

APARTHEID AND RESISTANCE IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GENTRIFICATION:
THE DIALECTICS OF BLACK WORKING-CLASS STRUGGLES IN ATLANTA,
GEORGIA, 1970-2015

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History
In the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2020

Urbana, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

This study serves as a critique of the political economy of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region between 1970 and 2015 through the lens of class struggle amongst African Americans. This dissertation argues that gentrification in U.S. cities must be understood as a dialectic of racial class struggle defined primarily through black working class collective resistance to urban reorganization. Second, this project argues that neoliberalization and subsequent gentrification in Atlanta served as a structural form of anti-poor black pogrom—the planned destruction or removal of a significant portion of a specifically defined group from a location. I contend that this intraracial class struggle is fundamental to contemporary black urban life and should be central to any analysis of racialized market societies. This dialectical relationship is intrinsically paradoxical and a prime contributor to contemporary apartheid in urban America and beyond. In this relatively new formation of racial oppression, poor black bodies and spaces disproportionately served as superfluous and malleable objects manipulated and reorganized predominantly through gentrification in the interests of capital accumulation. This conflict at the heart of the social construction of urban spaces determined the physical and social shape of Atlanta, the distribution of people, the allocation of resources, and the ways space and place were built, transformed, maintained, and disrupted. At its core, this study asserts that by understanding Atlanta and U.S. cities as sites of (intra)racial-class struggle over the production and maintenance of social space and globalized capital, African-Americanist urban scholars can more effectively explicate the fluid intraracial fissures in black neighborhoods that further complicate the urban structure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, this study is dedicated to the working classes of the world, whose struggle against oppression stimulated this research and continue to empower my intellectual and social development. I would like to thank my parents, Dorcas and Augustus Wood II, and my sister, Allyson Wood, for your continued support and encouragement in every way possible. I am forever indebted to you. I also thank my grandparents, Alice and Richard Brown, and Pearl and Augustus Wood, who set a standard for hard work and struggle that I sought to emulate from my earliest memory.

To my advisor, friend, and brother, Dr. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, there are not enough words to describe what your guidance, challenge, encouragement, loyalty, and friendship have meant to my development as a scholar, activist, leader, and overall human being. I am eternally grateful to you and strive to train scholars in a similarly, powerful manner. Special thanks to Stephanie Seawell-Fortado who gave countless hours of her time to prep me for prelim exams, read my chapter drafts, talk sports, and watch horror movies with her husband and my friend, Justus Fortado. Her invaluable feedback and spare social time elevated this scholarship. Special thanks to Ashley Howard, whose advice and scholarship set a high standard for me to which to achieve. Special thanks to Lou Turner, whose knowledge, rigorous scholarly work, and commitment to political economy and the community continue to both impress and deeply humble me. Your advice strengthened this project every step of the way.

Thank you to my exemplary committee, Rana Hogarth, Ruby Mendenhall, Theresa Barnes, and Kathryn Oberdeck, for your insights and support for my scholarship and community work. Each one of you were truly invaluable for this process. I also thank Antoinette Burton,

whose support and wisdom throughout the graduate school process strengthened my intellectual prowess in more ways than one. I thank the amazing Archives Division librarians and support staff at the Robert W. Woodruff Library in the Atlanta University Center and the Auburn Avenue Research Library in Atlanta, Georgia for your unrelenting engagement and availability with my project over the years. Finally, I dedicate this project to the memory of Alton Hornsby, Jr., who introduced me both to studying African American historical scholarship and archival research. When he hired me as a research assistant to excavate archives and copy newspaper articles at Morehouse College, he influenced my love of African American history, teaching, and desire to research the history of Atlanta.

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INTRODUCTION: THE TIME FOR MONSTERS

“All of history is the history of the struggle for freedom. If, as a theoretician, one's ears are attuned to the new impulse from the workers, new “categories” will be created, a new way of thinking, a new step forward in philosophic cognition.” –**Raya Dunayevskaya, 1958**¹

“If you believe in the implacable domination of economic forces, you cannot believe in the possibility of a social movement.”-**Alain Touraine, 2001**²

“Since I was knee high,
The only thing we had was the Peachtree Plaza in the sky,
Things ain't the same...no more, Everyday... my city seems to grow...and grow,
Gotta blow a bed for my back ‘cause I can't take the hardwood floors,
Crooked system had me working in the warehouse From 8 to 4, so...
Prices going up, people giving in,
To the rockets and Herndon Homes, is known,
By the city to be toxic, but ain't nothin' said,
Always on the down low never in the mainstream... ”
-**Atlanta-Based Band, Goodie MOB, “Hold On,” 2006**³

Introduction

On July 12th, 1993, dozens of activists in Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A’NUFF) swarmed and disrupted the Atlanta Committee of Olympic Games (ACOG)’s ceremonial groundbreaking on the \$209 million Olympic Stadium located in the predominantly low-income African-American neighborhoods of Summerhill, Mechanicsville, and Peoplestown, south of the Central Business District in the core city. Drowning out the event with speeches, marching and chants of “NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE!!!,” A’NUFF, comprised predominantly of working-class black residents, protested the Atlanta power structure’s latest redevelopment threat

¹ Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom: From 1776 to Today*. New York: Bookman Associates, 1958.

² Alain Touraine, *Beyond Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

³ Purple Ribbon All-Stars. Big Boi Presents Got Purp? Vol. 2. Purple Ribbon and Virgin Records, 2005, Compact Disc.

to their communities. Three years prior, the combined power of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta City Hall, and the Fulton County Board of Commissioners displaced nearly two hundred low-income Black families from the Vine City neighborhood to build the Georgia Dome stadium.⁴

A'NUFF also challenged Summerhill Neighborhood Inc. (SNI), a community development corporation comprised mainly of middle-class blacks who lived miles away from Summerhill in the black affluent Southeast area known as the “Gold Coast.” SNI signed a lucrative redevelopment deal with Atlanta City Hall that manipulated property values and rents, which priced low-income residents out of Summerhill. SNI accomplished this using Summerhill’s name, but without consent of the Summerhill residents. Thus, A'NUFF’s citywide working-class movement against the Olympic stadium’s construction challenged both the dispossession of indigenous Atlantans under the guise of revitalization and the cooptation of working-class social movements by the black bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes. “A nebulous process of displacement and dispossession has started,” A'NUFF stated, “protracted struggle for land and control over its use and by who, has clearly begun.”⁵ Although their disruptive protest proved more symbolic than effective, A'NUFF’s anti-stadium movement illuminated the class fractures at the heart of pro-growth ideology, neoliberalization, and gentrification in black Atlanta.

⁴ “Community Group Wants One Stadium in Area,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, Aug 2, 1991 pg. 1; “Demonstrators have Little Effect on Olympic Stadium Groundbreaking,” *Atlanta Daily World*, July 15, 1993, pg. 1; “The Olympic Stadium: Breaking Ground,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 11, 1993, pg. 25. “Turner Field Will Be Demolished After the Braves Leave,” *cbsports.com*, November 12, 2013; <https://www.cbssports.com/mlb/news/turner-field-will-be-demolished-after-braves-leave/>. See Appendix C.1 for a picture of Ethel Mae Matthews and A'NUFF protesting the Olympic Stadium groundbreaking.

⁵ “Why Do the Braves Need a New Stadium?,” *sbnation*, November 11, 2013, <https://www.sbnation.com/mlb/2013/11/11/5090654/braves-new-stadium-cobb-county-turner-field>; “A'NUFF to Fight Forced Property Purchases,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 10, 1991, pg. 6.

Gentrification and redevelopment in general have been defined, in both popular and scholarly arenas, as singular, organic consequences of “progress” and urbanization. Presented in this manner, gentrification appears as a top-down, one-sided process controlled solely through real estate interests. The sociohistorical record, however, tells a different story. This dissertation serves as a critique of the political economy of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region (AMR) between 1970 and 2015 through the lens of class struggle amongst African Americans. It reflects how the restructuring of capitalism in the 1970s shifted from the previous goal of extensive land development and investment for suburbanization to intensive structural redevelopment and investment in the backyards and workspaces of black urban dwellers. This political economic transformation drastically altered the African American urban experience.

“Apartheid and Resistance in the Political Economy of Gentrification: The Dialectics of Black Working Class Struggles in Atlanta, 1970-2015,” makes two arguments. First, gentrification in U.S. cities must be understood as a dialectic of racial class struggle defined primarily through black working-class collective resistance to urban reorganization. Working-class black Atlantans organized a myriad of social movements to not only mitigate disruption caused by urban development, but to also seize community control of public resources that strengthened their social conditions. Public and private pro-growth interests utilized petty bourgeois activism to counter these struggles and move the city towards a 24-hour private visitor market. I contend that both poor black bodies and spaces are viewed as superfluous and expendable commodities for market interests in late twentieth and twenty-first century urban regions.

Second, I argue that neoliberalization and subsequent gentrification in Atlanta served as a structural form of pogrom against poor black people—the planned destruction or removal of a

significant portion of a specifically defined group from a location. Although scholars have generally defined pogroms as “violent riots” aimed at cleansing ethnic or religious groups, particularly Jewish people, I seek to complicate the concept of “pogrom” in two specific ways. First, as historian Charles Lumpkins accomplished in his pathbreaking study of the anti-black pogrom in 1917 East St. Louis, I examine the long-term, *deliberate* process of a pogrom.⁶ Scholars of anti-Jewish pogroms have featured the “riot,” “mob behavior” or “spontaneous violence” of persecuted groups in such places as 1903 and 1905 Kishinev, 1905 Kiev, 1918 Lwow, and 1947 Aleppo. However, I argue that pogroms do not necessarily have to be explicitly violent nor riotous to accomplish the goal of destroying or cleansing a group or space. A *structural pogrom* framework illuminates the organized, macrolevel planning apparatus of the cleansing while also proving that violence against oppressed groups can be structural. As scholar Johan Galtung argued, violence as a somatic incapacitation or “the deprivation of health” predominantly through “killing at the hands of an actor who intends this to be the consequence” or as “an over form of coercion such as warfare, suppression of dissent by government forces, or physical assault” is too narrow of a concept.⁷ I argue that to fully understand the complex dynamics of violence against oppressed groups and individuals under a neocolonial structure,

⁶ Charles Lumpkins introduced the pogrom argument to U.S. urban history by examining racial violence against African Americans in East St. Louis. See Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008.

⁷ For more on classic examples of European pogroms, see Speros Vryonis, *The Mechanism of Catastrophe: The Turkish Pogrom of September 6-7, 1955, and Destruction of the Greek Community of Istanbul*. The University of Michigan, July 14, 2005, digitized July 14, 2008, 659 p; Jonathan Dekel-Chen, David Gaunt, Natan M. Meir, Israel Bartal, eds., *Anti-Jewish Violence: Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History*. Indiana University Press, 2010, 240 p; John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds. *Pogrom: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*. NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 416 p; Victoria Khiterer, “The October 1905 Pogroms and the Russian Authorities,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 43, No. 5, September 2015, pp. 788-803. Radu Ioanid, *The Iasi Pogrom, June-July 1941: A Photo Documentary from the Holocaust in Romania*. Indiana University Press, 2017, p. 200; Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History*. Liveright: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2019, 288 p; For expanding concepts of violence, see Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1969, pp. 168-169; Mary K. Anglin, “Feminist Perspectives on Structural Violence,” *Identities*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2010, p. 145.

scholars must expand the pogrom framework to incorporate class struggle and social movement capacity as motivations for cleansing.

In fact, Galtung's approach on violence accentuates why urban renewal and gentrification policies are best defined as structural pogroms against poor urban dwellers. Galtung defined violence as "the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is." More clearly, Galtung contended that violence is that which *decreases* the distance between a potential and the actual. For example, Galtung explained, if a person succumbed to tuberculosis in the eighteenth century, it cannot be conceived as violence since the lack of knowledge regarding the disease at that time made the death almost unavoidable. However, if a person died from it today, despite all the medical resources that make death from tuberculosis avoidable, then violence is present.⁸ Expanding Galtung's framework, I contend that when a dominant group purposely deprives both material and nonmaterial sources from a subordinate group in an effort to reduce their capacity to build institutions that both strengthen and improve the quality of their living and social spaces, those policies, indirect in nature, must be considered violent. From a dialectical perspective, Galtung's theory of violence works in similar ways:

"the potential level of realization is that which is possible with a given level of insight and resources. If insight and/or resources are monopolized by a group or class or are used for other purposes, then the actual level falls below the potential level, and violence is present in the system."⁹

⁸ Galtung, pp. 168-170.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.169.

Therefore, I expand Galtung's theory to argue that structural pogroms represent *indirect* violence against oppressed groups because "insight and resources are channeled away from constructive efforts to bring the actual closer to the potential."¹⁰ In other words, as scholar Mary Anglin posited, violence also assumes the form of the expropriation of vital political, economic, and social resources that subvert the capacity for the oppressed to construct and sustain social movements. Under structural pogroms like gentrification and urban removal, individuals may be destroyed or maimed with direct violence. However, they, alongside institutions, neighborhoods, and resources that inform the use value of living and social space, are also manipulated by a *structure* that contains actors, social organizations, and political regimes responsible for the violence. In fact, under a structural pogrom, there is usually not one specific entity who directly harms the oppressed group. The violence in a structural pogrom is built into the process and manifests as inequality, usually as racial oppression, intraracial class warfare, and inequality in life opportunities.¹¹ Kwame Ture (formerly Stokely Carmichael) and Charles Hamilton express in their seminal work, *Black Power*, how structural violence erases the individuality in racial class struggles by being "less overt, far more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals...but is no less destructive of human life." In its long-term meticulousness, a structural pogrom "is more the overall operation of established and respected forces in the society and thus does not receive the condemnation" that direct violence and explicit killing receives. However, groups under assault from indirect violence are politically, socially, and economically marginalized in ways that simultaneously deny them physical, psychological, and emotional well-being and heightened their exposure to social problems, like housing insecurity,

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 169-170.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 171; Anglin, p. 145.

underemployment, and mass incarceration, that disproportionately elevate the risk of sickness and death.¹²

Secondly, I seek to foreground class struggle as the defining feature of structural pogroms. As Lumpkins introduced, explicitly violent anti-black pogroms from the second Nadir Period (1877-1930) invoked racial terrorism to cleanse blacks from white-desired lands. However, contemporary structural pogroms operated through intraracial class-based struggle—black petty bourgeois activism framed through anti-poverty, anti-crime, and pro-growth discourse provided the capitalist class both a more sanitized, less explicitly-violent (indirect) eradication of low-income blacks and the soft power black urban leadership to execute the displacement. Thus, my conceptualization of gentrification and urban renewal as forms of structural pogrom allow me to build upon urban geographer Neil Smith's concept of gentrification as activism against the working class. This model effectively demonstrates how neoliberalization and gentrification, as coordinated anti-black working-class enterprises in urban America, defined neocolonial late twentieth century and early twenty-first century Atlanta.

After capturing the city's demographic majority in 1970, working class black Atlantans built neighborhood institutions and solidarity networks to procure autonomy over their neighborhoods and the direction of the city. Black workers sought interests that strengthened the use value of their neighborhoods—public resources that improved the quality of their lives and improved their overall capacity to build and sustain social institutions and movements. This included decision-making power over their bodies and spaces, stable, productive labor, community control of schools and police, and fair housing. Concurrently, the Atlanta power structure sought to destabilize low-income blacks' revolutionary proto-nationalist ideals and

¹² *Ibid*, p. 170-171; 187-188. Anglin, p. 145; Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967; 1992.

maximize the exchange value potential of their land by systematically targeting agency-laden institutions—spaces within black working class Atlanta that provided African Americans the resources to construct collective labor militancy, rent strikes, school protests, and mass rebellions against the police. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the most powerful social organization of capitalists in the Southeastern United States, directed their class interests through the majority black municipal government. These Black Urban Regimes (BURs) enacted retrenchment policies that regressed the social conditions of black workers, increased police funding, surveillance, and power, and opened blighted black-occupied lands to unregulated international and domestic private investment. This class struggle in black Atlanta resulted in the displacement of poor black Atlantans from the core city at record levels. By 2015, Atlanta had demolished all 14,000 federally subsidized public housing units, exposed over 68,000 people to poor housing or homelessness annually, and recolonized over 100,000 predominantly black families to hypersegregated, poverty-stricken, surveilled rural suburban spaces surrounding the core city.¹³

Specifically, I investigate the complex relationships within black Atlanta and how they shaped the political, economic, social, and cultural construction of a city driven by the commodification of poor black bodies, space and place. As the metro region shifted from a resident-centered design to a visitor-focused interface, the pursuit of international finance capital produced an inherent contradiction to black working-class dwellers' interests.¹⁴ As a result,

¹³ Stephanie Garlock, "By 2011, Atlanta Had Demolished All of Its Public Housing Projects, Where Did All Those People Go?" *CityLab*, May 8, 2014.

¹⁴ The concept "resident versus user interface" refers mainly to how the city planning remodeled its function to be less amendable to its residents while shifting all redevelopment on city "users" (tourists, students, other transient individuals) to further growing private interests. This often resulted in diminishing availability of public resources and jobs, especially manufacturing and blue-collar labor. Anthropologist Charles Rutheiser introduced this concept in his work, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* (1996) to examine the advertising model Atlanta used to lure international capital to the city. Thus, while Rutheiser is more interested in the cultural

black Atlantans split along class lines. The contending classes struggled over who would maintain access to public resources, stable living conditions, and the core city itself. To this end, black Atlanta's uneven development further fractured the overlapping relationships between the black working class, the black professional and managerial class, the black and white business elite, and the State. I contend that this intraracial class struggle is fundamental to contemporary black urban life and should be central to any analysis of racialized market societies. This dialectical relationship is intrinsically paradoxical and a prime contributor to contemporary apartheid in urban America and beyond.¹⁵

By way of this paradigm, I make three further contentions. First, black power struggles for control of Atlanta's future exposed class war amongst African American Atlantans. Black workers' proto-nationalist movements for community control countered black elites' push for black capitalism—a slice of Atlanta's profit pie. More specifically, the Black Power Era in Atlanta informed the reorganization of capital interests in the city and influenced black elected officials to secure their partnership with private investment to expand the metro region into a global privatized fortress. Through the neoliberalization process, BURs transferred black public resources to land entrepreneurs and private investors. In fact, urban reorganization not only reduced the availability of needed public facilities like schools, affordable housing, and

side of “resident vs user,” I will explore a more bottom up approach to how the African Americans' conditions changed as the user model dominated city planning over time.

¹⁵ My conceptualization of the term “racialclass” derives from scholar-activist C.L.R. James, who theorized that race and class do not subordinate one over the other; rather, James argued, race and class maintain a dialectical relationship where one supplements the other. As Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua argued, James implied that the black struggle was in essence a racialclass struggle. As in James' analysis of the Haitian Revolution, racial domination in the U.S. manifested “itself through capitalist institutions and despite the role of white workers in supporting racial oppression, the motive force for Black racial oppression was capitalism.” Therefore, it is appropriate for any analysis of racial oppression to use the term “racialclass.” For more information, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, “C.L.R. James, Blackness, and the Making of a Neo-Marxist Diasporan Historiography,” *Nature, Society, & Thought*, 11 (Spring 1998), pp. 53-89.

semiskilled, livable wage labor; it also lowered black neighborhoods' *locational advantage* to resources like social spaces, grocery stores, and public transportation. This resulted in the disruption of their efficiently integrated daily routine to goods and services within reach of residence. This, in turn, lowered black urban residents' capacity to organize consistent social movement activity against gentrification over the next three decades.

Second, the Atlanta power structure carried out this transformation of the city into the most powerful region in the Southeast United States using two specific tactics. First, capital reorganized for new accumulation throughout the city. Atlanta leaders weakened and later replaced stable, skilled, productive labor in working class spaces with unstable, low-wage, unskilled, service sector labor. Labor strikes in the 1970s pushed the Atlanta ruling class towards repressive laws to limit union activity. Second, real estate investors and public officials collaborated to manipulate urban land rents and property values. BURs often refused to collect property taxes on businesses or homeowners, which simultaneously hurled the city into crippling debt and provided justification for city officials to implement regressive taxes and cut public services.

Third and most significant, the police served as the crucial occupying force that facilitated neoliberalization and gentrification. The Atlanta power structure expanded police funding, surveillance, weaponry, and powers through federal and state grants and scrounging local tax revenues. As a result, city officials waged a policy and propaganda war that criminalized the black poor for exchange value interests. The police did not use their increased size and power to curb or stop underground economic activity—the drug trade, the black market for stolen goods, and the violent territorial conflicts that accompanied both. In fact, at the behest of the Atlanta power structure, police merely concentrated the underground economy away from

high business activity spaces and into low-income black neighborhoods—allowing it to grow and consume the resources and safety of the working-class residents. Consequently, the increasing number of both individuals who dropped out of the class structure and became *lumpenproletariat* (illegal capitalists who accumulate capital outside of the dominant economic structure) and drug markets in a relatively contained area led to intensified, and therefore, violent, competition for control. Atlanta officials exploited this process by advertising low-income spaces as dangerous, unsanitary, and socially backwards to local, national, and global investors. This *devalORIZED* land and property values in African American neighborhoods for private interests to purchase for cheap, raise the rents, and displace residents. This structural violence is never more apparent than during the Atlanta Child Murders era, when local, state, and federal officials overloaded the city with police to restrict black working-class access to the Central Business District while neglecting dozens of missing poor black children. In fact, when black working-class mothers organized and protested this hypocrisy, the Maynard Jackson regime dismissed the women as bad, lazy parents and the missing children as truants or homosexual prostitutes. Coincidentally, this same period saw relatively high investment activity and overseas recruitment trips, which spotlighted the class interests of Atlanta's leadership.

Thus, this dissertation argues that over a span of 45 years, Atlanta's black and white ruling class sought to transform Atlanta into an anti-working-class space. In this relatively new formation of racial oppression, poor black bodies and spaces disproportionately served as superfluous and malleable objects manipulated and reorganized predominantly through gentrification in the interests of capital accumulation. Capital contained poor blacks in colonized enclaves in isolated parts of the region. Thus, I conclude that Atlanta's gentrification served as a

new model for urban apartheid for twenty-first century U.S. metropolitan regions like New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Stakes of this Study

This conflict at the heart of the social construction of urban spaces determined the physical and social shape of Atlanta, the distribution of people, the allocation of resources, and the ways space and place were built, transformed, maintained, and disrupted. At its core, this study asserts that by understanding Atlanta and U.S. cities as sites of (intra)racial-class struggle over the production and maintenance of social space and globalized capital, African-Americanist urban scholars can more effectively explicate the fluid intraracial fissures in black neighborhoods that further complicate the urban structure.

Thus, this dissertation challenges the dominant paradigm in African American urban history by charting a more dialectical, working class approach for the field. Gentrification continues to dominate urban planning and black working-class communities suffer dispossession and displacement at disproportionate levels today. To fully investigate this dialectic, scholars must critique the political economy of urbanization by centering those oppressed groups most affected by redevelopment. Foregrounding political economy, through a historical materialist framework, disrupts the general notions of black homogeneity in black majority spaces like Atlanta. Political economy highlights racial class interests driving the African American experience in the United States. Centralizing black working class perspectives also dispels the myth of the Atlanta “Black Mecca” by revealing how black working class Atlantans operated in a state of oppression, but marshaled community networks against the ruling class in ways that have been overlooked by scholars because of their marginalized status.

“A People Without a Voice Cannot Be Heard”: Challenges in African American, Urban, and Atlanta Scholarship

This dissertation redirects the fields of African American history, urban history, and Atlanta history towards a dialectical methodology that foregrounds Black working-class voices, sources, and struggle. Much of the scholarship in these fields examines racial oppression primarily through macrolevel processes in isolation. Many works overlook how complex microstructures—neighborhoods, households, and organizations—produce more salient understanding of how systemic dereliction operates at all levels of society and how the restructuring of capital further complicates the relationship between race, class, gender, and power. As Black Studies scholar Lou Turner posits, the false equivalence between macrostructural analysis and the assumption that it explains individual, community, or other microlevel development must be abandoned. These types of macrostructural analyses treat the urban space solely as an isolated city undergoing an exclusive process where the oppressor moves and destroys objects with little opposition.¹⁶ This project conceptualizes urban space as a fluid social process itself where the interaction of the material and human environment form the circulation process of capital. This dialectical notion situates class struggle as the foundation of urbanization.

My dissertation offers a two-fold intervention: first, I construct an urban sociological study contextualized in a regional, dialectical perspective so as not to isolate the social construction of one city from the larger structural process at hand. This paradigm allows me to investigate the African American working-class as active agents under redevelopment.

¹⁶ Lou Turner, “Notes on Henry Louis Taylor and Same Cole, “Structural Racism and Efforts to Radically Reconstruct the Inner-City Built Environment (2001),”” Unpublished Paper, May 5-June 3, 2014, pp. 3-5.

However, some scholars lean towards the concept of “underclass” when examining the black working class. As sociologist John Arena argued, this is problematic for two reasons. First, the underclass concept “mischaracterizes the urban black poor and erroneously divides them from the other sections of the black working class.” The underclass concept fragments the urban poor from the rest of the Black working-class and places analytical emphasis on the behavioral deficiencies of the former.¹⁷

Arena succinctly stated that this liberal structural paradigm camouflages “the ways contemporary neoliberal, capitalist restructuring is worsening the material conditions of all segments of the working class.” When scholars such as sociologist William Julius Wilson and scholars Doug Massey and Nancy Denton assumed that the poorest black workers create their own deviance and self-perpetuate a “culture of poverty,” it reinforces the idea that individuals bear personal responsibility for their poverty, thus disregarding structural critiques of oppression. As a result, collective social movements appear irrational and poverty intervention strategies are professionalized in spaces like the non-profit industry.¹⁸

Consequently, as Arena argued, this conceptualization robs the black working class of their collective agency. Centralizing the black working class in the narrative illuminates how black working-class movements towards public goals—including strengthening the use values of their neighborhoods—and actions geared towards radical social transformation affects the local and global political economy. Examining working-class sources demonstrate that black

¹⁷ John Arena, “Bringing in the Black Working Class: The Black Urban Regime Strategy,” *Science & Society*, Vol. 75, No. 2, April 2011, pp. 153-179.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 158-179. For pathological frameworks on the black “underclass,” see William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987; Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

working-class urban collectives are central to African American and U.S. historical development. This methodology gives black working-class urbanites the space to narrate their own struggles.

Second, I provide an analysis of capital aggregation that locates neighborhoods at specific moments in time. In other words, I examine the social conditions under study not as individual points in an unstable environment. Rather, I plot them as *trajectories* of the region's structural instability. In the grand scheme of capital accumulation, the local urban population, that is the black and/or brown working poor, their households, and their neighborhoods, maintain a crucial dialectic to the structure as both levels determine one another. Without a focus on circulation of the two crucial markets (labor and capital) located principally in the microstructures of the city, we fail to recognize the effects of the contradictions in capitalist production (overproduction, over-capacity, and overaccumulation) and how those forms, in periodic accumulation crises, produce new urban formations. We also miss how these same crises facilitate threats to the working classes: underemployment, devalorization, disinvestment, and destruction of human and material assets. These social phenomena directly affect urban residents, their social conditions, and their capacity to build collective and individual resistance.

The literature on Atlanta can be separated into four distinct scholarly approaches: contributory biographical narratives, political science theoretical studies, sociological investigations into community formation, and top-down structural analyses. The earliest scholarship arrived in the 1950s and described how individual African-American elites shaped the city's post-emancipation polity.¹⁹ However important their contributions are to the

¹⁹ Clarence A. Bacote, "William Finch, Negro Councilman and Political Activities in Atlanta During Early Reconstruction." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 40, No. 4, (Oct., 1955), pp. 341-364. Clarence A. Bacote, "The Negro in Atlanta Politics." *Phylon (1940-1956)*, Vol. 16, No. 4, (4th Qtr., 1955), pp. 333-350; John Neary, *Julian Bond: Black Rebel*. William Morrow & Co; First Edition (June 1971). Other scholars, led by historian Alton Hornsby, Jr., continued the biographical narrative tradition in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. See Alton

historiography, these texts are limited both in their analysis of the social history of black people and in their insight into the broader historical meanings of black elected officials. The first major scholarship wave followed Atlanta's transformation into a black majority city in the 1970s and applied political science frameworks to examine how race intersects with public policy. Ignited by African American political scientist Mack H. Jones, these narratives introduced class fractures in black Atlanta history and challenged Atlanta's mantra at the time as the "city too busy to hate." For example, Jones's "Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Realty," countered Atlanta's "progressive" national image by illuminating how white elite structures aligned with black middle-class voices to segregate most blacks into resource-deprived spaces. Historian Virginia Hein added in "The Image of a City Too Busy to Hate: Atlanta in the 1960s," that there were "two Atlantas within the city and two black Atlantas within the black community itself...the people who lived in... the Negro slums...their problems touched every imaginable strata and facet of human frustration."²⁰ Alongside Mack Jones, African American historian

P. Hornsby, Jr., "Andrew Jackson Young: Mayor of Atlanta, 1982-1990," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 77, No. 3, (Summer 1992), pp. 159-182; Alton P. Hornsby Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009; Robert A. Holmes, *Maynard Jackson*. Miami, FL: Barnhardt & Ashe Publishing, Inc., 2011. David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*. William Morrow Paperbacks; Reprint edition, 2004. Deborah Mathis, Julius Hollis, *In the Arena: The High Flying Life of Air Atlanta Founder Michael Hollis*. BookBaby; Reprint edition (Dec 2016);

²⁰ Mack H. Jones, "Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 439, Urban Black Politics (Sept. 1978), pp. 90-117. Virginia H. Hein, "The Image of 'A City to Busy to Hate': Atlanta in the 1960's," *Phylon (1960-)*, Vol. 33, No.3 (3rd Qtr., 1972), pp. 205-221; Charles S. Bullock III, "The Election of Blacks in the South: Preconditions and Consequences," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 4, (Nov. 1975), pp. 727-739; Herrington J. Bryce, Gloria J. Cousar, William McCoy, "Housing Problems of Black Mayor Cities," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 439, Urban Black Politics, (Sept 1978), pp. 80-89; F. Glenn Abney and John D. Hutcheson, Jr., "Race, Representation, and Trust: Changes in Attitudes After the Election of a Black Mayor," *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 91-101; Peter K. Eisinger, "Black Employment in Municipal Jobs: The Impact of Black Political Power," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2, (June 1982), pp. 380-392; Charles S. Bullock III, "Racial Crossover Voting and the Election of Black Officials," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, (Feb 1984), pp. 238-251; Susan M. McGrath, "From Tokenism to Community Control: Political Symbolism in the desegregation of Atlanta's Public Schools, 1961-1973," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 4, (Winter 1995), pp. 842-872; J. Douglas Allen-Taylor, "Black Political Power: Mayors, Municipalities,

Alton P. Hornsby, Jr. led this wave with scholarship examining the political structure and conditions of Black Atlanta. His works, including *A Short History of Black Atlanta, 1847-1993* and *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* redefined the Atlanta scholarship by utilizing the biographical methodology to describe the transformation of Atlanta through the lens of policy makers. Although this wave countered the dominant “racially homogenous” narrative, it failed to take full advantage of the prevailing Black Power Movement’s focus on institution building and collective social movements as modes of resistance in black communities. Both Jones and Hornsby’s contributions provided significant foundation to examine Atlanta’s complex power dynamics, but their neglect of resistance and community studies constructed offered top-down perspectives of Black Atlanta.²¹

A third current introduced sociology, gender, and community to complicate relationships and conflicts between racial classes in Atlanta’s early history. Historians Tera J. Hunter’s *To Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War* and Allison Dorsey’s *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta, 1875-1906* illuminated African American struggles in labor, housing, and institution building in the first black neighborhoods in postbellum Atlanta. Hunter especially presented black women’s bodies and labor as vehicles of resistance. Black women utilized their position in the political economy—their leverage as domestic workers—to disrupt the lives and economy of white

and Money,” *Race, Poverty, and the Environment*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 20th Anniversary Issue, (Spring 2010), pp. 70-74; The white parts of counties where Atlanta resides were also split along class lines. For an in-depth history of these relationships and how they influenced the transformation of postwar Atlanta, see Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007;

²¹ See Alton P. Hornsby, *A Short History of Black Atlanta, 1847-1993*. Ivy Halls Academic Press, 2005; Alton P. Hornsby, *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.

Atlanta. This allowed Black women to control their work and living space as well as construct kinship networks in the neighborhoods to organize resistance.

Dorsey, on the other hand, examined the role of intraracial conflict in the struggle for autonomy in Post-Reconstruction Atlanta. She contended that in the face of white supremacist violence and apartheid, the early black leadership class constructed black social institutions and schools to unite blacks around a structured “American” community—racial uplift strategy. However, Dorsey noted, lower class blacks challenged the black elites’ ideology, resulting in a longstanding class fractures in black Atlanta that continued into the twentieth century.²² Though Hunter and Dorsey effectively complicated ideas surrounding African American monolithic communities and urban history in general, both do not venture far enough in their critique of the structure. Dorsey’s Atlanta is conspicuously built predominantly through black elites; her source base relied too heavily on privileged voices, thus jeopardizing the agency, role, and narrative of the black working classes in constructing community in Atlanta. Hunter’s community-based approach is strong in supporting her argument. However, she does not supplement her critique of the political economy with theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, Hunter’s text offered an exemplary example of an intersectional study of race, class, gender, and power in Atlanta. Yet, academics have yet to popularize Hunter’s exemplary working-class approach. Therefore, this

²² For more on this approach, see Tera J. Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997; Allison Dorsey, *To Build Our Lives Together: Community Formation in Black Atlanta, 1875-1906*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004; Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City*. University Press of Florida, 2004; David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of America Race Relations*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2005. Rebecca Burns, *Rage in the Gate City: The Story of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot*. University of Georgia Press, 2009. Although the majority of the works that utilize this approach focus heavily on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one text from historian Winston Grady-Willis examines black struggle during the Black Freedom Movement. See Winston Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

dissertation builds upon Hunter's approach by refocusing political economy as a major causal factor in intraracial class struggle.

Other sociohistorical works in this wave contributed macrostructural analyses of Atlanta. Kevin Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* investigated the white power structure's response to Atlanta's integrationist politics in the post-World War II era. Kruse constructed a critique of both the federal government and the warring white classes in arguing that white flight from Atlanta's city limits was not only a systematic physical process sponsored by the white ruling class. It also represented an ideological and socioeconomic white segregationist resistance to the Black Freedom Movement. Kruse concluded that white flight facilitated the creation and expansion of new capital accumulation in the city because it synchronously disrupted the earning potential of the city and facilitated hypersegregation. This created an influx of black working-class residents who worked skilled and semiskilled blue-collar labor. Although Kruse demonstrated structured process of apartheid from a policy and cultural perspective, he erased black workers from their own narrative in similar fashion to Arnold Hirsh in *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*.²³

Historian Winston Grady-Willis offered a fresh, yet problematic perspective on systemic oppression in Atlanta with *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*. Grady-Willis effectively framed post-Reconstruction Atlanta as a colonial state and centralized grassroots struggle in the city's postwar history. In fact, he successfully introduced Black Atlanta's working-class stalwarts like Ethel Mae Mathews as grassroots leadership in the 1960s. However, Grady-Willis mostly glossed over the intraracial class strife at

²³ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005; Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009; Winston Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

the center of Black Atlanta and collapsed the Civil Rights Movement into one long “human rights struggle.” More clearly, Grady-Willis did not provide a clear periodization of the Black Freedom Movement in Atlanta. He erased the Black Power Movement from the narrative. Instead, Willis credited individual black elite Atlantans like Hosea Williams and Julian Bond as prominent leaders during the Civil Rights Movement and did not dig deep enough into this petty bourgeoisie’s class interests. My dissertation builds on Kruse’s critique and Willis’ apartheid argument, but it goes beyond both studies to examine the dialectical relationship between the macrolevel and microstructures from the perspective of black working class Atlantans.

The final approach is best characterized by political scientists Clarence Stone and Adolph Reed, Jr.s’ respective works, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* and *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era*. These urban scholars expanded the ghetto synthesis paradigm by capturing black elected officials’ crucial role in managing the newly constructed ghetto spaces in central cities. Both texts, especially chapters 3-5 in *Stirrings in the Jug*, highlighted how sharpened racial class contradictions coincided with vast transfers of wealth and infrastructure to transnational investors, real estate, and information sector interests. Reed especially redirected black urban scholarship in a fresh direction. He contended that despite racist propaganda that sought to collapse class lines, black elites were not victims nor passive objects in the restructuring of racial apartheid in poor urban spaces; rather, Reed argued, the black professional and managerial class directed the reorientation of government activity through market and private interests to the detriment of the majority black working class population.²⁴

²⁴ See Clarence N. Stone, *Economic Growth and Neighborhood Discontent: System Bias in the Urban Renewal Program of Atlanta*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1976; Clarence N. Stone and Heywood T. Sanders, eds. *The Politics of Urban Development*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987; Clarence N. Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988; Charles Rutherford, *Imagining Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams*. London & New York: Verso books, 1996;

Reed's Black Urban Regime framework, which confronted the notion that race is the sole determinant in racial oppression against the black working classes, laid a pathbreaking foundation for critiquing the political economy of African American urban spaces that remains relevant today.

Other scholars such as Charles Rutheiser and Maurice J. Hobson employed a cultural approach to analyze Atlanta's political structure. These methodologies prove problematic because they generally diminish the role of the material socioeconomic conditions in the transformation of the city. Rutheiser, an urban anthropologist, argued in *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams* that Atlanta engineered the "city too busy to hate" reputation through producing a manufactured racially harmonious "style." This is noteworthy in its excavation of how the Atlanta city officials produced, distributed, and consumed the propaganda. However, Rutheiser's framework missed a few crucial elements. He too often pushed the political economic conditions of the African American majority that inform the city officials' policy decisions to the periphery. Thus, *Imagineering Atlanta* generally highlighted those cultural transformations outside of their connection to the political economy.

Hobson, on the other hand, did acknowledge that poor African American Atlantans suffered disproportionately because of black political decisions to "make Atlanta." However, his *Legend of the Black Mecca* suffered from its surface-level and liberal approaches to Atlanta's history. His treatment of Atlanta as merely a city where invisible, unguided social processes

Adolph Reed, Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999; David L. Sjoquist, ed. *The Atlanta Paradox: A Volume in the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000; Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005; Clarence N. Stone & Robert P. Stoker, eds. *Urban Neighborhoods in a New Era: Revitalization Politics in the Postindustrial City*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2015; Maurice J. Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern Atlanta*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

occur negated the metropolitan region as a social process unto itself working in coordination with both the black majority and the power structures to determine Atlanta's future.

Additionally, the black working-class and their class interests in *Legend of the Black Mecca* served as objects in an otherwise political narrative about Maynard Jackson, Andrew Young, and Bill Campbell's mayoralties. In other words, readers did not receive a grassroots depiction of Atlanta in Hobson's scholarship. Lastly, the book's culturally deterministic understanding of working-class frustration at structural inequality misinterprets "resistance."²⁵

More clearly, Hobson provided too much attention to "racial symbolism" in black political leadership without excavating the complex relationships between the working classes and their so-called "race leaders." Moreover, he offered very little critique of Atlanta elites' systematic anti-working-class politics at the heart of their agenda, and misinterpreted hip-hop expressionism as a form of resistance. Atlanta's hip hop music scene served as a commentary on the social problems plaguing the black majority; I argue that this commentary did not register as widespread working-class critique and therefore did not manifest social movements nor play a vital role in black protests against neoliberalization and gentrification. Cultural analyses are most powerful when part of a critique of the political economy because they showcase how capital exploits historically public cultural institutions like schools, the media, and religious institutions to shape the values and learned behaviors of people. This dissertation provides substantial attention to the deep relationship between the Atlanta power structure, the State,

²⁵ Maurice J. Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

education institutions, media, churches, and private capital in promoting the class interests of the city's bourgeoisie.²⁶

Racial Class Dynamics in African American Source Materials

For the purposes of this project, I define “black working-class” as the racial class of workers who do not possess the capacity to own the means of production, their own labor, and land and housing. Additionally, I separate the administrative, professional and managerial workers, and political officials as separate racial class, the petty bourgeoisie, because although they do not own the means of production, they have closer proximity to capital because they serve as the junior partners of the capitalist class. In other words, the petty bourgeoisie hold decision making power and influence for the direction of capital and generally act in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

I do not characterize income level as the determinant in class position; instead, I use the terms “black working class,” “low-income blacks,” and “poor blacks” interchangeably. I prescribe that job type is the best indicator of class position for many reasons. First, income does not necessary determine class interests. Veteran steel factory workers can generate higher incomes than human resources officers or city councilpersons. Yet, the latter two professions hold power that influence the means of production and generally act on behalf of the ruling class and against the interests of the blue-collar industrial and service sector workers. Also, working class workers, especially in economically volatile times, move frequently between blue-collar, livable wage labor and service-sector minimum wage labor. Third, the time period of study

²⁶ See Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams*. Verso Books, 1996; Maurice J. Hobson, *The Legend of the Black Mecca: Politics and Class in the Making of Modern America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

muddies the water on the correlation between income and class level. My research shows that by the mid-1970s, real wage growth for black workers began a steep decline and has yet to recover. Consequently, by the mid-1980s, wage growth did not catch the increasing cost of living. Thus, it is safe to conclude that wages for all working-class individuals were low enough that the noticeable differences between “low-wage” and “high-wage” working class individuals became indistinguishable. As Cha-Jua’s New Nadir framework demonstrates, this trend worsened into the twenty-first century. However, I do attempt to simplify or collapse the working classes into one another. There are subtle differences I discuss throughout this project between low-wage black workers and livable-wage black workers. Because of this, I identify temporary, unstable laborers as the *subproletariat*, or the sub-working class. The *lumpenproletariat* serve as the individuals who left the class structure altogether and engaged in illegal capitalism—the underground economy such as the narcotics trade or the black market. This project demonstrates how the urban power structure, through police and real estate, exploited and manipulated the size and power of the lumpenproletariat in black working-class neighborhoods to further their class interests.²⁷

Additionally, this research complicates the notion of class position by dissecting the fluidity of interests and identity amongst black Atlantans. As Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright posited, *processual* views see class position determined generally by the lived experiences of people. More clearly, Marxist scholar E.P. Thompson stated that class can also mean “when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and

²⁷ For Marx’s extensive conceptualization of the lumpenproletariat, see Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Translated by Moore and Engels. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990; Karl Marx, “The Class Struggles in France,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 19. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978; Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: penguin, 1976.

articulate the [position] of their interests as between themselves and as against those whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.”²⁸

Thus, both Wright and Thompson expanded the fluidity of class position by pointing out that the individual location within the means of production is only one mechanism that generates class position—it is not intrinsically more important than forms of community or social relations in constituting class consciousness. This compels individuals to confront class *identity*, or the ways people place themselves into different systems of class formation. For example, a person may identify as a conservative over a liberal, but it may have more to do with their individual experiences and social interactions within a space rather than their actual position in the capitalist structure.²⁹

This does not devalue the structural approach, however, as I do not see it and the processual approach as polar opposites. Structural concepts of class revolve around objective choices facing actors that are primarily future-looking—actors choose specific alternatives, based on historical structural implications, that impact their future interests. In fact, as Wright continued, each paradigm taps into the dialectic of structure and agency. Scholars must conceptualize both in a critique of political economy to determine how members of various classes develop their class alliance. As Marx argued, individuals with specific “class interests” are more than likely to remain in their designated class positions long enough that their individual interests become tied to their labor position. However, if an individual’s class

²⁸ Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Studies in Marxism Series. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 493-495; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 9.

