God always has a message? Is that not what the psalmist meant when she wrote, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning?"<sup>11</sup> The beauty of this text does not lie in Hagar's voice alone or in God's voice alone, but in the combined voices of Hagar and





the spirit of God. Their combined voices collaborate to create a way through the wilderness. Their combined voices demonstrate the creative power of the spoken word in the presence of social suffering. The same way God spoke into chaos to create the world, Hagar speaks out of a chaotic situation in order to create a new world . . . a new world for herself and her child.

While words can heal, words alone cannot make us whole. While words can lift us, words in and of themselves cannot liberate us. The reality is, that even after God intervenes with a word, Hagar and Ishmael are still hungry and close to death. While God's words undeniably bless Hagar's spirit, they do not change her physical circumstance. If the story ended here, then we would need to stop referring to God as *Jehovah-Jireh* (God, our provider). If the text stopped after God's Word, then we could no longer say, "We have never seen the righteous forsaken and God's children begging for bread."<sup>12</sup> While God's word is reassuring, we can't forget that water is still required. As simple as this sounds, you may be surprised how many religious folk forget this fundamental fact of life: words don't feed people; words don't put a roof over someone's head. That's why this text is significant this morning, not only because Hagar cries out for justice, not only because God has something to say, but because God doesn't just give Hagar a word, God gives Hagar water. Indeed, God gives Hagar a way out.

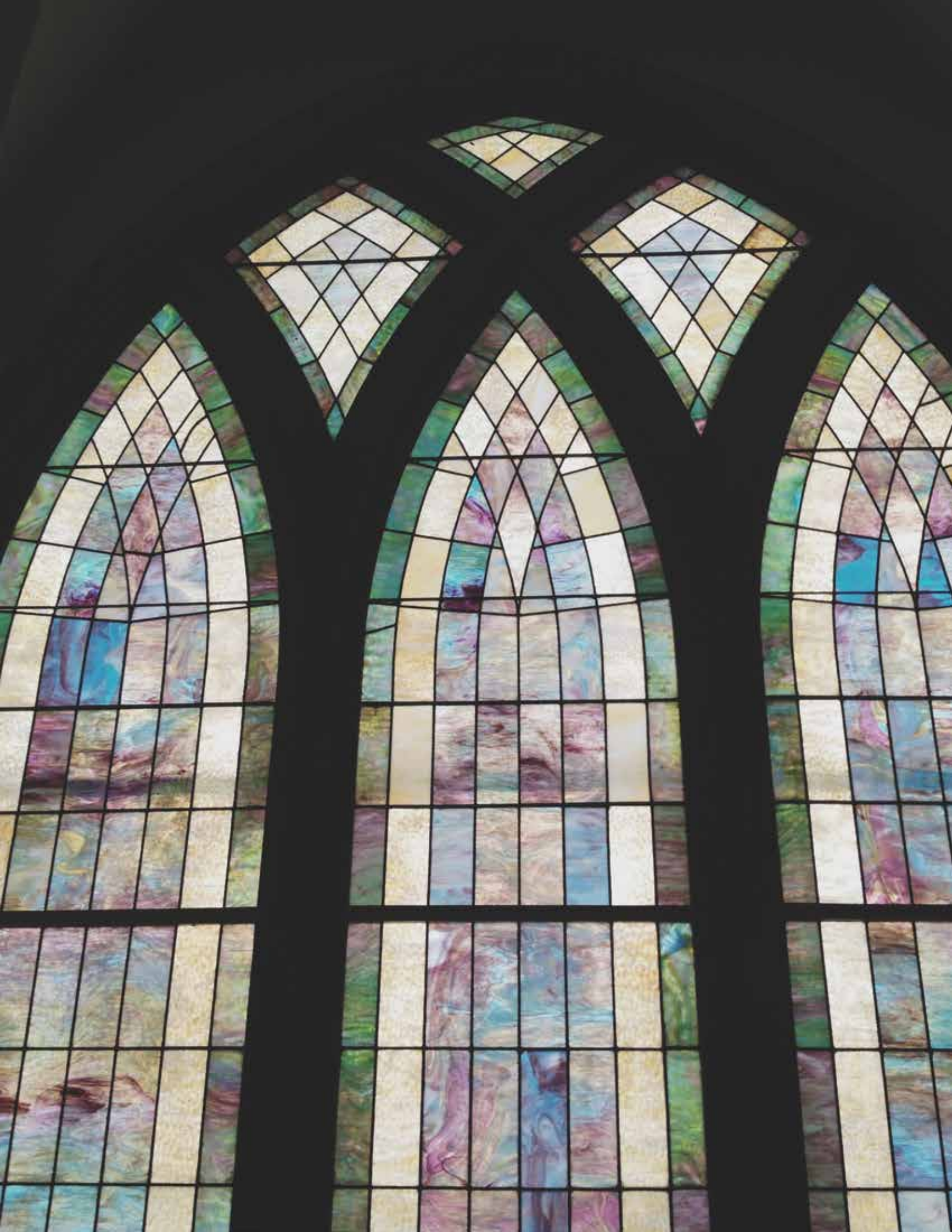
The scripture says that God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well of water.<sup>13</sup> Notice there are no miracles, or at least what many think of as a miracle, in this text. God doesn't drop a prayer cloth down from heaven. God doesn't ask Hagar for \$50 in exchange for a so-called blessing. God simply opens Hagar's eyes and enables her to see something that she previously could not. God gave Hagar an opportunity amidst her oppression. God presented a new possibility amidst her pain. This is significant because it reveals that God does not only care about our spiritual existence, God is also concerned about our physical well-being. God doesn't just care about our spiritual salvation; God is also concerned about our physical survival. And if we take this idea seriously, then we can no longer be satisfied with feel-good sermons that don't address the realities of our world. We can no longer settle for church on Sunday with no community change on Monday. If we take this idea seriously, we can no longer live under the myth that God is only concerned about the ekklesia—that is, the