²⁹ Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Studies in Marxism Series. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 493-495; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 9.

position fluctuates—whether they are laid off from a managerial position and take a blue-collar job, or a college student works a minimum wage job until he or she graduate and join their wealthy parent’s corporation—then their individual interests will only be superficially tied to their current class position. As Wright concluded, “consciousness of class interests...is oriented toward the future...reflecting the time horizons in terms of which individuals understand their relationship to the class structure.”³⁰

My predominantly African American research source base reflects this fluidity of class interests and identity. Firstly, I foreground existing, previously disregarded working-class newspapers, primarily *The Atlanta Voice*. Founded by African American journalist and civil rights activist Ed Clayton, who previously served as executive editor of *Jet Magazine*, and African American venture capitalist J. Lowell Ware in 1966, the newspaper challenged Atlanta’s white and black bourgeois media like *The Atlanta Daily World* through a more left-leaning perspective with working class and radical columnists. Clayton, who died shortly after *The Atlanta Voice’s* launch, held complex class interests. He operated one of the largest black periodicals in the United States while also participating in protest movements with Martin Luther King, Jr. Therefore, Clayton’s individual biography and future-looking class interests informed *The Atlanta Voice’s* black working-class inclination. Under the slogan, “A People without A Voice Cannot Be Heard,” *The Atlanta Voice* provided full coverage of political, economic, social, and cultural issues affecting black Atlantans that mainstream presses like *Atlanta Journal*, *Atlanta Constitution*, and *Atlanta Daily World* refused to cover. This included the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, white supremacist and police violence, housing and labor

³⁰ Erik Olin Wright, *Class Counts: Comparative Studies in Class Analysis*. Studies in Marxism Series. NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 493-498; E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 9.

struggles, radical student movements, and neighborhood destabilization from the perspective of the residents.

I also depart from dominant methodological strategies in African American history by allowing working-class-specific-documents (letters and correspondence), oral interviews, and other unorthodox sources like neighborhood organization meeting minutes and speeches, public access television shows, and policy research to support my critique of Atlanta's expansion. Some of my sources, particularly the Southern Center for the Study of Public Policy at Clark Atlanta University and *Endarch*, a black leftist political science journal, are petty bourgeois sources, yet they provide the most critical studies of the African American sociohistorical experience at the time. Black scholars like political scientist Mack H. Jones, who contributed to both sources, centralized the working class and human agency in their assessment of Atlanta's political structure. Scholars have overlooked these sources as evidence of the centrality of the African American working class in United States history because of ideological constraints. In clearer terms, scholars who passed over these generally did not consider working class voices and perspectives to be valuable to their perspective on history. Therefore, they neglected the working-class in the archive and only used elite sources because their approach does not regard working classes as historical agents of social change.

This project also foregrounds previously disregarded radical print archives to further expose the class struggle at the heart of Atlanta's struggles over urbanization. *The Great Speckled Bird*, which ran from 1968 to 1976, represented the only underground, alternative newspaper out of eight hundred in Atlanta at the time to maintain the third highest circulation of all media in the city. *The Bird* was published by a multiracial collective of Marxist-Leninists, anarchists, black working-class progressives, and anti-war pacifists. It sustained its popularity in

black working-class Atlanta by both critiquing racial oppression as a colonial structure and directly challenging local institutional powers like the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta City Hall, the Atlanta Police Department, and the Georgia governor's office. *The Bird* proved so controversial that the office was mysteriously firebombed in 1972 following a full expose of white Democratic Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell's anti-black speeches and corrupt dealings. Most black Atlantans denounced the attack and neighborhood associations held charitable events to rebuild *The Bird's* office. Still, *The Bird's* greatest impact was that it consistently provided a narrative of Atlanta through the voices of the most oppressed communities and individuals in the region. They printed hours of interview transcripts, community organization posters, demands, and action calls. They covered rent strikes, self-defense training exercises, and publicized the daily struggles. Therefore, I argue that *The Bird* was not simply a periodical. It also served as what sociologist Aldon Morris called an "agency-laden institution," for black social movements. Its headquarters and journalists were pivotal local movement resources for grassroots struggles against the Atlanta power structure until its shutdown. Financial troubles caused its downfall in 1976. Although the *Bird* attempted resurrection in 1984, it never operated fully again, and oppressed groups lost a crucial resource in their neighborhood movement actions.

Atlanta Progressive News filled the radical print void left by the *Great Speckled Bird* in 2006. According to its editor, Matthew Cardinale, the alternative rag "believes there is no such as objective news...mainstream media presents itself as objective but is actually skewed towards promoting the corporate agenda of the ultra-wealthy." At a time when capital owned the mainstream media in Atlanta and pushed petty bourgeois activism and gentrification as the best future of the Atlanta Metro Region, *Atlanta Progressive News* covered similar ground as *The Bird* and sought to raise Atlantans' consciousness on universal health care, living wages, fair

housing, and environmental protection. Although both the *Bird* and *Atlanta Progressive News* employed mostly white intellectual radicals, their individual lived experiences contributed to their objective to foreground black struggles. These journalists lived amongst the black poor and engaged in their daily struggles and protest movements against neoliberalization. Thus, their racial class identity reshaped their racial class interests in producing their radical print journalism.

Despite all of this, Atlanta scholars have yet to investigate these sources and recover their rich, complex narratives. Scholars of African American Atlanta history have mainly relied on the white ruling class-owned *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* daily newspaper. This proves problematic for many reasons. First, with a tagline that read “Covers Dixie like the Dew,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* rarely covered working class blacks in a positive light. In fact, working-class blacks were often portrayed primarily in pathological terms: inherently docile, uneducated, lazy, violent, corrupt, and a drain on government resources. Articles in these dailies challenged white Atlantans to strip blacks of political power, defended antiblack police violence, promoted gentrification as the way to “clean up the city,” and championed the reduction of social services to “make blacks grow up and take responsibility for themselves.”³¹ Thus, scholars who supported their arguments regarding the African American experience primarily through the lens of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* operated through a generally negative bias against their subject.

The Atlanta Daily World is equally problematic as a main source for documenting the African American experience in Atlanta. Although it is an African American controlled

³¹ Lewis’ Help Will Be Right at Home,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 26, 2008, pg. A18; “Atlanta’s Public Housing Revamp Shows Real Hope for the Future,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 27, 2008, pg. B6.

newspaper, its petty bourgeois and conservative leanings inform its condemnation or outright erasure of black agency and community. The founder, African American Republican C.A. Scott, refused to cover the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement in Atlanta. *Daily World* also published questionable articles denouncing low-income blacks and actively broke neighborhood social movements. I argue that centralizing low-income black sources and balancing them with a structural analysis not only rescues the voice of the people so that they serve as active agents of change in their own narratives of struggle; they also more accurately depict United States urban history as a dialectical relationship of domination and resistance.

My methodological interventions also benefit from reading elite archive sources “against the grain.” More specifically, I use major African American elite archives like the Maynard Jackson records, the Andrew Young Paper Collection, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce records, real estate organization records, city directories, police reports, and government data to demonstrate how the Atlanta power structure’s policies, discourse, and distribution of resources instituted neoliberalization, contributed to the deterioration of black social conditions, and displaced poor blacks from the central city. Reinterpreting mainstream elite archive sources from the perspective of the black working class provides an alternative perspective to the dominant narrative of gentrification by proving that the directors and defenders of gentrification and privatization actively worked to disenfranchise and destabilize black community life and organizations in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region.

Theorizing Resistance and the Dialectic: Black Racial Formation and Transformation

Theory and Internal Neo-Colonialism

Black working class struggles for autonomy during the Black Power Era clashed with capitalist restructuring in the 1970s and served as the prime determinant in urban transformation. When these two opposing forces collided, as Black Studies scholar Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua contended, it reconfigured a new racial formation where both black insurgents and ruling class elites “recalibrated their strategies, tactics, and ideological rationales” and challenged each other for the value of urban space. To properly analyze this sociohistorical shift in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region, I apply Cha-Jua’s Black Racial Formation and Transformation Theory (BRFT). According to Cha-Jua, the tripartite apparatuses of racial oppression—political subjugation, economic exploitation, and social humiliation—have been “the most definitive processes shaping the lived realities of the African American people.” However, the modes of political subjugation, economic exploitation, and social humiliation have changed in correspondence with complex interactions and relationships between U.S. capitalist political economies, social institutions and ideologies of racial domination and the self-liberatory praxis of African Americans.³² Black Atlantan workers, influenced by both the proto-nationalist

³² In a more specific sense, BRFT argues that “the transformations of periods of racial formation and the transitions between stages within a racial formation are based on complex interactions between U.S. capitalist political economies (dominate and subordinate), institutions and ideologies of racial domination, and the self-liberatory praxis of African Americans.” BRFT posits six dialectical points: 1) antiblack racial oppression is constitutive of rather than contingent to U.S. social formations; 2) antiblack racial oppression includes institutional policies, individual practices, and corresponding ideological discourses; (3) Black racial formations are both static and dynamic, reflecting moments of quiescence and of tumult; (4) Black racial formations articulate with and follow the logic of the broader social formations in which they subsist; (5); Black racial formations represent specific systems of racial control that occur at particular historical moments within specific political-spatial boundaries, thus, Black racial formations constitute particular periods of African American history; and (6) Black racial formations are formed and transformed according to the dialectical interaction between restructuring capitalist political economies, the evolving U.S. federal state system, developing U.S. popular culture, and the Black liberation struggle. Cha-Jua’s periodization is especially crucial to understanding how racial formations (which overlap) shift over U.S. history. In BRFT, the four sociohistorical periods are Enslavement (1619-1865), Southern Sharecropping/Domestic labor & Industrial capitalism (1865-1980), Proletarianization & Community Building (1910-1979), and the New Nadir

segment of the Black Power Movement and their increasingly diminishing working conditions, sparked a citywide outbreak of mass militant action at over a dozen public and private industries, including city sanitation, nursing, fire stations, grocery stores, steel mills, auto plants, and even Church's Chicken. As their demands for autonomy expanded, local revolutionary groups like Revolutionary Youth Movement, Georgia Black Liberation Front, Brothers Combined, The People's Liberation Party, and neighborhood organizations from Summerhill, Peoplestown, East Lake Meadows, and Mechanicsville mobilized black residents and Atlanta University Center students for the workers' demands.³³ As the movement grew, neighborhood activists like the president of the Atlanta chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization Ethel Mae Mathews held weekly political education sessions, pooled movement resources at agency-laden institutions, and escalated the strike movement to neighborhood boycotts. Black strikers told protestors to "spread the misery to downtown merchants" and disrupt the business flow of the city.³⁴

BRFT is an exceptional framework because it forces us to conceptualize the African American urban experience through a neocolonialist framework. More specifically, we must emphasize the colonialism in Atlanta and American racial class relations in general because it allows us to contend with capitalism's extractive relations and face the uncomfortable reality that our contemporary social problems are the results of a colonized state. As Cha-Jua argued (as he expanded on Black Studies scholar Robert L. Allen's Internal Neo-Colonial Theory), the black proto-nationalist and radical elements of the Black Freedom Movement forced white capital to

(1980-present). For a more detailed analysis, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *untitled*, monograph forthcoming, pp. 38-43.

³³ These struggles are fully detailed throughout Chapter 1.

³⁴ "Union Men March on Downtown," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 12, 1970, pg. 1.

reconstruct a new racial formation: one which both weakened collective working-class protest and reorganized capital accumulation through a global information and finance network. Capital accomplished this by creating a new black middle class. These indirect rulers functioned as supervisory broker chiefs—they defused racial conflict, offered token reform programs between white capital and the black lower classes, and transform policy and law in favor of capital.

As Allen articulated in his classic *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, this new black petty bourgeois class championed the conservative nationalist strata of the Black Power Movement. Black elected officials shifted the dominant mode of B=black working class struggle away from collective movement action and community autonomy via two main tactics: they advocated for the self-contained pursuit of individual goals and manipulated black nationalist sentiment to advance their political incorporation into the U.S. state. Black capitalists propagandized their individual wealth as evidence of American “progress” and advocated electoral politics as a sole strategy to “uplift the race” into full American incorporation with black “race leaders” controlling local polity. With their newfound political power, these Black Urban Regimes (BURs) controlled over seventy percent of urban space in the United States by the late 1970s and simultaneously served the will of white capital and extended the wealth of the black elite. BURs led by Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young in Atlanta, Carl Stokes in Cleveland, and Coleman Young in Detroit crushed local radical political movements, championed private investment, and downplayed structural racism as a determinant in the social conditions of black communities.³⁵

³⁵ See Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History*. Africa World Press, 1969; 1990; See Adolph Reed, Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug*; Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Most crucially, these BURs contributed to the demise of the Black Power Movement. They pushed symbolic racial representation in the State, abrogated class and gender struggle, and simultaneously exonerated and promoted capitalism. This strategy worked to disconnect the black working-class socioeconomic struggles of the Black Freedom Movement from a broader understanding of racial oppression. BUR participants also emphasized their individual incorporation into the American system as a positive result of the Civil Rights Movement. This prompted some active community residents to question (and in some cases, denounce) militant tactics and radical ideology in protest movements. Reverends William Holmes Borders, Martin Luther King, Sr., and Julian Bond actively moved numerous Black working-class labor and housing struggles throughout the 1970s towards concession to city demands. The most glaring example occurred in early 1970. Over 800 black sanitation workers struck the City of Atlanta for thirty-six days, boycotted major downtown businesses, and gridlocked much of the city operations to a standstill. However, members of the black leadership class who supported Atlanta Mayor Massell's pro-growth ambitions, negotiated a concessionary settlement for the workers. Additionally, many black neighborhoods in the 1980s and 1990s lost access to resources that improved their daily round and protest actions in black working-class Atlanta. The Atlanta power structure instead supplied the region with superficial, poverty bureaucracies like non-profit organizations and community development corporations that pushed liberal demands for incorporation or a request for "partnership" in the private venture. In line with Cha-Jua, I argue that this contemporary racial formation, the New Nadir, represented a deepening of colonial arrangements and racial class stratification in the United States.

Expanding on scholar Harold Baron's racial formation theory, Cha-Jua conceptualized the New Nadir (1979-Present) as the contemporary black racial formation to stress the "changing

same” in the African American experience—the creation and development of a new form of racial oppression under capitalism that both restructures capital accumulation and attempts to negate working-class gains made through resistance over time. More clearly, it frames both the overall structural relationship between U.S. society and African America and the contemporary period of African American history. In fact, as Baron noted, the black racial formation is the distinctive colonial position of African Americans in the United States social formation. Cha-Jua termed it “Nadir” because it is the third lowest point in African American history, following the second Nadir (1877-1923) when white supremacists utilized racial terrorism to worsen blacks’ material socioeconomic conditions, political position, and cultural representation. For this current historical moment, Cha-Jua posited that “the consequence of transformation to financialized global racial capitalism,” or new stage of capital accumulation occurred through three processes: globalization of production and markets, federal, state, and local neoliberal social policies, and financialization, or the shift of investment from production to monetary products. This combination amounted to an anti-black working-class agenda, reinforced through racialized mass incarceration, a resurgence in state terrorism and private racial hate crimes, new disenfranchisement, political fragmentation, and social humiliation.³⁶

The most far-reaching consequence of the New Nadir is that it restructured class and power dynamics in Black America. Atlanta provides an exemplary example of this problem. Dating back to the 1966 Summerhill Rebellion, Atlanta’s black insurgency wave greatly troubled the city’s Black and white ruling elites. On a weekly basis, Summerhill, Bolton Gardens, Peoplestown, Mechanicsville, Bankhead Courts, and other black working-class neighborhoods

³⁶ Sundiata K. Cha-Jua, “Racial Formation and Transformation: Toward a Theory of Black Racial Oppression,” *Souls*, Winter 2001, p. 29; Sundiata K. Cha-Jua, “The New Nadir: The Contemporary Black Racial Formation,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2010, pp. 38-40.

converted community spaces into agency-laden institutions and spearheaded rebellions with the following objectives: community control of public institutions (primarily schools/curriculum, transportation, and the police), establishing a black economic base, black control of local television and radio media, the elimination of slumlords and corrupt Atlanta Housing Authority and Model Cities officials, self-defense violence and community policing, the end to city rezoning, highway construction, and displacement policies, grocery store construction and control, and recognition of Black independent unions. Local neighborhood leaders such as John Shabazz, Columbus Ward, and Florence McKinley not only united neighborhoods across geographical lines and across multiple intersecting working class struggles, but they also systematized local leadership development and training in agency-laden institutions. As a result, working-class social movements expanded well into the late-1970s.

By 1975, black residents had ignited violent rebellions against rampant police violence. Bankhead Courts, Bolton Gardens, and Buttermilk Bottoms led a citywide rent strike so large that the Federal Housing Authority was forced to sanction the Atlanta Housing Authority. Numerous municipal and private sector workers struck businesses on a weekly basis. Two black parent-organized school walkouts and shutdowns had threatened school to close schools. Finally, neighborhoods constructed seven new black cultural centers that produced media, theatre, art, and political education sessions that critiqued the financial direction of Atlanta. Black Power defined the first half of the 1970s and sparked conflicts that resulted in a backlash by the Atlanta power structure to move Atlanta away from working-class black residents.

These struggles clashed with elites' plans. Through expanded police powers, displacement, defunding and closing community centers, transnational conferences, industry pitches, and a redistribution of city funds towards recruitment expenses, Mayors Sam Massell,

Maynard Jackson, Andrew Young, Bill Campbell, Shirley Franklin, and Kasim Reed all directed black urban regimes to erase past black freedom struggles, silence black worker demands, and propagandize a manufactured “racial harmony” narrative in the local, national, and international media and business community. As a result of their repression of Black Power elements in Atlanta’s working-class spaces, the Atlanta elite restructured the city’s image beyond a “city too busy to hate” and into a “city too perfect for investment potential.” In fact, Andrew Young in particular (a prominent figure in the Civil Rights Movement) famously stated at the beginning of his 1980 mayoralty, “Atlanta has no character: we are building it now.”³⁷

Additionally, the New Nadir framework provides scholars the means to examine the complex nature of gendered violence inherent in structural pogroms. More clearly, the New Nadir illuminates the different effects of neoliberalization and gentrification on both women and men. As the State disproportionately incarcerated black men during this period, it effectively barred them from access to resources generally afforded to poor black women, including welfare, public housing vouchers, and employment and education aid. As a result, black men displaced during urban revitalization programs held a higher rate of housing insecurity (homelessness) than black women and possessed a higher risk of falling out of the class structure and joining the lumpenproletariat. Concurrently, poor black women, who have historically represented the lowest paid and underemployed workers in the United States generally had access to state resources not afforded to poor black men when displaced, particularly welfare and public housing aid. However, poor black women disproportionately confronted the pathological stigma of the “single black welfare mother” or the “lazy black woman dependent on the state,” or social humiliation from both petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie whites *and* blacks. These gender

³⁷ *The Atlanta Constitution*, Wednesday, July 23, 1986.

dynamics are a crucial aspect of the political economy of gentrification because they facilitated the destabilization of black labor spaces, black working-class neighborhoods, social movement capacity.

The Atlanta Metropolitan Region as the Prototype for a Neo-Colonial State³⁸

Scholars have rarely conceptualized African American urban spaces as neocolonial apartheid states. However, as historian Winston Grady-Willis put forth, “Jim Crow” and “segregation” do not fully capture the severity of political subjugation, economic exploitation, terrorist violence, and social humiliation that blacks suffer under the U.S. capitalist structure. Therefore, urban scholars must incorporate an apartheid framework to underscore the complex relationship between the dominate and the subordinate. Grady-Willis limited his framework for apartheid in Atlanta in two ways. First, he reduced the grand scale of neocolonialism to *petty apartheid*—separate but unequal social conditions “according to arbitrarily weak racial classifications.” Second, he condensed apartheid in Atlanta from the post-Reconstruction period to the late 1960s. In fact, Grady-Willis asserted that “the efforts by grassroots activists and members of established organizations to dismantle these structures [petty apartheid] in Atlanta and throughout the South led to the obliteration of petty apartheid during the 1960s.”³⁹ More clearly, Grady-Willis credited the Civil Rights era with dismantling apartheid in Atlanta. This framework is problematic because it marginalized the grand scale in racial oppression—the class antagonisms that exacerbated African American struggles at the grassroots level. Second, it

³⁸ See Appendix A.1-A.3 for overview maps of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region and the African American Working Class Neighborhoods.

³⁹ Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*, pp. Xvii-Xviii.

reaffirms the misconception that the Black Power Movement served as the “declension” of the “successful” Civil Rights Era. However, as this dissertation illuminates, Black Power in Atlanta constructed new social movements against apartheid into the late 1970s and challenged the class interests of many of the Civil Rights Movement’s black petty bourgeoisie in struggles for autonomy.⁴⁰

I reclassify Grady-Willis’ notion of American apartheid as “grand apartheid” and extend it into twenty-first century Atlanta by conceptualizing the Atlanta Metropolitan Region as *Colonialism of a Special Type*. According to the South African Community Party, Colonialism of a Special Type refers to a “variant of capitalist rule in which essential features of colonial domination” against the overwhelming black majority, including poverty, super-exploitation, complete denial of basic human rights, and political domination, function through class struggles in both the white ruling class and the black majority. Similar to bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie infiltration of the Bantustan administrations, community councils, management committees, and tricameral parliament in late 1980s and 1990s South Africa, the black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in Atlanta and other urban spaces in the United States seized control of subordinate bureaucratic apparatuses to both align themselves with the ruling class against the interests of the working classes and accumulate surplus profits. More clearly, both the black bourgeoisie and the black petty bourgeoisie utilized their role as policy makers,

⁴⁰ The “Black Power as declension” narrative was made most famous in Clayborne Carson’s analysis of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in his work, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening in the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981. Sociologist Charles M. Payne continued the declension thesis in his work, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Sundiata K. Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang provided the best critique of the declension narrative and the distinctiveness of the Black Power Movement in their award winning article, “The Long Movement as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in n Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2, Spring 2007, pp. 265-288.

administrators, and operated as the junior partners of white capital under neo-colonial apartheid.⁴¹

In both South Africa and the U.S., the black majority serve as the dominated proletariat with petty bourgeois blacks acting as indirect rulers, or *soft power*, and directing anti-working-class policies and neoliberalization into the twenty-first century. Also, the black bourgeoisie managed to carve out a relatively small share of capital accumulation, but the economic stranglehold by white monopoly capital repressed their expansion into an economically competitive entity. A relatively small white working class worked alongside blacks but at a higher wage and occupation-tier. Thus, although Grady-Willis provided a fresh perspective to chronicle black struggles in Atlanta, his framework did not encompass the full scope of a neocolonial state and its effects on the black majority. What follows is a detailed exploration of contemporary Atlanta as a neocolonial state.

The primary goal of regions is the geographical concentration and centralization of capital into a singular systemic process in strategic locations. Therefore, the Atlanta Metropolitan Region's aggressive pursuit of land harmonized with its political economic transformation into the most powerful space in the Piedmont Atlantic megalopolis. In fact, Atlanta outpaced the rest of the nation's largest urban regions in geographical expansion and economic transformation. Between 1940 and 1970, the city of Atlanta expanded only 411 square miles; between 1970 and 2010, however, the region quintupled the square mileage gained to 2,040 with a change in expansion rate of 86.0 percent. In other words, Atlanta's land acquisition in the last four decades accounted for almost 85 percent of its total square mileage accumulated since the 1940s. To

⁴¹ "The Path to Power – Programme of the South African Communist Party as Adopted at the Seventh Congress, 1989. <https://www.sacp.org.za/content/path-power-programme-south-african-communist-party-adopted-seventh-congress-1989-0>

place this urban growth in relative terms, in the same time frame, the rest of the major cities in the United States combined experienced a -15.3 percent in their change in expansion rate.⁴² At an estimated 8,736 square miles, a population of 5.9 million people, 140 cities and 29 counties, the Atlanta Metropolitan Region annexed so aggressively that it now contains over half of Georgia's population, but with less than one percent actually residing in Atlanta's municipal limits.⁴³

Atlanta's land exploits facilitated far reaching changes to the political economy. By 2015, the region ranked sixth nationally and fifteenth globally with a GDP of \$270 billion. Atlanta also ranked third nationally in cities with the largest number of Fortune 500 companies headquartered within their boundaries. By the late 2000s, retail and distribution/transportation, trade and utilities, wholesale trade, information services, professional businesses, and movie and television production dominated the region's economy. As of 2015, retail trade employed 11.3 percent of the AMR workforce, the largest segment of labor. Retail trade corporations made up four of the top six employers in the AMR, with Wal-Mart Stores, Home Depot Inc., AT&T, and Kroger Co., accounting for close to 74,000 employees combined. Over time, the region's growth also transformed Georgia's overall labor sector. Over fifty percent of the state's highest paying jobs (and counting) sat in the Atlanta metro region.⁴⁴

Although retail trade is the region's leading sector, "Atlanta International" (as the metro region is known) assumed its position as a global phenomenon by courting more foreign

⁴² Buildzoom 2016.

⁴³ U.S. Census, 2015.

⁴⁴ For "Largest Employers, Atlanta Metro Area Chart, see Appendix B.1. See also Keith Jennings, *The Politics of Race, Class, and Gentrification in the ATL*," *Trotter Review*, Vol. 23, Issue 1: A Place in the Neighborhood: Pushed Out, Pushing Back, 2016, pp. 1-38.

investment capital than any other metro region in the late twentieth century. Between 1975 and 1984, the number of foreign, mostly European companies with offices in Atlanta increased from a meager 150 to 780. By 1984, foreign capital had invested over \$3 billion in their Metro Atlanta operations, pushing the city into competition with Miami as the dominant financial space in the Southeast.⁴⁵

The late 1980s witnessed an even greater partnership between Atlanta's ruling elite and foreign capital. In a few years, several overseas companies, mostly in distribution, increased their investment tenfold in office facilities and real estate speculation. Indeed, this new financial partnership between the region and global investors involved recycling prime real estate into new office construction and had two residual effects. First, banks, insurance companies, and real estate entrepreneurs earmarked their long-term market investment in strategic geographical spaces like Five Points and created new demarcations for geographical and social apartheid throughout the region. As the area where Marietta Street, Edgewood Avenue, Decatur Street, and Peachtree Street converge, Five Points was the center of downtown Atlanta. It was ripe for financial investment for decades because it contained many older buildings that owners were more than happy to demolish to satisfy the high demand for office space in locational advantage to the Federal Reserve Bank and the accompanying parking lot construction. Second, they decentralized the Central Business District (CBD) in the core city and reoriented a new downtown area northward towards Midtown (predominantly white upper-class area that stretches from North Avenue to 17th Street) with freedom to speculate and invest without public

⁴⁵ 1/3 of the total foreign presence in the Atlanta economy (and an even greater share of real estate investment) came from Canadian companies, followed by British and Dutch companies (\$500 million each), Japanese (\$400 million), and German (\$109 million). See "Why the Foreign Flock to Atlanta," *Euromoney*, December 1984, pp. 115-16; Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 180-182.

interference. Branches of the world's twenty largest banks replaced neighborhood tracts, factories, and public housing projects within the city limits.⁴⁶

This political economic shift severely destabilized working-class African American Atlantans' socioeconomic conditions. Between 1990 and 2015, following the incorporation of surrounding counties, the metro region gained more African Americans than any other region in the U.S. and accounted for nearly one-fifth of all black population growth that occurred in the nation's 100 largest metro areas. In fact, the growth was so substantial that by 2015, African Americans made up 33 percent of all residents in the metro region. However, Atlanta's record as one of the worst economic mobility spaces among metropolitan areas in the United States meant that the supply of stable, livable wage employment did not meet the demands of an ever-increasing black population. By the mid-2010s, the metro region had the third largest disparity between rich and poor among major cities. Concurrently, African Americans comprised 31 percent of the Georgia population but 45 percent of the state's poor residents. For relative comparisons, Latinx made up 9 percent of the population but constituted 15 percent of Georgia's poverty-stricken residents. The African American poverty rate in the AMR was 38 percent while the rate for black children was about 57 percent, among the highest in the nation at that time. The Latinx poverty rate was 19 percent and 36 percent for children.⁴⁷

While the unemployment rate is heralded as an accurate picture of the social conditions of people in the United States, it only provides a partial glimpse of the percentages of people who work. The unemployment rate does not account for people who became discouraged and

⁴⁶ "Why the Foreign Flock to Atlanta," pp. 115-116.

⁴⁷ U.S. Census 2010; U.S. Census 2015; Atlanta Region Commission, 2014; Atlanta Regional Commission, 2015; *Atlanta Business Chronicle* 2014, 2015.

stopped looking for work, the incarcerated, homemakers, or underground economy workers, all categories where African Americans represent a solid portion. Therefore, the labor force participation rate represents a much more authentic depiction of apartheid in American cities. From 1980 to 2010, labor force participation rates in Atlanta were higher for white men than for black men. Between 1980 and 1990, the rate of white men increased from 71.2 percent to 76 percent, but the rate for black men barely increased, rising from 64 percent to 64.2 percent. The participation rate for black women rose from 53 percent in 1980 to 57 percent in 1990. It grew slower than that of white women, which increased from 48.7 percent in 1980 to 57.8 percent in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, both black men and women's labor participation rates increased to their highest levels above 75 percent; however, since 2000, their participation rates plummeted in every age group.⁴⁸ As it stands in Atlanta, African Americans have always trailed whites in labor force participation rate and the gap has been widening.

The economic and political incorporation of the small black professional/managerial and bourgeois classes in the region correlated with rising underemployment and housing instability for low-income Black Atlantans. As BURs seized control of Atlanta's polity, the African American poverty rate increased from 29 percent in 1970 to 35 percent in 1990. While African American businesses comprised approximately 30 percent of the businesses in Atlanta (making the city the location with one of the highest proportions of black businesses in the U.S.), in 2015, African Americans were overrepresented in the temporary work force. This led to a racial inequality gap where whites earned three times more than blacks, along with a 22 percent Black

⁴⁸ Much of the fall in labor force participate rate can be attributed to a greater proportion of discouraged workers reeling from the recessions and loss of livable wage jobs in the city, the rise in mass incarceration, and a swelling of the sub working class to the point that many people fall out of the class structure and enter the underground economy. Chapters 3 and 4 examine this sociohistorical shift in more depth. For more on labor force participation rates in Atlanta, see "Current Population Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1980-2018," collected by The Center for Human Capital Studies of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, 2019.

unemployment rate that was significantly higher than the city's overall rate of 13 percent and was twice the state's average during the Great Recession. Between 2008 and 2015, many companies in the AMR more and more turned to temporary workers whose labor hours were often capped below thirty hours a week, thereby allowing companies to escape paying any crucial benefits such as health insurance. In 2014, the National Urban League reported that almost 1 in 4 African Americans were underemployed nationwide! Because Georgia remains one of the two states that has a minimum wage (\$5.15) lower than the federal minimum wage (\$7.25), the underemployment rate in Atlanta is more than likely higher than the Urban League's estimates. As of 2015, the three largest temporary employment agencies that dominated Atlanta were Randstad USA (16,000 employees, who staffed the 1996 Olympic Games), Employ Bridge Holding Co. (5,739 employees), and Dynamics LLC. (4,750 employees).⁴⁹

The combination of gentrification and the rise in underemployment held severe housing consequences for black Atlantans. The systematic removal of public housing exposed over 68,000 predominantly black Atlantans to homelessness each year. Although between 40-60 percent of individuals seeking shelter earned some form of income, most of the housing built in the city rented or sold for more than three times the Georgia state minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour that underemployed individuals earned. In fact, Habitat International Coalition estimated that roughly between 2004 and 2015, the average wage required for adequate housing within the municipality did not fall below \$15.73 an hour. A 2016 study found that occupations that earned at least \$43,000 (firefighters, etc.) a year could only afford 36 percent of all homes in the Atlanta market while those that earned \$24,000 (restaurant servers, etc.) or less could only afford 12 percent of the homes on the market. Not surprisingly, the study concluded that doctors and

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Jennings, pp. 6-7.

computer programmers (\$186,000 or higher) could afford 92 percent of all homes on the Atlanta market.⁵⁰ Therefore, it is safe to conclude that an overwhelming majority of African American Atlantans have been priced out of homeownership or rental within the city limits.

The Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) is historically unsympathetic to the woes that come from underemployment. Since the AHA required at least one non-elderly, non-disabled adult household member to maintain continuous full-time employment of at least thirty hours per week to qualify for a housing subsidy, many black poor Atlantans did not meet the thirty-hour minimum requirement and therefore had little to no access to adequate housing in the region. While the city of Atlanta and the metro region had the largest number of African American homeowners in the U.S., 80 percent of African-American children lived in communities with high concentrations of poverty, compared to 6 percent of their white peers and 43 percent of their Latinx peers.⁵¹

The AHA also worked steadily to appreciate home median value in the city to the detriment of the black poor. Between 2010 and 2015, the Atlanta Regional Council estimated that home sale prices within the municipality appreciated a whopping 155 percent to a median sale price of \$268,000 by September 2015. Place entrepreneurs in Atlanta focused solely on building these luxurious units, even though they were only affordable to ten percent of the population. Thus, while there were lots of housing units available, an overwhelmingly majority remained empty because most working-class families could not afford to buy them. According

⁵⁰ Anita Beaty, "Atlanta: Clearing Homeless in the Name of Economic Revitalization Further Privatizes Downtown in What is Called Tourist Triangle," *Habitat International Coalition*, Jan. 1, 2006; "Which Occupations are Priced Out of Home Ownership?" *Estatefy*, <https://www.estatefy.com/occupation-real-estate-affordability>

⁵¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2015.

to scholar Keith Jennings, during the period of 1991-2013, the percentage of families renting who paid more than half of their income on housing grew from 21 percent to 30 percent, putting poor people at risk of housing insecurity. Those living in public assisted housing were constantly under threat of forced displacement.⁵²

What is more shocking is that during the same time frame, Atlanta shifted from being the city with the highest proportion of its residents living in public housing in the United States (over 14,000 housing units in 43 properties by 1991) to being the only city in the nation that demolished all of its public housing units by 2011! A majority of the former residents of these public housing projects received Section 8 vouchers designed to “help” them find and pay for privately managed apartments and houses. However, most either moved to other poor areas of the city (where over 82 percent of renters lived below the poverty line by 2015) or to surrounding, hypersegregated rural suburbs like Douglas or Dekalb Counties where there was a 160 percent increase in the suburban poverty rate over the last fifteen years. This is the largest increase among the nation’s twenty-five largest metropolitan areas. In fact, Atlanta currently leads the nation in rate of African Americans moving out of and whites moving into the core city.⁵³

This new demarcation between predominantly black working-class suburbanites and majority white middle class city dwellers defined contemporary urban apartheid in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region. Between 1980 and 2010, the black majority plummeted from 74 percent to 52 percent in the region. More than likely, the estimated 2020 census will prove that Atlanta is no longer a black majority city. Much of the population shift occurred in East Atlanta,

⁵² U.S. Census Bureau 2015; Jennings, p. 21.

⁵³ U.S. Census Bureau 2015.

Southwest Atlanta (Grant Park), and Southeast Atlanta (Benteen Park). In those areas, black population decreased from 57 percent to 38 percent while the white population rose from 36.5 percent to 54.8 percent. As one of the most targeted areas for gentrification, the Edgewood, Kirkwood, and East Lake neighborhood black populations decreased from 86.2 percent to 58.7 percent while the white population rose from 11.3 percent to 40 percent. In luxurious Northeast spaces like Midtown, the white population rose from 49.3 percent to 59.2 percent with the black population dropping from 36.5 percent to 23.9 percent. In surrounding suburbs, the shifts were just as dramatic. For example, in Clayton County, the racial demographics shifted from 70 percent white and 30 percent black to 70 percent black and 30 percent white in little more than a decade. By 2010, 77 percent of African American Atlantans resided in suburbs.⁵⁴

Gentrification brought disastrous consequences for already-reeling black public schools in Atlanta. By the mid-2000s, over three-fourths of the 96 Atlanta Public Schools (APS) had one race with at least a 90 percent majority! More specifically, close to 90 percent of the 55,000 Atlanta Public Schools students were black and eligible for free and reduced lunch vouchers. Over the next ten years, both Atlanta city officials and APS took drastic steps to “reform” the failing schools and make room for their new racial-class of residents through redistricting, closure and privatization. During the 2012 standardized test cheating scandal, APS Superintendent Beverly Hall announced the closure of ten schools, all located on the southwest and southeast sides of the city. All the closed schools had close to 100 percent black and poor

⁵⁴ The growth disparity is much more pronounced when broken down further. Atlanta moved from 72% to 67% African American majority in 1990 to 61% in 2000 and 54% in 2010. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of the population composed of whites mushroomed from approximately 30% to close to 40%, a growth rate that more than doubled the increase BETWEEN 1990 AND 2000. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Changing the Odds: The Race for Results in Atlanta*. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015. Accessed January 2, 2019; CityLab, 2014. For population shifts over time, see *Creative Loafing*, 2015. For more discussion on African American suburbanization, see Karen Pooley, “Segregation’s New Geography: The Atlanta Metro Region, Race, and the Declining Prosperity for Upward Mobility,” *Southern Spaces*, April 2015, pp. 1-23; Jennings, pp. 23-25.

enrollment. Hall did not choose to close any schools on the northside of Atlanta, whose enrollments were majority middle and upper-class white. Following this redistricting, the Board of Education brought in Meria Carstarphen, a white superintendent with a notorious reputation for slashing public school budgets and closing schools in St. Paul, Minnesota and Austin, Texas. Since her takeover, APS has openly courted and partnered with multiple charter school foundations and prepared for a possible transformation towards a fully privatized school system.⁵⁵

Although APS is one of the highest spending education districts in the state of Georgia, their students did not see any benefits in their learning. By 2015, APS held a 58.6 percent graduation rate, one of the lowest-performing districts in one of the bottom five states in public education. Many students did not receive textbooks for at least one of their four primary subject courses (math, language arts, social studies, science). Additionally, constant budget freezes resulted in teacher shortages and overcrowded classrooms. Increased administration officials and resource officers exacerbated the disproportionate rate of black student disciplined (expelled or designated as “disabled for special education). For the 2012-2013 school year, black students were expelled at a rate more than double that of white students and nearly four times as many were suspended.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ I will provide greater details on the how gentrification affected Atlanta Public Schools in subsequent chapters. Anthropologist Karen J. Cook wrote a powerful masters thesis equating the redistricting and closing of black schools in Atlanta to hypersegregation. See Karen J. Cook, “Atlanta Public Schools (APS) Case Study: A Tale of Two Schools,” Thesis, Georgia State University, 2013. For more data on Atlanta Public Schools, see Eric Wearne, “Atlanta’s Segregated Schools-I 2004,” *Cato Institute*, May 17, 2004, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/atlantas-segregated-schools-2004> Michelle Cohen Marill, “Resegregation,” *Atlanta Magazine*, April 2008; Max Blau, “Picking Up the Pieces of Atlanta Public Schools,” *Creative Loafing*, July 10, 2014; Rachel Aviv, “Georgia’s Separate and Unequal Special Education System,” *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2018.

⁵⁶ “In Georgia, as in U.S., Race Affects School Discipline,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Jan 18, 2014.

Atlanta's gentrification relied on the criminalization of the black poor. This included draconian anti-poor laws, increased state surveillance, harassment, and violence. Racialized mass incarceration assisted in turning poor black residents into antagonists in the court of public opinion as obstacles to "progress." Indeed, criminalizing the poor moved bodies off targeted property and constructed social antagonism between the urban poor and Atlanta's "good citizens." Atlanta's BURs were especially notorious for advocating strict punishment for the poor and homeless. Acting on Maynard Jackson and Bill Campbell's pro-Olympic gentrification policies, between 1990 and 1996, Atlanta police illegally arrested over 9,000 poor and homeless residents and evicted another 30,000.⁵⁷

Mayor Shirley Franklin's regime intensified the attack on the poor. Citing "the need to improve the atmosphere for business," in 2004, she passed strict city ordinances barring panhandlers from downtown and argued that their presence "contributes to the negative perceptions of the city" and "causes a sense of fear and intimidation and increases potential criminal activity." The National Coalition for the Homeless rated Atlanta the "second meanest city" in the country. Following Franklin, Mayor Kasim Reed partnered with former city councilpersons Keisha Bottoms (who succeeded Reed as Atlanta mayor) and Michael Julian Bond (son of Civil Rights activist Julian Bond) to top Atlanta's antipoor and homeless reputation by passing a 2015 anti-panhandling bill that provided a mandatory six-month jail sentence for a

⁵⁷ "Atlanta City Council. An Ordinance by Councilmembers Keisha Lance Bottoms and Michael J. Bond as Substituted by Public Safety and Legal Administration Committee...to Outlaw Monetary Solicitation in Certain Locations and Manners; 12-0-1324 (3), *Atlanta City Council Action Minutes*, (October 1, 2012); Atlanta City Council Passes New Anti-Panhandling Law" *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, October 2, 2012. I will examine in much more explicit detail the power and effect of each Black Urban Regime on the black working class in Atlanta and their role in directing gentrification in subsequent chapters.

first time offense! When community resistance forced Reed to veto the bill, Bottoms and Bond continued to introduce harsh legislation aimed at criminalizing poor Atlantans.⁵⁸

Police powers and freedom restrictions expanded in the final quarter of the century to enforce the austerity measures necessary for private investment. In fact, the Incarceration Trends Project calculated that both the prison and jail nationwide population increased more than four-fold between 1978 and 2014! Surprising to most, the carceral states that received the most press, Los Angeles, New York City, and Chicago, did not rise to the level of Clayton County, Georgia. Imprisonment in the southmost tip of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region increased a whopping 962 incarcerated per 100,000 people!⁵⁹ Considering that African Americans made up over 40 percent of the carceral state and Clayton County's nearly 260,000 residents were 67 percent black, it is more than accurate to claim the incarceration crisis in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region was indeed racialized.

⁵⁸ "Atlanta City Council. An Ordinance by Councilmembers Keisha Lance Bottoms and Michael J. Bond as Substituted by Public Safety and Legal Administration Committee...to Outlaw Monetary Solicitation in Certain Locations and Manners; 12-0-1324 (3), *Atlanta City Council Action Minutes*, (October 1, 2012); Atlanta City Council Passes New Anti-Panhandling Law" *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*, October 2, 2012. I will examine in much more explicit detail the power and effect of each Black Urban Regime on the black working class in Atlanta and their role in directing gentrification in subsequent chapters.

⁵⁹ "Incarceration Trends: Pretrial Jail Incarceration Rate Per 100,000 residents age 15-64," *Vera, The Incarceration Trends Project*, December 15, 2015; <http://trends.vera.org/incarceration-rates?data=pretrial> For more information, see *The New Dynamics of Mass Incarceration, Out of Sight: The Growth of Jails in Rural America*, and *Divided Justice: Trends in Black and White Jail Incarceration 1990–2013*, which provides analysis of the Incarceration Trends data, and Vera's reports on the misuse of jails, the cost of jails, and women in jail. U.S. Census Bureau, 2015. Ironically, over 56 percent of Atlanta's almost two thousand police officers is black, the smallest racial disparity between the community and police officers in major metro regions next to the Baltimore Police Department (over 3,000 officers, 63 percent black).

“I Don’t Consider Myself Poor”: Ethel Mae Matthews and the Working-Class Neighborhood Activist Base in Black Atlanta

This project departs from previous scholarship on Atlanta by excavating previously disregarded black working-class leaders in the struggle against racial oppression. Although historians have given primacy to petty bourgeois organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Atlanta Urban League, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, examining neighborhood-based groups like Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A’NUFF), the Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference (MASLC), Community Concern (CC), Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), and the Committee to Stop Children’s Murders (STOP) complicate the notions of struggle, movement, and autonomy in Atlanta history. In fact, one such leading figure in Atlanta’s working-class movements, Ethel May Mathews, pushed to reverse the uneven development of working-class Black Atlanta.

Struggle followed Matthews her entire life. She was born at the nadir of the Great Depression in Loachapoka, Alabama in 1933 to a sharecropping family. The political economy of racial and gender exploitation informed her background of class struggle and labor hardship. Although her parents attempted to send her school, the cotton crop harvest season ended her education early:

“I had to come out of school...And when you get ready to go back to School, you be so far behind hat you don’t now where you stopped. Now, A lot of peoples, you know, they criticize a lot of peoples, for not knowing How to read and write. But, they have to take under consideration, that Everybody couldn’t go to school...”⁶⁰

Mathews sudden motherhood and subsequent marriage at age thirteen further disrupted her education aspirations. In 1950, she moved her five children to the Summerhill neighborhood

⁶⁰ “Interview with Ethel Mae Mathews,” February 23, 1989, *Eyes on the Prize II Interviews*.

and focused on supporting her children through a slew of low wage jobs, including shucking vegetables and domestic service for affluent whites in the Northeast Buckhead neighborhoods. However, in 1965, Ethel Mae Mathews became one of hundreds of poor black residents evicted from her home for the construction of the Fulton County Stadium. The following year, black working-class residents ignited the Summerhill Rebellion to protest urban renewal, the lack of jobs, and increased police violence in the neighborhood. According to Mathews, she chose to join in the protests when she saw black rebels drowning out white Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.'s screams for peace with chants of "BLACK POWER! BLACK POWER!"⁶¹

Mathews' channeled her critique of the racial class structure into her organizing for poor black people. In 1968, she met with Etta Horne, an African American welfare-rights activist from D.C, regarding the establishment of an Atlanta chapter of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). As Mathews recognized, NWRO movement organizing lugged an equally racial, classist, and gendered stigma with it. Because the black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie considered single black mothers on welfare to carry dependent and pathological "colonialism," the NWRO, which was comprised mostly of single black women, faced constant criticism from black middle-class groups and leaders. Mathews' work organizing public housing tenants in Atlanta provided her an esteemed reputation among her working-class peers and they elected her as NWRO president soon after she joined the group. She combined the movement for welfare rights with her labor union support, fair housing rights, and most crucially, challenge to black elected officials to be accountable to their black working-class constituencies.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ibid*; Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*, p. 115; 118; 136.

⁶² *Ibid*; pp. 137-138.

In 1969 and 1973, Mathews attempted to take her grassroots activism to the policy level and ran for Atlanta City Council. Although she lost both races, she successfully infused class struggle in electoral politic discourse in Atlanta:

“I wanted to represent my peoples, which is poor peoples...and they knew if I Went in office, things were not going to ever be the same no more... If you have to live like a poor person, you don’t know the plight of another poor person...but if you have to live it from day to day, week to week, month to month, you what it is to be poor. You know what it is to not have money to pay your bills. Not have money to pay your house. Not have money to pay, you know, your light bill, your gas bill, your water bill...you know how it is.”⁶³

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, she founded the anti-gentrification movement, A’NUFF, served as a chairwoman on the Peopletown Advisory Council and the Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger. Throughout these years, she supported other movements against racial oppression by pooling resources for labor strikes, training picketers, or standing in front of bulldozers meant to destroy black neighborhood institutions.

Ethel Mae Mathews is only one working class activist that shaped Atlanta’s transformation. Columbus Ward, John Shabazz, Eva Davis, Haniyfa Ali, Ron Carter, Louise Whatley, Gene Ferguson, and Alvin Price make up a portion of the unsung resident activists in black working-class Atlanta that this research unearthed. Their struggles against the Atlanta power structure must point to a new direction for African American history and urban studies scholarship.

⁶³ Interview with Ethel Mae Mathews by Jackie Shearer, February 23, 1989, *Eyes on the Prize II Interviews* Digital Archive, Washington University.

Land, Urban Rents and the Political Economy of Gentrification

Although many argue that urban redevelopment contains some problematic elements, scholars rarely interpret gentrification as a social problem. In fact, since gentrification emerged in scholarship in the late 1970s, researchers have politicized its “progressive benefits” to the point that it remains one of the most contentious ideological debates today. Gentrification scholarship is best categorized in three distinct types. The conservative argument of the late 1970s and early 1980s ignited the conversation but was mostly indifferent to what they considered a brief and inconsequential moment in urbanization. The liberal, consumption-side argument emerged soon thereafter and remains the most dominant narrative. Consumption-side arguments contain two strands of thought: a) gentrification is important to “improving” capitalism by progressively shifting the structure of social production towards a new urban petty bourgeoisie; and b) from a culturally deterministic perspective, gentrification provides new opportunities for consumer demand, free markets, and individual choice. Racism underscored the consumption-side scholars’ gentrification advocacy: they lambasted “urban decline” at the hands of “dangerous, ghettoized” black and brown poor people and celebrated the “revival” of the postindustrial city through middle class “saviors” who inaugurated a new “renaissance” in U.S. cities. These scholars conceptualized gentrification as a “powerful victory” for the “expression of individual activism by the middle class and their personal triumph over economics” in reforming postwar liberalism. The consumption-side basis accentuated perceived “benefits” and middle class “emancipatory practice” while also bypassing the underlying political, economic, and social destabilization of black working-class communities, institutions, and resistance, and the resulting criminalization, commodification, and exploitation of black bodies and public space.

Scottish radical geographer Neil Smith led the third scholarship wave in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Smith's tendency countered consumption-side cultural determinism with a production-side critique of the political economy of gentrification. This paradigm comprised mostly of European Marxian intellectuals highlighted the profit motive behind gentrification. They argued that the State and financial capital comprise two critical directors and beneficiaries behind neighborhood revitalization. Both work in tandem to sculpt counter-Keynesian laws that benefit unrestricted real estate markets.⁶⁴

Production-side perspectives also exposed how disinvestment operates in favor of revitalization: it cheapens the targeted land and built environment through undermaintenance and other forms of structural neglect; therefore, the production-side wave effectively refuted the "progressive" narrative of middle-class political activism by conceptualizing gentrification in a broader theoretical perspective of uneven development, land rent manipulation, and class warfare

⁶⁴ For the more conservative debates regarding gentrification, see B. Berry, "Islands of Renewal in Seas of Decay, in P. Paterson (ed.) *The New Urban Reality*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1985; G. Sterlieb and J. Hughes, "The Uncertain Future of the Central City," *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1983. For liberal "consumption-side" arguments, see D. Ley, "Liberal Ideology and the and the Postindustrial City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 70, 1980, pp. 238-258. A contingency of radical social theorist scholars challenged the consumption-side logic and gentrification as a whole through their "production-side framework, contending that gentrification was symptomatic of a wider class geography of the city which was replicated through capital investment in housing. Hamnett provided a culturally deterministic framework for reinterpreting gentrification, prompting a new crop of radical scholars to emphasize a critique of political economy as an appropriate paradigm to examine urban reorganization. See C. Hamnett, "The Blind Men and the Elephant: The Explanation of Gentrification," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS*, Vol. 16, 1991, pp. 173-189; L. Bondi, "Gender Divisions and Gentrification: A Critique," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 16, 1991a, pp. 290-298; L. Bondi, "Women, Gender Relations, and the Inner City," in M. Keith and A. Rogers (eds.), *Hollow Promises: Rhetoric and Reality in the Inner City*. London: Mansell, 1991 b; N. Smith, "Blind Man's Bluff, or Hamnett's Philosophical Individualism in search of Gentrification," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS*, Vol. 17, 1992, pp. 110-115; Smith, "Gentrifying Theory," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Issue 111, 1995, pp. 124-126; E. Clark, "Toward a Copenhagen Interpretation of Gentrification," *Urban Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 7, 1994, pp. 1033-1042; and M. Boyle, "Still Top Our Agenda? Neil Smith and the Reconciliation of Capital and Consumer Approaches to the Explanation of Gentrification," *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Issue 111, 1995, pp. 120-123.

in cities. As Smith states, “if gentrification is an emancipatory practice, it is difficult to see it as anything other than political activism *against* the working class.”⁶⁵

This dissertation builds upon the production-side critique of gentrification by framing Atlanta’s urbanity in a dialectic that highlights how places (both land and built environment) operate as commodities and how the fundamental sociological processes, particularly racial class struggle, helped determine the pursuit of use and exchange values and establish property prices. Land value, often overlooked in urban scholarship and studies of urban housing, holds crucial power in urban planning because its permanence means that its exchange value is connected to both its current and *future* use.⁶⁶

Since this project is concerned with how the black working class communities in Atlanta struggled against the city’s annexation of affordable residential and public space for private commercial land value, I focus my study on the locational component of land; that is, I examine how demand factors regarding its topology, climate, and most importantly, locational benefit, determine its relatively inelastic supply. As economists Morris A. Davis and Michael G. Palumbo contended, when land and built environment are combined as *home*, the elasticity of the supply of housing and the response of house prices to changes in demand are closely related to the share of home value that is accounted for by the replacement cost of its physical structure and share that reflects the market value of its land and location. Therefore, in places where most of

⁶⁵ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, pp. 43-44.

⁶⁶ To the third point here, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a policy reversal vastly different from the postwar period where lending restrictions where banks focused more on extending credit to businesses for investment. However, the easing of credit markets led banks to prioritize lending to households for home purchase and taking land as collateral. This dominant banking policy ignited the market boom in land and property in the final decades of the twentieth century and laid the foundation for gentrification throughout the nation. For information, see Josh Ryan-Collins, Toby Lloyd, and Laurie MacFarlane, *rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing*. Zed Books Ltd., 2017, pp. 5-9.

the value of housing is accounted for by the maintenance cost, changes to demand will likely affect the quantity of structures, but not their price.⁶⁷

Between 1983 and 2014 approximately, residential land became relatively expensive in just about every large metro area in the United States. What is of special interest is that in 1984, most large U.S. cities (including Atlanta which was undergoing internationalization) experienced a “price-cycle” where residential land lost value for an extended period, followed by rapid residential land value appreciation. This land price volatility correlated with extreme home price volatility and impacted the intersection of Atlanta’s commercial development, real estate investment, and housing affordability.⁶⁸

A Marxist urban rent conceptualization is the most appropriate framework to examine this fundamental element in the political economy of gentrification and explain how black working-class urban residents were disproportionately subjugated under revitalization. Rent levels are based on the location of a property in relation to other places (it holds a particularity). Place entrepreneurs (landlords) establish the rent according to the *differential* locational advantage of one site over another. Lou Turner categorizes differential rent into two subcategories: *extensive differential rent* (EDR) and *intensive differential rent* (IDR). EDR is what landlords appropriate from the surplus profits that accrue to a place because of favorable locational advantage. For example, Alta Pointe on Huff Road in Northwest Atlanta was one of the most expensive apartment complexes in the city in the early 2010s because it served as a central residential hub for Georgia Tech University students, the Central Business District, and

⁶⁷ See Morris A. Davis and Michael G. Palumbo, “The Price of Residential Land in Large U.S. Cities,” Working Paper, 2007, p. 1-3.

⁶⁸ Morris A. Davis and Michael G. Palumbo, “The Price of Land in Large U.S. Cities,” unpublished, received November 2006, revised 2007, pp. 1-2; 20-21.

commercial shopping centers on Northside Drive and Howell Mill Road. Because EDR contributes to equalizing otherwise declining rates of profit, it plays a pivotal institutional role in that it clears the land for middle and upper class development and supplies small businesses with cheap locational costs.⁶⁹ These developments re-incentivized trendy sole proprietorship restaurants like FLIP Burger Boutique to open near surplus profit generating properties like Alta Pointe. Such upscale businesses rely on their relatively expensive menu prices and the consistent supply of middle and upper-class consumers who can consistently afford their prices to offset locational costs. This allows them to operate on such highly valuable land.

IDR on the other hand, arises from more intensive use of land. For example, the development of multilevel built environment where previously single-storied residential or commercial property stood holds an intensive differential rate. The most common occurrence of this is when place entrepreneurs transform abandoned production spaces into exorbitant rental properties. For instance, the Fulton Cotton Mill Lofts on Boulevard Street in Southeast Atlanta were built inside one of the largest abandoned cotton mills in Georgia and charged close to \$1700 a month in rent for a studio apartment with 20-foot ceilings and exposed brick interiors.⁷⁰

IDR also helps us flesh out how local land-use zoning and re-zoning policies segment the urban geography with respect to race and class. Regulatory zoning associated with intensive differential rent restructures the spatial composition of the city by segregating neighborhoods along racial class lines, especially through building high-rise and low-rise public housing projects. For working class African Americans, who maintain lower than average incomes, the

⁶⁹ Lou Turner, "Notes on Henry Louis Taylor and Same Cole, "Structural Racism and Efforts to Radically Reconstruct the Inner-City Built Environment (2001)," May 5-June 3, 2014, pp. 3-5; 8-10.

⁷⁰ "These Cool Atlanta Apartments Used to Be Industrial Buildings," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Aug 17, 2016.

probability of finding housing outside of poverty stricken areas is greatly diminished when surrounding white and middle class jurisdictions are expensive.⁷¹ When real estate developers reconstituted more abandoned production sites throughout the city in the late 2000s, more rezoning claims effectively instituted de facto segregation near the CBD by restricting poorer residents from residing in high income spaces.

When these restrictive zoning policies exclude competing real estate developers, it develops spatial monopolies that accrue such a favorable and permanent land-rent-relationship that landlords acquire even greater rents. These *monopoly rents* incentivize low-rent seeking service enterprises, like barbershops and restaurants, which engage the political process involved in the redevelopment of spaces with cheap rental costs. Black working-class urban neighborhoods figure prominently in this competition for locational advantage because while the price of commodities sold at a peripheral location may be similar to those sold at a central or downtown location, the rent appropriated by landlords with locational advantage creates a disparity, which dictates different and higher returns.

What is key is that the amount of rent is not determined by any balance between supply and demand or by what people can afford to pay. Instead, rent price is driven by competitive bidding on a fixed resource (land) by investors who assume the future price will be greater than the present one. In Marxist terms, this is the essence of capital speculation that drove much of the redevelopment over the last three decades in Atlanta. With Andrew Young's constructed beacons of international finance and tourism throughout the area in the 1980s, place entrepreneurs took advantage of differential rent profits to simultaneously usher in a new white

⁷¹ Jonathan Rothwell and Douglas S. Massey, "The Effect of Density Zoning on Racial Segregation in U.S. Urban Areas," *Urban Aff Rev Thousand Oaks Calif.*, Vol. 44, No. 6, 2009, pp. 779-806.

and international middle-class and price out and later restrict access and movement of African American working-class urbanites. This dissertation demonstrates how people do pay the price of place in more ways than one.

Gentrification is only possible through the manipulation of urban rents and restructures urban space in the following ways: 1) it fragments residential communities, either through constructing new multilevel infrastructures (IDR) or dispersing residents to the surrounding metropolitan region via local government redevelopment policies, and 2) it imposes uniformity by creating a new service-oriented economy in which the means of production are linked to communication and information networks.

Another crucial component of the political economy of gentrification is the liberal growth machine (LGM). Comprised of local political officials, business elites, entertainment moguls, banking executives, insurance companies, liberal advocacy groups and individuals, county executives, federal and state government officials, and professional and managerial class representatives, these groups work in tandem with real estate developers (rentiers) to serve the interests of capital by manipulating social conditions to intensify the potential future land and/or built environment use in a particular space. Although LGMs are often championed as the bastions of progressivism in most urban studies, this misinterpretation of their objective camouflages their culpability in exacerbating the New Nadir. I argue that LGMs engage in petty bourgeois activism, which is the method to which they implement pro-growth reforms and sell their anti-working-class agenda to the general public.

Scholars John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch categorize LGMs in urban spaces by three general features. First, LGMs justify their collusive alliance to gentrification through an ideological doctrine called “Value-Free Development,” the notion that free markets alone must

determine land use. Actors in these coalitions work to force targeted communities to surrender control over any means of production, invite capital to produce and distribute anything it wants in desired areas with locational advantage, and work extensively to devise expensive propaganda campaigns to sell aggregate growth as a public good to urban residents because it “brings jobs, expands the tax base, pays for services, and increases the safety of residents.”⁷²

Despite these claims, LGMs tend to alienate, act outside of, or against the best wishes or concerns of most residents in the targeted space. This point is made clear by examining the extent to which local officials negotiate to construct chemical waste dumps or trash incinerators in the poorest black and brown neighborhoods. Second, LGMs are predominantly class-based with most members being from the professional and managerial class. Third, they tend to oppose any action, movement, protest, policy, or regulation that improves the use value of neighborhoods. Access to resources that increase neighborhood benefits, such as informal support networks, generate stability, thus conflicting with exchange value interests (devalorization in particular). Fourth, they bolster and secure their interests through state repression. When residents’ organizing on behalf of their class interests threatens to undermine the pro-growth agenda, LGMs engage in petty bourgeois activism to pressure elected officials to discharge law enforcement to scare the protest out of residents. The expansion of the Atlanta Police Department through the creation of the SWAT, STRESS, and REDDOG Special Units cleared black protest actions out of high-business traffic areas and pushed illegal capitalist competition into poor enclaves throughout the city. Those cleansed areas became new profit-

⁷² John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 32-33.

generating residential and commercial real estate investments that also increased property values and rents to drive out poor blacks.⁷³

The Vine City neighborhood gentrification in Southeast Atlanta provides a prime example of how LGMs and real estate developers target active black neighborhoods and manipulate urban rents to accumulate surplus profits and hypersegregate the black poor under the cloak of “revitalization.” The Southeast neighborhood held locational advantage to social movement resources because of its boundaries. It is bounded by Simpson Road (currently Joseph E. Boone Blvd), the English Avenue neighborhood to the north, Northside Drive and downtown Atlanta close to the historic black churches (Wheat Street, Ebenezer, and Friendship Baptist Churches) to the east and the Atlanta University Center (Morehouse College, Spelman College, Morris Brown College, Clark Atlanta University, and the Interdenominational Theological Center) to the South. These community spaces served as viable local movement centers where Vine City residents worked alongside black college students to challenge much of the downtown renovation over the last three decades. However, it is also one of the poorest communities in the city with the median income of its 2,785 residents well below the poverty line and over forty percent of its housing vacant and boarded up. Vine City also held the reputation as one of the most violent spaces in the city, with the “Bluff” on Carter Street notorious for its heroin trade wars and homicide rate.

Stadium construction in the 1990s and the 2010s proved to be the catalyst to the deterioration of Vine City’s social conditions and capacity to resist destabilization.

Geographically, the Georgia Stadium Corporation designed the location of the Georgia Dome

⁷³ For more information on the Liberal Growth Machine ideology, see Robert Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*; John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, pp. 2-3; 94-110.

(and later Mercedes Benz-Stadium) to both facilitate a differential rent advantage as a cluster hub in the area while also acting as a locational disadvantage to Vine City residents. Mercedes-Benz Stadium currently serves as the new core of the convention and entertainment district in the city as it is connected to the Georgia World Congress Center, Philips Arena, the CNN Center, Centennial Olympic Park, the College Football Hall of Fame, the World of Coca Cola, the Civil and Human Rights Museum, the Atlanta Aquarium, and finally, the Central Business District on Trinity and North Avenues. This location prevents Martin Luther King Jr. Drive from running through the downtown to the end of the city limits at Fulton Industrial Blvd, thus cutting the impoverished Vine City residents off from the CBD and the black churches.

Many of the once-standing federally subsidized public housing projects occupied some of the most valuable land because of their locational advantage; thus, their destruction points to the desire of the neoliberal agenda to manipulate and take advantage of differential urban rents. In 1995, the Atlanta power structure targeted Carver Homes, one of Atlanta's largest public housing complexes with over one hundred acres that stretched three miles south of the CBD, for a \$145 million "mixed-income" revitalization that resulted in 648 apartments, 66 townhomes, and close to 250 houses that very few of the predominantly Black residents could afford. City officials and real estate entrepreneurs effectively killed two birds with one stone: they sought to take advantage of Carver Homes' adjacency to wooded area where they cleared many of the trees, gutted fifty-year old, deteriorating apartment buildings, and created new amenities such as jogging trails and upscale clubhouses to justify the higher rents. Consequently, this neighborhood fragmentation via higher rents neutralized the Carver Homes Tenants Association, one of the most active resident activist groups in the city. East Lake Meadows, one of the poorest areas in 1990s Atlanta, contained 640 housing units and was located next to the East

Lake golf course where the PGA hosts its annual championship. The East Lake area was also known one time as “Little Vietnam” for the violence between local drug factions warring over territorial expansion. By 1995, Mayor Bill Campbell’s regime initiated an anti-violence campaign to manipulate the residents’ perspective on gentrification in East Lake. This petty bourgeois activism swayed public opinion on gentrification. By cloaking his initiative in the language of anti-violence, he silenced questions about displacement and fractured resistance against the city’s plan. As a result, the “mixed-income” New Village at East Lake only built 270 apartment units for low income people with the remainder of the space reserved for middle class, non-black residents and tourism for the PGA annual tournament.⁷⁴

On a macro scale, how much of a crisis is gentrification for the black working class? Governing.com collected data on census tracts with median household income and median home value that fell in the bottom 40th percentile at the beginning of a decade. Measuring for significant increases in these values by decade, Governing.com found that between 1990 and 2000, only 13 of the 78 eligible tracts (out of 127 total tracts) in Atlanta could be classified as gentrifying. Of these, most were clustered in historically black working-class downtown neighborhoods like Summerhill, Techwood Homes, and Capitol Homes, spaces that were strategically valuable for Olympic Games development and tourism. However, the measurement between 2000 and 2010 shows that the number of gentrifying tracts increased to 30 out of a total of 65 eligible tracts; thus, it almost doubled the percentage of tracts gentrified from 16 percent to 30 percent. The number of tracts not eligible to gentrify also increased from 49 to 62, meaning

⁷⁴ Jennifer A. Williams, “The End of an Era: The Case of Public Housing in Atlanta, Georgia,” *Agora Journal of Urban Planning and Design*, p. 61. For more info on former Atlanta housing projects and what replaced them, see Appendix 3.

that by 2015, 92 out of a total of 127 tracts, or 72 percent of tracts in the city of Atlanta were gentrified.⁷⁵ What is most striking is that these newly gentrified tracts were geographically advantageous for the Atlanta Beltline Construction Project (ABCP), a 22 mile multi-use trail railway that transports individuals around the southwest, southeast and west corridor of the city.⁷⁶

Project Structure and Periodization

I begin my account of class struggle in Black Atlanta at the height of the Black Power Movement in the city. Chapter 1 (1970-1973) argues that the new black working class majority engaged in Black Power struggles for control of their neighborhoods. These sites of struggle in turn, informed Atlanta's move away from its black residents and towards private investment. This chapter also examines how black workers and elites interpreted "Black Power" in distinct ways. Because it was a complicated era with four separate strata, Black workers and the Black leadership class interpreted Black Power through their vying class interests. Close to the mid-1970s, Black working-class neighborhoods chose revolutionary proto-nationalism as their means to autonomy and social change. Finally, the chapter investigates how Black women's subproletarian labor position influenced their proclivity towards militant action and leadership in social movements.

The second chapter, 1973-1982, examines how the State reacted to the wave of insurgency during the Black Power Era. Chapter 2 argues that Atlanta's power structure,

⁷⁵ Atlanta Gentrification Maps and Data. (n.d.). Retrieved April 20, 2016, from <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/atlanta-gentrification-maps-demographic-data.html>

⁷⁶ The ABDP will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 as it plays a pivotal role in accelerated gentrification efforts in the historically black business district on Auburn Avenue.

controlled through a partnership between the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and Maynard Jackson's Black Urban Regime, laid the foundation for gentrification by regressing black social conditions and repressing working class neighborhoods through increased police power and surveillance. I argue that the city's first Black Urban Regime dismantled neighborhood viability and restricted public resources for blacks pushing for black community control. As a result, proto nationalism declined as a primary objective in black working-class militancy. Facilitated by a crippling economic downturn, federal austerity policies, increased police powers, and the reduction of local movement centers, this era forced black working-class neighborhoods to reevaluate their movement objectives, resources, and ultimately, their residential viability. Finally, the chapter examines the growth of the political economy of crime. Maynard Jackson's black urban regime deteriorated working-class neighborhoods by allowing the underground economy to expand while simultaneously providing little protection during the Atlanta Child Murders crisis.

Chapter 3 examines the neoliberalization of Atlanta between 1975 and 1990. A combination of federal policies, local austerity, and an international recruitment campaign for private capital severely destabilized black Atlantans' capacity to protect their neighborhoods and fight gentrification. I analyze how Andrew Young rivaled Ronald Reagan in his conservative efforts and expanded Maynard Jackson's business-friendly strategy into a full privatization wave that displaced poor blacks. Real estate, banking, and retail juggernauts annexed black spaces. Black workers continued to wage war for their survival, but a Black Great Depression, which resulted in the New Nadir, weakened much of their organizing capacity.

Additionally, I also trace real estate's expanding power in local decision making. Here I demonstrate how place entrepreneurs moved from periphery decision makers to prime directors

of urban reorganization through devalorization and locational advantage planning. Chapter four tackles the Olympic years, 1990-1996. New local and global investors partnered with Maynard Jackson and Bill Campbell's pro-growth regimes to accelerate gentrification by criminalizing and removing a significant portion of Blacks from the core city. However, local movement action witnessed a resurgence during this period, as neighborhood activists overcame spatial fragmentation and attempted to fight the construction of the Olympic Stadium in Summerhill. However, black elites coopted this new group, A'NUFF, by cutting a redevelopment deal that fractured their movement. The latter half of the chapter describes the long-lasting consequences the Olympics had on African American urbanites.

Chapter five examines how the Atlanta power structure extinguished all public housing from the city. Between 1996 and 2007, the combination of skyrocketing underemployment, economic recessions, and repressive policing put working class Blacks on the defensive. As a result, the Shirley Franklin and Kasim Reed regimes passed sweeping anti-working-class legislation that dismantled low income housing throughout the area.

Additionally, I examine the suburbanization of working-class Blacks. Many displaced Atlantans migrated to rural suburban areas—Douglas County, Gwinnet County, and Union County—that lacked accessible public transportation and livable wage labor. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the small enclaves of poor Blacks isolated in Vine City and Old Fourth Ward.

During this period, the LGM promoted gentrification as the primary policy in Atlanta's political economy. Gentrification produced cheap labor costs and land, so entertainment moguls built major music and film corporations throughout the region, providing the city with another major industry next to finance and tourism. Chapter 6 examines Atlanta from 2007-2015 and argues that the Great Recession offered petty bourgeois activists a fragile

political economy to exploit for public resources. In other words, pro-growth interests took advantage of rising underemployment and the housing crisis to remove more resources from working class neighborhoods. Finally, the conclusion section diagnoses the problem of gentrification and offers frameworks for scholars to address class struggle in Black America.

Conclusion

Black scholar-activist Samuel Yette stated in his seminal 1971 book, *The Choice*, “How better [for the ruling class] to insure that certain groups always bear the brunt of any public dislocation and that selected other groups still make whatever profit there is to be made? Only the carefully designed colony would suffer...disadvantages. Segregation [is] an invaluable tool of colonization and exploitation.”⁷⁷ Yette’s prophetic assertion acknowledged that the U.S. State deemed that the displacement of working-class bodies from urban spaces represented the progression of capitalism. However, Yette argued that the “choice” belonged to Africa American workers, to organize or face attrition.

Marxist Italian scholar-activist Antonio Gramsci stated that “the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: now is the time for monsters.” Throughout African American urban history, once urban power structures recognized Black insurgent resistance to threats to their lives and neighborhoods, the elites developed new tools of class war against the rebels. Gentrification serves as the latest tool to reduce the autonomy and stability of Black and Brown workers in metropolitan regions. I intend to more deeply investigate the role of local collective resistance to urban reorganization, and in doing so establish the following: the Black Power Movement was an impetus for accelerating Black neighborhood solidarity, then

⁷⁷ Samuel F. Yette, *The Choice: The Issue of Black Survival in America*. Cottage Books, MD, 1971, pp. 124-126.

fragmentation and gentrification; the struggles of the working class determines changes in the political economy; and Atlanta's transformation is a prime example of contemporary urban apartheid.

I hope this methodological revision will move the understanding of these processes from top-down and linear frameworks to that of historically contingent dialecticism that help highlight the coeval nature of neighborhood organized protest. The reappearance of such processes in New Orleans, Louisiana; Oakland, California, and most recently, Chicago, Illinois, demonstrates the need for understanding both the underlying motivations and consequences of gentrification and the repercussions of black struggles for autonomy, public space and resources. Moreover, it shows that for many underrepresented people, the use of local protest movements is just as relevant in the new millennium. The black working-class struggle against contemporary urban apartheid must be seen in a more complex manner beyond empty promises, shiny buildings, and symbolic representation to demonstrate the ways in which the subordinated seek political recourse.

**CHAPTER ONE: IF THERE'S A HELL BELOW, WE'RE ALL GOING TO GO!":
BLACK POWER, LABOR, AND NEIGHBORHOOD SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, 1970-1973**

“Black people will not be oppressed, repressed, or depressed. We produce the wealth, and they take the wealth. People who produce the wealth should get it.”

-Sherman Miller, African American chairman of the Mead Caucus of Rank and File Workers and member of the Atlanta Chapter of the October League, 1972

“Why do they have the gold,
Why do they have all the power,
Why do they have friends at the top, why do they have jobs at the top.
We've got nothing, always had nothing,
Nothing but Holes and Millions of Them.
Living in Holes,
Dying in Holes,
Holes in Our Bellies,
And Holes in Our Clothes.
Marat we're poor and the poor stay poor,
Marat don't make us wait any more.
We Want our rights and we don't care how, We want our Revolution NOW!”

-Peter Weiss, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat*, 1963⁷⁸

Introduction: “Spread the Misery!”

On Tuesday, March 17, 1970, after ten years on the job, Gene Truelove, an African American garbage man, joined over 2,500 predominantly black American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1644 on strike. The thirty-six-day walkout was the largest public sector work stoppage in the city's history. The revolt began as a one-day solidarity “holiday” and march on City Hall in response to the Aldermanic Committee renegeing on previously promised pay raises for the sanitation and sewage departments. The city's sanitation workforce soon escalated it to an open-ended strike after they discussed the city's

⁷⁸ Peter Weiss, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis De Sade*. Atheneum: New York, 1965.

recent expenditures on a new sports coliseum, highway expansion, and police pay raises. The workers concluded that this wage fight was as much about pay equity for black workers as it was about the municipality's stake in Atlanta's future.⁷⁹

Strikers framed the work stoppage through Black Power notions of community control of public space sweeping through neighborhoods at the time. Flyers, chants, and speeches spoke to demands for Atlanta to reorganize city revenue towards black residents' interests. "If the city can find money for a coliseum," black labor organizer Jesse Epps said, "it can find money for a wage increase." "They spend our money and buy ammunition to kill our boys, but there's no money for bread," declared Ethel Mae Mathews. Indeed, many in the garbage strike movement contextualized the episode as a revolutionary struggle over power relations in Atlanta. "Like the fingers on the hand, we are united into a fist against oppression," neighborhood activist Linda Jenness stated.⁸⁰

The strike served as a pivotal moment in the shaping of race and class relations in the city. This chapter examines how black working class struggles during the Black Power Era in Atlanta informed a new racial formation in the city. I argue that two African American racial classes, the black working class and the black petty bourgeoisie, contested for control of Atlanta's future. Both contending racial classes made use of Black Power ideological streams. The black working class drew from the revolutionary black nationalist current while the middle class utilized conservative black nationalism. Black labor struggles brought these significant racial, class, and ideological fissures to the forefront of city politics.

⁷⁹"Garbage Updated in Disposal Style," *The Atlanta Daily World*, January 23, 1970, pg. 2; "City Workers Strike; Wage Demands Unmet," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 22, 1970, pg. 1, 11; "Garbage Power," *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 23, 1970, pg. 4; "What's Behind Mail and Garbage Strikes?," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 29, 1970, pg. 3, 20.

⁸⁰"STRIKE!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 23, 1970, pg. 3.

Additionally, these sites of struggle created the conditions for Atlanta's neoliberal push towards privatization. The Chamber of Commerce, Atlanta City Hall, and pro-growth economic interests—dismayed at the dismantling of the “city too busy to hate” mantra and international attention black working-class social movements placed on racial class struggles—responded by destabilizing the material conditions of black working-class residents. This chapter examines how Black Power enabled working-class black Atlantans to understand their position and stakes in the metro region. I provide instances of neighborhood and labor social movements to demonstrate how race, class conflict, and resistance was central to urban change.

The coordination between African American working-class activists and their radical allies during the sanitation strike produced pickets, marches, and boycotts that gridlocked many city operations bringing them to a standstill. Beginning at 6am every morning pickets shut down the large sewage plants on Hill Street in the Southeast while workers closed off city waste disposal sites on Jonesboro Road and the Mason Incinerator on Northwest Magnolia Street. Pickets also halted expressway maintenance and construction throughout Southwest Atlanta. Strikers burned piles of trash and shattered glass bottles on picket lines and in front of the Chamber of Commerce (from which strikers claimed City Hall gets its orders) to scare away replacement workers. Atlanta University Center students coordinated travel to and from sympathetic spaces outside the inner city like Emory University to elicit donations and volunteers. Violence erupted after a replacement worker brandished a handgun and shot striker James Simmons in the leg. The strikers then attacked the garbage truck holding the replacement workers and forced it to retreat from the area.⁸¹

⁸¹ “Strike...Marches on,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 13, 1970, pg. 2-3; For more on community strike support, see “Atlanta Black Doctors Support Garbage Strikers,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 26, 1970, pg. 1; For a comparative

Striker's wives, sisters, and other neighborhood women provided crucial support and the movement strategy to escalate the strike. Because most strikers resided in Black working-class neighborhoods in the city, the women coordinated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference (MASLC) to establish a network of local movement centers in close geographic proximity to their homes. They chose the Butler Street YMCA in Southwest Atlanta as the official strike headquarters and Mount Moriah Baptist Church, West Hunter Baptist Church, and the Electric Plaza Building across the street from Atlanta Stadium as strategic resource points to house strike materials, serve food to families, distribute strike funds, train picketers, marchers, and speakers, print flyers and pamphlets, and hold tactical meetings.⁸²

The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and City Hall attempted to crush the strike in four ways. First, Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell fired striking workers. Massell, a White Democrat only two months prior obtained a majority of Black votes by articulating a populist, anti-racist, anti-establishment message.⁸³ Second, Black and White Atlanta elites utilized their control over *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* and *The Atlanta Daily World* to confuse strikers and thereby weaken picket line participation. A week into the work stoppage, both *The Atlanta Constitution* newspaper and local TV newscasts ran unverified reports that an agreement had been reached between workers and the city and that "900 Fired Reported Reinstated." Jenness best summed up how the city-media relationship was detrimental to people's movements for

perspective with the Memphis Sanitation Strike in 1968, see "Two Years Now.. Some Thoughts on That Day in April, in Memphis," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 5, 1970, pg. 9.

⁸² "Strike...Marches On," pp. 2-3.

⁸³ Massell requested Fulton County Superior Court to issue a restraining order forcing the strikers back to work, which was granted by Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President John C. Wilson.

social change in Atlanta. She contended, “And what have they [*Atlanta Constitution*/TV/Radio] done to help the strike? Nothing! On the contrary, they oppose the strike and are supporting all the efforts to smash it. They blow up every rumor about a back to work move that Sam Massell and other enemies of the strike have planted.”⁸⁴

Third, Massell attempted to fracture the bargaining room along racial lines. He offered a union “incentive” program where the 2,300 lowest paid city workers—virtually all black—would receive an extra \$5.00 per week if they worked the full week. If they missed a day, however, they would get the current rate of pay. The strikers decried the offer as racist and classist, saying that “he [Massell] wasn’t doing it to white cops, he wasn’t doing it to white firemen.” Lastly, the city unleashed the police on the picketers. By the strike’s fourth week, police had arrested over three dozen strikers, dwindled the number of picketers and thus impeded strikers’ ability to block replacement garbage trucks. Police also brutalized picketers on multiple occasions.

Striker James L. Adams recounted his near-death experience on the line:

“We were marching in front of the construction department...four policemen broke through the crowd...they pushed the crowd so hard that they almost pushed me into the mailboxes...then that’s when the police club came down on me...after I got hit, I don’t remember nothing until I got in the paddy wagon...If it hadn’t been for Lyn Wells, I would have bled to death before I got to Grady. After all this was over...my bond was set at \$200. Charged with hitting an officer...hands in pocket until I got in the paddy wagon.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ For more evidence on *The Atlanta Journal* and *Constitution* anti-strike behavior, see “Massell Stands Up in Baptism of Fire,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 22, 1970, pg. 1, where the reporter Alex Coffin praised Massell’s “independence.” Additionally, see “Have We Lost the Will to Work?,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, March 26, 1970, where reporter Reg Murphy stated that “the grandfathers of the current strikers would have been on the prairie busting sod or in the bottomlands preparing for another cotton crop.”

⁸⁵ “Strike Escalates,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 20, 1970, pg. 4-5; “Testimony by James L. Adams, Striking City Worker,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 2, 1970, pg. 2.

Despite black working-class neighborhood solidarity across the city and economic strain on municipal operations, middle class black leaders were able to coopt and weaken the movement and fracture strike support along racial class lines. By April 20th, black elites like State Senator Leroy Johnson, insurance capitalist Jesse Hill, Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King, Sr., and chairman of the Atlanta Community Relations Commission Reverend Sam Williams had begun meeting with City Hall without consent from the rank and file and pushing for the strikers to concede and return to work. Coincidentally, all three were ardent supporters of Massell's mayoralty campaign and held stakes in downtown Atlanta businesses.

The strike's effectiveness in halting or slowing city operations as well as its longevity challenged the black petty bourgeoisie's class interests. At a strike meeting at the Butler YMCA, workers angrily responded to Leroy Johnson's pleas for concession by chanting "SUPER TOM!!!," "MASSELL ASS KISSER!," and throwing a trash container at his head.⁸⁶ Concurrently, strike resources dwindled away and workers felt the financial pinch. One shop steward reported that a striker warned at a meeting, "something better happen soon. They 'bout to throw me out of the house and they cut the gas off on me."⁸⁷

These issues hastened the strikers to end their work stoppage at thirty-six days with many disappointed in their "small victory." Less than one third of the remaining strikers participated in the contract ratification meeting. By that evening, the only member of the black leadership class who openly supported continuing the strike was SCLC's Reverend Hosea Williams.⁸⁸ In

⁸⁶ "Union Men March Downtown," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 12, 1970, pg. 2; "5 Weeks Jobless Hurting Garbage Workers, Families," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 19, 1970, pg. 1, 11; For more takes on the effects of the strike, see "Rats Flourish in City," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 3, 1970, pg. 1, 13.

⁸⁷ "5 Weeks Jobless Hurting Garbage Workers, Families," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 19, 1970, pg. 1; "April 22, Earth Day Good Day to End Strike," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 26, 1970, pg. 1, 11.

⁸⁸ "5 Weeks Jobless Hurting Garbage Working Families," p. 1.

the end, the AFSCME negotiators settled on a one-step pay raise, reinstatement for all fired garbage men, and the dropping of criminal charges against arrested strikers.⁸⁹ In the following months, employers retaliated against workers for their participation in the strike. Managers harassed strikers, cut their pay, extended lay-offs, or outright fired them. Evidence suggests that black elites neglected these retaliatory measures against their working-class counterparts and defended the city's actions at every media juncture possible.⁹⁰

In a letter addressed to then-Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson, Summerhill resident Kelley Kidd responded to City Hall's anti-worker stance during the strike by summing up the radical feelings permeating through working-class Black Atlanta: "Ultimately, this strike raises the fundamental question of our time: shall we perpetuate gross inequality of wealth, income, and power or shall we move towards a more democratic society?"⁹¹ In other words, a distinct militancy had been brewing in the black working-class neighborhoods for some time. The black sanitation workers' movement served as one of the crucial episodes that exposed the widening

⁸⁹ "Garbage Strike Over; But Wage Hike Slighted," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 26, 1970, pg. 1, 11; "Vice Mayor Jackson Asks Judge Panel on Increases," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 26, 1970; pg. 1; "Strike," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 4, 1970; "Slim Victory," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 4, 1970, pg. 5; For an alternative take on the strikes, see "What's Behind Mail and Garbage Strikes?" *The Atlanta Voice*, March 29, 1970, pg. 13; Also see "Look to the Needs of the Poor Before Others," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 19, 1970, pg. 2.

⁹⁰ Associate Director of the Atlanta AFSCME local told reporters that two of the strike captains were fired immediately after returning to work. Strikers also were denied promotions, sent home for the day for minor infractions, and marked with red dots on their time cards so payroll could dock their pay. See "Atlanta's Union Busting," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 18, 1970, pg. 9. The *Atlanta Journal* and *Constitution's* coverage of the strike overwhelmingly supported Massell and questioned the "work ethic" of the majority black strikers. See "City Strike Gains Support; Massell Issues Ultimatum," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 19, 1970, pg. 1, 24-A; "Have We Lost the Will to Work?" *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 26, 1970, pg. 4; "Responsible Settlement," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 23, 1970, pg. 4; "Strike Handling Praised," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 25, 1970, pg. 21; "After the Strike," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 27, 1970, pg. 4.

⁹¹ Letter from Kelley Kidd to Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson of the Atlanta city government, 27 March 1970, Maynard Jackson Administrative Records, Box 5, Folder 12, Robert F. Woodruff Library Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

class division in African American Atlanta and set both groups on diverging paths pursuing their distinct and contradictory interests for decades to come.

As the Black Power Movement advanced through Atlanta, black working-class residents overwhelmingly chose to embrace revolutionary nationalism because they embraced its principles of militancy, proto-nationalism, anti-exploitation, and autonomy. Black workers considered revolutionary nationalism the best pathway for their main objective: strengthening their living and social spaces and their neighborhood social movement capacity (NSMC). Between 1970 and 1973, black working-class residents ignited multiple labor strikes for black control of labor, formed independent black unions, attempted to seize community control of schools and neighborhood institutions, and repeatedly infused proto-nationalist discourse in their movements. Concurrently, Atlanta's black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie sought to counter insurgent protest movements with black capitalist ventures and incorporation into the city's financial oligarchy. More clearly, black revolutionary nationalist movements at the working-class level disrupted pro-growth, black conservative nationalist strategies. As African American Marxist *Atlanta Voice* columnist F.C.C. explained at the end of the strike, "There are now two utterly distinct black communities. The [Community Relations Commission] did its job: to conciliate water and fire and coming up with a lot of hot air...the negotiated settlement was a sell out when compared to the pressing needs of the garbage workers...it was not enough money to buy an outhouse in relation to [the] rising cost of living. To have fought for so long so little must create anger in the hearts of the workers."⁹²

⁹² The Community Relations Commission acted as a liaison service between the Atlanta neighborhoods and City Hall. In fact, the CRC worked for the city administration as another committee. The Mayor possessed the power to select their own CRC chairman. Mayors selected individuals like Andrew Young who low-income Blacks identified with the Civil Rights Movement but served the interests of capital. The CRC did not take sides in neighborhood movements against the city nor did they offer resources during socioeconomic issues like recessions, gentrification,

Next, the strike further revealed to black urbanites that their neighborhoods were planned spatial demarcations of blight and neglect. Observers noted that the trash piles were more prevalent and highest in poor black areas during the strike—meaning that the few replacement workers only collected garbage in affluent black and white neighborhoods. Thus, when AFSCME intentionally steered the strike away from its racial underpinning, black city workers stood at a crossroads with white unionism. Working-class blacks argued that revolutionary nationalism provided the necessary racial class consciousness for African American municipal workers to reconsider their role in the U.S. Labor Movement. The Chamber of Commerce, on the other hand, believed that if domestic and international capital perceived Atlanta as a space of constant racial unrest, they could not utilize the metro region to reap the lucrative returns that private investment offered. City Hall then reconsidered the geographical and social boundaries of black Atlanta. As a result, black working-class bodies, spaces, and resources became expendable commodities in the new political economy of Atlanta.