church—but not concerned about our economy.

The problem is, too many people have a small god. That's right. A god who only saves the spirit but can't heal the body; a god who can change individuals but not transform society; a god who only speaks on Sunday morning; a god who lives in the church but neglects the community; a god who cares about our spirit but has no concern for our struggle. We need to stop confining God to the church, limiting God to Sunday morning, and trapping God in our closet Christianity. Woe to us for reducing a God who created all that we see and experience to a God who is only concerned about where we are spiritually but not economically, politically, or socially. Truth is, to say that God is not concerned about war and world poverty is to lie against God. The text clearly demonstrates that God does not just have a word but God can make a way—a way out of no way.

But notice that God does not bring the well to Hagar, neither does God send an angel to carry the water to her. Scripture says that God opens her eyes and that she went to the well and filled the skin with water and gave Ishmael a drink.<sup>14</sup> God opens her eyes *but Hagar* goes to the well. This speaks to our contemporary situation insofar as we realize that there are some things that we must do—we meaning you and I. We would be at best naïve and at worst lazy to sit back, wait, and expect God to do everything for us. We are copartners and cocreators with God. Isn't that what the authors of Genesis meant when they wrote, "We are created in the image of God"?<sup>15</sup> We must work with and alongside God to transform this wilderness into a new world. For too long too many people have used God as a scapegoat for the sins of humanity. God did not create poverty, imperialism did. There are enough resources on earth to feed the world many times over. Yet, people, many of them children, struggle to live with little to no resources. The truth is, we don't have a shortage of resources; we have a sharing problem. But the important part here is that Hagar does not wait for an angel, she does not lay back and wait for another sign. Rather, she wipes her tears and runs toward the well! She utilizes the opportunity that God gives her and she transforms a spiritual possibility into a social reality.

More than a story about Hagar, this is a story about us. More than a text about Beer-sheba, this is a text about America; this is a text about our global situation. This story challenges us with a critical question: where do we go from here? As we wander in the wilderness



of economic injustice and imperialism, where do we go from here? As we wander in the wilderness of world poverty and global warming, where do we go from here? As we wander in the wilderness of prison proliferation and education inequality, where do we go from here? Amidst this chaos we need a compass! While we wander, some seek security in the compass of capitalism. While we wander, some pursue comfort in the compass of materialism. But I'm here to unashamedly announce that we have a compass. And this compass we have is neither the crippling disease of capitalism nor the misleading myth of materialism.

Our compass is Christ! Not the repackaged Christmas commercialized Christ of the Western Christian imagination; I'm talking about Christ the rabble-rouser; Christ the religious rebel; Christ the political prisoner; Christ the liberator; Christ the social prophet. And if Christ is our compass, then the cross is our caravan. What do you mean, preacher? Since when did the cross have wheels, you ask? The cross has had wheels since courageous freedom fighters sacrificed success and comfort and became cosufferers with the poor and marginalized; since Fannie Lou Hamer organized people of color to register to vote; since Ida B. Wells literally risked her life in order to document the inhumane lynchings across the south. Yes! The cross has legs, it has feet, and it has wheels. The cross moves through time, through history, and through space. It transcends Golgotha's hill and manifests itself in American ghettos. It transcends Calvary and manifests itself in the struggle of Wal-Mart workers protesting for livable wages. And as long as there is a cross, there must be someone willing to carry it.

So where do we go from here? We go where Christ is. And where is Christ? Christ is in the 'hood; Christ is in the hospitals; Christ is in the homeless shelter; Christ is in the prison yard. Christ is at the school board meeting demanding educational equality. And like Christ, we must stand up and speak out, remembering the words of Dr. King Jr. :“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”<sup>16</sup> My sisters and brothers, we can't afford to waste one more minute, we can't afford to misuse one more moment, we must gather ourselves, organize, and run together toward the wells of peace, freedom, and equality.

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