“Malignant” Neglect: The New Black Majority in Atlanta

In March 1970, Nixon aide Daniel P. Moynihan followed up his 1965 report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, with a leaked memorandum to the president that advised him to institute a period of “benign neglect” on the social problems of African Americans. Moynihan’s basis for this policy was that the nation would benefit from a federal blackout on “racial rhetoric” and allow it to “fade” out alongside “extremist” groups like the Black Panther

and police violence. As this dissertation demonstrates, many neighborhood activists refused to work through the CRC because they recognized its role was to subdue protests. “What is a Negro Leader?” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 10, 1970, pg. 2.

Party.⁹³ However, at the turn of the decade, Atlanta reflected a complex fusion of political, economic, social, and ideological circumstances that established the precedent for a surge in black working class militancy.

Atlanta's 255,000 black residents in 1970 gave it a black majority for the first time in the city's history.⁹⁴ However, as historian Joe Trotter posited, Atlanta's postwar urban renewal proletarianized working class migrants by concentrating most of the new urban blacks into the oldest housing stock surrounding the Central Business District: Summerhill, Peoplestown, Pittsburgh, Mechanicsville, Bedford-Pine, and Vine City.⁹⁵ In the decades prior to 1970, slum clearance programs targeted these areas, but the city tore down just over 40 percent of the poorest housing (estimated 22,000 units) and never replaced it. In fact, the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA), the federally subsidized housing agency for low-income people, sold most land cleared of blighted housing to the highest private bidder. As a result, low-income housing in the 1960s was scarce and the percentage of housing deemed "unrepairable" increased by 23 percent by 1970. Activist David Morath of the anti-slumlord organization, Emmaus House,

⁹³ Memorandum from Daniel P. Moynihan to the President of the United States, Richard Nixon, 16, January 1970, Nixon Library Files, National Archives, Washington D.C.

⁹⁴ In 1970, Black Atlantans held a 51% majority to Whites' 49%. Cartographic/Boundary data is courtesy of the Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System, Version 2.0 Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota, 2011. Census data is courtesy of Census of Population and Housing, 1970, Extract Data [computer file]. 2nd release. Ann Arbor, MI: Economic Behavior Program, Survey Research Center [producer], 1991. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [Distributor], 1992. MAP Produced by Mathew L. Mitchelson, Kennesaw State University.

⁹⁵ Joe Trotter's Proletarianization Thesis challenged the dominant Ghettoization framework by asserting that black workers were not voiceless, powerless objects concentrated into a poverty-stricken space; rather, they built institutions, social movements, and kinship networks to combat racial oppression and advance their class interests. Thus, the proletarianization thesis offers a dialectical approach to how the intersections of capitalism, racial oppression, and resistance produced a community of working-class agents struggling for autonomy. The proletarianization thesis undergirds the framework of this dissertation. See Joe W. Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-1945*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985.

explained new black working-class residents faced a dilemma in organizing fair housing movements: “The buildings are too worthless to be fixed, but if they’re condemned—well it’s just that much more crowding.”⁹⁶

Whites fled the city during these years and flooded the five-county-surrounding suburbs with 1.07 million white residents (compared to 311,000 black suburbanites). Much of the economic activity left the newly majority black inner city and traveled to the northern metropolitan area, including Gwinnett, Cobb, Cherokee, and northern parts of Fulton and DeKalb Counties. Black working-class spaces shed industrial, retail, and service sector jobs. Banks, law firms, real-estate development, stockbrokers, accounting firms, and retail stores all fled to the north. Industrial labor, which had always been decentralized in the city, dispersed further from Atlanta’s core after highway expansion began and the major means of transporting goods shifted from railroads to trucks.

The war in Indochina generated an economic catastrophe for African Americans across U.S. cities. By 1970, the U.S. was spending nearly \$30 billion a year in an increasingly unpopular conflict. Inflation skyrocketed to an annual rate of 6 percent and was climbing yearly. Nixon’s “anti-inflation program” response depleted federal municipal work, the highest employer of African Americans. By April 1970, the rate of U.S. black unemployment rose from 7.1 to 8.7 percent, compared with a rise for whites from 4.1 to 4.3 percent. Thus, for the first time in fifteen years, the black unemployment rate was double the white rate. The unemployment rate for black teens skyrocketed to a whopping 41 percent. By June 1971, black unemployment had surged to 10 percent. The unemployment rate for returning black veterans

⁹⁶ Emmaus House was formed in 1967 to fight against slumlords in Atlanta and find adequate housing for those that needed it. For a detailed history and analysis of Emmaus House’s work in African American Atlanta, see Leeann Lands, “Emmaus House and Atlanta’s Anti-Poverty Movements,” *Atlanta Studies*, April 2, 2015.

was even higher, at 10.8 percent. It is safe to assert that if the U.S. Labor Department included black workers who stopped looking for work and temporary workers (labor force participation rate), the black unemployment rate was more than likely beyond 30 percent.⁹⁷

Blacks who looked to the state government for employment faced mounting barriers, especially underemployment. While Georgia's black population was 33 percent, only 14 percent of state employees were black. What is clear is that those blacks who drew state payroll checks did so around the bottom rungs of the hierarchy. Georgia's Department of Health was the largest state agency in 1972, of its 12,238 employees only 29 percent were black. Over two thirds of their black workforce were classified as "auxiliary" or "custodial." In fact, 84 percent of all black state employees in 1972 were auxiliary, clerical, or custodial workers.⁹⁸

City hiring data at that time revealed an employment ceiling for most African Americans. The Atlanta Community Relations Commission released a 55-page report in August 1970 citing that 70 percent of blacks in the city were clustered in the lowest sector of labor while only 14 percent of whites were similarly employed. What is most striking in the report is that of the 28 city departments, only five employed black people outside of the dirtiest jobs.⁹⁹

Inflation served as a dialectical catalyst for black workers. First, inflation eroded black workers' wages. This, combined with discriminatory hiring and pay practices, prompted a higher surge of black labor militancy for higher wages. However, many of those gains were wiped out by more inflation, higher taxes, and shorter work weeks. Atlanta factory workers' purchasing

⁹⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1970.

⁹⁸ Georgia Census, 1970.

⁹⁹ Those five departments are Model Cities, the Mayor's Office, Law, Youth Council. See "Minority and Hiring and Promotion Practices, City of Atlanta," August 1970, Maynard Jackson Administrative Records, Box 3, Folder 11, Robert F. Woodruff Library Archives, Atlanta, Georgia.

power dropped five to six percent during the first quarter of 1970. This meant a fall in gross average weekly earnings of factory production workers in Atlanta from \$137.23 in December 1969 to \$129.26 in March 1970. Take home pay for a worker with three dependents dropped from average weekly earnings of \$117.44 in December to \$112.36 in March. This proved disastrous for black households as the income disparity gap widened between the races to record levels. In 1970, the black median household income was \$5,710 to whites' \$12,146.¹⁰⁰ Business owners, however, felt little to no effect of inflation. That same month, Coca-Cola reported that its net earnings for the first quarter of 1970 set a record high of \$26.9 million, up from \$23.9 million for the first quarter of 1969.¹⁰¹

Wage discrepancy and job type directly correlated with blacks' access to health care. In 1967, the black male life expectancy was only 61 years compared to white male's 68 years, a gap of seven years. For black women, the gap widened to 7.7 years: black women expected to live 67.4 years while white women outstripped them at 75.1 years. This is in part attributed to the fact that most blacks at that time (79 percent male and 75 percent female) earned livings in manual labor or service sector work (compared to 51 percent and 35 percent for white men and women, respectively), which took a toll on workers' bodies. In Atlanta, investigative journalist Boyd Lewis compared the city to "serfdom" for blacks. He reported that many "unemployable" black men perform heavy manual labor for one-tenth the federal minimum wage and are "compelled by unimaginable poverty to live little better than animals." As a result, black

¹⁰⁰ "Inequality in Family Income Between Predominantly Black and White Atlanta Census Tracts, 1950 to 1990," David M. Smith, *Geography, Inequality, and Society*. Cambridge University Press, 1987; See also Keating, *Atlanta*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰¹ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the wage regression was due in large part to decline in the average work week for Atlanta workers from 40.6 to 38.7 hours; a four cent drop during the quarter in average hourly earnings, and a 1.5% rise in the Atlanta consumer price index. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 1970.

physical and mental health deteriorated, jeopardizing their lives as well as their capacity to construct informal support networks, organize protests, protect their neighborhoods, and establish a beneficial daily routine.¹⁰²

For example, African Americans Charles Williams and David Scrivens brought home \$36 a month, or 17 cents per hour each as full-time maintenance men for Juniper Street apartments in 1971. They were on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, cleaning and repairing apartments. The owners of the apartments, Brewer-Head Realty Company, offered the two workers two basement rooms described as “filthy, adjoining the boiler room with no toilet nor bathtub and swarming with roaches.” In early 1971, Williams was carrying fully loaded trash cans down four flights of stairs when he suffered a hernia attack. Following his operation, Williams suffered from the pain and possible side effects from medicine. He set fire to their \$20 a month shack and was jailed for criminal trespass and brandishing a pistol. With his monthly income cut, Scrivens was forced to move to a house in Mechanicsville without running water, gas, or electricity. Williams remained in jail with no guarantee of a psychological evaluation.¹⁰³

Wage theft crippled black workers in early 1970s Atlanta. The Wage and Hours Board of the U.S. Department of Labor revealed that Atlanta area businesses were responsible for stealing approximately \$1.12 million from employees over the previous fiscal year. The Board reported that almost one thousand Atlanta companies were guilty of paying 4,768 laborers wages lower than those permitted by the Fair Labor and Standards Act. Additionally, hotel, motel, restaurant, and agricultural employees were excluded from this protection since these three sectors had high

¹⁰² Refers to neighborhood use values, which are discussed in detail in the following section. See Appendix A.4 for Persons in Households with Incomes Below Federal Poverty Level by Tract in 1970 in the Metro Region.

¹⁰³ U.S. Census, 1970; Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 1970; See also Paul Cornely, “Health in Action,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 8, 1970; “17 cents per hour is pay for elderly workers here,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 31, 1971, pg. 1, 7.

numbers of low-wage black workers. Since African American women represented a high number in these labor sectors, it is appropriate to conclude that they suffered wage theft at a disproportionately higher rate than black men and white men and women. Additionally, considering employers' historical tendency to discriminate and steal wages from African American workers in general, it is also safe to assume that many of the Atlanta workers affected were black.¹⁰⁴

This amounted to black urban spaces acting as dependent colonies to global capital through *super-exploitation*. Although Karl Marx stated that he did not see the suppression of wages below the value of labor power as “outside of his analysis,” Brazilian Marxist economist and sociologist Ruy Mauro Marini expanded Marx’s point by providing a superb framework for super-exploitation. Marini stated that when capitalists siphon extra surplus value (super-profit) from the working classes past the point that it drives their wages below the value of their labor power, capitalists maintain both their profits and impose lower wages for longer and more intense working days. Although Marini believed that super-exploitation was exclusive to third world political economies like Mexico or Vietnam, this framework can apply to black and brown urban workers who experience wage regression. Capitalists utilize race and gender as material and social variables to regress wages as well as fracture working class solidarity. Additionally, capitalists sometimes use a share of their surplus profits to invest in “social peace.” In other words, they finance state expenditures and elections to reinforce their domination over the working classes or provide incremental material increases to worker conditions, including cooling fans for hot factories, catered lunch breaks, or donations to community institutions. As a

¹⁰⁴ “Adillera Dollar,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 27, 1971, pg. 5.

result, business owners invest in the potential extraction of surplus profits without the worry of insurgent rebellion.¹⁰⁵

President Richard Nixon's "New Majority" strategy worsened underemployment and declining wages. In 1971, Nixon declared that "the educated people and the leader class no longer have any character, and you can't count on them." For Nixon, workers represented the counter to the "eastern elite establishment" who "painted their asses and ran like antelopes" when crises occurred. Nixon believed that America's working class constituted the only segment of the American population with "character and guts" to meet the economic crises of the day. The working classes, Nixon concluded, would rally against the "liberal cultural elite who want to take their money, and give it people who don't work." Blue-collar pro-war protests in New York in 1970 provided Nixon's belief about American workers palpable imagery and political symbolism.¹⁰⁶

Consequently, Nixon initiated his "blue-collar strategy" as an effort to secure allegiance with labor leadership on foreign policy and social issues while also moving further right on working class economic issues. His theory involved labor leadership mobilizing rank and file support for Republican initiatives while he reduced resources for the "strong American worker" who could survive the downturn. However, his New Economic Policy cut taxes for corporations in order to generate incentives to invest in new equipment, expand production, and increase their workforce. This only worsened the black economic crisis. With significant tax breaks, businesses obtained the financial stability to automate their labor and close factories. Without

¹⁰⁵ See Claudio Katz, "Revisiting the Theory of Super-exploitation," *International Journal of Socialist Review*, July 5, 2018, <http://links.org.au/revisiting-theory-of-super-exploitation>

¹⁰⁶ Jefferson Cowie, *Staying Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*. New York and London: The New Press, 2010, pp. 125-136.

any federal public works or jobs program (Nixon vetoed two federal work program bills), the relatively small blue-collar job market for working class blacks shrunk even further. The federal government then added a price, wage, and rent freeze with many companies receiving government exemptions by the Federal Cost of Living Council to raise prices during the freeze (auto and insurance industries). Wages for workers did not receive the same accommodation.¹⁰⁷

The combination of accelerating inflation, regressive wages, rising prices, and higher/discriminatory unemployment/underemployment buried many African Americans into deepening poverty. The U.S. government defined poverty as an income of \$3,968 for an urban family of four. By 1970, over one third of people designated as “poor” in the United States were black, while African Americans made up less than 15 percent of the national population! In Atlanta, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 15,000 families of two or more members were under the poverty level while an additional 16,000 fell at or slightly above it. Of the former, more than one in five black families in Atlanta lived in poverty compared to one in fourteen for whites.¹⁰⁸

Evidence suggests that Atlanta’s postwar power base coordinated poor black colonial enclaves in designated areas of the central city. Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) areas are spaces where families are three times more likely to have inadequate incomes than families in other parts of the city. In 1970 Atlanta, 25.7 percent of all CEP families lived below the poverty line while another 8.7 percent of all families in other parts of the city experienced similar economic constraints. Additionally, 45 percent of black Atlantans living in poverty resided in the CEP portion, which contained over 35 percent of all blacks in the central city. The greatest

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 150-151.

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 1970; June 1971.

proportion of poverty families of any category were blacks with seven or more family members living in the CEP portion. Over fifty percent of these families fell below the poverty level that year. Ethel Mae Mathews described her precarious economic stability: “I have a 13-year-old daughter to support. I also receive disability social security so that I’m not getting any more than if I didn’t get it. Also, recipients get no money for telephone or insurance. People can get free clothing if their case workers writes them a note...not many recipients are told that.”¹⁰⁹

Georgia state revenue problems trickled down in black Atlanta’s pockets. At the beginning of January 1972, the recession forced more people to Medicaid while medical costs rose, resulting in the state paying more for welfare programs (\$33 million in 1971). Consequently, Georgia sought a sales tax increase of 4 percent to grow the state’s revenue. Because sales taxes levies survival items at the same rate that they taxed luxury goods, poor people who spend most of their money on necessities end up paying a larger portion of their small income in taxes than do members of the affluent classes, making this a regressive tax. Concurrently, almost \$6 billion worth of property in Georgia, most of it improved and highly valuable, went untaxed every year. Figure B.2 shows the value of the tax-exempt property in Georgia in 1972.¹¹⁰

The federal government dealt black Atlantans another blow in housing. Only three years after the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Supreme Court upheld a California law that the people in a community could call for a referendum to decide whether or not they would permit low-income housing units to be built in their community.¹¹¹ Although defining the “community” was a legal

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* “15,000 Atlanta Families Income at Poverty Level,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, August 18, 1970, pg. 2

¹¹⁰ See Appendix B.2.

¹¹¹ *James v. Valtierra*, 402 U.S. 137 (1971)

snafu, the landmark legislation not only cut off large swaths of available land for public housing; it assisted urban communities like Atlanta to construct colonial boundaries for future middle and upper-income residential housing and commercial development. As later chapters in this dissertation discuss, real estate capitalists took advantage of this market-rate housing development decision by increasing construction of new housing units adjacent to low-income units in Southwest Atlanta in the late 1970s and Southeast Atlanta in the late 1980s. This facilitated early gentrification efforts in Atlanta by increasing rents and displacing the black poor.

The Right to Place: Use Value Theory, Neighborhoods, and Social Movement Capacity

Atlanta's political economy not only complicated the value of land, property, and resources, it also made African Americans' social conditions more precarious. At the heart of Atlanta's urban struggle was the inherent contradiction between black residents' push for autonomy, community control, or the strengthening of the use value of their neighborhoods—obtaining the resources that places generate to both satisfy essential needs and strengthen community—and the city's pursuit of exchange value interests. As urban geographers John Logan and Harvey Molotch argued, the simultaneous push for both goals by two distinct groups is “a continuing source of tension, conflict, and irrational settlements.” As sociologist Ruby Mendenhall argued, this special intensity constructs an asymmetrical market relation between buyers and sellers where landlords determine property prices not by worth, but by how much the residents value the idiosyncratic locational benefits. This market, Marx, contended, in dialectical

fashion, structures urban phenomena and determines the experiences and relationships of city dwellers.¹¹²

Black urban dwellers conceived of bolstering their use value of place as indispensable: they recognized that they could survive with less desirable places, but their *quality* of place determined their political, economic, social, and cultural power. This struggle for place, inherent in most black urban spaces, generates and possibly sustains access to resources that enhance *neighborhood social movement capacity* (NSMC), including access to work, community oversight of public education institutions, kinship networks, family, and close proximity to survival needs shops (primarily grocery stores). Urban sociologist Kevin R. Cox effectively conceptualized “home” as a vested network—meaning that, oppressed people’s relationship to place holds very high stakes and carries intense feelings—and commitments related to long-term and complex social, material, and emotional attachments. Access to these benefits are so important to residents that they are willing to employ “extramarket” protocols like organized protests, social movements, violent insurrections, or political regulation to procure stability in their living and workspaces.¹¹³

Logan and Molotch provided six different, yet intersecting types of variables that increase the use value of place that I apply to Black working class Atlantans’ struggle to enhance their NSMC. First, the *daily round* is how residents learn, consider, and make conscious

¹¹² For more conceptualization of Use Value Theory, see Karl Marx & Fredrick Engels, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Bennett A Cerf & Donald S. Klopfer, The Modern Library, Random House Inc., 1906, pg. 42, 47-48, 52-53; Logan and Molotch expand on Marx’s conceptualization in Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. University of California Press, 1989. See also Ruby Mendenhall, “The Political Economy of Black Housing: From the Housing Crisis of the Great Migrations to the Subprime Mortgage Crisis,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2010, pp. 20-37.

¹¹³ For more on the political economy of “home,” see Kevin R. Cox, *Urbanization and Conflict in Market Societies*, Chicago: Maaroufa Press, 1978, pp. 94-110.

decisions to adapt facilities, locations, and offerings to their everyday routine and to the benefit of their neighbors. In other words, the daily round is how residents adopt a consistent movement throughout the day that minimizes their time and resources and in turn provides avenues to strengthen the use value of their neighborhoods. Aspects that affect the daily round include labor within relative proximity to home, transportation between home, work, school, and social spaces, food security (relative proximity to grocery stores and quality and fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy), amenities (electricity, gas/heat for the winter), and child care services.¹¹⁴

The daily round allowed black Atlantans to develop integrated mechanisms for dealing with multiple social problems in their neighborhoods. In July 1970, the Pittsburgh community in Southeast Atlanta conducted door-to-door “rat surveys” to determine why more vermin were populating their homes, playgrounds, and community center. The survey concluded that improper storage for loose and damaged garbage cans (provided by the city) not only caused a boom in the rat population, but also contributed to a host of other problems that impaired the daily round. Pittsburgh resident Beatrice Garland aligned with Summerhill residents in the Citizens Neighborhood Advisory Council of Summerhill and Pittsburgh to build new garbage can racks, repair damaged garbage cans, and schedule mandatory block area clean-ups. The racks also decreased pollution, limited stray dogs roaming the streets, and made the neighborhood more attractive.¹¹⁵

Most importantly, apartheid is a crucial determinant in the daily round. Racial oppression exposes the daily round as vulnerable because if residents lose one of the elements in

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 94-110. John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 17-23, 103-110.

¹¹⁵ “Pittsburgh rats find food is scarce now,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 26, 1970, pg. 9.

the routine or their original residential place, the value is either penalized or outright erased. For instance, in January 1970, the Atlanta Aldermanic Zoning Committee voted 3 to 1 to rezone a Southwest Atlanta residential area for the development of an additional six hundred apartment units on Sewell Road—making a total of 2000 apartments (6,000 people) concentrated into a 3-4-mile radius over a three-year span. Most of the blacks pushed into the area were sub-working class—meaning that their only labor options included unskilled, low wage, unstable work: grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, domestic work, and sandwich shops. With approximately nine thousand people consolidated in a compact space within a short time span and beset with subpar labor and services, new residents struggled to establish a daily round while established residents reported a disruption in their public services. For both sets of residents, an increase in population without attention to improving labor options and services undercut the daily round because low-wage, non-unionized jobs became scarce while city services declined further because of having to serve more people. Consequently, poor residents travelled beyond their daily round to search for a short supply of jobs thereby jeopardizing other segments of their routines. In November that same year, the Atlanta Transit System cut bus lines across the city. The most impactful line cut was the No. 35 Decatur Street-Grady Hospital (down 20 runs per week), which forced hospital workers to alter their daily round and find a new way to work every day.¹¹⁶

Time is also a significant variable to the daily round. The bus line cuts resulted in longer travel times by an average of 26 minutes for each bus line. Thus, residents like Shelby Cullom had to restructure their routine, including when to drop children off at daycare, the time to

¹¹⁶ “Atlanta Crisis in Southwest Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 1, 1970, pg. 1, 3; “Bus Lines Cut Back,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 16, 1970, pg. 3.

schedule (or cancel) community organization meetings and events, or when to go to sleep and wake up for work. Lastly, money determines to the daily round. The August 1969 bus fare hike from twenty-five cents to thirty-five cents cash or thirty cents token priced many black workers out of public transportation and pressured them to disrupt their daily round to preserve their financial budgets. Eighteen months after the fare hike, ATS Secretary-Treasurer Henry Taylor noted that the number of bus riders decreased eight percent.¹¹⁷

The second resource that impacts the use value of black working-class neighborhoods, *Informal Support Networks*, is a loose organization of individuals who provide life sustaining goods and services to the neighborhood. Residents maximize an informal “marketplace” where they barter through a reciprocal system. The most consistent examples in African American working-class spaces are loaning food to neighbors, babysitting children for friends and acquaintances who offer aid that can alter social conditions. This includes electricity sharing when a neighbor cannot afford to pay their bills, a carpool service (utilized in response to the ATS bus line cut example above), or referrals for jobs. Anthropologist Carol Stack conceptualized these “kinship networks” as conventional among poor urban blacks because of their social conditions. Black urbanites do not necessarily reside in the same place, but they are responsible for each other’s place, carry out domestic functions, and exchange goods and services for survival. Although Stack is correct in her assertion that these kinship networks effectively generate stability and function in a dysfunctional environment, she limits her conceptualization of kinship networks.¹¹⁸ Whereas Stack recognizes kinship networks as

¹¹⁷ “Bus Lines Cut Back,” p. 3; Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, pp. 103-110.

¹¹⁸ For more on kinship networks and Carol Stack’s study on Midwestern poor urban blacks, see Carol Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in the Black Community*. Basic Books, 27th Printing edition, 1983, pg. 9, 22, 129.

reactionary—meaning that they are only consequences of oppression—I argue the inverse: kinship networks are equally social and cultural and are generally proactive representations of struggles for autonomy.¹¹⁹

The resourcefulness and resiliency of black urban informal networks under perpetual oppression and urban decay do not compensate for nor perpetuate the poverty cycle; rather, they represent a crucial resource only made possible by *community*. These networks solidify the bonds people build with one another that enable them to rely on one another when capital threatens their neighborhoods. Community establishes the fourth variable for the use value of neighborhood, *Security and Trust*, because it provides residents a sense of shared cultural symbols, values, and kinship ties through their experiences in struggle. Signs of commonality (skin color, clothing, diction) serve as a means for categorizing members and nonmembers of the neighborhood. This “categoric knowing” is reinforced through mechanisms in the daily round, like carpooling during the ATS transit hikes or building a new neighborhood garbage collection system. As a result, residents maintain a distinction between community member and outsider which informs their organizing strategy for future movement action.¹²⁰

Neighborhoods also provide residents with a significant spatial as well as social demarcation that strengthens the linkage people make between their locational advantage and their racial class position. *Identity*, in the form of class, is the fifth asset for a neighborhood’s use value and informs the sixth and seventh resources, *agglomeration* and *ethnicity*, respectively. The status of the residents as a community negates the neighborhood identity as simply a

¹¹⁹ See Appendix B.3 for a Chart of Resources that Affect the Use Value of Neighborhoods.

¹²⁰ Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, pp. 103-110.

“collection of houses;” rather, it establishes an enclave of complementary benefits where the concentration of many similar people (working-class African-Americans) stimulates the development of collective-based needs organizing.¹²¹ The neighborhood’s shared ethnicity serves as a summary characterization of all the overlapping benefits of resources for NSMC. Most residents in the neighborhood require similar daily rounds, represent a shared lifestyle, and the social boundaries for sustaining interpersonal support. More clearly, it constructs trust and collective needs-based organizing objectives among the residents while simultaneously identifying individual and group antagonists to the NSMC.

This struggle works both ways. As black urban space is consistently at play for exchange value interests, residents often face displacement, eviction, or some type of disruption to place, or the use value of neighborhoods and NSMC. Black Studies scholar Lou Turner noted that for capitalists, the use value of the black community as a neighborhood asset “is no more than a commodity with an exchangeable market value for development and finance capital in the same way that a corporation or factory with financial vulnerability is a purchasable asset for private equity firms.”¹²² Thus, capitalists categorize afflicted black neighborhoods as mere fodder whose planned depreciation puts them on the market to be bought and sold, recycled and reinvested. In 1970s Atlanta, this emerging struggle between black working-class residents and pro-growth, bourgeois reformists became a struggle over the value of black space and place in the city.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, pp. 103-110.

¹²² Lou Turner, “Notes on Henry Louis Taylor and Same Cole, “Structural Racism and Efforts to Radically Reconstruct the Inner-City Built Environment (2001),”” Unpublished Paper, May 5-June 3, 2014, pp. 3-5.

I argue that the fight for resources that impact the use value of neighborhoods, and therefore NSMC, generate most, if not all urban black social movements; however, current trends in social movement theory that examine black struggles continue to relegate this human agency in making conscious decisions to pursue neighborhood resources for social movement capacity as secondary. More clearly, most existing scholarship overemphasizes structural political opportunities. As sociologist Aldon Morris argued, this misinterpretation occurs because “assumptions in current theory lead its proponents to gloss over fundamental sources of agency that social movements can bring to the mobilization process, cultural framing, tactical problems, movement leadership, protest histories, and transformative events.”¹²³ While sociologist Doug McAdam’s political process model contributed a necessary counter to classical social movement theories that portrayed actors as “irrational, apolitical deviants,” his neglect of social and cultural underpinnings and overemphasis on external factors means that it did not fully account for how black community social movements develop, succeed, or fail.¹²⁴

As Morris argued, the political process model misinterprets structuralism as the generating force of social movements. Rather, agency-laden institutions/local movement centers, frame lifting, tactical solutions, and social movement leadership, all reinforced through social

¹²³ Aldon Morris, “Reflections of Social Movement Theory: Criticisms and Proposals,” *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (May 2000), 445. See also Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. Simon & Shuster, 1986.

¹²⁴ McAdam, alongside other political process model theorists Charles Tilly, and Sidney Tarrow make three significant arguments. First, communities contain mobilization structures that produce rational actors to mobilize and engage in collective action. This rejects the spontaneity argument because preexisting institutional structures and formal organizations recruit and train participants, gather resources, and coordinate movement action. Second, political opportunity structure allows movements to only emerge in communities when favorable changes occur in the external political system; as a result, social movements are solely dependent on external resources. Third, insurgent consciousness is central to constructing and sustaining a social movement. Community members that feel a shared grievance against an unjust component of the system or the system itself motivates them to become actors in movements. See Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

connections (via neighborhood resources), must all be explored in order to understand social movements. In other words, Morris' social movement theory illuminates the dialectical relationship between agency and structure. One determines the other and both hold inherent conflicting interests in capitalist urban spaces. Thus, I argue that a radical urban history must treat both agency and structure as interdependent. As Marx stated, people "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given, and transmitted from the past."¹²⁵

Morris' model counters the political process model in many successful ways. First, McAdam's "mobilization structures" theory did not contend with how local actors developed an organizational relationship for movement. Morris argued that these structures were "agency-laden institutions," that housed cultural and organizational resources for collective action. "Their cultural materials," Morris states, "are constitutive in that they produce and solidify the trust, contacts, solidarity, rituals, meaning systems, and options of members embedded in their social networks."¹²⁶ As my examination of Atlanta demonstrates, urban black working class residents often organized for movement in spaces that many of them were familiar with (homes of community members, churches, recreation centers, and school classrooms), held sacred and secular rituals (particularly card and rent parties), and in areas where they labored together. In late 1970, Kirkwood residents joined local organizer Dan Danner in establishing the Harambe Living Art Gallery, a community center that served as an art gallery, an African performing arts space, and an education workshop for residents. In August 1971, the Atlanta Black Panther Party

¹²⁵ Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. International Publishers, Inc., 1994.

¹²⁶ Morris, "Reflections of Social Movement Theory, 447.

was evicted from their Southwest Atlanta community center by African American realtor and alderman Q.V. Williamson. Black Kirkwood residents found a building in the neighborhood for the BPP's new headquarters. There they continued to hold survival training seminars, house protest materials, and babysit neighborhood children.¹²⁷

Second, in Morris's model, tactical solutions can initiate social movements instead of developing later in the process. Community members in the infra-political stage of social movement development—where a significant portion of residents experience unorganized, collective anger and contempt at a specific issue affecting many, if not all of the community—utilize mobilization as a catalyst for coalescing unorganized anger into an organized protest. In late October 1970, upon hearing that Fulton County Superior Court Judge Emeritus W.A. Foster acquitted Atlanta police department officers J.T. Hasty Jr. and J.M. Colbert for shooting fourteen-year old African American Andre Moore to death, dozens of his Summerhill neighbors stormed the Fulton County courthouse. Summerhill activists Louise Whatley and John Shabazz transformed the spontaneous rally into a multifaceted anti-police violence movement that involved the following: a city-wide boycott of downtown Atlanta businesses through Christmas, community self-defense training and patrol in Summerhill, and numerous sit-ins and marches that lasted nearly a year.¹²⁸ Working class black Atlantans consciously chose to crystalize their frustrations with the structure to make attempts at community control of aspects of the State.

¹²⁷ "Afro-Art Center Finds New Home in Kirkwood," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 15, 1970, pg. 1; "BPP Seminars on Survival Beginning," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 31, 1971, pg. 1

¹²⁸ For community coverage of the Andre Moore murder and the black working-class neighborhood response, see "Moore's Death at the Hands of Police Enrages Community," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 9, 1970, pg. 1, 3; "Murder," *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 9, 1970, pg. 1, 3; "Near Riot," *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 10, 1970, pg. 3; "Mayor Meets Residents of Outraged Summerhill; Tensions Even Higher," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 26, 1970, pg. 1, 6; "Mayor Addresses Crisis in Summerhill Finds Cool Reception in Community," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 30, 1970, pg. 1; "Summerhill Sets Own Community Patrol," *The Atlanta Voice*, September 6, 1970, pg. 9; "Aftermath of Murder," *The Great Speckled Bird*, October 26, 1970, pg. 2; "Blacks Asked to Make Mystery

Third, Morris considers movement leadership as essential. The pre-existing community leadership configurations are critical to how indigenous networks operate in dealing with multiple, interlocking struggles, distributing resources effectively, and training emerging actors.¹²⁹ Despite their various class positions, black working class Atlantans generally recognized Ethel Mae Mathews, John Shabazz, Louise Whatley, Willie Ricks, Gene Ferguson, (working-class) and Reverend Joseph Boone, Reverend Hosea Williams, and MASLC (middle class) as community leadership because they demonstrated consistency in joining local struggles that affected their material interests. Although some leaders strayed from proto-nationalist struggles when they jeopardized their class interests (Hosea Williams especially), working class black Atlantans still understood specific individuals to be leaders in moments and movements against racial oppression.

Lastly, Morris's model deemphasizes "powerful external actors" as the prime determinants of the success or failure of social movements.¹³⁰ Scholars such as sociologist Charles M. Payne have centralized external mobilizers in Southern social movements at the expense of local actors. Thus, he removed indigenous peoples' agency and identified them as faceless, "unorganized and unenthusiastic."¹³¹ In considering Atlanta, I challenge the political process model, particularly the external resource mobilization theory by applying Morris's model to black Atlantans' fight to bolster the use values of their neighborhoods and highlighting the

Decision at City Hall on Nov 3," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 1, 1970, pg. 1; "Black Tuesday," *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 1, 1970, pg. 2; "Black Tuesday," *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 9, 1970, pg. 2 & 3.

¹²⁹ Morris, 447-450.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 446.

¹³¹ Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995, p. 2.

complicated class fractures in the metropolitan region. Additionally, this project investigates how these working-class blacks consciously decided to champion the various tenets of Black Power and form social movements to seize control of a city plagued by inflation, job flight, housing crises, police violence and surveillance, and looming internationalization.

“The City is the Black Man’s Land!”: Black Power in Atlanta¹³²

While the Civil Rights Movement has become the darling of American historical scholarship and Atlanta history, Black Power has been subject to an unrelenting attack and erasure since its intrusion onto the political scene. Since the 1960s, scholars have structured a narrative of disillusionment, degeneration, and declension to describe Black Power’s social impact. Sociologist Charles Payne, who called Black Power an “unsettling idea,” argued that the “transition from the “Beloved Community” of the Civil Rights Era to the Black Power Era of the Black Freedom Movement created “an atmosphere of mutual distrust and recriminations, a deteriorating social climate,” and, “was accompanied by a jettisoning of some of the moral and social anchors that had helped regulate relationships among activists...”¹³³ The dominant story as recounted by scholars like Gerald Early emphasized Black Power’s “excesses, its implausibility, its lack of discipline, its shocking intolerance, its anti-intellectualism, and its tragedies.”¹³⁴ Scholars often erased the artistic renaissance, intellectual awakening, ethical

¹³² James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle: Further Pages from a Black Workers Notebook*. Monthly Review Press, New Edition, 1970, pp. 39-50.

¹³³ Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*, p. 2; 389.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 389.

commitment, civic engagement, self-transformations, social movements, and institution building that Black Power stimulated at the local level.

When scholars do address Black Power, it is often a truncated, homogenous interpretation of the Era that accentuates militant nationalism and black radicalism. That is, although most scholars acknowledge that at least three political strategies or ideologies were practiced by Black Power advocates—liberal pluralism, cultural nationalism, and revolutionary nationalism/radicalism—historians have tended to investigate only the *radical* expressions and neglect the conservative nationalist strategy. Historians particularly have focused on the revolutionary wing, especially the Black Panther Party. However, with the new Black Power Studies from Black Studies scholar Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Komozi Woodward and Scot Brown, there are serious attempts to complicate Black Power and recognize that its conservative tangent added to its ideological heterogeneity and perplexed urban black working-class movements against oppression. Particularly in Atlanta, Georgia, Newark, New Jersey, Detroit, Michigan, Cleveland, Ohio, and Gary, Indiana, the black leadership class chose liberal pluralism or conservative nationalism to the chagrin of their working-class constituents. Urban and sociological scholars of African Americans must confront how contradicting Black Power ideologies represented vying class interests under the reorganization and concentration of capital towards global finance.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Cha-Jua's current research into the life and social impact of Floyd B. McKissick will reset the New Black Power Studies field. For the most recent example, see, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Augustus Wood III, "Floyd McKissick," chapters in Karin Stanford, Akinyele Umoja, and Jasmin Young (eds.) *Black Power Encyclopedia: From "Black is Beautiful" to Urban Uprisings*" (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Books 2018); For serious engagements with cultural nationalism, see Komozi Woodward, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) and Black Power Politics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999; Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. NYU Press, 2003. For other engagements in conservative nationalism, see Laura Warren Hill and Julia Rabig, *The Business of Black Power: Community Development, Capitalism, and Corporate Responsibility in Postwar America*. NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012.

In May 1970, seventeen-year-old African American Beverley A. Matthews submitted a letter to the editor of *The Atlanta Voice* describing the changing ideologies, politics, and culture reshaping black Atlanta:

“I am a 17-year old, who is very glad this self-awakening is happening to Afro-Americans. It is long overdue. If we make a big deal out of our “blackness” these days, it’s because we are no longer ashamed of ourselves...Not all Negroes are black...You had better get “hip to the word because “black” is where it’s at.”¹³⁶

Radical Black activist James Bogg’s aptly titled chapter in his classic work *Racism and Class Struggle* “The City is the Black Man’s Land,” personified the fight in the working-class trenches in Atlanta: all four streams of Black Power—revolutionary nationalism/radicalism, cultural nationalism, liberal pluralism, and conservative nationalism—confronted one another in the largest concentration of militant action in the city’s history. Despite the “Long Civil Rights Movement” theorists, the Black Freedom Movement in early 1970s Atlanta demonstrated that Black Power was not civil rights. Black Power was, in part, a rejection of the discourse, strategy, tactics, symbols, leadership, and most importantly, ideologies of Civil Rights. Black Power advocates demanded that blacks control the organizations and institutions that affected black people. Different organizations and individuals pursued different and vying strategies to these ends.¹³⁷

In general, each stream of Black Power diverges equally on ideology and strategy alike. Revolutionary nationalists argue that people of African descent are colonized as an oppressed

¹³⁶ “Letters to the Editor,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 10, 1970, pg. 9.

¹³⁷ Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall developed the “Long Civil Rights Movement” in her work, *The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past*, *The Journal of American History*, March 2005, pp. 1233-1263; she argued that the Civil Rights Movement stretches back into the 1940s and to the 1980s. Black scholars Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang successfully challenged the Long Movement Thesis in their award-winning, “The Long Movement as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *The Journal of African American History*, 2007, pp. 255-288. They also provided an extensive

working class who must unite, locally, nationally, and internationally, for their own self-interests. According to organizations like the Republic of New Afrika, revolutionary proto-nationalism is grounded in anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, collective self-determination, community control, and a redistribution of land and resources for colonized peoples. Cultural nationalists, on the other hand, were stigmatized as “reactionary nationalists” who desired to adopt African culture as the means to liberation. Evidence suggests that their position in Atlanta’s Black Power Era was more fluid than fixed: they did not assume a significant organizational or movement presence, but they individually participated in political actions for both neighborhood and black bourgeois groups. Therefore, as scholar Algernon Austin suggested, cultural nationalists were much more political than their historical reputation suggests.¹³⁸

Atlanta Liberal Pluralists like Julian Bond stated that Black Power was simply, “a natural extension of the Civil Rights Movement.” Liberal Pluralists promoted pro-growth reformism and believed Black Power derives mainly from electoral representation: “...from the courtroom to the streets in favor of integrated facilities; from the streets on backwoods in quest for the right to vote; from the ballot box to the meat of politics, the organization of voters into self-interest units.” Lastly, black conservative nationalists like Floyd McKissick and Atlanta’s Andrew Young argued that Black Power meant getting a “fair share” of American capitalism and that

¹³⁸ Karenga presented “Seven Basic Areas of Culture: Mythology, History, Social Organizing, Economic Organizing, Political Organizing, Creative Motif, and Ethos.” US defined cultural nationalism through four areas (religious nationalism, political nationalism, artistic nationalism, and what they called “atavism.” For more details of Karenga’s conceptualization of cultural nationalism, see Maulana Ron Karenga, “Karenga: Revolution Must Wait for the People,” *Los Angeles Free Press*, May 16, 1969, pg. 14.

militancy must give way to “free enterprise” and “private wealth.”¹³⁹ As chapters two and three argue, this stream gave way to the noliberalization of urban spaces in the mid-1970s and 1980s.

Black national conservatism competed with revolutionary nationalism in Black Power Era Atlanta. Black national conservatives not only believed that American capitalism was the answer to the ills of the black population—they sought to increase blacks’ purchase power to “share the wealth” with whites. Atlanta’s Chairman of Grassroots Exposition, Inc., Jackson R. Champion stated that “Black Capitalism is necessary to sustain minority communities and eventually blend blacks into the mainstream of the American economy.” One of the largest black capitalist organizations in the city in the 1970s, New World Developers, Inc., built the first black owned “super store” in Kirkwood on the Corner of Howard Street and Boulevard Drive. According to Reverend Joel West Marshall, the president of the Board of Directors and Stockholders, this was the “first time in the history of the state where nearly one thousand black people have pooled their money and other resources together to prove to the world that black people can organize and develop business enterprises in their own community.” The corporation added that, “the black man will never be recognized, respected, nor appreciated regardless of his educational status until he decides within himself that he must own and control some of the business enterprises and some of the wealth of this nation.” However, an in-depth analysis showed that New World Developers, like most black capitalist ventures, was not operable solely through black funds; it was dependent on white financial institutions. At the groundbreaking

¹³⁹ See Algernon Austin, “Cultural Black Nationalism and the Meaning of Black Power,” *Paper Presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association , Atlanta Hilton Hotel, Atlanta, GA , August 16, 2003.* Online PDF. 2009-05-26 from 2009-05-26 from http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p107842_index.html

ceremony, Marshall told interested parties that he and his board of directors “are going to file their application with all the banks...and the cooperation of responsible blacks and whites.”¹⁴⁰

Black revolutionary nationalists publicly criticized conservative nationalist ideology as equally idealistic and exploitative as white capitalism. F.C.C. Campbell issued his blunt perspective on black businesses:

“The essential misconception held by members of the Negro-American Liberal Establishment is that [Capitalism] is expanding a vital, powerful, manner...If we clear away the mysticism surrounding [capitalism], we can see the reality...we can see unemployment among young and old...intensifying layoffs...lousy welfare...confused integration schemes... death and misery in Vietnam...alienation...Hence, if you decide to follow Mr. Roy Wilkins advice and join the System, you should at least be cynically aware that you are with a losing cause, though there is wealth to be made at the trough for the short run.”¹⁴¹

Black liberation theologian Reverend Isaac Richmond expanded the criticism of private enterprise and how it exposed the class conflicts in the city:

“The myth that blacks can be like whites (meaning big capitalists, big bankers, international financiers) is nonsense...wealth was not built on genius and hard work, it was built on slave labor. Anybody trying imitate white capitalism will find themselves using slave labor – and exploiting... Black leadership, then, instead of holding out an impossible capitalist development to the black masses, must offer viable alternative systems and economics...and this cannot be done until more black leaders study and come to understand the inherent slavery n a capitalist society, instead of screaming about enlarging the cesspool.”¹⁴²

In clearer terms, black radicals and the black working class understood the class fractures in African American Atlanta to be a question of exploitation. If individual blacks attained wealth,

¹⁴⁰ “New World Developers to Break Ground January 3,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 2, 1971, pg. 1;

¹⁴¹ For more detailed breakdown of the core Black Power tenets, see Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006, Third Editon*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007, pp. 84-112; F.C.C. Campbell, “The Senecan Rambler: Signs of Progress,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 10, 1971, pg. 4.

¹⁴² Reverend Isaac Richmond, “Politics of the Proletariat,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 17, 1972, pg. 8.

the black masses' social conditions would not improve and could possibly worsen from additional exploitation from both races. Thus, under the emerging and ever-increasing popular form of Black Power, conservative nationalism/liberal pluralism, it can be asserted that black working-class Atlantans understood social movements for neighborhood power to be against a white-black power structure with their own class interests in mind for black public space.

The Black Power ideological conflicts carried over into neighborhood movement actions in Atlanta. In the summer of 1970, revolutionary nationalists residing in the Vine City slums conducted a door-to-door survey asking residents a two-part question: what do they need and how do they expect to get it? Vine City residents overwhelmingly chose resources for children, protection from police, and community control of schools. As a result, Tim Hayes created the Georgia Black Liberation Front (GBLF) with the vision of "self-reliance based on social practice." They quickly established a free breakfast program for children project that became so popular among the neighborhoods that when they were questionably arrested and jailed, Vine City residents raised funds to bail them out.¹⁴³

Their popularity continued to rise as they took up the struggle of Atlanta University Center students organizing a university-wide boycott of the colleges. Here, Black Power ideological conflicts were on full display. The students and GBLF demanded that the Morehouse College, Spelman College, Morris Brown, and Atlanta University administrations pass resolutions to suspend all academic activities and hold political education sessions in response to recent racist attacks against blacks in nearby Augusta, Georgia and Jackson State University. According to Tim Hayes, while Atlanta University and Morris Brown passed the resolutions, Morehouse and Spelman called Hosea Williams and Jesse Jackson to "suppress the

¹⁴³ "Black Break-Fast," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 4, 1970, pg. 10.

voice of the people.” Hayes issued a statement accusing Williams and the SCLC of making “fund-raising campaign rallies for their own glorification, forcing students to participate in their march, and drawing attention away from the students demands.”¹⁴⁴

In their most incendiary accusation, the GBLF stated that the SCLC “destroyed all political aspects of the students’ efforts, and staged a pop festival starring LeRoi Jones, Andrew Young, and an almost complete roster of CIA-paid bullshitters that hit the campus so hard that it would take the political organizers on campus a week to recover.” GBLF ended by assuring black Atlantans that the “CIA pays groups such as US and SCLC to “cool you down” when you get hot.” The Atlanta Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) joined in condemning the SCLC’s actions that day. RYM accused the SCLC of passing out voter registration forms and telling marchers to stop chanting “Black Power” slogans.¹⁴⁵

Both the GBLF and RYM conveyed SCLC’s conflicting ideology, strategy, and tactics as detrimental to insurgent black protest actions erupting across the city. It did not help the SCLC’s reputation that they allowed Sam Massell to lead the March Against Repression on Morehouse College campus only a few months after he attempted to crush a strike of predominantly black city workers. Spectators like Barbara Joye reported that black Atlantans were dismayed at Massell’s presence and booed him.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ The Georgia Black Liberation Front, “Black Challenge,” reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 1, 1970, pg. 2; Atlanta Revolutionary Youth Movement Statement, reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 15, 1970, pg. 5

¹⁴⁵ The Georgia Black Liberation Front, “Black Challenge,” reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 1, 1970, pg. 2; Atlanta Revolutionary Youth Movement Statement, reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 15, 1970, pg. 5

¹⁴⁶ “Rally,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 1, 1970, pg. 3; “Posted,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 15, 1970, pg. 5.

“It’s a War Now”: Proto-Nationalism in Practice in Black Atlanta Neighborhoods

A major objective of the African American working-class in Black Power Era Atlanta was community control of neighborhood institutions. Working-class black Atlantans constructed *proto-nationalist* movements as a strategic vision of revolutionary nationalism to emphasize autonomy and preserve distinct cultural practices and social spaces. First applied to African Americans by Black Studies scholar Wilson J. Moses and expanded by Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, the concept of proto-nationalism serves as a liberating perspective of a collective of oppressed people on a quest for freedom.¹⁴⁷ For low-income blacks, institutions that directly influence the use value of their neighborhoods, like schools and grocery stores, represented viable weapons against racial oppression if controlled by local neighborhood actors.

Federal desegregation legislation hastened black Atlantans’ conscious decision to seize control of their schools. The Nixon administration’s policies in the South especially resulted in the consolidation of segregated schools and mass firings and demotions of black teachers and principals. This brought about dire consequences for black students including increased discrimination and mass closings of black schools—the latter severely impacted the daily routine of working-class blacks regarding transportation to school and security and trust outside of the neighborhoods. According to a study conducted by the Race Relations Information Center, by 1971, black teachers and principals faced extinction in the South. In Atlanta specifically, the numbers were alarming: in 1970, white teachers rose by 615 while black teachers decreased by 923! Another report, “The Status of School Desegregation in the South, 1970,” posited that school systems were circumnavigating the issue of discriminatory firing by forcing black

¹⁴⁷ For more on the protonationalist concept, see Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *America’s First Black Town: Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

teachers to instruct courses that for which they had no knowledge nor training. The report listed examples of gym teachers assigned to biology or English courses and vice versa. Then, the school system fired them for “incompetency.” In 1970, 235 African American schools in the south closed with 57 percent of them less than 20 years old. Officials converted closed school buildings to administrative offices or sold them to private interests. Newly desegregated schools overcrowded black students into small capacity classrooms and barred them from social activities. School dances and other extracurricular activities were moved to all-white community centers or country clubs to restrict black student access.¹⁴⁸

Working class black Atlanta served as a prime site of collective proto-nationalist response to the loss of black teachers, the closure of black schools in the community, and the transformation of curriculum without the consent of black neighborhoods. In March 1971, Marietta closed two all-black schools, Central School and Marietta High School. African American parent Walter Moon led a walkout of over 78 black parents at a school board meeting, telling them that “you may save a dime here and a dime there, but it’ll disrupt the...community...as God as my witness, we are determined that we are not going to sit by and continue to be ridiculed by the white people!” After numerous community protests, the school board buckled and reopened Marietta Junior High School within three months.¹⁴⁹

Atlantans recognized these actions as losing control over their children’s institutions of cultural production. F.C.C. Campbell summed up black Atlanta’s attitude best: “There must be

¹⁴⁸ “School Board Meeting Ends with Walkout of 50 Blacks,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, May 16, 1971, pg. 1; “Cobb County’s Bi-Racial Committee Agrees n Schools,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, June 4, 1971, pg. 1.

¹⁴⁹ “School Board Meeting Ends with Walkout of 50 Blacks,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, May 16, 1971, pg. 1; “Cobb County’s Bi-Racial Committee Agrees n Schools,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, June 4, 1971, pg. 1.

absolute community control over black schools by local boards working in concert around a common educational program...responsive to grass roots people.”¹⁵⁰ The earliest black community school in Atlanta opened in April 1970. The Atlanta Center for the Black Arts was housed on Gordon Street in Southwest Atlanta and promoted the Pan-Africanist concept of “a United struggle of all African peoples and seeks to develop a local nucleus of community people for that struggle.” It offered courses to black children aged 12 to 20 in African and African American history, politics, culture, and dancing. Many of the teachers, like Larry Rushing, Kofi X, Babtunde, and Karen Spellman, were active in community struggles and catered their teachings to a shared value system. Consequently, the Center provided tenets of cultural nationalism as well.¹⁵¹

On July 2, 1970, black parents from Bankhead Courts held a massive protest in the streets promising to “shut down” Mayson Elementary School over the removal of a popular principal from their community. According to the parents, Atlanta Public Schools transferred Principal Otie Mabry as political retaliation against her active role in the Bolton Garden public housing tenants’ rent strike. School Board Superintendent told the parents that Mabry, a six-year veteran principal, was being moved because she was “physically incapable of running the overcrowded Mayson school because of foot ailments.” Parents reported that Area Superintendent Cecil Thornton added that “Negro children are harder to teach.” Mabry refuted this and honored the community pickets alongside a dozen Mayson teachers. Armed police detectives soon arrived to

¹⁵⁰ Both reports’ data was reprinted in “Integration: 400 Years of Patience,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 8, 1971, pg. 2; F.C.C., “The Senecan Rambler: Howard Moore-Right or Wrong,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 15, 1970, pg. 5.

¹⁵¹ “Atlanta Center for Black Art Opens,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 26, 1970, pg. 11.

“monitor the protest,” but incited violence when residents said that they drove their vehicle through a line of picketers without sounding the horn and almost hit two picketing children. A swarm of black parents surrounded the car to which the detective told them, “I’ll do it again.”¹⁵²

The movement to keep Mabry in the community escalated to a demand that Thornton resign as Area IV Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools. A week after the first pickets, the black parents and teachers, organized by Louise Whatley and John Shabazz, stormed Thornton’s office at the Area IV headquarters but were stopped by locked doors. The parents banged so loudly on the office windows and doors that they tripped the security alarm, prompting the police, television reporters, and newspapers to arrive on the scene. When Thornton finally appeared, one parent told him, “I don’t see why you don’t retire if you find it so hard to get along with black people!” Louise Whatley added, “Transfer yourself, a Black man will replace you.”¹⁵³

The Atlanta Community Relations Commission meeting between the Bankhead Courts parents, Area IV administration, and Mayor Massell that followed the confrontation at Atlanta Public Schools revealed the militancy and nationalist sentiment at the heart of the residents’ movement. Black residents utilized the meeting to consolidate their push for control of Mayson Elementary with their housing struggles in West Adamsville. Bankhead Courts residents spoke of caved in apartment ceilings, windows so weak that rain poured into their apartments, maggot and rat-infested garbage cans, and poor drainage that caused swimming pool sized flooding during rainstorms.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² “Mayson School parents pledge to ‘shut it down,’” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 12, 1970, pg. 1, 11; For alternative coverage, see “Mabry Shift Gets Backing,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 23, 1970, pg. 9.

¹⁵³ “Dump Thornton Group Converges on Area IV,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 19, 1970, pg. 1, 6.; “SW Schools Stir Protests,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1970, pg. 11.

¹⁵⁴ “Help us, CRC is told, or watch out for us,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 19, 1970, pg. 1, 6.

The 40-plus protestors at the meeting warned that violence against the city was possible if their demands were not met and their neighborhood continued to deteriorate. “We will declare war on Atlanta,” Louise Whatley stated to the CRC. “Until our problems are solved, we’re going to hit the streets. Some of us may get hurt, some may get killed. But it’s a war now.” “There’s going to be riots and burning if nobody listens to us. We’re being treated like nobodies...but we are somebody,” Lilia Kapers, mother of eight children, told the CRC. “We asked Mayor Massell and the alderman to do something but they didn’t...and we don’t want to have anymore politicians at Bankhead Courts asking for our votes and making promises but who go downtown to sit with the white man.” When asked what would happen if any residents were unjustly evicted for their role in this protest, Kapers concluded with a simple threat that the entire neighborhood stood behind: “we’ll kill the man who touches our furniture and puts us out. We’ll kill him and be the pallbearers and flowergirls.”¹⁵⁵

John Shabazz spoke next, stating that Mabry has tried to help intolerable housing situation in Atlanta and is being punished for her effort. “In September, if Mrs. Nelson says the school won’t open without Mrs. Mabry, it won’t open,” Shabazz promised. The protestors gave the CRC and the Area IV administrators a thirty-day time frame to produce a report on solution. “In 30 days, it might be so hot out here that you won’t be able to get close...there might be bonfires from here out to Chappell Road.”¹⁵⁶

Following more denials by the school system, the Bankhead Courts movement shifted to full community control of Mayson Elementary School and other institutions. At a press conference the next week, residents, parents, and teachers joined in condemning Thornton for

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

being “insensitive to the needs of our community and children” and that the Mabry crisis was a microcosm of a larger problem of lack of community power in Atlanta Public Schools. Harold Huggins, a teacher at West Manor Elementary School, told *The Atlanta Voice* that the school system suffers from intense overcrowding, faulty curriculum, inadequate buildings and materials. Benjamin E. Mays, the African American chairman of the Atlanta Board of Education, former president of Morehouse College, and a prominent leader in the Atlanta middle class, opposed the Bankhead Courts movement and contextualized the residents’ protests as disruptive and “structurally out of order” with the policies of Atlanta schools: “The board’s policy...is an administrative function...I don’t think the administration could function very well if parents had to be consulted on every appointment.”¹⁵⁷

The school control movement spread swiftly throughout Southwest Atlanta. On April 8, 1971, black parents from West Manor Elementary School organized a boycott to protest overcrowding and lack of communication with the community. Over ninety percent of the students enrolled did not cross the picket line: only 70 of the 642 students attended school that day. After the school day ended, the parents set up a motorcade and disrupted the Atlanta Board of Education briefing session to air their grievances. In their comments to the board, residents like Henrietta Canty made it clear that their school’s deterioration was not due to it being fully black now; rather, it was because it was fully black now that city services, funding, and resources were now slow or halted altogether: “We find classes being held in the principal’s office; classes

¹⁵⁷ “Community Control Argued: Mayson Struggles Shift to Remove Thornton,” *The Atlanta Voice*, Aug 2, 1970, pg. 1.

being held in the book room...we find no difficulty in taking whatever action necessary to bring this racially tinted treatment to an immediate halt.”¹⁵⁸

Black proto-nationalism reached beyond grade schools into post-secondary institutions in the city. In March 1971, the Dekalb Board of Education in Atlanta denounced black college students’ request to institute a Black Studies program as “separatist.” The students then organized Black Life at Core Curriculum (BLACC) to combat “typical power structure’s attitude towards the black man.” BLACC’s secretary Beverly Stewart expressed that concession was off the table when college president James Hinson offered to submit a textbook list and approved books may be “integrated” into existing courses: “But our history is different. You just can’t teach it like that.” Instead, BLACC demanded a full program that offered courses in African American history, literature, contemporary drama, and jazz. BLACC also hoped that the Black Studies program opened the door for more black teachers at Dekalb College.¹⁵⁹ Thus, not only did BLACC seek control over school curriculum, but they also attempted to increase the black employee base at the school to obtain more power.

Black working class Atlantans targeted grocery stores for community control as well because of their crucial value in neighborhoods. The neighborhood grocery store provided three essential variables to strengthen the use value of their neighborhoods, particularly the daily round: 1) locational advantage to black working-class communities that do not own means of transportation, 2) food, and in many cases, 3) job opportunities. However, whites who did not reside in those respective communities owned and operated most neighborhood groceries in

¹⁵⁸ “West Manor Boycott Dramatizes Crowding,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 17, 1971, pg. 1, 7; “PETA Votes Boycott at W. Manor,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 8, 1971, pg. 10;

¹⁵⁹ “BLACC at Dekalb, Jr.,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 29, 1971, pg. 6; “Dekalb Students March April 2 for Studies,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 1971, pg. 1.

1970s Atlanta. Therefore, Black residents sought to make grocery stores an established locational benefit for their neighborhoods.

One initial episode occurred at the turn of the decade in Summerhill. Azar's liquor and grocery stores sat right across the street from Atlanta Stadium on the corner of Fraser and Georgia Avenue and served the entire Summerhill, Mechanicsville, and Peoplestown neighborhoods. The owner, Donald Azar, had a long history of conflict with the black residents. One anonymous youth told *The Great Speckled Bird* underground newspaper that Azar had been in Summerhill for over fifteen years and owned a lot of property in the area, including more liquor stores, a pawn shop, and a washeteria. According to other Summerhill residents, Azar was notorious for physically attacking blacks and in the prior year, he allegedly had a policeman shoot a child in the leg for petty theft. Aside from the racist violence, Summerhill residents objected to Azar economically exploiting the neighborhoods. Azar's stores prices were sometimes fifty cents higher than other stores in the city.¹⁶⁰

Another incident involving Azar's proved a step too far for many in Summerhill. Miriam Smith was an African American employee of Azar's making 77 cents an hour. According to eyewitnesses, she and Azar began arguing when Azar hit her, causing her to grab the store gun and shoot at him. Azar subdued her, took the gun, and held her at gunpoint until the police arrived. She was charged on three counts and bound over to the state prison. Once word reached Summerhill, over two dozen residents set up a picket at Azar's with signs reading "AZAR MUST GO! WHITE GO CHEAT EACH OTHER AND STAY AWAY FROM US! BLACK

¹⁶⁰ "Azar Must Go!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 26, 1970, pg. 3

PEOPLE ARE THE BACKBONE OF THE WORLD!,” and “AZAR-YOU HAVE HIT A WOMAN FOR THE LAST TIME. GET OUT.”¹⁶¹

As the picket continued daily, Summerhill residents escalated their tactics to suing Azar for violating their rights to using his own strikebreaking tactics against him. According to the protestors, Azar attempted to bribe many of the teenage picketers with free liquor, something he did the last time residents picketed him. This time, Summerhill was prepared. They trained the teenagers to take the liquor, keep picketing, wait for the police, and then start drinking in front of the police. As a result, police arrested Azar was arrested and charged him with distributing alcohol to a minor. This resulted in the Aldermanic Committee challenging his liquor license and closing the store temporarily.¹⁶²

This movement expanded into a citywide campaign to either command control of or close white-owned grocery stores. Angier Avenue residents followed suit in 1971 and shut down their white-owned neighborhood grocery after a pattern of sky-high price markups and employee discrimination. When the residents and employees instituted a combination strike-boycott-picket outside the store, business halted and the Whitemans locked the doors for good. The National Council of Distributive Workers and Operation Breadbasket, both groups comprised mainly of working-class residents and radical college students, joined in support of the residents.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² “Azar’s Tricks,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 2, 1970, pg. 3; “Untitled,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 14, 1970, pg. 12; For alternative coverage on the Summerhill movement against Azar, see “Curbs Remain on Summerhill,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 26, 1970, pg. 9; “Azar’ Attorney and Mayor to Meet,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 1, 1970, pg. 11; “Hearing Set on Picketing Azar Store,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 9, 1970, pg. 14.

¹⁶³ “Whitemans,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 15, 1971, pg. 4; “Whiteman,” February 22, 1971, pg. 8; “Arlan’s Oinks,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 15, 1971, pg. 3; “Customer Intimidation Cause Store’s Boycott,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 24, 1971, pg. 1

Black working-class Atlantans also demonstrated how proto-nationalism's strategic elements restructured their daily round when necessary. Bob Goodman stated that if residents had to close every white-owned store in black neighborhoods because they would not acquiesce to the black community demands, then they were prepared to organize carpools and strategic bus trips to supermarkets in white neighborhoods. Several neighborhood churches agreed to furnish buses for a group of residents in a neighborhood to buy a week's worth of groceries and distribute them to other residents.¹⁶⁴

The movement next targeted King's Grocery a few blocks from Whiteman's. After witnessing what happened to Whiteman's, King's Grocery quickly agreed to lower prices and increased wages for their black employees. Boulevard residents then moved to Arlan's Supermarket on the predominantly white Ponce De Leon Avenue. The protestors threw up a picket when Arlan's refused their demands to empower black employees. When word reached the national vice president of Arlan's chain of stores in New York, they immediately called Operation Breadbasket's Reverend Carl Dorsey and conceded to not only raise the pay of black employees, but also offered them back pay. Ed's Superette on Fairburn Road served black Adamsville and Bowen Homes residents. The supermarket had a reputation for discriminatory practices against black employees (Elonora Phillips cashiered for five years and only made \$1.70 an hour with no lunch or rest breaks), armed security followed black customers, and management forced humiliating bag searches for black customers only. Residents enacted a combination strike-boycott-picket that proved so effective that only three white customers crossed the picket line in the first week. According to MASLC's Reverend Joseph E. Boone, "We calculate Ed's

¹⁶⁴ "Whitemans," *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 15, 1971, pg. 4; "Whiteman," February 22, 1971, pg. 8; "Arlan's Oinks," *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 15, 1971, pg. 3; "Customer Intimidation Cause Store's Boycott," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 24, 1971, pg. 1

Superette takes in from \$15-\$17,000 a week, the majority of that from black people. Now the flow of customers has been slowed to a trickle.” One of the former grocery employees, Richard Nelson, who joined the movement summed up the proto-nationalist and class consciousness in the Boulevard movement: “No white man—or black man either, if isn’t concerned with us-can come in there and scoop up the profits.” Reverend Dorsey added, “If we find one [store] owned by a black person doing the same things [as white owned stores], he’ll be the first to go.”¹⁶⁵

Black working-class movements against poor quality grocery stores challenged class fractures in the city by invoking middle class support in some instances. Working class Atlantans utilized the SCLC, MASLC, and other black petty bourgeois organizations to gain access to their resources, especially funding and their local and national contacts. Operation Breadbasket possessed the capability to contact national business headquarters and media for leverage against the movement’s targets. However, as the East Lake Meadows social movement against Popeye’s Chicken demonstrated (see below), Black working-class neighborhood activists had to hold middle class activists at arm’s length to protect their class interests and social movement objectives from cooptation.

Black proto-nationalism was also instrumental in creating an independent black union movement in the city. The most classic example occurred with Atlanta’s African American firefighters. Black firefighters had pleaded with city officials for years to intervene in the department’s discriminatory hiring practices, racist insults, lack of promotion, and grievance procedures. By 1970, the Atlanta Fire Department had 234 white officers and no black officers. The AFD also used a mental ability test which 82 percent of blacks failed compared to 48

¹⁶⁵ “Whitemans,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 15, 1971, pg. 4; “Whiteman,” February 22, 1971, pg. 8; “Arlan’s Oinks,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 15, 1971, pg. 3; “Customer Intimidation Cause Store’s Boycott,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 24, 1971, pg. 1

percent of whites. However, when black fireman William Hamer conducted a study of the prep classes for the exam, he found that black firemen were given practice tests three times a week and made high marks; but when they asked for a promotion, they failed the official exam. Concurrently, Hamer reported, whites from outside the city limits who performed lower than blacks on the exams were promoted to the highest positions in the fire department.¹⁶⁶

Racial animosities against black firefighters were as detrimental to the black working-class neighborhoods as they were to the firefighters themselves. Since black firefighters had their shift assignments reduced, white firefighters, with racist attitudes towards low-income blacks, either delayed getting to the fire or, as reported by F.C.C. Campbell, went beyond putting out a fire and destroyed black property. According Campbell, a black woman called the fire department and the all-white team “busted up the entire apartment, sprayed water everywhere,” and stole items from her.¹⁶⁷

Ignored by City Hall, the international union, and the CRC, Hamer organized Brothers Combined, an independent union for black firefighters that sought to end racism in the Fire Department. Their demands included black personnel present when blacks sought jobs as firefighters, efforts made to give black Atlantans preference over out of town whites for higher positions, and a formalized grievance procedure.¹⁶⁸ Hamer was able to secure a grievance procedure and officer jobs for blacks. However, white supervisors and white firemen discriminated against other groups of firefighters, especially drivers, for filing racism grievances

¹⁶⁶ “If They Say So, It Must be True!,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 12, 1970, pg. 16; Jackson, Dodson Meet with Black Firemen,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 25, 1970, pg. 2.

¹⁶⁷ F.C.C. Campbell, “Retroactions: Firemen Racism,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 5, 1970, pg. 2E.

¹⁶⁸ “Jackson, Dodson Meet with Black Firemen.”

against their superior officers. The grievance committee victory solidified Black Power in firefighting labor organizing in the city for the foreseeable future.¹⁶⁹ However, the intersection of gender and labor struggles proved to be black working-class Atlanta's biggest challenge during Black Power.

“They Trapped Me with Chain and Gun”: Gender and Black Women Labor Struggles

In early June 1970, fifteen African American women workers walked off their jobs at Howard Johnson's on Washington Street in Southwest Atlanta. The restaurant held significant locational advantage for the city: it was one of the most popular restaurants in Atlanta and hosted crowds of sport enthusiasts coming and leaving Fulton County Stadium. However, as the black working women described it, Howard Johnson's resembled a Southern plantation. When the workers began signing union cards, Manager John Manion verbally abused the “agitators,” and even fired a few workers.¹⁷⁰

Most of the strikers were waitresses who brought home 65 cents an hour as part time workers, 75 cents an hour as day shift regulars, or \$1 per hour as night shift workers, plus tips. As a result, the restaurant possessed a locational *disadvantage* for the workers' labor stability, wages, and ultimately, their daily round. As one striker pointed out, customers rarely tipped the waitresses because the food prices were too high, and the stadium-goers ordered their food to go. “They order a dozen hamburgers to go, and we wait on them, but they don't tip. During some

¹⁶⁹ Wages and benefits would become a major issue for black firefighters in the Jackson years. See chapter 2 and 3 for more info.

¹⁷⁰ “HoJo Walkout,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 29, 1970, pg. 3

ballgames, we don't even have a chance to sit down."¹⁷¹ Only "regulars" in name, waitresses were often laid off on days when there were no planned events at the stadium. Sometimes, waitresses were told to work at another Howard Johnson's for the day and expected to pay the transportation themselves to a location in Hapeville, Georgia. With this instability and wage theft, waitresses often took home less than \$20 a week. Few men worked at this Howard Johnson's because, as one striker stated, "they don't pay enough for men."¹⁷²

Lastly, the waitresses were subject to daily sexual discrimination and misogyny. Manion demanded that the women wear white bras, white girdles, and light pantyhose everyday they came to work, speak in a "pleasant" tone, and "take it" when Manion dressed them down in front of the customers. Fed up with these conditions, the women went on strike. The restaurant attempted to replace the striking waitresses, but the work stoppage crushed the business. One striker told reporter Bob Goodman: "We've stopped the day shift regular customers almost completely."¹⁷³

Like most black working-class women, the Howard Johnson waitresses represented what sociologist Martin Oppenheimer deemed the "subproletariat." According to Oppenheimer, throughout the western world the subproletariat correlates directly with black and brown populations and labor regarded by that society at that particular moment as the least desirable, or the "dirtiest."¹⁷⁴ Although the subproletariat share characteristics with the black working class,

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, pg. 3

¹⁷² *Ibid*

¹⁷³ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Oppenheimer notes that the society's notion of what constitutes "dirty" work is a relative one, just as in the case of subsistence. See Martin Oppenheimer, "The Sub-Proletariat: Dark Skins and Dirty Work," *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1974, pp. 7-20; 1-2.

specifically racial subjugation, high unemployment and underemployment, and social humiliation, the subproletariat's gender marks them as qualitatively different workers under this political economy.¹⁷⁵

In applying black scholar activist Claudia Jones' Triple Oppression Theory, black women are devalued under capitalism as women, as African Americans, and as workers. As Jones contended, capitalism's inherent racialization and sexism causes black women's overrepresentation in the lowest paying, dirtiest jobs in an already precarious blue-collar labor market. Black working-class women are often employed in relatively small businesses and spaces. Because of their racialized labor position, they are often ignored by unions and women's rights organizations and excluded from legal benefits like minimum wage laws, the National Labor Relations Act, and other structural resources. White unions, already holding a discriminatory attitude towards black women workers, designate their labor as domestic workers, waitresses, manual laborers, and clerical staff, as too unstable and "unworthy" of organizing efforts. Therefore, black working-class women's material and social conditions were more superfluous than their male counterparts. As 1970s Atlanta demonstrates, low-income black women were more prone to autonomous proto-nationalist movement organizing—including extralegal wildcat strikes and housing rent strikes—to procure and strengthen the use value of their neighborhoods.

In fact, in the face of the rising feminist movement at the time, black women in 1970s Atlanta constructed their resistance from a revolutionary nationalist perspective: in their understanding of their historical role in the political economy of the United States and their

¹⁷⁵ Martin Oppenheimer, "The Sub-Proletariat: Dark Skins and Dirty Work," *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1974, pp. 7-20; 1-2.

superexploited status as black women, they consciously chose not to fight in a gendered women's movement that excluded their black male counterparts and posited them as antagonists. Rather, despite black male chauvinism, they sought to unite and equalize their standing amongst black men to weaken white supremacy and end racial exploitation. At the 1970 International Women's Day march in Atlanta, one of the few black women in attendance argued that "the struggle is different for black women [than white women]" and their objective must be to "unite with black men in order to build a liberation army." Atlantan Jean Jamison added, "I fail to see the feasibility of your being liberated as a woman when you have yet to be liberated as a black...How can a black Sister be liberated while her black Brother is being oppressed and enslaved?"¹⁷⁶ Black Atlanta poet Beulah Richardson offered an explicit defense of revolutionary nationalism and critique of white feminism in her poem, "A Black Woman Speaks on White Womanhood,":

"I must in searching honestly report,
How it seems to me.
White womanhood stands in bloodied skirt,
And willing slavery,
Reaching out adulterous hand
Killing mine and crushing me."

"They trapped me with the chain and gun.
They trapped you with lying tongue...
And you, women seeing,
Spoke no protest
But cuddle down in your pink slavery
And thought somehow my wasted blood
Confirmed your superiority."

"You bore him sons, I bore him sons.
No, not willingly. He purchased you,
He raped me!
I fought!"

¹⁷⁶ "Off Our Backs, Into the Street!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 16, 1970, pg. 2; "The People Speak," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 1, 1971, E2, E8.

But you fought neither for yourselves nor me...

I kept your sons and daughters alive,
 But when they grew strong in blood and bone
 That was of my milk
 You
 Taught them to hate me.
 Put your decay in their hearts and upon their lips...

You've been busy seeing me
 As white supremacists would have me be
 And I will be myself. Free!
 My aim is full equality."¹⁷⁷

Atlanta black women utilized the labor space to achieve these goals for several reasons. First, black women were as affected by disruption to the daily round as black men; yet, they were often at a disadvantage because of their subproletarian status. Fighting for better working conditions, higher wages, and agency in the workspace vastly improved and positioned women closer to their male counterparts in moving the neighborhoods closer, through security, trust, and identity, against those outsiders threatening it (banks, real estate agents, elected officials). Second, black urban women utilized their labor struggles to grow their informal networks, train local leaders, and ultimately develop agency laden institutions. Both Louise Whatley and East Lake Meadows leader Eva Davis led especially powerful labor movements during Black Power in Atlanta.

For instance, Louise Whatley attempted to unionize black women workers at Kessler's Department Store in Southwest Atlanta in May 1970. She organized a union card drive with the National Council of Distributive Workers (NCDW, an independent black union), who she had worked closely with in supporting the sanitation strike. Once Ed Kessler discovered this, he

¹⁷⁷ Beulah Richardson, "A Black Woman Speaks on White Womanhood," reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, October 12, 1970, pg. 16-17.

immediately fired Whatley. Black Atlanta promptly set up pickets at Kessler's, singing "AIN'T GONN MAKE NO MONEY TODAY...AIN'T GONNA SELL NO RECORDS TODAY." As John Shabazz noted, "most of the pickets are not representative of any organized groups, just interested community people..." The Kessler's picket eventually disrupted the city's busy weekend. On Saturday of the first week, virtually all the stores in the downtown area were in a state of confusion; many stores remained empty as shoppers feared crossing the picket lines. One protestor made it clear that it this fight was part of a larger struggle for Black Power: "This is not a fight for Louise Whatley. It is for all blacks and women especially in the store." After three weeks of picketing, Kessler's was closed forever.¹⁷⁸

Eva Davis also utilized labor struggles to benefit her East Lake Meadows neighborhood. Built in October 1970, East Lake Meadows public housing project in the Dekalb County section of Atlanta was criticized for its poor construction from the start. The \$15 million units housed close to 5,000 residents with an estimated 8,000 additional people on the waiting list. Most of those individuals were displaced by urban renewal policies; their housing sat on land that was cleared so that the city commenced its building of the new civic center, stadiums, insurance buildings, and banks.¹⁷⁹ The 25-30 acres of land in East Lake Meadows earmarked for parks remained barren. Since East Lake was built on the Country Club grounds, the turf grass was removed and never replaced. Drainage was such an issue that flooding produced what the residents called "red clay pools" around the project. The elderly residents lived in the high-rise section with no nurse or recreational activities. Since the promised shopping center was never

¹⁷⁸ "Just Git!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 25, 1970, pg. 5; "Kesslers Fires Six Year Black Department Manager," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 17, 1970, pg. 1, 9; John Shabazz, "Public Supporting Boycott Against Kessler's Store," reprinted in *The Atlanta Voice*, May 31, 1970, pg. 1, Back cover.

¹⁷⁹ For early gentrification and urban reorganization, see chapter 2.

built, the closest stores were high-priced Majik Market and Colonial Store across a four-lane street. Colonial employees especially were known to sexually harass black female customers. As a result, black East Lake residents were forced to constantly change their daily rounds to get to cheaper, better quality grocery stores. The Atlanta Housing Authority and City Hall often ignored residents' demands for repairs. Because of a lack of traffic lights (a common complaint by black residents in urban spaces), a car hit three children and killed a woman at the intersection of East Lake Boulevard and Memorial Drive. The residents also had to choose between no police presence or police harassment and abuse. When Eva Davis organized a confrontation with the African American aldermanic police chair, Q.V. Williamson, no action was taken to assist the residents.¹⁸⁰

Davis channeled East Lake's anger into a labor struggle affecting the black women residents and the neighborhood conditions. In early May 1972, Davis gathered a dozen black East Lake Meadows women to picket a Church's Chicken restaurant on Second Avenue. When the protestors arrived, all employees began a wildcat strike and joined the East Lake pickets. The strikers demanded the rehiring of a black assistant manager who was fired without cause, a pay raise above their \$1.60 an hour salary, sick leave, fringe benefits, and overtime pay. For Davis, Church's Chicken was an outsider threat to their neighborhood power: it resided in their community but operated outside of their community's interests, security, and trust. "The enterprise makes over \$7,000 a week in the black neighborhood," Davis stated, "but refuses to cooperate with neighborhood projects or hire within community."¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ "Slums of the Future," *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 24, 1972, pg. 12-13.

¹⁸¹ "Chickenshit," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 8, 1972, pg. 7.

By the second week of pickets, the Church's strike became a black working-class symbol for citywide resistance and black solidarity. After 6 days, the East Lake Meadows restaurant was closed and the protestors moved to the Moreland Avenue location where employees did not walk out, but customers refused to cross the picket line. By the end of the second week of May, Davis had created a movement apparatus with groups of picketers scheduled at different points of the day to picket five Church's locations throughout the city. Protestors created pamphlets, flyers, walked door-to-door recruiting picketers, and set up local movement centers at neighborhood churches and Davis's home. By mid-May, the movement had closed ten Church's restaurants and planned to strike more.¹⁸²

Much to the chagrin of Davis, however, SCLC's Hosea Williams requested to negotiate the labor contract on behalf of Church's workers. Williams' fluid movement through multiple Atlanta movements represented the complicated nature of class interests and leadership in Black Power. Following his support for the sanitation strikers, he had fallen out of favor with SCLC leadership over his active role in strikes for black hospital, steel, and factory workers. He had also been heavily criticized for his liberal pluralist campaigns for elected office and conceding to City Hall and downtown businesses in labor negotiations. As a result, working-class black Atlantans were cautious of Williams—he seemed to be the exclusive member of the black professional and managerial class with a reputation for fighting for the needs of the black masses, but he took no ideological stance. Additionally, since this was an illegal wildcat strike, the workers had no real access to legal representation. Thus, it is more than likely that Davis reluctantly agreed to allow Williams to assist; however, she made it known that Williams did not speak for her or the East Lake residents: "Church's can do what they want with SCLC but they

¹⁸² "10 Stores to Close in Labor Dispute," *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 9, 1972, pg. 9.

haven't settled with us."¹⁸³ In other words, Davis wanted to keep both residents and workers' movement united while Williams' arrival effectively fractured the two into separate struggles.

Black Atlanta grew more enraged at Church's when the company held an event in East Lake Meadows where it gave six thousand free pieces of chicken to the residents. Concurrently, Morris Brown College students organized solidarity pickets at the Markham-Northside Drive location, prompting a swarm of police to fight picketers. Officers severely beat two black students, Andrew Mackey and Donald Denson, who also required hospitalization. However, police jailed Denson without medical care for his three broken bones and eye and head injuries. When his brother stormed the jail and saw him bloodied, he mobilized two hundred Morris Brown students to go to the Fulton County Jail. At the threat of possible rebellion, police finally released Denson and friends rushed him to Holy Family Hospital for treatment.¹⁸⁴

Following this latest altercation, Hosea Williams announced a settlement with Church's that raised eyebrows. The employees received a ten cent per hour raise and the franchise implemented a policy where they only retained two part-time employees. Church's designated all other employees as "regular," meaning they were granted hospitalization, insurance, overtime pay, holiday pay, and retirement pay.¹⁸⁵ Williams hailed the settlement as "one of the greatest victories for the poor in the history of Atlanta," but for East Lake, it left more to be desired. Although the East Lake women were central to improving the working conditions of subproletarian workers at Church's restaurants, Williams did not bargain Davis' original demand

¹⁸³ "Church's Closes Stores, Negotiations Under Way," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 13, 1972, pg. 1, backcover.

¹⁸⁴ "Church's Chicken Strikes Again!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 15, 1972, pg. 6.

¹⁸⁵ "Church's Settlement Hailed as Victory for Poor People," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 10, 1972, pg. 1, 2.

that Church's hire from within the neighborhood and contribute funds to the community's interests. In fact, Williams negotiated demands that served the class interests of the black petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie, including a clause for black firms to receive "contracts."¹⁸⁶

When evaluating the East Lake Meadows labor strike, the incorporation of black middle-class leadership at the negotiation table subverted and reoriented the movement's original proto-nationalist intent towards more conservative nationalist concessions. However, Davis and the East Lake women demonstrated that struggle inherently strengthens the use value of neighborhoods. The sheer amount of communication, coordination, picket training, political education, and resource mobilization involved in closing ten restaurants across the city bolstered their informal support networks both inside and outside the neighborhood boundaries. Their complicated experience in dealing with class conflict in organizing with individuals who did not represent their racial class interests and losing community demands reinforced their security and trust values within their own neighborhood for future protest action. Finally, organizing in their neighborhood's interests prepared them for decades of struggles against Atlanta gentrification.

Black working-class women's next battle came relatively early with their much larger, decades-old problem: the Atlanta Housing Authority. A month after the movement against Church's ended, fifteen black women and children from Carver Homes, Buttermilk Bottoms, Bankhead Courts, East Lake Meadows, and Bedford Pine took over a City Hall sponsored "open house" ribbon cutting on Linden Avenue in Northeast Atlanta for a new Atlanta Housing Authority project. The group called for a citywide rent strike for the 39,000 tenants living in deplorable AHA public housing until their conditions vastly improved. Clearly, all blacks were not sympathetic to the housing woes of the black poor. One African American AHA official told

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 2.

The Atlanta Voice, “This is uncalled for. They’re blaming public housing for their uncleanliness.” When police approached Louise Whatley and Lillie Capers to arrest them at the ceremony, Whatley said, “Your loud mouth don’t scare me, baby.” When told they were disrupting this program, Capers replied, “You’re disrupting our lives!”¹⁸⁷

For over a month, the city housing operations ceased. By the second week, black tenants from all sixteen federally subsidized housing projects organized pickets at AHA administrative offices, padlocked leasing management offices, and initiated a media campaign to counter false and racist statements the AHA released to discredit the strikers. *The Atlanta Journal* and *Constitution* refused to run any tenant comments, but they ran AHA statements throughout the duration of the strike). Neighborhoods hosted weekly political education sessions in community centers and in front yards regarding the rent strike. City Hall, the Economic Opportunity of Atlanta office, and the AHA conspired to break the strike by sending police to intimidate the picketing women and children.¹⁸⁸

However, the tenants remained unflinching and by mid-October that year, AHA had amassed over \$185,000 in uncollected rents. Louise Whatley chaired a tenants’ only meeting where they hammered out demands to the AHA.¹⁸⁹ Because of the length of the rent strike

¹⁸⁷ Memorandum from “SOS” to Maynard Jackson regarding the Meeting of the AHA Tenants Advisory Board,” 20 July 1972, Maynard Jackson Administrative Records, Box 8 Folder 3, Robert F. Woodruff Library Archives, Atlanta, Georgia; “Tenant Grievances Lead to Taking Over Ceremony,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 8, 1972, pg. 1;

¹⁸⁸ Memorandum from “SOS” to Maynard Jackson regarding the Meeting of the AHA Tenants Advisory Board,” 20 July 1972, Maynard Jackson Administrative Records, Box 8 Folder 3, Robert F. Woodruff Library Archives, Atlanta, Georgia; “Tenant Grievances Lead to Taking Over Ceremony,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 8, 1972, pg. 1;

¹⁸⁹ For the purposes of space, the demands list the tenants issued to the AHA were the following: more street lights, working heating systems, closet and cabinet doors, more efficient office management, more adequate maintenance, more maintenance men and better pay for them, better recreational facilities for children, get rid of mud banks, laundromat facilities, repair dilapidated walls and ceilings, enough garbage receptacles for the project, provide unbreakable windowpanes as replacements are needed, monthly pest control, repair poor roofing and provide water-proofing, do something about rats, roaches, and such health hazards, repair leaking bathroom pipes, provide grass or

(many tenants refused rent payments through 1973), the national media attention, and other questionable AHA practices (see next chapter), the U.S. Justice Department, Internal Revenue Service, the FBI, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development launched a fraud and corruption probe into the Atlanta Housing Authority.¹⁹⁰ Although it did not yield the long-term results that they hoped for, the black tenants' citywide rent strike established decades-long informal support networks across geographical and social spaces while also excavating hidden histories of grassroots struggles to national and international audiences.

“SOUL POWER! WORKER POWER! BLACK POWER!”: Intraracial Class Struggle in the 1972 Mead Wildcat Strike

Intraracial class Struggle during Black Power also affected the relatively small industrialized sector in Atlanta. In fact, the combined forces of labor militancy and radical ideology provided a succinct view into how class interests informed the success of the social movement. The largest strike of black workers in 1972 occurred at the Mead factory on West Marietta Street near the central business district. Mead served as a nationwide manufacturer of beverage and food packaging. It was one of the largest plants in the U.S. at the time, with about 1,200 workers, 800 of them African Americans with two-thirds men and one-third women. Most blacks were concentrated in the most dangerous, dirty areas of the manufacturing plant. One black worker recalled the problematic working conditions when he joined the Mead workforce in 1970:

sod, hire assistant managers, better police protection, provide some form of window security. Reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 24, 1972, pg. 2-3.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

“There was an area that dealt with inks, and there was a vat that had acid in it, ‘cause there was this solvent type ink...Two white guys who worked in this area, they slipped and fell into the vat; and when they came back up, all you saw were their skeletons... And after that they hired about five blacks and put them in that area.”¹⁹¹

The plant also contained branch administration offices, a warehouse facility, one black foreman and no black supervisors. Additionally, most of the workers juggled other jobs because their wages were so low. Early rumblings occurred two years prior on Monday, May 25, 1970 when workers in the gluing department organized workers from other departments into a wildcat strike for a cost-of-living-raise to meet rising inflation. Within 24 hours, so many workers had joined the walkout that the MEAD factory ceased operations. “A little money—that’s basically what it’s about,” an anonymous worker told *The Great Speckled Bird*.¹⁹²

Although Mead obtained a court injunction against a strike, the workers stayed out. By that Sunday, the wildcat had pressured Mead to reopen negotiations with Atlanta Printing Specialties and Paper Products Union (APSPPU) Local 527 of the AFL-CIO on their three-year contract—an unprecedented move. However, this early struggle revealed racial fractures in the Mead union workers. One black worker stated that when blacks arrived at a union meeting, whites sat in a circle amongst themselves and “pushed their chairs back for fear of being too close” when blacks sat next them.

Two years later, the workers’ anger over their treatment boiled over after a number of episodes. In January 1972, workers reported that Mead unfairly fired four black workers within

¹⁹¹ Monica Waugh-Benton, “Strike Fever: Labor Unrest, Civil Rights, and the Left in Atlanta, 1972,” Masters Thesis, 2006, Georgia State University, pp. 58-59.

¹⁹² “Workers Fight,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 2; “Racism,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 3; “STRIKE! MEAD,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 2.

weeks of one another. During the summer heat wave that year, several black female employees fainted from heat exhaustion during forced overtime shifts. A black female worker complained that when she asked a white worker to help her lift something, he threatened to “smack her if she didn’t leave him alone.” Another black woman who suffered from anemia had a doctor’s note stating that she could not work more than eight hours a day. Her white foreman, however, forced her to work twelve-hour days until she collapsed and had to be rushed to the hospital.¹⁹³

Workers attempted to address their grievances through the union at first; however, Local 527 held a bad reputation for neglecting grievances related to black employees. In fact, word began to spread that the union acted as a “sweetheart” with the Mead management. Therefore, the Atlanta chapter of the October League, a Marxist-Leninist organization that grew out of the splintering of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and whose members worked at Mead, grabbed the initiative and organized secret meetings with workers. They held their first strategy meeting on August 6, 1972 at the Mass House near Fulton County Stadium, a prime location near many of the black workers’ neighborhoods. At the meetings, they formed the Mead Caucus of Rank and File Workers (MCRFW) organization outside of Local 527 representation. MCRFW members elected to plan a wildcat strike outside of union jurisdiction and set in motion their organizing plan:

“For three weeks we organized the plant. The committee met almost daily. We assigned people to organize areas of the plant which hadn’t been represented. We developed a list of thirty demands, circulated them, started mass discussions. At a mass meeting they were debated, developed, increased to near fifty. At this mass meeting of over 200 Mead workers, we officially became the Mead Caucus of Rank and File Workers, and we delivered an ultimatum to the company.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ *Ibid.* Benton, “Strike Fever,” pp. 61-62.

¹⁹⁴ Benton, “Strike Fever,” pp. 62-64.

Thus, on August 18, 1972, close to 800 predominantly black hourly Mead workers walked off their jobs and vowed to not return until company officials terminated “intolerable working conditions.” Figure C.2 depicts the official preamble of the “Mead Worker’s Manifesto.”¹⁹⁵ The manifesto contained 50 demands to alleviate the poor working conditions at Mead with special attention to the racist and sexist discrimination. In fact, the manifesto centralized preferential policies towards black workers to overcome inequality while also centralizing equal pay and treatment for black female employees. MCRFW demanded fifty-cent raises and ongoing quarterly adjustments for all hourly employees. They also sought job protection for injury, bereavement, and arrest, full health care coverage, improved ventilation and temperature controls, protective gear, and an on-site nurse. A sticking point for MCRFW was worker autonomy. They demanded to select their own grievance and safety committees and the power to determine policies, benefits, job descriptions, and oversight over supervisory staff hiring. The workers also wanted Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, emergency phone call privilege, and contributions made to black neighborhoods.¹⁹⁶

O’Hara immediately sent word to MCRFW that they would only negotiate with Local 527 and declared the strike illegal. “We intend to resolve our real problems with our employees, their legally elected labor officials, and government agencies,” O’Hara announced. Mead also argued that all demands in the Workers Manifesto fell under the authority of the collective bargaining agreement which contained a no-strike clause. In other words, Mead attempted to avoid conflict with MCRFW on a legal basis that they would violate a labor agreement by negotiating with a splinter group.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix C.2 for a copy of the Manifesto preamble.

¹⁹⁶ Benton, “Strike Fever,” pp. 65-66.

Management's passive-aggressive tiptoeing around the issue inflamed Mead workers. As a result, an estimated 75 percent of the workforce joined the picket lines. To their advantage, many of the strikers were highly skilled machinists, which made it incredibly difficult for management to find replacement workers with comparable training. Picket lines filled with signs reading "United We Stand, Divided We Fall" and freedom songs echoing down Marietta Street. Sherman Miller's picket line chants included "SOUL POWER! WORKER POWER! BLACK POWER!"¹⁹⁷

Mobilizing neighborhood residents proved crucial for the strength of the wildcat. In fact, the revolutionary proto-nationalist wave erupting through the area at the time informed MCRFW's social movement capacity and tactics:

"We had what people called mass meetings, and in these mass meetings students and people from other companies, they would come and find out what was going on. We would set up a phone tree with these people, and call them, get them to bring friends... To really build a movement that was wider and greater than just the workers that worked at Mead 'cause this was a struggle of all the people...it was important to set up committees to talk to them, to go into the community...so that when we had these marches they would join us. And they did. And that kind of strategy worked. It really paid off."¹⁹⁸

In other words, black Mead workers aligned their struggle for better conditions and control over their space with the interests of the black working-class residents. Because of the strike's wildcat status, it left the MCRFW with very few resources from the union to sustain their protest. Consequently, black supporters donated plentiful amounts of food and money as well as mobilized other striking workers at the Nabisco Plant and Sears Warehouse.¹⁹⁹ *The Great*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

¹⁹⁸ Benton, "Strike Fever," pp. 68-69.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

Speckled Bird added a significant agency-laden institution to MCRFW's wildcat. *The Bird* used its weekly rag to deliver political education, daily updates, and solicit funds while using their headquarters to mobilize resources and sign up picketers. Additionally, they partnered with the Metro-Atlanta-Dekalb chapter of the SCLC, who provided local movement centers like Wheat Street Baptist Church to house strike resources and hold trainings and MCRFW meetings and votes. The SCLC also issued a citywide boycott of Mead's products, including all Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Budweiser, Schlitz, Black Label, and Morton Frozen Foods products. Although the SCLC's alliance showcased petty bourgeois support for a working-class labor struggle, it also complicated the class interests of the movement. Sherman Miller, the black chairman of MCRFW and a member of the Atlanta chapter of the Marxist-Leninist October League, stressed the need for worker solidarity and neighborhood alliances with SCLC as Mead management used this fight to "take a stand against this year's wave of rank-and-file strikes." Further, he expressed to the MCRFW that Mead had essentially "declared war on...black workers and through this action...declared war on all the poor working black and white communities in the city." Miller concluded that if the company won without a struggle, it would "[open] the road to fascism."²⁰⁰

The proto-nationalist aspect of the demands complicated the racial class dynamics of the wildcat. An *Atlanta Voice* reporter arrived on the scene the first week of picketing and described "about fifty picketers, all black men except two white men." When asked about who crossed the line, they stated that "the overwhelming majority of the workers inside were white." One anonymous striker provided further explanation to the racial class fractures in the worker base:

"Those white workers that are in there are country white folk.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*; "Workers Fight," *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 2; "Racism," *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 3; "STRIKE! MEAD," *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 2.

They're from Gwinnett and Cobb Counties. They're not from Fulton or Dekalb. They think that the working conditions and the pay are good cause they haven't had anything better. They don't have to pay but maybe \$80 a month rent while we who live in the city must pay \$130 to \$180 in rent each month."²⁰¹

In other words, most of the white workers resided in rural areas where they did not live or work near black people. However, some white workers who saw this as class struggle supported the wildcat. As one black protestor stated, "the enemy is not the white man. It is the capitalist economic system and things are going to be turned around in this country when Black people join with poor white people." Although the majority black strikers constantly emphasized that their fight was not against white workers, Local 527's stewards were predominantly white and ultimately sided with management. The union issued a statement declaring the walkout "illegal" and urged its members to return to work or face dismissal.²⁰²

Mead ramped up their offensive against the wildcat in the face of mounting financial losses. The company obtained an injunction from Fulton County Superior Court Judge Jack Eldridge that prohibited the leaders of the movement from interfering with those employees who attempted to cross the picket line. The following week, they filed another injunction to ban the twelve leaders of MCRFW from picketing and limit the number of picketing in general. Unsurprisingly, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Elmo Holt ruled in favor of Mead and issued the following proclamations: only five picketers at each Mead gate; one person was allowed to move back and forth on the driveway; the others must stand two on each side of the gate; all other picketers must be at least "a half-a-football field away" from company property.

²⁰¹ "Strikes Continue Here," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 26, 1972, pg. 1, 12;

²⁰² *Ibid*; "Workers Fight," *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 2; "Racism," *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 3; "STRIKE! MEAD," *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 2.

Mead then used fear and intimidation to coopt the MCRFW leadership. They sent termination letters to the core leaders, indefinite suspension letters to the secondary leadership, and threatened disciplinary action to any worker who refused to cross the picket line. Mead also attempted to red-bait strikers to “get rid of their commie leadership.”²⁰³

Mead also targeted MCRFW’s neighborhood resources, particularly public land and media. Residents near the plant had allowed picketers to use their front lawns to pass out leaflets and hold rest and food stations. Consequently, Mead purchased those lands and restricted all strike activity off front lawns. Mead retained a black public relation law firm with state representative Ben Brown as partner to purchase large amounts of advertising time on popular radio stations in the black community, including WIGO, WXAP, and WAOK. The company issued pleas for strikers to return to work. Lastly, Mead coerced police to harass the picketers and set up traffic patrol at each gate at the opening and closing of each shift.²⁰⁴

The combination of multiple black grassroots movements and the presence of the October League prompted the Atlanta Police Department to swarm the wildcat. *The Atlanta Constitution* fanned anticommunist propaganda against MCRFW by suggesting that the October League instigated the wildcat and “brainwashed” employees with the assistance of Hosea Williams. Possibly feeling his petty bourgeois class interests in jeopardy, Williams essentially attempted to disassociate himself and the strike away from the October League, claiming that the organization did not help organize nor finance the work stoppage. He continued to denigrate the leftists across public media:

²⁰³ *Ibid*; “Workers Fight,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 2; “Racism,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 3; “STRIKE! MEAD,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*; “Workers Fight,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 2; “Racism,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 8, 1970, pg. 3; “STRIKE! MEAD,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 2.

“Not too long ago, somebody offered \$1000 in contributions from an anonymous source, but I told them that I had to know where my money came from that I touch. I suspect it was the League’s money...About the only thing that we ever had to do with these folks was the Mead deal...They almost ruined it by trying to take over the show themselves...they never do any work. All they do is sit around and philosophize. I don’t think these folks could raise 10 people this afternoon if their lives depended on it.”²⁰⁵

As Benton concluded, Williams disregarded the October League and the radical aspect of the wildcat because it conflicted with his petty bourgeois ideals of vanguardism and external mobilization.²⁰⁶ More clearly, Williams may have wanted the workers to win, but not on their own terms and not by their own voice and actions. The MCRFW operated on rank-and-file democratic decision-making while Williams and the SCLC generally functioned through a select few charismatic leaders. Indeed, leadership is a significant element in sustaining a social movement, but it must be a vehicle to empower workers to make decisions for themselves, not a vehicle for leaders to make decisions for workers. As was the issue in the Church’s Chicken/East Lake Meadows movement, Williams operated under his own philosophy that sometimes conflicted with the indigenous movement agents themselves.

On September 6, Mead conceded and requested a meeting with MCRFW, who replaced Local 527 as the contract negotiation committee moving forward. O’Hara offered MCRFW a new committee of rank and file workers that he selected to meet with him monthly regarding grievance issues. This represented an undermining of the previously established committee set up by the workers because the company refused to negotiate with the black Marxist Miller.

²⁰⁵ “Red Activist Cell Under Probe Here,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 29, 1972; Benton, *Strike Fever*,” pp. 77.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

“Black people will not be oppressed, repressed, or depressed,” Smith stated. “We produce the wealth, and they take the wealth. People who produce the wealth should get it.”²⁰⁷

As the strike stretched past a month, the Atlanta power brokers sought to destabilize the workers’ movement by distorting the primary objectives in the public media. Towards the end of September 1972, Nat Welch, the executive director Atlanta Community Relations Commission, the committee chosen by the mayor to report on their interpretation of the needs of the broader Atlanta communities, reported that the main area of disagreement between black employees and Mead was that “Mead does not put black employees into supervisory and executive positions.” However, the most recent contract proposal contradicted this narrative. A report to the *Atlanta Voice* stated that the company rejected the employees’ demand for a restricted pension plan, paid sick leave, improved insurance plans, and back pay for striking employees.²⁰⁸

Concurrently, the week proved expensive and exhaustive for the strikers. The police jailed strikers they believed to be leaders of MCRFW for contempt of court and sentenced them to ten days each. The police also arrested an estimated 66 picketers for “criminal trespassing,” a state offense and bound them over to state court with a bond set at \$500-\$1000 each. Despite these setbacks, the strike forced Mead to establish four-day work weeks. Mead offered the workers a deal to rehire about 100 employees that had been suspended or discharged for the wildcat.

The *Atlanta Constitution* also sought to diminish the agency laden institutions for the wildcat, especially the October League. The newspaper hurled countless assaults at the October League, blaming them for instigating the strike and challenging the community to turn against

²⁰⁷ “Workers: Mead Workers Caucus Recognized,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 18, 1972, pg. 11.

²⁰⁸ “Mead Employees Reject Company Offer,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 30, 1972, pg. 1.

them. In response, Michael Klonsky, the president of the Atlanta chapter of the October League, held a press conference to make the October League's position clear:

“It is not the October League which has practiced racial discrimination in their policies of hiring and promotions...while black workers are kept in the dirtiest, lowest-paying jobs. It was Mead and not the October League who directed the Atlanta Police Department to attack the Mead workers on September 21, jailing more than 100 workers and brutally clubbing the arrested workers to the ground, possibly blinding one Black worker...to the charges of fighting to put an end to these conditions and the oppressive system, we in the October League plead ‘guilty!’”²⁰⁹

On October 3, Mead sent a settlement proposal addressed to Andrew Young, the chairman of the Atlanta Community Relations Commission. This was more than likely a tactic by Mead to subvert the workers' more radical demands. Young worked on behalf of the city and as a mediator, he had stepped in towards the end of the strike to negotiate concessions, including an end to protest activity and “improved relationship structures” between management, supervisors, and workers. In other words, Young worked to put the strikers back to work and to decrease the capacity for more protest action in the future, regardless of MCRFW demands. On October 8, the MCRFW settled with Mead. The terms of the settlement included the following: Mead promised to establish a “human relations council” for grievance procedure (it is not known who chose members of the council); Mead offered \$20,000 for purchasing additional equipment to cut down on dust in the finishing area; employees would receive an increase in pay whenever assigned additional responsibilities; the company promised to investigate and eliminate any and all acts of discrimination for reasons of race, sex, age, or national origin, including banning racial slurs; the company made one non-interest bearing loan of \$200 to any employee during a 30 day window; with the concurrence of the union, the company submitted the cases of discharged and

²⁰⁹ “October League & Mead,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, October 16, 1972, pg. 2.

suspended employees to a panel of arbitrators selected by a federal mediation board from a panel of arbitrators nominated by the Community Relations Council; based on the company future manpower requirements, qualified and interested employees, both white and black, would be selected for pre-supervisory training and development and for other salaried positions.²¹⁰

Hosea Williams spoke at the settlement press conference, claiming that “we did not gain everything sought, but we gained a whole lot more than we had when we began.” The truth is that Williams and Young settled for far below than what MCRFW wanted when MCRFW possessed relatively strong leverage for much of the strike. The problems of weak wages, the lack of health coverage, and concentrating black workers in the dirtiest work continued without a significant change. Considering that Mead faced large financial losses during the wildcat, MCRFW held the position to control the narrative at the bargaining table. In the end, petty bourgeois class interests, through Williams and Young’s concession-style mediating and red-baiting, jeopardized the objectives and movement capacity of the Mead workers’ wildcat.

Conclusion

Black Atlanta’s struggles for autonomy were only part of a wide range of insurgent activity that served to diminish Atlanta’s false “racial harmony” narrative.²¹¹ On Monday afternoon, February 1971, thousands of Atlantans witnessed over three hundred black youth battle Atlanta police for over two hours in the middle of the Central Business District on Broad Street. Eyewitnesses reported that a white man attacked a black child near a bakery. Blacks

²¹⁰ “Mead Settlement,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, October 16, 1972, pg. 2; Benton, “Strike Fever,” pp. 80-82.

²¹¹ Anthropologist Charles Rutheiser documented Atlanta’s attempt to brand itself as the “City too Busy to Hate.” See Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams*. London and New York: Verso Books, 1996.

standing nearby pulled the man off the child and police intervened, leading to more blacks joining the scuffle. When the fight reached over three hundred persons, police sent heavy reinforcements: helmeted riot teams, plainclothesmen, and Georgia Bureau of Intelligence agents. Dozens were injured and police arrested thirty people (29 black) on charges of sidewalk ordinance violation, creating a turmoil, and making terroristic threats. The mainstream media reported the police's questionable version: Two black policemen tried to break up a fight between a black Muslim and the black panther and nearby blacks attacked the policemen.²¹²

Regardless of the catalyst, this uprising sent shockwaves through an already tense city. Working class Black Atlantans held expressed a revolutionary nationalist perspective of the conflagration; they alluded to it being symptomatic of a structural problem in the city that elected officials and business elites were ill equipped to handle: "There is a deeper, underlying cause to what happened Monday. Utter despair, the inability to change the system...poverty, unfilled promises..."²¹³

The internal press coverage of the uprising threw City Hall into disarray. *The New York Times* issued the story, "Two Blacks Come to Blows, a Melee Flares in Atlanta," reprinting much of the police's narrative, but also suggesting that "young blacks" destroyed business property in the most vibrant business section in Atlanta.²¹⁴ The Atlanta power structure believed that the Black Power struggles—proto-nationalist labor and housing militancy and anti-police

²¹² "Ain't No More Niggers in This World," *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 22, 1971, pg. 4-5; "Too Many People Wait for too Little," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 27, 1971, pg. 1, 11; "Truth of Riot Should Be Told," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 27, 1971, pg. 2; "Message to the People," *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 1, 1971, pg. 18; "Brutality Again," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 6, 1971, back cover.

²¹³ "Ain't No More," pg. 4-5.

²¹⁴ "Two Blacks Come to Blows, A Melee Flares in Atlanta," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1971, pg. 37.

brutality rebellions—shone a distasteful light on the city’s future business interests. Sam Massell stated to a group of white business elites, “Surely whites don’t have to put forth too much effort in thinking black to understand that half the population, blacks want half of the power...I spoke to the black community about the economic damage we could all suffer from our city going all black...”²¹⁵ Ruling elites understood that the direction they wanted to send Atlanta required not only a shift in the dominant mode of production, but retrenchment and repression against the new black working-class movements for autonomy.

African American musician Curtis Mayfield’s 1970 ballad, “If There’s A Hell Below, We’re All Going to Go,” declared that “if only all the mass[es] can see, this ain’t no way it ought to be.”²¹⁶ Black working class Atlantans’ mass arrival to the city served as their collective political awakening. Atlanta’s ruling class understood that proto-nationalism represented this collective awakening in action and right to put the city in the residents’ control. The black working-class struggles discussed here contributed greatly to the city’s planned annexation of unincorporated lands, repression of resident activists and social movements, and overall move away from an urban black working class space. The decades in Atlanta transformed the racial class power structure and thus, the political economy in the region for decades to come.

²¹⁵ “Save Us From the Blacks,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 10, 1972, pg. 3.

²¹⁶ Curtis Mayfield, “(Don’t Worry) If There’s a Hell Below, We’re All Going to Go,” Warner Chapell Music, 1970.

**CHAPTER TWO: THE BLACK URBAN REGIME STRIKES BACK:
RETRENCHMENT, REPRESSION, AND THE ROOTS OF GENTRIFICATION IN
ATLANTA, 1973-1981**

“It seems that no matter how brutal and vicious the oppressor is, he has always had certain members of the oppressed to help carry out his policies of oppression, brutality, and racism.”
-**Michael Abney, local African American Atlanta resident, June 8, 1974**²¹⁷

“My Daddy told me a story about the Boll Weevil. You know the boll weevil used to keep the poor man down by eating the cotton crop. Then they came up with this spray that’s kill ‘em. Now all the boll weevils moved to the city and put on coats and ties.”
-**Finley Holmes, African American Atlanta sanitation worker, February 4, 1974**²¹⁸

Introduction

In April 1979, Marian Green, African American resident and former president of the Northwest Techwood Homes Tenants Association, organized a mini squadron of her neighbors and stormed Atlanta Housing Authority property manager David Maultsby’s office. According to Green, Techwood residents had grown tired of the falling plaster, water and gas leakage, inadequate heating, bad plumbing, rat and roach swarms, and in general, the AHA’s malignant neglect of their neighborhood. “AHA has been getting away with too much,” Green told *The Atlanta Voice*. “The[y] holler about what the tenants do to the housing, yet they don’t do nothing about the housing for the tenant.” When Maultsby refused to meet with the group, Green initiated a sit-in and was forcibly arrested. A few days later, the remaining residents returned to the office and resumed the sit-in. Maultsby pulled a chair out from under one of the protestors, causing her to fall to the floor. He was arrested and jailed for assault.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ “Manipulation of Blacks: An Old Repeated Story,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 8, 1974, pg. 2.

²¹⁸ “Bird Gets Inside Dirt from Garbage Workers,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 4, 1974, pg. 4, 15.

²¹⁹ “Black Elected Official Abandoned AHA Tenants,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 5, 1979, pg. 2

The crux of the problem, Green argued, was that the majority-black Atlanta City Hall—led by the city’s first black mayor, Maynard Jackson—remained silent on Techwood residents’ mounting crises. “We helped every single one of them get elected,” Green continued, “passed out leaflets, made phone calls, did everything...and now that we need their help, they can’t do anything for us...Tenants are crying out, but no one listens.”²²⁰

While City Hall neglected black residents’ complaints, Jackson prioritized the power structure’s class interests and the future international investment in the region. Atlanta’s hosting of the first Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly in 1974 initiated a prolonged preoccupation with foreign capital and neglect of low-income residents. International business executives considered this a major event because it was the first OAS assembly held outside of Washington, D.C. since 1962. According to the Southern Council on International and Public Affairs, OAS chose Atlanta because the city exhibited “very impressive...international ambitions.” With the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s “leadership” and Coca-Cola’s “lavish reception and international press” in Underground Atlanta, Jackson’s City Hall assured investors in Atlanta’s potential as the convention trade, banking, and finance region of the Southern United States.²²¹ Marian Green and Techwood residents, on the other hand, faced neglect from Atlanta City Hall, displacement from landlords, and police repression over their fight for adequate housing.²²²

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ The Organization of American States is an international organization created in 1948 for the “purposes of regional solidarity and “to achieve an order of peace and justice, strengthen their collaboration, and defend their independence.” All 35 nations on the Western hemisphere are members of the OAS. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the OAS General Assemblies mostly amount to collaborative business dealings and investment presentations. For more information, see “How the OAS Came to Atlanta,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 6, 1974, pg. 4.

²²² *Ibid.*

The harsh reality for Marian Green and other black working class Atlantans was that despite their efforts to elect and support black elected officials (BEOs), these new Black Urban Regimes (BURs) pursued their own bourgeois class interests at the expense of the black working class majority. By the end of 1973, black proto-nationalist social movements had redefined downtown Atlanta as a battle zone between the residents seeking autonomy and City Hall's pursuit of investors. Consequently, the Chamber of Commerce grew deeply concerned with how this conflict in the central business district jeopardized current and future revenue streams. This chapter explores how Atlanta's power structure—the Jackson administration and the regional corporate executives in the form of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce—attempted to repel, isolate, and weaken black working-class movements for autonomy and their right to city space. This chapter argues that Jackson's Black Urban Regime's strategy of economic retrenchment and police repression planted the seeds for neoliberalization and gentrification in Atlanta. While many scholars argue that neoliberalization produced conditions for gentrification in urban spaces, I argue that retrenchment and police repression produced the necessary conditions for the neoliberalization process to occur in African American urban spaces. Consequently, the brutal path to gentrification in Atlanta set it on a course toward internationalization and financialization of capital, with a consumer-based, 24-hour market. The repression also assured white and black business leaders that Jackson's administration operated in the class interests of Atlanta's power structure. This chapter demonstrates that black urban regimes in American cities were first and foremost capitalist social structures of accumulation which weakened the use values of black working-class neighborhoods in the interests of white capital.

To demonstrate these arguments, I first expand Adolph Reed Jr.'s Black Urban Regime Theory by applying economists David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich's

theory of social structures of accumulation. I examine the relationship between black working-class actors and the self-conscious, anti-black working-class actions of black urban political structures. More clearly, I illuminate the public openness of the City Hall administration to not only seek and enact policies that reduce the social conditions of their constituency, but to simultaneously develop and mobilize that very constituency for sustaining their political position.²²³

Maynard Jackson and the black city councilpersons recognized that in order to maintain legitimacy with their working-class constituency—albeit weakened in most cases—they had to parcel out both discourse and relatively small exercises that deviated from their class interests. Although Maynard Jackson strengthened the powers of police forces in the metro region, he also publicly decried blatant examples of police brutality. In many cases, the black urban regime bolstered their class interests by manipulating their constituency. For instance, evidence suggests that both the Jackson and Andrew Young regimes attacked the deplorable conditions of public housing in Atlanta to purposely blight the land and built-environment for cheap purchase by gentrifying interests. Their criticisms of public and private housing conditions for low-income blacks rarely preceded any significant push to alleviate residents without the threat of privatization and revitalization that drove up rents and property values. Black working-class urbanites understood early revitalization as a loaded powder keg: revitalization offered potential relief for diminishing resources, but as chapters three and four explain, it also brought higher rents that many could not afford. This class manipulation undergirded the new social structure of

²²³ See David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, “Long Swings and Stages of Capitalism,” in David M. Kotz, Terance McDonough, and Michael Reich, (ed.) *Social Structures of Accumulation: The Political Economy of Growth*, pp. 11-28.

accumulation in 1970s urban spaces where black political regimes carried out the class interests of the white bourgeoisie and regressed poor blacks' resources and movement across the city.

I next examine how that public-private partnership served the interests of Atlanta's bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes at the expense of black working-class individuals. The four episodes I investigate—the 1970s revenue crisis, the 1977 Sanitation Workers Strike, the Atlanta power structure's "war on crime," and the Atlanta Child Murders—each widened the class divide in Black Atlanta and set the metro region on the path toward neoliberalization. Concurrently, this chapter demonstrates how black working-class resistance altered to face increasing restrictions to their neighborhood social movement capacity and safety.

Maynard Jackson, The Black Urban Regime, and the New Black Petty Bourgeoisie

Following Richard Hatcher and Carl Stokes' mayoral wins in Gary, Indiana and Cleveland, Ohio, respectively, black elected officials (BEOs) took the United States by storm. Between 1969 and July 1977, BEOs increased threefold from 1,185 to 4,311! Despite these statistical gains, African Americans who comprised 11 percent of the United States population in 1977 accounted for less than 1 percent of the more than 522,000 elected officials. There were only 19 BEOs for every 100,000 African Americans while there were approximately 282 non-black officials for every 100,000 non-blacks. 60 percent of all BEOs were in the South (where 53% of blacks resided) with Georgia ranking in the top ten states with 225 BEOs.²²⁴

As political scientist Adolph Reed Jr. conceptualized, BEOs that constitute the majority or near majority in city governments and sustain the black working class as their main political

²²⁴ Joint Center for Political Studies, July 1977; "Increase in Black Elected Officials, *The Atlanta Voice*, March 19, 1978, pg. 1;

base form Black Urban Regimes (BURs). Reed's conception of BURs provides a useful framework to examine Atlanta's urbanization. Urban scholar Mary Patillo contended that the primary function of the brokerage is to facilitate pro-growth agendas that widen racial class divides and deepen inequality.²²⁵ Considering the black working class majority in relationship to the Atlanta BUR engages the kind of particular, historically-grounded analysis and traces the fault lines of intra-racial class divides that labor scholar David Camfield calls for.²²⁶ This chapter examines how this class divide widened in response to four key events that occurred during the Jackson administration—the city's 1970s revenue crisis, the 1977 Sanitation Workers Strike, the Atlanta power structure's "war on crime" targeting working-class Black activists and neighborhoods, and the Atlanta Child Murders.

However, Reed's framework did not fully account for conservative nationalists' role in the creation of the black urban regime. Thomas Boston succinctly posited that the Black Power Movement determined "the conditions for an alteration in the internal structure of the black capitalist class and the growth of a new black capitalist segment." Working class militancy in black urban neighborhoods provided black entrepreneurs the opportunity to seek out access to markets, knowledge, and capital previously restricted to them. As an anonymous black businessman told Ellen Bonaparte in 1976:

"When you ask about the black militant, I have to say I appreciate the changes he helped bring out...unless there were people running around the streets throwing bricks, I wouldn't be where I am. It wasn't until the riots that we got legislation in the Johnson administration... If they weren't burning down cities and having riots, the business

²²⁵ For an extensive breakdown of Black Urban Regime Theory and its criticism of Clarence Stone's Urban Regime Theory, see Adolph Reed, Jr., *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-segregation Era*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999, pp. 79-119; John Arena, "Bringing in the Black Working Class, pp. 153-179;

²²⁶ John Arena, "Bringing in the Black Working Class: The Black Urban Regime Strategy," *Science & Society*, Vol. 75, No. 2, April 2011, p. 163-165.

environment wouldn't have asked who can we talk to?"²²⁷

From a macrostructural standpoint, black businesses independent of white capital did not possess the required strength to weather the turbulent cyclical recessions. According to John Gloster, who headed the Opportunity Funding Corporation, a non-profit funding service for minority businesses, "the general concept of those who have money is that small enterprises are risky anyway, and they think they're doubling their risk when they buy into a minority company."²²⁸ Finally, the economic downturn decimated potential customers for emerging black businesses. Black workers' low purchasing power and increasing unemployment diminished black businesses' market share of consumers. For instance, the "real" weekly earnings for Atlanta black workers with at least three dependents decreased over 1977. The decline continued into 1978. Black worker earnings between December 1977 and June 1978 dropped 7.2 percent, from an average of \$113.57 to \$105.35.²²⁹

A new black capitalist class, Boston continued, diverted from the old black bourgeoisie by depending to a greater extent on an external white clientele, the corporate sector, and subsidies from the federal government. Thus, new black capitalism was not tied closely to the black masses, which simultaneously weakened their connection to black working-class neighborhoods and heightened class tensions in Black America.

Economic trends for black business growth in the 1970s demonstrate the social nature of the new black capitalism. Black capitalism generally struggled during the Black Power Movement. By 1974, the 195,000 black owned businesses reported by the Commerce

²²⁷ Thomas D. Boston, *Race Class, and Conservatism*. London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1988, pp. 35-36.

²²⁸ "Black Capitalism in the Red," *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 3, 1975, pg. 8.

²²⁹ Georgia Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, September 1978.

Department were mostly small-scale retail and service outlets such as grocery stores, dry cleaners, and barber shops. Less than twenty percent of these had any paid employees. Counting the proprietors, black businesses employed less than quarter million people. The Black Economic Research Center reported that in 1974, the Black business failure rate was about 18 percent compared to only 1 percent for smaller businesses generally. The following year, *Black Enterprise Magazine* reported that since 1972, thirteen of the 100 largest Black-owned companies went bankrupt or shut down completely. By early 1975, the recession decimated black businesses at a rate three times that of white businesses.²³⁰ The upsurge, however, occurred at the end of the Black Power Movement when black capitalists grew closer to white capital. The U.S. Department of Commerce reported that between 1977 and 1980, black-owned businesses increased by 47 percent. *Black Enterprise* observed that this growing business reflects “the increasingly strong desire of all Black business owners...to expand their clientele beyond the Black market.”

Ultimately, this new black capitalism and the coinciding declension of the black conservative nationalist stream of Black Power contributed greatly to the rise of BURs and the new black middle class. As sociologist Morton Wenger posited, the disappearance of the old black petty bourgeoisie and rise of the new black petty bourgeoisie was a direct function of the development of monopoly capital and the consequently altered relationship between the white capitalist class and the black working classes. There was no question about it: after mass urban rebellions of the 1960s and the proto-nationalist movements in working class urban spaces in the early 1970s, the U.S. ruling class feared African-American mass militance growing to a nationwide level. As Wenger noted, this is more than apparent when we examine “radical”

²³⁰ “Black Capitalism in the Red,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 3, 1975, pg. 8.

Supreme Court opinions by conservative justice William O. Douglas. The capitalist class quickly developed their justification for the creation of a new black petty bourgeois class: they functioned as doctors, teachers, lawyers, police, merchants, elected officials, and *supervisors* for the black masses.²³¹

The distortion of the labor market brought about by “monopolistic tendencies inherent in capitalism, the decline of the U.S. world hegemony, and the ideological ‘over-determination’ of racism” forced the departure of State involvement in this new tactic in racial class struggle. The new black middle class grew their influence in urban centers by collapsing class in their homogenization of racial oppression, supplanting civil rights discourse with a war on poverty, and assuming the role of spokespersons for the black masses. Concurrently, petty bourgeois activists appealed to white capital who utilized their social position to reorient the labor market away from stable, livable wage industrial labor and towards unstable, low-wage, service sector labor. Additionally, the labor for the new middle-class jobs set education and skill restrictions that barred the black working classes out of competition in that market.²³²

The net results of these new social relations proved disastrous for black working-class urbanites. White capital undergirded black bourgeois and petty bourgeois’ pro-growth ambitions. As political scientist Cedric Johnson argued, these middle class “race leaders” opted to chase access routes to the white power structure’s dollars by seizing municipal government positions and forming public-private partnerships—diluting their main electoral base’s autonomy and extinguishing the chance for a united black front across class lines in the process. “We’ve

²³¹ Morton G. Wenger, “State Responses to Afro-American Rebellion: Internal Neo-Colonialism and the Rise of a New Black Petite Bourgeoisie,” *The Insurgent Sociologist: Race and Class in Twentieth Century Capitalist Development*, Special Issue, Vol. X, No. 2, 1980, pp. 68-70; Thomas D. Boston, *Race Class, and Conservatism*. London, Sydney, Wellington: Unwin Hyman, Inc., 1988, pg. 35-39.

²³² *Ibid.*

got to get at the heart of what America's about," stated an anonymous African-American Alabama state representative, "and that's money. It's nice going down to Montgomery and sitting in a legislature, but unless blacks get access to investment capital...all the other stuff is illusory." For BUR members, the proto-nationalism and militancy characterized in the radical stream of Black Power was a barrier to "Green Power." "I'm not looking for a fight," said Richard Arrington, the first black mayor of Alabama, "I'm looking for results. I don't care if we reach this goal amicably...we're going to get there."²³³

Atlanta operated in the same vein. C.A. Scott, the conservative African American publisher of *The Atlanta Daily World*, pointed out that by 1980, "Sweet" Auburn Avenue, the historical epicenter of black business in Northeast Atlanta, had lost a good portion of its black entrepreneurs to emerging white corporations. "There are more unrented offices than there ever were in the days of the Great Depression," he stated. "A few of us are holding out, but smart young men with drive and ambition don't come here anymore. They move into skyscraper offices in Peachtree Plaza."²³⁴ By 1974, many African Americans elites recognized that black self-determination did not align with their bourgeois class interests. As Adolph Reed, Jr. suggested, the shift to the Black Urban Regime strategy was not unconscious; rather, it was a calculated effort to repel the black masses' struggles for autonomy, compartmentalize them to enclaves isolated from profit-producing spaces, and to reinforce the police State with money and power. Ultimately the BUR strategy publicized to financiers that their metropolitan regions were ripe for private investment.

²³³ "Yesterday's Shout of 'Black Power' Are Today Replaced By 'Green Power,'" *The Atlanta Voice*, August 9, 1980, pg. 7.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 7.

Maynard Holbrook Jackson's historical win to become the first black mayor of Atlanta cemented the African American elite's pivot away from the radical Black Power strategy to Black Urban Regime strategy in October 1973. Jackson defeated his predecessor, Sam Massell, utilizing the same populist, anti-establishment rhetorical strategy that carried Massell to an upset victory in 1969—he championed a “new deal” for the poor black masses and a “stomp out crime” plan for the professional and managerial classes. However, Jackson extended an even more secure pact to the white power structure during the election season. According to multiple sources at the time, white elites promised to deliver white votes to Jackson in return for him delivering black support for Wade Mitchell, the white city council president and vice president of the Trust Company of Georgia. Billy McKinney, African American Georgia State Representative, not only admitted that the closed-door deal occurred, but also that black elites Jesse Hill, Atlanta Life & Insurance Company President, Charles Reynolds, MARTA official, Lyndon Wade, President of the Atlanta Urban League, and Herman J. Russell, construction and real estate magnate—the most influential black capitalist at the time—helped seal the deal. The white capitalists in the deal included Dick Kattell, president of C&S Bank, J. Paul Austin, chairman of the Board of Coca-Cola, and Tom Cousins, the most powerful realtor in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region.²³⁵

The changing structure of Atlanta's municipal government served as a ruling class strategy to reassert colonial rule in Atlanta. In March 1973, the Georgia General Assembly passed a new city charter that replaced the original 1874 charter. The charter moved away from the ambiguous language of the old charter and more clearly defined that the mayor possessed all executive and administrative power. In other words, the mayor's sole duty was to *enforce* the

²³⁵ Jesse Hill was the president of Atlanta Life Insurance Company on Auburn Avenue from 1973-1992, Charles Reynolds was an official of MARTA, Herman J. Russell was

laws. However, the new charter shifted all legislative power to the city council. Section 1-103 stated: “All legislative powers of the city are hereby vested in the council...the council shall adopt and provide for the execution of such ordinances, resolutions, and rules, not inconsistent with this Charter as shall be necessary or proper for the purpose of carrying into effect the powers and duties conferred by this Charter...”²³⁶

This government restructuring meant that the city council president assumed more decision-making power than previous bodies. The city council president could appoint all members and chairpersons of the standing committees such as Zoning, Planning and Development, and Police. The president also presided over the council and only voted in resolutions to break a tie. The document stated that “Council shall by ordinance adopt and publish rules to govern its proceedings and transaction of business.” In other words, the president of the council could create a completely new system of procedures for passing ordinances and doing other business without challenge from other parts of the government.²³⁷

Thus, the new charter provided very few checks to the power of the city council. This allowed the Chamber of Commerce to invoke their class interests in the day-to-day municipality indirectly through the Atlanta city council, who they supported through financial donations. Also, the new charter redirected capitalist development and the power of repression to the city council president. Although the mayor held macrostructural power to reorganize the municipal government, the charter removed any of the mayor’s capacity to direct day-to-day operations in the city. The city council possessed the power to fine a maximum of \$500 and up to six months

²³⁶ City of Atlanta City Charter, March 1973, Box 18, Folder 1, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²³⁷ City of Atlanta City Charter, March 1973, Box 18, Folder 1, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

in jail for violating any ordinances passed by their body. The council had the power to create departments, define their duties, and appoint boards and commissions to hold hearings. Atlanta Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor Debbie Bustin summed it up best: “The white power structure has become aware that Atlanta’s black majority is likely to elect a black mayor. Naturally they would want to exert as much control as they could over a black mayor so they are trying to get their candidate elected for Council President...their balance of power is safer because of the deal...this deal makes it clear just who Maynard Jackson will be working for.”²³⁸

The new city charter also pushed Atlanta’s ruling body into murky waters regarding real estate. Section 2-105 stated: “no member of the council, which would inure to his or her financial or personal interests, or which would be a conflict of interest...”²³⁹ In other words, the new charter barred elected officials from participating in any council votes that affected their business interests. Some city council members like Q.V. Williamson, a notorious slumlord at the time, owned multiple real estate holdings and thus influenced innumerable bills that informed land and property values.

The Revenue Crisis of 1974-1979

From 1974 to 1979 the Atlanta power structure navigated a revenue crisis that solidified Maynard Jackson’s BUR by reshaping power dynamics, widening class divisions among African American Atlantans, and providing the white power structure with the necessary assurances that the CBD was ready for private investment. To understand the impact of the Atlanta Chamber of

²³⁸ “Maynard Making Good (Friends),” *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 9, 1973, pg. 3.

²³⁹ City of Atlanta City Charter, March 1973, Box 18, Folder 1, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

Commerce and City Hall's transformation of Atlanta, it is first necessary to examine black Atlantans' urban crisis in sociohistorical context. The almost uninterrupted expansion of the U.S. economy from 1965 to 1973 permitted a build-up of instability—inflation, excessive debt, and working-class militancy. Between 1965 and 1969, plummeting unemployment gave way to increased labor union organizing, setting off a wave of labor strikes and demands. The black labor force participation rate hovered around 59 percent during that period, making the real black unemployment rate close to 40 percent.²⁴⁰ As more workers won material gains with union contracts, it significantly undermined profits and grew the economy so rapidly that it created an increasing demand for imports. Combined with an export decline, it created a balance of trade problem. Consequently, the Lyndon Johnson administration proposed a slow-down to ease problems and prevent a recession. The problem, though, was that Johnson did not reduce, but rather expanded spending for the War in Indochina as the American masses began to oppose the conflict. Fearing the rising amalgamation of Black Power Movement action and anti-Vietnam Movement protest, Johnson did not raise taxes and increased social program spending.

As discussed in chapter one, Nixon's New Majority strategy to fight inflation at the expense of the "strong American worker" reshaped global capital and primed the pump for the neoliberal turn in American urban centers. This New Economic Policy devalued the dollar and established wage price controls and tax incentives for corporations. His administration designed an import surcharge to improve the foreign trade position of the U.S. by discouraging spending on foreign goods and promoting export sales. By 1973, profits jumped sharply, and inflation stabilized. However, by the end of that year, consumer prices began increasing at a rate of nearly 10 percent a year. As deindustrialization accelerated across urban sectors, manufacturing export

²⁴⁰ Mitra Toosi and Leslie Joyner, "Blacks in the Labor Force," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, February 2018.

losses devastated the trade balance. In response, the Nixon administration promoted agricultural exports as a viable replacement. The problem, though, is that the federal government went too far. Agricultural exports, which averaged \$5 billion a year from 1966-1969, jumped to \$9.4 billion in 1972. In 1973, they skyrocketed to \$17.5 billion, amounting to roughly one-fifth of all U.S. farm products.²⁴¹

The 1974 Energy Crisis compounded the problem twofold and contributed to the already-diminishing manufacturing hub in Atlanta. When oil companies exaggerated fuel shortages to manipulate prices, oil exporting countries kept pushing prices, causing the government to lose control of the economic imbalances. “You know that people don’t think there’s a shortage at all,” stated Diane, an Atlantan African American autoworker who was laid off during the Energy Crisis. “They think they’re just doing this whole thing to raise prices, drive the small gas station owner out of business, and put us out on the street. People are pretty mad.”²⁴²

Double-digit inflation—prices rising at an annual rate of more than 10 percent—was the new norm in mid-1970s U.S. political economy. The wholesale price index—the most significant inflation barometer the government uses—surged upwards with a jump of 19.1 percent between March 1973 and March 1974.²⁴³ Atlanta fared much worse than the nation. During that same time frame, Atlanta’s cost of living index rose 10.8 percent, as compared to the general rise nationally of 10.2 percent.²⁴⁴ The Commerce Department also reported that

²⁴¹ “5250 Laid Off in Atlanta,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 25, 1974, pg. 13

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pg. 13.

²⁴³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1973, 1974

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Atlanta's prices rose 3.7 percent in the first quarter of 1974, the largest quarterly rise since the Korean War caused crippling inflation in 1951.

These policies improved the foreign trade balance, but it also exploded domestic food and energy costs. Between 1973 and 1974, food prices in the Atlanta area soared 20.6 percent for the average citizen. According to Economic Opportunity of Atlanta's study of food prices, bread, eggs, milk, sugar, margarine, shortening, cornmeal, and pinto beans—nine staple items most frequently bought by poor black folks—increased from \$6.16 in 1973 to \$10.84 in 1974—a whopping 75 percent increase! Economic Opportunity of Atlanta reported that if they had included meat, fresh fruit, vegetables, and cleaning supplies, the inflation percentages would have been even higher. When we examine the value of the U.S. dollar across a five-year period, the 1969 dollar bought 100 cents of goods and services; by August 1974, the U.S. dollar bought only 75 cents worth of goods and services. This also meant that in 1974, food for a family of four cost approximately \$54.40 a week, up considerably from 1969. Gas and electricity rose 3.4 percent and 8.8 percent, respectively. Transportation costs rose 4.8 percent in the quarter and 9.6 percent in the year. Medical care rose 8.7 over the course of a year as well.²⁴⁵ Needless to say, this recession represented a shock to monopoly capitalism that had not been felt since the Great Depression.

The declining political economy menaced auto manufacturing especially. The Atlanta auto giants—who produced to their largest inventory in history (765,000 automobiles in 1973) slashed production and jobs, closed multiple plants, and retooled mass-production towards smaller vehicles that used marginally less gasoline. Two General Motors plants in Doraville and Lakewood—which manufactured large Chevrolet and Pontiac models—laid off 3,000 workers

²⁴⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1973, 1974; "EOA Perry Area Studies Food Prices," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 27, 1974, pg. 9; "American Cost of Living Tied to World Food Crisis," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 17, 1974, pg. 2.

each. The layoffs hit black women the hardest. Manufacturing companies only started hiring black women and in very small numbers in the early 1970s. “We don’t have much seniority and we get laid off first. When they do start rehiring, if they ever do, they will rehire who they want to,” said Nancy, a laid-off African-American woman autoworker who spoke with *The Great Speckled Bird*. “And I think it will be the minimum of black and the minimum of women,” she further claimed.” “We’re gonna be without work,” Vicki, another black autoworker added. “We are without work. We’re not gonna have money, we’re going to be forced into that situation without food and maybe without clothing. It’s a bad situation.” “The little people are suffering, not being employed,” Nancy concluded. “But this can also bring people together... We have to do something and I think its going to cause unification of the laborer. It has to.”²⁴⁶ Thus, Nancy succinctly predicted how the threat to poor Atlantans’ social conditions united them for collective resistance.

During planned expansion and revitalization, this economic crisis severely diminished black Atlantans’ purchasing power. Assistant Commerce Secretary Sidney L. Jones noted that purchasing power fell at a rate of 4.7 percent between March 1973 and March 1974. Inflation moved so fast that Americans could not keep up: the Georgia Labor Department made record unemployment payments totaling \$1 million weekly to over 85,000 Georgians. To place this in proper context, in the first quarter of 1973, Georgia only paid 11.4 million compared to \$20.8 million in 1974.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ “Energy Crisis Hits Home-6500 Atlantans Out of Work,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, December 24, 1973, pg. 3; For a Black perspective on the Energy Crisis, see “The Energy Crisis: Who’s to Blame and Who’s to Suffer,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 19, 1974, pg. 6A.

²⁴⁷ “And in Atlanta,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 6, 1974, pg. 3.

Atlanta City Hall faced a mounting revenue crisis as it prepared for 1975. In his mayoral election, the ballot included a referendum question to increase the homestead tax exemption from \$2,000 to \$5,000 and elderly exemptions from \$2,000 to \$3,000.²⁴⁸ Both referendums narrowly passed. Jackson's administration neglected these significant changes to the tax structure and budgeted for the 1975 fiscal year at its usual levels. The City Council finally acknowledged the loss of revenue in December of 1974. Two days prior to Christmas, they called an emergency session and issued cutbacks to the police, mayor and council staff, cancelled equipment purchase and maintenance, declared seven mandatory furlough days for all city employees, and passed a property tax rate increase of 1.3 mills.²⁴⁹ The property tax increase particularly upset Atlanta's capitalists and placed more pressure on Jackson to appease their class interests.²⁵⁰

Nevertheless, this increase failed to generate the revenue needed to alleviate the budgeting shortfall, even as efforts to mitigate the shortage disproportionately targeted the city's poor. The Joint Board of Tax Assessors (JBTA) is required by state law to keep tax assessments on property at 40 percent of the property's fair market value. Yet the city did not reappraise properties--meaning that the mill rate was applied to assessments generally below where they should be. Consequently, both the city and counties in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region received

²⁴⁸ The homestead tax exemption deducts a certain dollar amount or percentage of home value from property taxes. They're called "homestead" exemptions because they apply to primary residencies, not rental properties or investment properties. You must live in the home to qualify for the tax break. Some states exempt a certain percentage of a home's value from property taxes, while other states exempt a set dollar amount. For example, if a house is assessed the value of \$200,000 and the property tax rate is 1%, the property tax bill would equal \$2,000. However, if the homeowner was eligible for a homestead tax exemption of \$50,000, the taxable value of the home drops to \$150,000, meaning the tax bill drops to \$1500.

²⁴⁹ A millage rate (mill) is the tax rate used to calculate local property taxes. The millage rate represents the amount per every \$1,000 of a property's assessed value. In other words, it is \$1 for every \$1000 of property value. Thus, 30 mills is the equivalent of \$30 for every \$1000 of the assessed value of property. Assigned millage rates are multiplied by the total taxable value of the property in order to arrive at the property taxes. Different agencies within a municipality may have their own millage rates, which are factored into a homeowner's property tax calculation. The millage rate for individual properties are usually found on the property deed itself.

²⁵⁰ "Unfair Tax Collection: Why a Budget Crisis," *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 2, 1975, pg. 1.

less from property taxes than was legally possible. The Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax released a position paper showing that an individual who owned a home valued at \$50,000 was given a \$5000 homestead tax exemption. Figure B.4 below shows the mathematical equation for this.²⁵¹

Research Atlanta, a non-profit, local public affairs organization, also exposed the Atlanta Metropolitan Region's problematic tax structure in their report, "The Other Side of the Tax Problem." Fulton County, which collected taxes both for itself and the city of Atlanta, brought in smaller percentages of tax revenue every year. In 1963, Research Atlanta reported, the Fulton County tax commission collected 96 percent of its expected revenues. By 1973, however, it had dropped below 93 percent. Additionally, delinquent taxes represented 12.2 percent of the levy of that year, totaling over \$23 million in uncollected taxes. To make matters worse, a Georgia constitutional amendment passed in 1972 exacerbated the shortfall. It declared Fulton County billing institutions (like hospitals) tax exempt.²⁵²

Slum housing, on the other hand, experienced the inverse. The values declined and the assessments remained high, so the JBTA over-taxed poor residents. Thus, the root to Atlanta's revenue crisis in the 1970s was directly tied to the black poor: forcing poorer residents to pay higher regressive tax rates than they could afford decreased their purchasing power. It also stalled downtown business in the process, increased unemployment, weakened neighborhood social movement capacity and indirectly provided the bourgeois class with a tax break.

²⁵¹ See Appendix B.4 for the equation.

²⁵² "The Other Side of The Tax Problem," *Research Atlanta*, December 23, 1974; "Unfair Tax Collection: Why a Budget Crisis," *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 2, 1975, pg. 1, 3.

These tax revenue problems trickled throughout Georgia. On January 1, 1975, the State Department of Human Resources cut 125,000 welfare recipients' payments after removing 7,000 working mothers completely from welfare the month before. The maximum grant for one person was reduced from \$47 to \$38 a month; for two people from \$85 to \$76. Surprisingly, the \$47 maximum welfare payment in December 1975 was only 44 percent of what the Welfare Department itself computed as the need for an individual, \$106 per month.²⁵³ The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published that an individual or an urban family of four living in 1975 required \$2,590 and \$9,200 a year, respectively, to maintain a "modest standard of living." A yearly Georgia welfare check, however, only provided \$564 per year to an individual and \$5,050 to a family of four—far below the floor needed for survival.²⁵⁴

With property taxes failing to keep up with revenue needs, City Hall colluded with the Chamber of Commerce and pinned their hopes on a local option sales tax to relieve the Atlanta Metropolitan Region's (AMR) financial strain. In 1974, Governor Jimmy Carter vetoed the AMR's first attempt to pass a local option sales tax. The following year, newly-elected Governor George Busbee signed the tax bill but a group of state representatives led by Democrat Cynthia McKinney overrode it.²⁵⁵ In 1977 Jackson won reelection, maintained his working class black constituency and gained the support of white elites. In 1978, though, the interested parties shifted strategy. Southern Bell, Georgia Power, IBM, Coca-Cola, and Delta Airlines organized a

²⁵³ "Welfare Cuts for Christmas," *The Great Speckled Bird*, December 18, 1975, pg. 4

²⁵⁴ "Poverty Figure Raised to \$5,050," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 31, 1975, pg. 2

²⁵⁵ Memorandum from Phil Hoffman to Bill Alexander regarding the Voting Record on local Option Sales Tax in Atlanta, Georgia, 16 July 1979, Box 65, Folder 7, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

campaign to push for the local option sales tax. Jackson joined the campaign in 1979 and supported a property tax rollback that would benefit the area's largest corporations. His support laid the basis for a public-private partnership to reorganize capital in the region.²⁵⁶

What is interesting to note is that Jackson initially quarreled with the campaign because he believed that the local option sales tax would "place an undue tax burden on the poor." Jackson concluded that he would only support the tax if it exempted food and drugs. Yet when he joined the corporations in favoring the tax a year later, neither he nor any of the business executives made any effort to advocate for a food and drug exemption. Food sales generated more taxes than any other item covered by the sales option tax. Figure B.5 shows how Georgia's sales tax revenues were distributed in 1978.²⁵⁷ Thus, the local option sales tax campaign included food to insure the maximum property tax rollback at the expense of the region's poorest residents. Poor people who spent a generous portion of their meager earnings on necessities like food and utilities ended up paying significantly more of their income in taxes than did members of the affluent classes, making this regressive levy potentially one of the most damaging in Atlanta's history. This became especially apparent when Atlanta's Bureau of Budget and Planning did not recommend the local option sales tax as a viable course for correcting the region's revenue crisis.²⁵⁸ Nonetheless, the Jackson administration adopted this campaign because it strengthened the relationship between black elites and Atlanta's white power structure.

The local option sales tax campaign introduced black and white elites' plan to amend the Georgia Retailer's and Consumer's Sales and Use Tax Act (passed in March of 1979), which

²⁵⁶ Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax Position Paper, undated, Box 65, Folder 8, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁵⁷ See Appendix B.5 for the Chart showing Tax Revenue Distribution for 1978.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

authorized counties and cities to hold referendums. Jackson said he “unqualifiedly” supported the tax as “the only alternative available” to avoid increasing property taxes. Fulton County Commissioner Milton Farris estimated that the tax would bring in an estimated \$54 million during the first year (1980). Then in 1981, local property taxes, in both the County and city, would be rolled back to offset the local option sales tax income. According to Jackson, Fulton County would take \$19 million while Atlanta would take \$28 million.²⁵⁹

However, while City Hall, Fulton County, and its bourgeois proponents admitted the sales tax was regressive, they did not publicize how uneven the tax burden was nor how truly lucrative the rollbacks would be for Atlanta’s corporations. Figure 2.6 illustrates how the heaviest tax burden would fall on lower-income citizens.²⁶⁰ Additionally, the Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax exposed that commercial property holders stood to receive \$9 million, or 16 percent of the anticipated property tax rollback. Figure B.7 reveals the total dollar amounts of rollbacks for largest Atlanta businesses.²⁶¹

Atlanta’s power structure sought to control the narrative throughout the campaign. The black urban regime more than likely determined that a referendum was the best way to push through the sales tax because low income residents—whose financial stability would be the most affected by the law—did not historically turn out large numbers in referendums. The campaign operated mostly as a quiet, behind the scenes, pro-growth movement so as not to incite the black majority into an anti-tax movement—especially being five years removed from the zenith of organized black working-class neighborhood movement action.

²⁵⁹ “Local Option Sales Tax Referendum May be Oct. 2,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, July 31, 1979, pg. 1

²⁶⁰ See Appendix B.5.

²⁶¹ See Appendix B.6.

Support for the sales tax in black Atlanta split generally along class lines. Jackson and the black city council members mobilized support in the Black bourgeois and petty bourgeois who lived outside the inner city, in the suburbs. The local BEOs pushed the black upper classes to serve as brokers of disinformation and initiators of scare tactics to coopt and frighten the African American working class. A group of anonymous African Americans calling themselves “Black Business Leaders” released a press statement in support of the tax and admonished those who opposed it. The Black elites stated that the tax represents “the most equitable way for the City of Atlanta and Fulton County to generate badly needed new money” and that they felt “disturbed” at opponents because “as black businessmen, we face the same problems...struggling to survive in America.” The statement concluded with a promise to “provide funds to upgrade the pay scale of our police officers” and that “all Atlantans who care about the future of our city” should support the tax.²⁶² The Atlanta Board of Realtors upped the class element in their press release, stating that, “the sales tax is the most fair alternative and that property taxpayers should not have to continue to carry the entire burden for city and county services.” Defensively, the realtors concluded, “another property tax increase would be detrimental to the quality of life and growth of our region.”²⁶³

Jackson pressured black clergy to sell the tax to their members during Sunday services or face being declared “irresponsible” citizens. He and his supporters also attempted to manipulate the Black poor into supporting the tax through fear. Jackson told poor residents—particularly elderly residents living on fixed incomes—that unless the referendum passes, “social programs

²⁶² Press Release from Black Business Leaders Endorsing Local Option Sales Tax, 1 October 1979, Box 65, Folder 7-10, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁶³ Press Release from the Atlanta Board of Realtors, Inc., endorsing the Local Option Sales Tax, 31 August 1979, Box 3 Folder 7, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

will be discontinued and city services such as police and garbage collection will be eliminated or curtailed.” Lastly, he attempted to sell the property tax rollback to the black poor by claiming that businesses were threatening to leave the Atlanta Metropolitan Region if it were not passed.²⁶⁴

The scare tactics were duplicitous for multiple reasons. First, the federal government provided the primary funding source for social programs in the region. Second, little evidence exists that suggests that a legitimate threat existed from businesses to leave the area. Third, the black working class suffered many setbacks from a number of damages to the use value of their neighborhoods, most of them caused by the Jackson City Hall—including losing the 1977 Sanitation Strike (see below), rising consumer prices, increasing unemployment and underemployment, and numbers of disappearing children with little to no attention from the city (see below). In other words, low-income black Atlantans did not support a regressive measure that held the potential to further strain their already precarious living conditions.

On October 2, 1979, Atlantans soundly defeated the local option sales tax. The power structure lost 39.5 percent (yes) to 60.5 percent (no). In fact, the voters rejected the measure in every county in the region, shocking Jackson and the business community who believed poor residents would sit the vote out. Both black and white working-class voters crushed the tax referendum. According to political analysts, both groups voted 80 percent against the tax. Surprisingly, 50 percent of middle-class blacks voted against the measure as well— possibly

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, “Ministers Back Sales Tax Plan as Battle Shapes Up,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, July 19, 1979, pg. 1. Multiple college professors and students in the Atlanta area conducted studies on alternative funding sources to solve Atlanta’s revenue crisis. They concluded that the following sources of revenue were better options than a local sales tax: 1)Expanding the tax digest by reducing the amount of exempt properties. 2)More vigorous effort to collect delinquent taxes. 3)Cut the fat from the city budget. 4)Revise license and fee schedules. 5)Increase city’s share of airport concessions. 6)Push for revision in distribution of existing 3% statewide sales tax revenue. 7)Graduated occupational tax with basic exemption to protect poor and elderly. 8)Graduate income tax.

meaning that they were not property owners and recognized the tax as more of a cost than a benefit.²⁶⁵

Even as his hopes of passing the sales tax dimmed, Jackson did not take advantage of federal revenue sharing funds to fix the Atlanta budget shortfall. The Nixon Administration's revenue sharing program was designed to replace federal block grant programs, giving cities and local governments allocations they could use at their discretion with little to no guidelines. They were initially billed as "supplemental" funds to current federal programs, but Nixon gutted federal spending for cities—especially social service programs. For the fiscal year July 1, 1973 through June 30, 1974, Nixon chopped \$20.2 million from social program spending. Thus, revenue sharing funds allocated to Atlanta amounted to only \$7.1 million for a net loss of \$13.1 million in federal monies coming to the city. Research Atlanta noted that Atlanta City Hall was the sole determinant in how that \$7.1 million was spent with no input from residents.²⁶⁶ As this chapter discusses later, Jackson's Administration used the funds similarly as they were used in other urban locales—to cut taxes for the rich and fund pay raises and weapon purchases for police departments.²⁶⁷ Through his decisions made in navigating the revenue shortfall, Jackson consolidated his BUR in relationship to white owned corporations and the propertied bourgeoisie—in the process deepening the divide between the black working class and elites.

That gulf deepened with the 1977 Sanitation Workers Strike.

²⁶⁵ "Vote Against Sales Tax Surprises Supporters," *The Atlanta Daily World*, October 4, 1979, pg. 1.

²⁶⁶ "Revenue Shafting," *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 9, 1973, pg. 7; "New Federalism," *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 5, 1973, pg. 3; "Revenue Sharing Flops," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 27, 1974, pg. 3; "Revenue Sharing's Future," *The Atlanta Voice*, Feb 1, 1975, pg. 2.

²⁶⁷ "Neglect Hurts Cities, Says Coalition Head," *The Baltimore African American*, December 2, 1972, pg. 12; For a more contemporary instance of revenue sharing funds going to police, see "Revenue Sharing for East End Police to increase under Proposed budget," *The Suffolk Times*, September 21, 2015.

“The Airplane Can’t Fly”: The 1977 Sanitation Strike

In early February 1974, African American city sanitation worker Finley Holmes sat in his AFSCME local 1644 union office and released his pent-up anger. “We have complaints, problems with cans with no tops filling with water, cans for garbage being filled with rubbish...the city couldn’t pass a law even requiring things like standard cans with tops!” Fellow sanitation coworker Melvin Leeks added, “They sent this man in a couple of years ago...find out where the city could save some money...he’s the kind of man who knows an airplane can fly, and he knows you know an airplane can fly, but he can sit down with his piece of paper and pencil and show you that an airplane can’t fly.” Holmes chimes back in with even louder shouts, “A MAN SLAP YOU IN THE FACE...YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO WALK AWAY!”²⁶⁸

On most mornings, Holmes had joined his coworkers at the Hill Street sanitation barn to change into his city uniform. The lockers were too small to fit more than one or two pieces of clothing. “They’re treated like animals,” AFSCME Atlanta official Ron Reliford commented. “Right down to the fact that they have to go outside and answer roll call in any sort of weather after they’ve already clocked in.” After roll call, Holmes headed on his route “rattling those cans” before sunrise. At the first few houses, homeowners came outside to watch the garbage collections nervously. In fact, since the Atlanta City Council passed a resolution for backyard garbage collection, some residents had brandished guns to chase off garbage workers multiple times.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Interview with Finley Holmes, Marion Cullens, Wayne Moreau, Melvin Leeks, and Ron Reliford, reprinted in “Bird Gets Inside Dirt from Garbage Workers,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 4, 1974, pg. 4, 15.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Finley Holmes, Marion Cullens, Wayne Moreau, Melvin Leeks, and Ron Reliford, reprinted in “Bird Gets Inside Dirt from Garbage Workers,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, February 4, 1974, pg. 4, 15.

At one house, Holmes picked up over three hundred pounds of trash, filled with a garbage worker's nightmares: decaying food and heavy telephone books. One of his coworkers, Wayne Moreau, salvaged as he collected the trash. By the end of a month, Moreau recovered three toasters, pots, pans, an electric skillet, two radios, a 10-speed bicycle, a chess set, a globe, a 10-gallon hat, records, pants, shirts, socks, ties, a basketball and football, a Frisbee, a diving mask, a pair of tennis shoes, and a working color television set. Holmes and other coworkers' pride refused to let them salvage, but Moreau relished collecting the items that the wealthy threw away and helped him save money.²⁷⁰

Holmes experienced a daily routine of pain and agony. Very few days passed where he did not cut himself on garbage cans, regravate his back injury lifting cans, or fall off the moving truck. In fact, Holmes witnessed former coworkers crushed under the wheels after falling under their truck. Health insurance could have provided some relief for Holmes, except he and others never viewed their policy with the city of Atlanta. Coworker Melvin Leeks noted that he had not seen one since 1962. When a worker went to the hospital, nobody from the City Hall, union, or city employee base knew how to deal with the bill. Coworker Marion Cullens said the City cancelled his insurance while he was injured because he was unable to afford his premium. A garbage truck ran him over and he lost the feeling in his right leg. When he was taken to Grady Hospital, the doctor told him he was fine to return to work. When Cullens went to his own private doctor, they rushed him to another hospital for overnight observation.²⁷¹

Both Holmes and Cullens knew coworkers who were docked vacation and sick leave pay because they were too injured to report to work. Many of Holmes' injured coworkers quit to end

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 15.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, pg. 15.

the “cycle of dirt and scum and maggots and rain and cold and dogs.” At the time, Atlanta city sanitation held the reputation as a transient occupation because many workers grew frustrated, tired, or resentful of their treatment at the hands of the city. For over 52 years, though, Holmes repeated this same repetitive circuit and always collected his \$19 a day (private garbage collection in the suburbs started higher), returned to the barn, changed his clothes, and went to the bar or home to drink a bottle of wine or six-pack of beer.²⁷²

As Karl Marx argued, black garbage workers like Holmes experienced alienation from their labor because they possessed no self-determination in their work, conditions, and were disconnected from the relations within production. As a result of the repetitive nature of garbage collection for an extended period, Holmes only found fulfillment in activities outside of labor—among his kin and friends in the neighborhoods. Marx stated that “the activity of working, which is potentially the source of human self-definition and human freedom, is...degraded to a necessity for staying alive.” Marx continued, “In his work, the laborer does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside of work, and in his work feels outside of himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home.”²⁷³ The Atlanta garbage workers described this repetition in similar, stark detail:

“When you head out on the route speed is the most important thing, speed and rhythm. And it goes like this: gun the truck, four houses to go, down the street, up the driveway, out of the truck (watch for dogs here), find those cans, (in the garage again), a kick and a lift

²⁷² *Ibid*, pg. 4, 15.

²⁷³ Karl Marx, “Estranged Labor,” in *The Marx and Engels Reader* (ed. Robert C. Tucker). Second Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978, pg. 74.

and a heft to the shoulders, back to the truck, little spillover there, bit more heft, damn heavy, dump it in, gun the truck, backing most important, fishtailing down those long drives, back to the street, back to the Mother Truck to lose my two-ton load.”²⁷⁴

This alienation created the conditions for black labor militancy among municipal employees. Although some scholars defined the 1973-1974 period as a “strike wave in the city,” they also overlooked the relationship between the collapsing political economy in 1975 and the upsurge of renewed social movement action. Joblessness for African Americans reached a peak of 14.5 percent in September of that year—a post-World War II high—and remained above 10 percent through April of 1977. After the first quarter of 1977, black women’s unemployment rate was 12.2 percent while that of black men was at 11.5 percent. During these same periods, white unemployment never rose above 4.5 percent for men and 6.3 percent for women.²⁷⁵

Thus, between 1975 and April 1977—at the height of Great Depression-level unemployment and wage cuts for black people—municipal employees withheld labor in Atlanta 49 times and withdrew approximately 46,404 work hours from the city!²⁷⁶ In other words, the threat to black city workers’ labor power also threatened their homes, neighborhoods, and kin—the life fulfillment they sought outside of work. Concurrently, black labor militancy was a means to exert control over their labor power. Autonomy in labor meant that workers could experience as much fulfillment at work as at home, breaking the repetitive disconnectedness in alienation.

Much of the fuel driving the workers’ anger derived from the city declaring that the revenue crisis meant no cost of living raises—while at the same time City Hall continued to

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 74

²⁷⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1975, 1976, 1977.

²⁷⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics report on the Number of Work Stoppages in the City of Atlanta, 1 April 1977, Box 114, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

allocate major funds to MARTA construction, Central Business District revitalization, the Georgia World Congress Center, and hotel and convention center projects. Workers understood this as detrimental in two ways. First, the money municipal workers needed to survive was not available because of urban development projects. Second, the execution of these projects threatened to disrupt black neighborhoods even further. Thus, union contract negotiations with the city were tense. Atlanta denied the union an 18 percent pay increase, cost of living escalator for all public workers, a guarantee of no layoffs, cutbacks, furlough days, and reduction in public services.²⁷⁷

City employees went on the offensive on March 17, 1975 when 500 sanitation workers stormed city council chambers to confront the administration about the recently announced five furlough days. Loud chants of “WE WANT MORE MONEY!” and “CITY SAYS CUT BACK, WE SAY FIGHT BACK!” stalled city council business for hours. City Hall called the SWAT squad and Commissioner of Public Safety Reginald Eaves to mediate the standoff so business could continue. To add insult to injury, all 500 city workers sat in on the meeting where the city council approved a \$3 million renovation to the Bobby Jones golf course in affluent Northwest Atlanta. The following Friday, the council invited AFSCME workers, the Afro-American Patrolman’s League, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the Laborers International Union as a “goodwill” gesture to hear union grievances in the city. However, it is safe to assert that by inviting both police unions to City Hall during a highly contentious battle over control of the police, the Black Urban Regime diluted the sanitation workers’ time to speak on their contract negotiations. Consequently, 400 city workers arrived but were denied the time to speak. They held an impromptu protest outside of City Hall and alerted community supporters of coordinated

²⁷⁷ “City Workers Storm City Council More Demonstrations Planned,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, March 27, 1975, pg. 1.

protests in the future, including the Atlanta School Board, Grady Hospital, and the Fulton County Commissioners Office.²⁷⁸

As the worker's movement built, Jackson's Black Urban Regime not only stood firm on their claim of financial strain, but also initiated a public relations offensive to both fracture support for the city employees and alert the bourgeois class of their allegiance to Atlanta's investment future. In March 1976, Jackson admitted he had not requested pay raises for city employees, but was happy to announce that the 1976 Atlanta City Council Appropriations Committee did provide "sufficient funds for a 4.25 percent increase for the 70 percent of city employees who are entitled to an annual one-step increment." Jackson concluded that "there was simply no source of funds which could provide sufficient money to meet that level of needs without a tax increase." By 1977, the cost of living increased 15-20 percent.²⁷⁹ In other words, Jackson assured real estate, corporations, and homeowners that he would not put their wealth—meaning institute a property tax—at the behest of city workers. I argue that this represented Jackson's biggest test to determine where Atlanta's future lay—with the black majority working class residents, or a black bourgeois and petty bourgeois power base with affluent whites. Jackson redrew the power dynamics across race and via class in Atlanta and proved his allegiance to capital. For Atlanta's bourgeois class, destabilizing black working-class resistance held as many stakes as building airports, convention centers, and banking structures—the beacons of global finance.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Statement by Maynard Jackson on City of Employee ages and Benefits, 10 March 1976, Box 108, Folder 2, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

The city workers, however, countered Jackson's claim with their own public political education campaign. First, Research Atlanta discovered that the City Council appropriated, but had not spent, \$2,025,000 for purchasing new police cars, new garbage trucks, bulldozers, and other construction equipment. The city defended their decision to not use the funds for public employee raises by stating that "by eliminating heavy equipment, the costs of repairing what we have now would be higher than the purchase of new items and in this case, too, Atlantans would suffer a loss of efficient service delivery."²⁸⁰ AFSCME argued that not only had the U.S. economy trended upward since the second quarter of 1975, but that Jackson reported false revenue figures to the public. For example, AFSCME reported that with a 1975 actual property tax collection of \$33,602,000, a 3 percent growth rate over 1975 produced another \$1 million. If the \$1 million was added to the 1975 figure, the 1976 property tax collection would be \$34,602,000. If the difference between the estimate and the updated budget prediction of 1976—\$1 million—was used to finance pay raises, then it would ease the 1976 and 1977 budget. Additionally, city workers pointed to an obvious possible revenue source: hotels and motels. They argued that since hotel construction was one of the largest projects in the city, an extra \$300,000 could be realized through a hotel-motel tax. Next, the employees advocated for liquor sales on Sunday to raise another \$1 million. Finally, the union claimed that the city hid approximately \$900,000 in the contingency fund and \$1 million in the auto fund.²⁸¹ By the end of 1976, the workers and City Hall defined the battle lines for the Atlanta Metropolitan Region

²⁸⁰ Untitled document detailing a \$2 million budget appropriation, undated, Box 114, Folder 16, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁸¹ AFSCME Final Pints of the City of Atlanta 1976 Budget, 14 July 1976, Box 114, Folder 10, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

and both continued to escalate tensions via work stoppages, police harassment, and a public relations war.

Two months before the strike, the power structure fired their first warning shot. In mid-January 1977, dangerous below freezing temperatures struck Atlanta. Many garbage workers refused to work in those temperatures and the city denied their wages. AFSCME filed grievances for loss pay, citing inclement weather. On February 7, Jackson issued a statement refusing to return loss wages to workers:

“time today was too short to permit me to address the merits or demerits of the issue of work during cold and inclement weather... the refusal of some city employees to work when properly instructed to do so and when the facts did not justify their refusal resulted in Commission Funnye making the decision in question. I support Commissioner Funnye’s decision...I trust that you will report back to your respective jobs...so there will be no further loss in pay and so that the services which we are charged with providing to the taxpayers and other citizens of Atlanta can continue.”²⁸²

Jackson continued his hard-line stance against unions in early March by railing against dues checkoff for public employees—setting the stage for a showdown:

“I...have reemphasized to the [city] council my position that the city of Atlanta Should not...recognize or engage in collective bargaining, per se, with any union Attempting to organize public employees in Georgia... it can be no other way...strikes by public employees...are unlawful under Georgia state law and will not be tolerated.”²⁸³

By the second week of March, city workers responded by announcing their intent to strike if Jackson did not meet their demands. On March 10, the workers released their “final offer” in an

²⁸² Statement by Mayor Maynard Jackson Regarding Docked Pay for Workers, 7 February 1977, Box 114, Folder 10, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁸³ Press Release Statement by Maynard Jackson regarding Dues Checkoff, 3 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

addendum to their contract proposal demanding the following: 1) Atlanta be liable for all damages, death, and injuries that may be caused by any union member while operating any city vehicle or equipment as part of his or her duties or with proper authorization, 2) the City will pay the full premiums for all employees and their dependents for hospitalization, medical and dental care to cover the standard cost of such care in the Atlanta area, and 3) no layoffs of employees represented by AFSCME.²⁸⁴ In the meantime, black working class neighborhoods whipped into an organizing frenzy to support the potential strike. Figure C.3 shows one of the many informational flyers workers flooded throughout the city.²⁸⁵ Concurrently, AFSCME exposed the local battle to international audiences with a *New York Times* advertisement that presented the union negotiations as a power struggle between the poor residents and a business-friendly mayor who betrayed his people:

THE FALCONS AREN'T THE ONLY LOSING TEAM IN ATLANTA. TRY CITY HALL. Atlanta has seen four years of bickering, squabbling, phonyism and cronyism at City Hall. The score: higher taxes, poorer services, boarded up schools, dirtier streets... The mayor was for her [the people] then against her. She [the people] got tired of the Posturing... everybody's penalized. \$18 million in taxes, most of it owed by businesses, Go uncollected. The Falcons have hired a new coach. It's time for one at City Hall.²⁸⁶

Once word reached his office of the *New York Times* ad, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President Richard L. Kattel sent an angry correspondence to the Legislative Action Committee

²⁸⁴ AFSCME Local 1644 Union Proposal, 10 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 12, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁸⁵ See Appendix C.3 for the flyer.

²⁸⁶ AFSCME advertisement in *The New York Times*, 29 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

appealing for bourgeois networks to support the City of Atlanta and Maynard Jackson against the “union threat”:

“Mayor Jackson and the majority of the Atlanta City Council have stood firm against attempts by public employee unions to assert undue influence in the operations of city government...The Mayor and Council need our support. Atlanta has been singled out by organized labor for public employee union efforts...if you are concerned about organized labor’s attempt to take over city government, write Mayor Jackson and the members of the Atlanta City Council expressing your support for their efforts to treat all citizens and employees in Atlanta fairly while maintaining efficient and economical delivery of government services...ACT NOW!²⁸⁷

This line of anti-worker propaganda represented the most bourgeois characteristic of the Jackson Black Urban Regime. By promoting the idea that black workers—who organized a union for legal protection of their right to collectively bargain—acted as pawns in a power play by an outside entity removed agency from the very black constituency that fought to elect Jackson and his city council. Rank-and-File black workers did not practice “service model unionism”—meaning they did not believe that the workers and the union were two separate entities. Rather, they practiced an *organizing* model where they consciously understood *themselves* as the union that worked to liberate their own labor power from exploitation. What Jackson and the city power structure failed to comprehend was that their propaganda was not only anti-union; it was an anti-black working-class attack on the character, agency, and legitimacy of low-income black Atlantans. In clearer terms, Jackson’s Black Urban Regime sought to delegitimize black municipal workers’ capacity to understand their class position and organizing power against racial oppression.

²⁸⁷ Atlanta Chamber of Commerce correspondence to the Legislative Action Committee on the NYTimes ad, 30 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

With both sides at an impasse in negotiations, the workers struck first. On March 29, 1977, over one thousand AFSCME Local 1644 public employees from sanitation and water works walked off their jobs for an indefinite strike over an insufficient wage proposal. This marked the second major public employee strike in Atlanta in less than a decade. Strike support advertisements flooded the black weekly *The Atlanta Voice* with directions for picket sign pick up, where to send resources, and general information. By the end of the first day, over 84 percent of the city's garbage remained uncollected, 0 of the 18 garbage collection crews from the Hill Street substation reported to work, 0 of the 19 crews at the Liddell Drive substation showed up, and only 10 total crews in the entire city crossed the picket line. Strikers also removed keys from garbage trucks to stop workers from crossing the picket line at some stations. Jackson, on the other hand, spent the day assuring media that the strike would not affect city operations and warned that there may not be enough garbage and water work for union members to remain certified—thus he indirectly threatened a membership card check to scare workers into reporting to work. He finished the day promoting the Chamber of Commerce idea that striking black city workers served as “pawns” of the union to take over Atlanta.²⁸⁸

On April 1, 1977, Jackson sent the following letter by registered mail to every striker who did not report to work on March 30:

Because you have refused to comply with your superior's written order of March 30, 1977 that you report to work, prepared to perform your assigned duties as a employee of the City of Atlanta, on Friday, April 1, 1977, no later than your regularly scheduled time for reporting to work, you are hereby notified that you are terminated from employment with The City of Atlanta, effective immediately,

²⁸⁸ Correspondence from Sam A. Hider regarding Effects of Demonstration by Sanitation Employees, 29 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 12, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; “City Workers Walkout,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 2, 1977, pg. 1, 13.

Friday, April 1, 1977...²⁸⁹

His letter escalated his war against black workers and elevated his standing among Atlanta's power structure. By firing the strikers, Jackson took advantage of the unstable political economy and high unemployment rate at the time to entice people to cross the picket line for a job. He not only broke the strike, but he also delivered a mortal wound to organized labor in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region. By April 4, 49 percent of garbage collection resumed, and some picket lines had closed, for instance at the Liddell Drive Substation.²⁹⁰ To further fracture the workers, Jackson followed up his termination letter with another registered mailing to all fired workers—essentially taunting them by attaching an empty job application:

The city of Atlanta has over 1,000 applications from persons applying for your former job. These new applicants are being put to work each day. It was unfortunate that you, along with many other employees, were dismissed...We wish to invite you to fill out the attached application... the City cannot give a pay raise this year...It is unfortunate that they [strikers/union] ignored this and advised you to abandon your job...²⁹¹

Jackson's hard-nose union busting approach produced desirable results for his Black Urban Regime strategy—the strike weakened as the days rolled by and Atlanta's white and black power structures showered him with congratulations and praise. Thomas K. Hamall, Vice President of the Chamber of Commerce, Dan Sweat, President of Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), Lyndon Wade, Executive Director of the Atlanta Urban League, Franklin O'Neal,

²⁸⁹ Termination letter sent to all striking public employee workers, 1 April 1977, Box 108, Folder 3, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁹⁰ Correspondence from Sam A. Hider regarding the Effects of Demonstration by Sanitation Employees, 5 April 1977, Box 114, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁹¹ Letter to Terminated workers on strike, 5 April 1977, Box 108, Folder 3, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

Executive Director of Atlanta Business League, Rebecca English, Chairperson of the Citywide Advisory Council on Public Housing, Reverend Howard Creecy, Vice President of Atlanta Baptist Ministers Union, and Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr.,—who was responsible for weakening the 1970 Sanitation Strike—united at a solidarity press release to praise Jackson’s union busting:

“We are here together today to express our mutual and deep concern for this city and its workers and to express our support for Mayor Maynard Jackson in his dealings with Local 1644...we deplore the tactics of this union which purports to represent some city workers, while using these same workers in a cynical power play aimed at taking over city government in Atlanta and a campaign to discredit Atlanta generally and Mayor Jackson in particular. They have made their point and it is time for city services to return to normal.”²⁹²

Despite his son Martin Luther King Jr. sacrificing his life for the rights of black municipal garbage workers in the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike, King Sr. saw fit to align with the Atlanta corporate elite to remove vital resources-fair labor conditions-from black sanitation workers and black working-class neighborhoods. In one of the only articles praising Jackson in the publication’s history, *The Atlanta Journal*—who spent the entirety of Jackson’s tenure vilifying him and the black polity—thanked the mayor for essentially putting black militancy in its place. According to the white daily, Jackson “stood firm despite a smear campaign that has hurled all manner of invective against him...AFSCME sought to use city employees as pawns in a power struggle. And Mayor Jackson would have none of it.”²⁹³

²⁹² Joint Press Release Praising Mayor Maynard Jackson’s actions During the Strike, Undated, Box 116, Folder 16, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁹³ Statement from *The Atlanta Journal* executive board Congratulating Jackson for firing striking workers, 26 April 1977, Box 108, Folder 4, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

The black working-class neighborhoods and supporters regrouped and responded strongly. Black working-class neighborhood leaders Ethel Mae Matthews, Eva Davis, Gene Ferguson, Gene Guerrero, and Marian Green kept the strike alive with community rallies, political education information sessions, picket sign ups, and strike supply collection. Figure C.4 shows a community strike rally flyer during the fourth week of the strike.²⁹⁴

Left-leaning university professors joined in supporting the striking workers. Black political scientist Mack H. Jones released the most inflammatory statement—highlighting the class characteristics of the Atlanta power structure’s subjugation of black workers and equating Jackson’s regime with the racist violence that sieged Memphis sanitation strikers in 1968:

“It is indeed tragically ironic that on the ninth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who was felled by assassin’s bullets when he was in Memphis to support the strike of that city’s predominantly black sanitation workers, the black mayor of Atlanta announced that he was firing some one thousand low paid and predominantly black workers who were on strike seeking a wage increase and humane working conditions...The tragedy and irony were heightened by the fact that a group of self-styled leaders led by Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., and orchestrated by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce met in the opulent quarters of the Chamber [to] endorse the mayor’s firing of the workers and to complain that the union’s tactics were damaging the city’s image...”²⁹⁵

Jones concluded his statement by pointing out that “just as the city finds the money to pay fat salaries to the Mayor, Commissions, and Department heads, restore old civil war paintings, and other matters of high priority it can and must find the money to pay city workers livable wages.”²⁹⁶ A group of unidentified college professors united to not only condemn Jackson, but

²⁹⁴ See Appendix C.4 for the Community Rally Flyer.

²⁹⁵ “In Solidarity with Striking City Workers,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 9, 1977, pg. 1; For more of Jones’ critique of Atlanta’s local government and economics, see Mack H. Jones, “Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality,” in Mack H. Jones (ed.), *Knowledge, Power, and Black Politics: Collected Essays*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014, pp. 97-141.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 97-141.

to also elicit unconditional support via collecting supplies and documenting City Hall's actions during the labor strike. Additionally, the professors called out the union busting measures in Jackson's tactics: "the anti-worker, anti-union crusade of Mayor Jackson...is now demanding that union allow the city to pick and choose among fired workers to determine who will be rehired...those workers who took the lead in standing up for their rights will not be rehired. Other politically conscious workers will be shifted around so that continuity of the workers movement would be compromised."²⁹⁷

The Ad Hoc Committee in Support of Striking Sanitation Workers sharpened the radical perspective of the strike, condemning Jackson and the Atlanta power structure and illuminating the alienation in sanitation work:

"We have assembled here today to declare and to demonstrate our support of the striking sanitation workers who, with their arms, their legs, their backs, perform the filthiest, most backbreaking work in the city. We condemn Mayor Maynard Jackson for his ruthlessness. Mayor Jackson, who won his election because of the support given to him by unions, is now engaging in anti-union activity. Mayor Jackson, be it known, is a strike breaker, a union buster. We recognize, however, that the struggle of these workers is no against Maynard Jackson as an individual. This struggle is against the state, against the government, against the powerful business interests of this city who Maynard represent."²⁹⁸

William Lucy, a former Chairman of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, criticized Jackson's "hypocritical character"—citing the mayor's background in labor law: "[he] understands labor, one who has practiced at the trade, one who has given all the slogans...about the rights of

²⁹⁷ Press Release by Undersigned Faculty Members of Colleges and Universities Located in Metropolitan Atlanta, 19 April 1977, Box 114, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

²⁹⁸ Press Release by the Ad Hoc Committee in Support of Striking Sanitation Workers, 12 April 1977, Box 114, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

working people and, at the same time, when a confrontation occurs...takes the ultimate action of firing employees...[that] is absolutely unforgivable.”²⁹⁹

Despite rallying support against Jackson, the strike fizzled out by the first week of May. By that point, many new workers replaced the terminated strikers and almost all the city’s garbage collection had resumed. With the high rate of unemployment at the time, the mayor’s declaration to consider rehiring fired workers was estimated to take years to complete. Concurrently, Jackson sent word to the few workers still on strike that his terms for ending the impasse was for AFSCME to sign a no strike clause and accept no pay raises. By the end of May, all positions were filled, mostly by new employees. Strike leaders who attempted to re-apply for their jobs were told by supervisors “they are no longer wanted.”³⁰⁰ This defeat weakened organized labor in Atlanta for decades. Black working-class residents no longer possessed the vast neighborhood resources they once did during the era of Black Power to organize strong social movements across the region. A combination of increased police power, Andrew Young-led neoliberalization in Atlanta, and the oncoming Reagan-led neo-conservative movement—discussed in the next chapter—destabilized black Atlanta neighborhoods through gentrification, underemployment, and mass racialized incarceration. Police repression, through the manipulation of the political economy of crime, further threatened black working-class neighborhood social movement capacity.

²⁹⁹ Press Release Story from America’s Black Forum, 7 May 1977, Box 114, Folder 16, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁰⁰ Memorandum to Maynard Jackson Regarding Retaliation Against Strikers, 2 May 1977, Box 108, Folder 4, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

Police Repression and Resistance: The Political Economy of Crime in Atlanta

On May 14, 1973, Black Citizens Against Police Repression declared a self-defense war against the Atlanta Police Department. The coalition of black radical community organizations included the Ujamaa Society of Atlanta University, African Liberation Support Committee, the Black Workers Congress, the Committee for Independent Black Politics, Georgia Prisoners Observers Committee, the People's Committee to Insure Justice, and the Atlanta Chapter of the Black Panther Party. Their united front was born out of an increasing number of police murders of black residents in the low-income neighborhoods that surrounded the Central Business District.³⁰¹

The Atlanta Police Department's racist history gave black Atlantans genuine reason to defend themselves from state violence. According to former Atlanta police chief Herbert Jenkins, who served in the position from 1947 until 1972, "it was helpful to join the Ku Klux Klan to be an accepted member of the [police] force. This was your ID card, the badge of honor with the in group, and it was...an allegiance stronger than the policeman's oath to society." Jenkins, who himself joined the Klan when he became an officer in 1933, added that "the Klan was powerful in that it worked behind the scenes with certain members of the Police Committee and the City Council."³⁰² Thus, white nationalist ideology served as the foundation for the Atlanta Police Department and influenced not only its internal policies and culture, but also in its political machinations in the city. More clearly, the police's rooted racism informed its

³⁰¹ Statement by the Black Citizens Against Police Repression, printed in "Black Citizens vs. Police," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 14, 1973, pg. 7.

³⁰² Herbert Jenkins, *Keeping the Peace: A Police Chief Looks at His Job*. New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970, pp. 4-5.

relationships with Atlanta's business leaders, political officials, and working-class residents through much of the city's history.

Fourteen-year old Andre Moore's murder by police in 1970 escalated an already violent relationship between black Atlanta and the Atlanta Police Department. In August officers J.M. Colbert and H.F. Pharr provoked an altercation with 14-year old Andre Moore. The officers shot Moore in the back twice as he ran for his life in Summerhill screaming for his little sister's help. Summerhill responded with many self-defense measures, including placing snipers on rooftops to surveil police officers who entered the neighborhood, organizing boycotts of downtown businesses, and community police marshals. When the City refused to indict the officers, Summerhill erupted in rebellion burning two major white owned businesses to the ground and initiating boycotts of downtown businesses.³⁰³

Black working-class Atlanta remained on high alert for police after Moore's death rocked the area. Both sides had previously clashed during the following movement actions: the 1970 Sanitation Strike, after police shot community residents while picketing the Holy Family Hospital in 1972, and when police stormed East Lake Meadows to evict a resident organizing the tenants' union that same year. In other words, police had been extremely active in attempting to repress black working-class social movement action during the Black Power Era. The creation of the Black Citizens Against Police represented a shift in the relationship between black communities and the Atlanta Police. As black worker protests against policing of their neighborhoods escalated, Jackson strengthened his position within the police hierarchy and established a Commissioner of Public Safety. This figure had authority over the police chief and reported directly to the Mayor—drawing another thread of local power into the web of the

³⁰³ "MURDER!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 10, 1970;

Jackson Black Urban Regime. After restructuring local police power, Jackson made a “law and order” crackdown on crime a centerpiece of his administration. But what exactly did crime mean in mid-1970s Atlanta?

To understand how Maynard Jackson’s Black Urban Regime strategy contributed to police repression against the black poor, it is important to examine the political economy of crime and why it is important to define crime through class struggle. By 1973, Atlanta possessed the highest murder rate of any city in the country—51.3 homicides for every 100,000 people, almost triple the average for other U.S. cities with populations of 250,000 or more. For combined serious crime, including robberies, burglaries, homicides, rapes, and aggravated assaults, Atlanta ranked third in the nation—66.8 per 1,000 residents, or about one-third above the national average for cities above 250,000 population.³⁰⁴

Although these numbers seem alarming, crime must be understood in class struggle terms. From the perspective of the working classes, Karl Marx contended that for wages to remain at a subsistence level, workers must possess weak bargaining power—meaning that they do not have the ability to leave their employer and secure a job somewhere else. Under capitalism, Marx stated, capitalists maintain a weak bargaining system through a large supply of unemployed workers. Workers cannot simply leave their job or agitate their employer into firing them because the probability of procuring another job with such a large supply of the unemployed is very low. This surplus of unemployed—“the reserve army of labor”—ebbs and flows in size based on the instability of the political economy. When combined with racial formations over the United States history— including slavery, Jim Crow apartheid, proletarianization and ghettoization, and finally, racialized mass incarceration—members of the

³⁰⁴ “Crime,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 20, 1973, pg. 4-5.

African American working-classes are disproportionately more likely to fall out of the class structure and fluctuate throughout the reserve army. While most of the reserve army remains in labor participation—meaning they actively search for work and report their unsuccessful searches to government bureaus to secure transfer payments, some workers have no means to secure employment in the recognized legal labor market. As Marx contended, poverty is “the hospital of the active labor-army and the dead weight of the...reserve army.” Thus, workers leave the class structure and engage in “criminal activity,” such as the production, sale, or distribution of controlled substances, grand and petty larceny, and illegal lotteries. It is appropriate to label these individuals as illegal capitalists because their means to secure income is both a product of exploitation and resembles the same monopolistic, individualist, profit-seeking characteristics of the legal capitalist class.³⁰⁵

The *lumpenproletariat*—as Marx dubbed them—must engage in the same exploitative practices as legal capitalists to make a meaningful living for themselves, family, or neighborhood kin. In social terms, French philosopher Jacques Ranciere provided an apt description to build a contemporary understanding of illegal capitalists who are displaced by global finance capital. “For the proletariat,” Ranciere explained, “the lumpen [are] the workers renouncing their revolutionary vocation and resorting to self-preservation.” However, Ranciere also alluded to the lumpenproletariat acting in similar manner to the financial aristocracy by “snatching productive wealth” in the form of territorial monopolies in both urban centers and rural spaces.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ For Marx’s extensive conceptualization of the lumpenproletariat, see Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Translated by Moore and Engels. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990; Karl Marx, “The Class Struggles in France,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 19. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978; Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: penguin, 1976

³⁰⁶ For Marx’s extensive conceptualization of the lumpenproletariat, see Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Translated by Moore and Engels. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990; Karl Marx, “The Class Struggles in France,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 19. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978; Karl

As downturns in the economy—such as the Great Recessions of 1951, 1975, 1983, and 2008—produce higher numbers of reserve army, it in effect raises the potential for more people to fall out of the class structure, end their labor participation, and join the lumpenproletariat. Consequently, as the size of the lumpen expands, they threaten to reduce the size of earnings for previously-established lumpen—resulting in conflict over territorial/monopolistic control that is often violent. In clearer terms, I argue that the instability of the capital and labor markets influences the size of the lumpenproletariat and subsequently the intensity of violence in the underground economy. Illegal capitalists must not only acquire and sustain a viable profit, but, in many cases, also display a hypermasculine mannerism to remove the possibility of competition, expand a monopoly over territory, strengthen their brand or reputation, or risk losing that revenue source. Popular examples can range from pirated movie and music street sales, to rival gangs warring over turf for their drug trade, or the illegal lottery wars in 1920s Harlem between Ellsworth “Bumpy” Johnson, Madame Queen Stephanie St. Clair, Charles “Lucky” Luciano, and Dutch Schultz. A more urban regional instance includes drug syndicates in major urban centers like Chicago expanding distribution nodes in smaller, surrounding metropolitan areas like Champaign County. To uproot previously entrenched syndicates, illegal capitalists must engage in monopolistic competition through three possible means: 1) buying out the competition, 2) brand rivalry, or 3) territorial war. All three generally result in violence. On the other hand, a loss in monopolistic competition could result in a “black out,” or barring the individual or group from participation in the underground economy.

Although bourgeois and petty bourgeois media, academia, and other forms of cultural production incorrectly pathologize African Americans as predisposed toward crime, I argue that

Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976; For Ranciere’s analysis of the lumpenproletariat, see Jacques Ranciere, *Le Philosophe et se pauvres*. (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), pg. 145.

the political economy of crime is an inherent social condition to capitalist exploitation. Many individuals that sit at the top of illegal empires are non-black, but like vampires, they accrue surplus profits off the exploitation of a disproportionate number of black working-class people subjugated by the racist labor market and seeking any form of income. Crime—for most working-class people unfortunate enough to fall out of the class structure and join the lumpenproletariat—serves as their only means to procure the needs for human survival.

Concurrently, pathologizing crime along racial lines served the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes in urban spaces in four strategic ways: 1) it justifies apartheid and restricting control and access to public and private resources, 2) it fractures ethnic groups over ideological and class lines, 3) it criminalizes the insurgent poor, thus reshaping racial formations, and 4) it devalues, or blights the land and property in black working-class neighborhoods. In other words, I argue that the Jackson Black Urban Regime utilized his war on crime to destabilize and criminalize active, low-income black residents—whether they engaged in criminal activity or not. Black Power had replaced Atlanta’s “City Too Busy to Hate” image with one of mass racial struggles and violent clashes between forces vying for control of the city. The City’s power structure sought to reinvigorate the region’s viability as a peaceful oasis where working class resistance was at a minimum—ripe for capital accumulation. Thus, they concentrated the underground economy away from high business spaces and into the poorest sections of the city. This resulted in Black Power’s declension and the onset of neoliberalization in black urban neighborhoods.

During the height of Black Power in Atlanta, the power structure equated working class social movement run-ins with the police as criminal behavior—and potentially damaging to future investment interests. In August 1973, Atlanta’s black and white elites sponsored research

from the Metropolitan Atlanta Commission on Crime and Juvenile Delinquency—an ultra-right-wing organization headed by Atlanta market corporatist and private security force owner Dillard Munford and African American insurance giant and future president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Jesse Hill, Jr. Other affluent African American members of this group included Herman J. Russell, educator Horace Ward, and Lyndon Wade. The commission argued that Atlanta must construct a “campaign to eliminate undesirable business locations,” citing that 10th Street was a “gathering point for disorderly elements.” In other words, they equated crime with a significant black residential corridor. The Metropolitan Atlanta Commission on Crime and Juvenile Delinquency recommended “thorough investigation and use of undercover operations” to collect information to justify closing places that constitute a public nuisance by cancelling their business licenses. The paper concluded by urging “residents and operators and business located in the vicinity of these undesirable locations report to the police the nature of the activities which occur making them unattractive to the general public but a gathering point for hoodlum elements.”³⁰⁷

Once crime became the rallying cry for the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes, it provided justification for increasingly brutal tactics to isolate the black poor in enclaves away from areas of capital accumulation and disrupt their geographical and social interaction with private spaces outside of their neighborhoods. Munford continued his personal crusade to portray black “collective” activity in Atlanta as “undesirable” and in need of an extreme response:

“The mayor...his actions of being Mayor for only the Black people of the city needs no support...he deserves none, at least from the White people as they are no longer part of the city...As of right now, if I could move every store, every office, and every warehouse my company has

³⁰⁷ “Big Business Declares War on Crime,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 25, 1973, pg. 1, 10.

out of the city, I would do it, as I think we are sitting on a time bomb... Frankly, I'm terrified at the future of Atlanta...the city won't survive... if it is to become a) all Black; b) a welfare capitol; c) a crime haven; d) the crime capitol of the South..."³⁰⁸

Atlanta's power structure attempted to scare the "crime crisis" into the residents via the local media. In late August 1973, they sponsored a 90-minute "community dialogue" called "Murder in Atlanta," on WSB-TV. The program featured several affluent panelists discussing the causes of crime—including Howard Stanback of the National Association of Black Social Workers, Psychologist Dennis Jackson, Marvin Marcus, a White Georgia State University professor, and Reverend Joseph E. Boone of Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference.³⁰⁹

Although elites screamed crime, many of the "anti-crime" laws the city government passed impeded black social movement action. On March 20, 1970, Atlanta passed a law that resembled the Jim Crow-era Mississippi vagrancy black code. City Hall prohibited "loitering, spending time in idleness, lingering, sauntering idly, and lurking." According to the witnesses in City Hall that day, officials rushed the legislation through the Board of Aldermen to be used against the sanitation workers on strike. Two months later, Fulton County Superior Judge Luther Alverson approved a "no knock" rule for officers storming residencies—stating that "if officers announced their presence before entering it would endanger their lives and risk disposal of evidence." In September that year—in response to the rebellion sparked by Andre Moore's murder a month prior, Atlanta Police converted an old library book mobile into a new mobile police precinct in Summerhill. The following year—after three black Edgewood men were

³⁰⁸ Correspondence from Dillard Munford to Joel Stokes, 10 February 1975, Box 65, Folder 5, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁰⁹ "Community Dialogue Reveals Causes but Not Solutions," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 25, 1973, pg. 3

beaten by police—African Americans organized multiple protests that culminated in hearings against the perpetrators. In response, the Police Aldermanic Committee declared that citizen police brutality reports would no longer be made public in Atlanta. Additionally, Atlanta residents were no longer permitted to address the police committee directly concerning any police violence complaint.³¹⁰

Black Atlantans adapted their self-defense resistance to these new police powers with some success. On March 23, 1972, Atlanta police no-knocked the Atlanta chapter of the Black Panther Party offices in Kirkwood in East Atlanta. The officers claimed they had a warrant for someone that the Panthers never heard of, but they used the warrant as an excuse to search the headquarters. Within the hour, Kirkwood residents swarmed the headquarters to prevent any incidents with the police.³¹¹

Jackson also spent much of his tenure securing massive funds for police expansion—demonstrating to the power structure that he was the right choice to move the Atlanta Metropolitan Region towards their interests. Atlanta acquired its most significant funding grant in 1972 when the Nixon Administration’s Law Enforcement Assistance Administration sent \$20 million in “crime-fighting” funds the city. Funded programs included \$5,000 for classification of juvenile probation caseloads, \$3.5 million to add 100 more supervisors for adult probationers and parolees, and the establishment of a “shelter” for newly released offenders in need of financial or counseling services.³¹²

³¹⁰ “Lurking with Intent to Loiter,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 4, 1970, pg. 3; “Judge Approves No Knock Raid by law Officers,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 5, 1970, pg. 1; “Police Committee Nixes Public Brutality Hearings,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 10, 1971, pg. 1, 7; “Police Brutality,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 3, 1971, pg. 11;

³¹¹ “Police Beat,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 3, 1972, pg. 2.

³¹² “Mayor Names Task Force to Find Uses for \$20 million in crime-fighting grants,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 20, 1972, pg. 1.

However, these objectives shifted drastically when new Atlanta Police Chief John Inman was appointed to the executive committee that oversaw the planning for the federal grant. A close friend to former mayor Sam Massell who reportedly held close ties to organized crime figures, Inman skyrocketed up the ladder quickly—from a sergeant position in 1966 to chief of police in 1972. Inman’s philosophy aligned closely with Jackson’s in that he believed police should be a paramilitary occupying force. Inman’s first “innovation” arrived in January 1974 titled “Target Hardening through Opportunity Reduction” (THOR). The program consisted of six phases intended to “check such crimes as breaking and entering, burglary, and larceny of goods” from homes and businesses. The largest parts included residential surveys where police officers looked throughout a person’s home and demonstrated ways that the owner or renter could make it more difficult to break-in. Also, THOR recruited 50 to 100 businessmen to give talks and lectures as well as accompany security officers on residential surveys. Next, these businessmen recruited “right-thinking” people into an auxiliary police force. Thus, as journalists for *The Great Speckled Bird* put it, this equated to right-wing “vigilantes being used to search people’s house on whatever pretext.”³¹³

Inman almost immediately set in motion his plan to destabilize working class black Atlanta’s proto-nationalist thrust. In September 1972, Atlanta Police shocked the community by releasing their most recent edition of their newsletter *Signal 39*. On its fourth page under the headline, “Survival Information,” they issued a “Red List” detailing the names, aliases, and addresses of radical black neighborhood leaders for the police to target. The statement read as follows:

The following list of persons and addresses is furnished by the

³¹³ “Big Brother is Watching and Being Watched,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 5, 1973, pg. 10; “The Dangers of THOR,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 19, 1974 pg. 5E.

Intelligence Division in the hopes that it will enable the police officers of the Atlanta Police Department to stay alive. The following are some of the extremist militant individuals and addresses. Caution should be used when arresting these subjects or a call is received to these addresses. When approaching these addresses and individuals, request assistance and use extreme caution...”³¹⁴

The residents on the list included Atlanta Black Panther Party leaders Ron Carter and Samuel Lundy, All African People Party’s Willie Ricks, and many other local activists. The addresses listed were for both residence and headquarters. The Red List was sent to all levels of police. Multiple neighborhood organizations stormed the Police Aldermanic Committee the following Wednesday protesting the apparent criminalization of activists. “The people on this list are not criminals nor are they wanted for any crimes,” Mary Joyce Johnson of the National Lawyers Guild exclaimed. “They are on it because they are black or because of their exercise of rights under the first amendment to free expression of political ideas...This shoot to kill mentality is reminiscent of the murders of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by the Chicago police.” Inman shouted directly back at Johnson, “WHERE, YOUNG LADY, DID YOU GET THE IDEA THAT SHOOT-TO-KILL ORDERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN?!” Johnson responded, “What can be expected of these officers who are told to approach the people on this list with extreme caution and reinforcements, when they have been told the list has been furnished to help them stay alive?” Black attorney Edward Brook spoke next, condemning the Atlanta Police for “fostering racism when it issues to police officers a written license to kill.”

The most impactful statements came from the two top names on the Red List, Sam Lundy and Ron Carter, who both spoke at length. Carter stated it was now going to be very difficult to continue their Free Breakfast program for children at the locations on the Red List for fear of

³¹⁴ “Survival Information” from *Signal 39 Newsletter*, reprinted in *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 18, 1972, pg. 4.

violence or harm to the children and neighborhood residents. Lundy's testimony revealed that Atlanta police committed an illegal act when Lieutenant W.W. Holley infiltrated the Panther headquarters in Kirkwood posing as a building inspector. When confronted about this, Holley, visibly embarrassed, said, "Well, I just happened to look that building up, and it was due for inspection so I just went along with the building inspector. Anyway, I was only there for about three or four minutes when they recognized me and asked me to leave." Towards the end of the confrontation, a family of three approached the Police committee and asked why their address was on the list when the only thing they did was host two anti-Vietnam War discussion sessions.³¹⁵ By the end, black Atlantans learned the extent to which Atlanta police had infiltrated their organizing, meetings, and social spaces.

Learning about this infiltration angered many black residents, but the Red List served its purpose in alerting groups vying for control of Atlanta that police power was strengthening. It also paved the way for Inman to create his first tactical units to siege the black neighborhoods. In late 1973, the Stake-Out Squad and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) commenced operations—as head of the Afro-American Police League stated—to be an “execution squad.” STAKE-OUT—a plain-clothesman unit—was allotted \$1 million funding for 59 officers in Summer 1972 and within 13 days, they killed two black men by shooting them 29 times. SWAT Squad placed five squads—containing a commander, observer, automatic weapons man, shotgun man, and a riot control man—in five different quadrants in the city. Like the STRESS Unit deployed in Detroit at the time, STAKE-OUT and SWAT received training from the FBI and employed decoy methods to target then lure people into criminal situations. However, unlike

³¹⁵ “License to Kill,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 25, 1972, pg. 3.

STRESS, Atlanta Police Department selected black policemen to both units—seeking to delegitimize public accusations of racism against police forces.³¹⁶

SWAT and STAKE-OUT terrorized black Atlanta throughout the 1970s. In early April 1973, STAKE-OUT Detective E.F. White disguised himself as a derelict lying on the pavement in a parking lot off Whitehall Street when African American Charles Jerome Oliver attempted to go through his pockets. After Oliver found a fake roll of money wrapped in three one-dollar bills, White identified himself as a policeman, Oliver and his two friends attempted to run, but stopped when they heard warning shots. By that point, according to three eyewitnesses, 11 officers were on the scene. Oliver put his hands up, walked back to the police, and Officer H.F. Pharr put the barrel of his gun to the back of Oliver's neck, walked him to an empty parking lot, and squeezed the trigger without provocation. Oliver was a 23-year-old transplant to Atlanta who could not find work except for Kelly Labor—where he earned \$1.80 an hour on a temporary basis. He was killed by police for stealing \$3. By the end of the month, STAKE OUT had arrested over 200 individuals who they lured into allegedly breaking a law.³¹⁷

Not every police officer followed along Inman's new police structure and a few sought to expose the police department's corruption and disregard for life. On June 1, 1974, *The Atlanta Voice* published a damning testimony by two anonymous STAKE-OUT officers who worked on the unit for ten months before leaving. According to their testimony, their unit leader Captain Riley insisted that all officers "shoot to kill" and "entrap people" to "make arrests at all costs." The testimony's most shocking accusation was that Sergeant H.F. Pharr falsified the police report of 19-year-old African American David Jack, who was killed on April 20, 1974 on Plaza

³¹⁶ "Black Atlantans Fight Police State Tactics," *The great Speckled Bird*, April 2, 1973, pg. 7.

³¹⁷ "STAKE-OUT Murder," *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 7, 1973, pg. 3.

Way. Pharr reported that one of the bullets Detective Durham fired hit a fire alarm box, ricocheted backwards, and struck David Jack in his chest. The two officers concluded their statement by demanding that Captain Riley and other decorated officers be removed from the STAKE-OUT and DECOY Squads and that “many of the tactics used by the [Decoy and STAKE-OUT] squad should be eliminated, and more humane methods be introduced.”³¹⁸

The terror continued when STAKE-OUT Officer Daniel P. Bowens killed 29-year-old African American Charles Henry Underwood, a migrant from Muskegon, Michigan, with eight bullets—making Underwood the fifth black man killed by Bowens in 30 months. Bowens had previously shot and killed two black robbery suspects on Christmas Eve and March 1971, respectively. STAKE-OUT Officer J.W. Carlise killed 60-year old African American construction worker Ernest Hilson a week later, after Hilson allegedly attempted to sexually harass a white STAKE-OUT policewoman.³¹⁹

Inman soon-thereafter formed a new Intelligence Division operating on an \$80,000 grant to “control civil disturbances.” Their work grew out of the Red List as they surveilled local organizations that they considered “subversive.” As expected, the elite classes benefited the most from Inman’s police restructuring. Because most of the units materialized through the Atlanta Crime Commission’s “crime-fighting” federal funds, they focused predominantly on protecting private businesses and eliminating perceived threats to consumer spaces. By late 1974, Inman reported that crime against businesses was down. The Crusade Against Crime—founded by Maynard Jackson and championed by Dillard Munford—as well as the Atlanta Retail

³¹⁸ “Decoy Detectives Blast Riley,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 1, 1974, pg. 2.

³¹⁹ “Atlanta Cop Kills Blacks,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 13, 1973, pg. 8; “Ernest Hilson,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, August 20, 1973, pg. 6; “Police Review Fifth Slaying by Detective,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 5, 1973, pg. 3; “City Officer Moved Off Firing Line,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 9, 1973, pg. 20A.

Merchants Association, endorsed Inman, claiming he was doing an “outstanding job.”³²⁰

Inman’s police militarization plan laid the roots for Atlanta to transition from a resident urban space to a “user-consumer-first” space as these police units redrew imaginary boundaries between low income blacks and market-laden areas—restricting spatial as well as social access to public spaces and to protect future investments.

Inman’s new surveillance tactics in black Atlanta required both foot patrol and airborne surveillance. In the Fall of 1973, Inman and Jackson spent \$1.5 million on four new helicopters equipped with infrared body heat detection technology that could detect an individual behind a thick wall. According to Inman, the helicopters “greatly increase patrol capabilities,” because a patrol car covered 100 linear miles in an eight-hour shift while a helicopter covered over 300 miles in the same time. With his new weaponry, Inman expanded Atlanta Police’s helicopter patrol to 24-hour surveillance in April 1974. According to residents, the helicopters were sent out not only on specific assignments where a crime was committed; they also patrolled areas regularly, acting as aerial patrol cars. They also flew low near apartment windows, shone bright lights into rooms, and flew by neighborhoods three or four times a night. Black residents felt that the helicopter patrol was such an invasive operation that they did not feel comfortable holding meetings in their homes anymore. One resident let it be known that “I would rather put up with a few more burglaries in my neighborhood than feel that I was being spied upon by the police!”³²¹

Inman’s final plan involved subverting the local black alternative media—to take away a vital resource from working-class Black Atlanta. On April 8, 1974, African American police

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ “Police Helicopters Exposed,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, April 1, 1974, pg. 1, 3.

officer Marion Lee applied for employment at the *Atlanta Voice* newspaper—four days prior to graduating from the Atlanta Police Training Academy. She was hired as a typesetter at the paper. Unbeknown to the *Voice*, Lee altered her police department record to reflect that she had been fired from the department. She was not only assigned to the Intelligence Division right out of training, she was under the direct supervision of Inman himself. According to Lee—who confessed her deceit to the *Voice* after being discovered, her assignment entailed locating the *Voice*'s “source of information” regarding police corruption, STAKE-SQUAD brutality tactics, and “gestapo-style policing.”³²² Less than a week after the *Voice* outed Lee as a spy, Inman justified his infiltration of the office by accusing *Voice* guest contributor and black political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr. of being connected to the Symbionese Liberation Army. Inman admitted that he authorized Lee to bug the *Atlanta Voice*.³²³ Reed's response to Inman's charge as well as *The Atlanta Constitution* is noteworthy in its radical perspective of black working-class movements against racial oppression and the power structure in Atlanta:

“Inman's infiltration of one of his lackeys into the *Voice* is of course just another incident in the increasing battle between Black people and John Inman as the commander of the terrorist occupation army which subjugates the black community...If ever reference is made to the oppression of our people, they will branded by their “understanding” and “good-willed” oppressors as “hard core terrorists or run.” Apparently, the leadership stratum of the Black community has made few such references...There is no question that Atlanta has been infiltrated by hard-core terrorists; they are Inman's blue shirted thugs, and they are running all over the city. Their kill record speaks for itself. The only disappointment is with policewoman Lee, who decided to turn on her people for a shiny badge and a pat on the head from Inman...I am not certain what Officer Lee plans to do with her badge, but I have at least one suggestion.”³²⁴

³²² “Policewoman Planted on VOICE Staff,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 11, 1974, pg. 1, 4.

³²³ “Police Spying & the Black Press,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 18, 1974, pg. 1;

³²⁴ Adolph Reed, Jr., “The Constitution, Chief Inman, and the White Power Structure,” reprinted in *The Atlanta Voice*, June 1, 1974, pg. 2-3.

By the end of 1975, the Atlanta Police Department had spent \$20 million to create THOR, SWAT, STAKE-OUT squad, the Crime Control Bureau, Crime Investigations, Auto-Theft, Burglary Investigations, Mobile Crime Scene Unit, Subversive Organizations, Organized Crime Section and Vice Control Division. When Jackson's Black Urban Regime assumed its power over city operations, it further expanded police power through weaponizing the department. In May 1979, Jackson approved of the following upgraded measures for Atlanta police: One box of ammunition per month for target practice for each sworn member of the force, free of charge; Grady Hospital would provide preferential treatment to police officers who were injured while on duty; the drafting of an ordinance that enabled the city to assume liability for officers injured while off duty and taking action as a police officer, even if they were working a second job; complete health and hospital coverage (Sanitation, Water, and other public employees did not have this coverage); and instead of telling police officers "no," as he told other municipal employees, Jackson assured police he would find a way to obtain the approximately \$12,917,358 necessary to pay for the upgrades.³²⁵ Jackson also reinvigorated the auxiliary police forces and sponsored a pro-police campaign where multiple billboards depicting a innocent-faced white policeman gave an unconscious child CPR with the tagline, "And They Call HIM Pig!"

While these forces brutalized black Atlantans and disrupted their neighborhood social movement capacity, white and affluent residents praised City Hall's tactics. By mid-1974, Inman supporters—led by Dillard Munford—initiated a "Support Our Chief John Inman" campaign with automobile bumper stickers. According to *Atlanta Voice* editor J. Lowell Ware,

³²⁵ Correspondence between Maynard Jackson and the Fraternal Order of Police, 24 May 1979, Box 55, Folder 3, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

Munford was instrumental in helping Inman falsify crime statistics to make his department appear efficient. For example, Ware noted that Inman juked burglary statistics by marking several unsolved burglaries as “solved” every time one burglar was caught. When Inman installed television cameras in the downtown areas and in low-income black neighborhoods, *The Atlanta Voice* polled African Americans and found that most of the support derived from middle-aged, professional and managerial class blacks. One woman stated that she was “200 percent,” in favor and that “I think it’s needed more in the communities than downtown.” She went on to suggest surveillance in Adamsville and Simpson Road—areas very far from black middle-class suburbs but also adjacent to popular shopping strips where affluent African Americans encountered their working-class counterparts. Atlanta activist Tyrone Brooks, however, offered a different perspective: “...the main purpose of the cameras is for surveillance. To keep an eye on certain individuals...” Brooks concluded that the one way to deal with the problem of crime is to “open up the job market.”³²⁶

We Have to Do More!: Gender, The Atlanta Child Murders and Decreasing Neighborhood Social Movement Capacity

The black Urban Regime’s strategy—including retrenchment, subversion, and police repression of the black working classes in Atlanta—decreased neighborhood social movement capacity resources in a myriad of ways. The decline in local activist leadership served as the most significant loss. In 1971, Summerhill leaders Gene Ferguson and Alvin Booker Price were both assaulted by police. While Ferguson was pulled out of a movie theater for a “routine search,” Price was physically attacked by police while giving a political education talk to

³²⁶ “Law Enforcement, Where?,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1974, pg. Back Cover, 6.; “Black Community Favors Inman’s ‘Candid Camera’” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 4, 1973, pg. 1.

Peoplestown residents. Police arrested and jailed him after the attack. Police also harassed and incarcerated Ron Carter constantly between 1972 and 1974. After leaving the Black Panther Party in mid-1974, Carter ran for a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives but lost. In the meantime, police harassment, incarceration, evictions, and the loss of Carter forced the Atlanta Chapter of the Black Panther Party to close in 1975. Black working-class residents who relied on the Panthers' Free Breakfast, daycare, and Summer school programs were forced to find a viable substitute to their daily round.³²⁷

The Atlanta power structure especially targeted black women neighborhood leaders because of their penchant for being at the center of proto-nationalist movements. In other words, city officials recognized that working class black women represented crucial resources to neighborhood strength. In October of 1975, Jeanette Griggs, a member of the Perry Homes Defense Committee, was evicted from her apartment for eleven dollars back rent. Immediately upon hearing the news, the rest of the Defense Committee moved all of her evicted belongings back in her apartment and created a barrier to keep maintenance from moving her stuff again. Unfortunately, harassment against Griggs continued and she moved out of Perry Homes, leaving a gap in movement leadership there. When the Defense Committee approached Mayor Jackson concerning the harassment, he sent "the same old people we always see," one committee member stated.³²⁸ Techwood Homes Tenants Association President Marian Green was convicted in state

³²⁷ "Atlanta Panthers Busted," *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 20, 1972, pg. 4; "The Trumped-Up Panther Case," *The Great Speckled Bird*, December 11, 1972, pg. 8; "Black Panther Arrest Ridiculous, Stupid," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 30, 1973, pg. 1-2; "Ron Carter Talks to the Bird," *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 16, 1973, pg. 8; "Black Panthers Close Office Temporarily, Train in Oakland," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 24, 1973, pg. 1; "Black Panther Party Revisited," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 6, 1974, pg. 5; "Ron Carter to Run for Ben Brown's House Seat," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 20, 1974, pg. 1.

³²⁸ "Summerhill Community Worker Files Complaint After Arrest and Manhandling by Police," *The Atlanta Voice*, October 23, 1971, pg. 1; "Ferguson Pilled from Movie at Cop's Gunpoint," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 20, 1971, pg. 1;

court of criminal trespassing and simple battery charges—stemming from the previously discussed confrontation with David Maultsby. Green was sentenced to one year in prison and one-year probation for her first-time offense. To make it more apparent that Green was targeted for her activism, Judge Grady Tittard told Green that he had decided her sentence long before the jury returned their guilty verdict. While delivering the sentence, Tittard admonished Green for “intimidating AHA employers with loud talk and cursing.”³²⁹

Besides forced exile, black community leaders became convinced that electoral politics offered a viable means to obtaining power for their neighborhoods. Jackson’s win in 1973 served as a symbolic moment for working class activists because it offered a model for blacks seeking power positions in the city—encouraging some activists to consciously choose to trade militancy for electoral politics. Ethel Mae Mathews—who continued her work with the National Welfare Rights Organization and other community organizations—threw her hat into the city council ring in Fall 1973. Although Hosea Williams proved controversial within black Atlanta because of his questionable motives and class alliances during labor organizing, he was willing to fight alongside multiple striking workers throughout the 1970s. When he decided to dedicate his activism to electoral politics, it removed another resource for support and leadership. With the crippling economy, black residents possessed little capital and restricted access to public resources. As a result, they struggled to develop new agency-laden institutions to train new local leadership to replace exiled or coopted leaders.

No other episode in Black Atlanta’s class struggle better showcased the anti-working-class roots of gentrification than the Atlanta Child Murders Crisis of 1979-1981. More clearly, as dozens of low-income black children disappeared from Atlanta neighborhoods, the Maynard

³²⁹ “Harassment at Perry Homes,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, October 2, 1975, pg. 2. “Conspiracy to Destroy AHA Tenant Leadership,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 3, 1979, pg. 2;

Jackson regime's response exposed both their hypocritical relationship with Atlanta's black working class and the class motivation in the expansion of police powers in black urban areas. The Atlanta Child Murders Era demonstrated that the police served to simply concentrate, not stop, the expansion of the underground economy in low-income areas and away from high business activity while neglecting to protect poor blacks. Lastly, as working-class black women protested for protection against the kidnappings, the Atlanta power structure's dismissal and attack against them as bad mothers contributed to a growing pathological discourse against poor black women in the mainstream.

On July 28, 1979, 14-year-olds Edward Smith and Alfred Evans were found dead 50 yards apart on Niskey Lake Drive in Southwest Atlanta. Both children were black working-class residents dumped on the side of the road.³³⁰ The white controlled dailies—*The Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution*—ran a hardly noticeable story, and Atlanta City Hall did not dispatch detectives to investigate. By May 1980, six more children had disappeared from black working-class neighborhoods and both the white dailies and conservative black *Atlanta Daily World* failed to provide any serious any serious or consistent coverage of the growing crisis. The working class centered *Atlanta Voice*, however, provided the only consistent updates and interviews with parents and neighborhood leaders. This prompted black working-class mothers to organize a confrontation with City Hall. Within three months, another eight children had disappeared. All but two of the fourteen kidnappings occurred during daylight hours. Only two of the fourteen victims were girls and six of the boys were between ages of 9 and 11 and within

³³⁰ "The Atlanta Story," *The Socialist Worker*, No. 51, July 1981, pp. 1, 6-7; "Ex-Atlanta Official Raps Atlanta Administration for Failure to Solve Child Cases," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 30, 1981, pg. 2.

fourteen months of each other. All the kidnapped victims belonged to either the YMCA or the Boy's Club. All fourteen children resided in low-income neighborhoods.³³¹

Camille Bell—who resided in the shambled Mechanicsville housing project located on the Southside below Highway I-20, west of the Fulton County Stadium, and adjacent to Summerhill and Peoplestown neighborhoods—found her nine-year old son Yusuf Bell dead and stuffed inside a crawlspace of an abandoned school in early 1980. Yusef, who excelled in math and science and desired to become a physicist, was one of twenty-five students at Dunbar Elementary School enrolled in the Gifted Students Program. Although Maynard Jackson reportedly sent her a telegraph that stated that “The Atlanta Department of Public Safety will do everything within its power to expeditiously resolve this tragedy,” when she confronted Atlanta police and City Hall about the lack of investigation, she was dismissed and stereotyped as a “bad ghetto mother.” “...To this point the mayor has not come out and said there is a problem,” Bell stated. “That borders on ridiculous...what we are trying to do is warn the city of Atlanta there is danger. If they [city officials] had warned the city of Atlanta this last child that left the swimming pool [Earl Lee Terrell] would not have been picked up.” Bell concluded by outlining the class problem at the heart of the crisis:

“If there was a case of hepatitis or a wide-spread epidemic, the mayor and everybody else would be on all the tv stations saying let's get out and find out what happened, but it took Maynard Jackson from July of last year when the two boys were found at Niskey lake to July of this year to create a task force. I know it can't be because we're black. It is because we're poor.”³³²

³³¹ For early coverage of the crisis, see “Crimes Against Atlanta Children on Rise in Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 22, 1980, pg. 3; “Black Atlanta Youth Still Listed Missing,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 17, 1980, pg. 2; “Ex-Atlanta Official Raps Atlanta Administration for Failure to Solve Child Cases,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 30, 1981, pg. 2; “Black Leaders Lashed for ‘Lack of Interest’ in Missing, Slain Youths,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, August 14, 1980, pg. 1, 9.

³³² “Black Leaders Lashed for ‘Lack of Interest’ in Missing, Slain Youths,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, August 14, 1980, pg. 1, 9.

City Hall's indifference to the growing crisis pointed to the inherent contradiction of the credibility of black urban regimes in the experiences of working-class African Americans. Jackson's administration spent millions of dollars to weaponize police, surveil low-income black enclaves, and arrest, detain, and incarcerate suspected loiterers, vagrants, truants, drug dealers, burglars, neighborhood activists, and radicals—because the Atlanta power structure deemed them detrimental to capital accumulation and the future investments in designated parts of the metropolitan region. If the underground economy expanded in a contained quadrant of the city, the Atlanta police had no class interest to intervene. The directors of the police, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and City Hall, made it clear that they did not consider an attack on low-income Atlantans as an attack on their "Atlanta." When poor black children disappeared at an alarming rate, the City allocated only minimal police power. Emma Darnell, the former Commissioner of the Department of Administrative Services of Atlanta who was fired by Maynard Jackson in 1977, stated that "Atlanta officials didn't move to catch the killer for over a year because it wasn't my child and it wasn't Julian Bond's child." "This classman[classism]," she continued, "this elitism, that is what has cost us the lives of our children." Ironically, Darnell revealed that Julian Bond did not speak on the crisis except to admonish the parents of the victims. Although she publicly called for the mayor to "shut the town down" to stop the murders, her request did not receive any consideration from City Hall.³³³ "The mayor has been invited to everything we've had," Camille Bell added. "The big meeting at Wheat Street [July 24] and another conference [July 28] and he hasn't even taken the time to send a man to the meeting to say he's interested."³³⁴

³³³ "Ex-Atlanta Official Raps Atlanta Administration for Failure to Solve Child Cases," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 30, 1981, pg. 2.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 2.

The Atlanta power structure's neglect of the Atlanta Child Murders crisis also exposed a gendered characteristic of class relations in black Atlanta. When mothers of murdered children confronted City Hall about the problem, the administration not only shunned them, but also demonized the victims' characters to diminish public concern for poor black residents. City Hall repeatedly told the press that the missing children were street hustlers who came from single-parent welfare households and skipped school. According to the City Hall, the young victims broke the city curfew, so they brought their grisly fates upon themselves. Outraged at this victim blaming, Bell stated that "well if you can't keep it quiet that these kids are dead, then let's tell the world it's their fault that they're dead." Once the FBI arrived in the city, they immediately accused the mothers of murder. In April 1981, FBI Special Agent Michael Twibell stated that "some of those kids were killed by their parents because they were nuisances."³³⁵

The Atlanta power structure was more concerned with how media attention to the murders would affect international investment, the booming convention trade business, and early gentrification efforts. Between 1979 and 1981, Maynard Jackson and members of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce embarked on numerous international trips to Japan, China, African nations, and European countries to recruit foreign capital to invest in the central city. Additionally, the Chamber of Commerce and City Hall were knee deep in a funding campaign to expand the Georgia World Congress Center further into the Vine City and Lightning neighborhoods. *Forward Atlanta*, the chamber's newsletter, announced in February 1980 that they had designated \$10 million to purchase land and complete architectural design for the GWCC. The newsletter did not speak about the missing children. In other words, it was business as usual for the Atlanta bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Additionally, when Jackson

³³⁵ "The Atlanta Story," *The Socialist Worker*, No. 51, July 1981, pp. 1, 6-7.

was in town, he showed up across media campaigning for Democratic Governor Zell Miller. “I find it strange that he has found the time to campaign for Zell Miller, but he couldn’t find the time to be concerned about the kids of Atlanta,” Bell stated. “He’s a city father and he’s supposed to act like one.” Camille Bell explained why Maynard as an individual refused to help black working class Atlantans protect their children:

“I just know that the type of people are not being hurt. I hope I’m wrong, but either he’s surrounded by a bunch of incompetents or he doesn’t care about black people that’s bad, but if black people don’t care about black people, that’s deplorable.”³³⁶

The Atlanta power structure’s interests directly conflicted with the needs of the black working class at that time—survival.³³⁷

Black working class mothers did not restrict their criticism of Atlanta’s response to the crisis solely to Jackson. Camille Bell noted how black leaders’ absence reaffirmed their conflicting interests with their black constituency:

“Two city councilmembers showed up to our meeting and they were both white. If Elaine Williams Lester [white city councilperson] can show up at our meeting and say she is concerned, where were Q.V. Williamson, James Bond, Morris Finley, Marvin Arrington, and Billy McKinney? When they wanted votes they knew where to find us, right over there in McDaniel-Glenn.”³³⁸

In fact, African American Reverend Earl Carroll stated that Jackson’s press secretary, Angelo Fuster, rebuked pleas for help from black mothers and told Carroll that “from what it seems in

³³⁶ “Black Leaders Lashed for ‘Lack of Interest’ in Missing, Slain Youths,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, August 14, 1980, pg. 1, 9.

³³⁷ I discuss the economic ventures and neoliberalization of black working-class Atlanta during this time in depth in chapter 3. Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s *Forward Atlanta* Newsletter, Vol. XIII, No. 5, 25 February 1980, Box 3, Folder 9, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia. “Black Leaders Lashed for ‘Lack of Interest’ in Missing, Slain Youths,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, August 14, 1980, pg. 1, 9.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 9.

the newspapers, [yall] are trying to embarrass us.” When Bell approached 35th District Representative Billy McKinney for help, McKinney told her, “the mayor’s trying to get me thrown out of office, after the election I’ll help you.”

Low-income blacks did not register for City Hall’s future plans—so the Jackson administration classified the victims as “different” than the City too Busy to Hate’s “respectable citizenry.” Poor Black children were erased from their own narrative until they could no longer be ignored—then vilified. Thus, the Jackson Administration and the Chamber of Commerce put forth more effort propagandizing low-income blacks as “degenerates” than investigating the murders and protecting the victimized spaces. City Hall disproportionately neglected the voices of poor black women calling for protection for their children. Like their triple oppressed status in U.S. society, black working-class mothers experienced classist and sexist treatment from Atlanta City Hall.

Bell considered poor blacks’ safety to be isolated from the city’s interests and therefore organized other black mothers who lost children, Willie Mae Mathis, Chi’ Chi’ McGraw, and Venus Taylor, into the Committee to Stop Children’s Murders (STOP) in May 1980. Five more mothers joined the organization over time. The Campbellton Plaza Hotel donated a small room free of charge for STOP to hold meetings. The organization’s main goal was protection of children. They worked mainly as an information hub with residents supplying them with helpful information, such as descriptions or characteristics of individuals who had approached other children or any strangers in neighborhoods. Additionally, since the police were of little direct help, a private detective volunteered to serve as a liaison with the Atlanta Police Department. Secondly, STOP made itself available for neighborhood organizations who requested aid. They

sought to both solve the murders and return the agency and character of the victims.³³⁹ Their first tactic was to phone bank the Justice Department until federal investigators took the case. Like City Hall, the federal government ignored STOP. Thus, STOP recognized they had to expand their membership base and influence both regionally and nationally to acquire federal intervention into the problem. They next hosted a conference on safety precautions for children that attracted dozens of residents. As more children disappeared, STOP canvassed neighborhoods to recruit more members to STOP and leafletted neighborhood watch guidelines. City Hall further alienated black working-class Atlanta when they refused to create an investigative task force and instead hired Dorothy Allyson, a famous psychic, to solve the crisis. By December 1980, the number of missing black children reached 16 and City Hall continued to dodge responsibility.³⁴⁰

STOP's efforts mobilized African American Atlantans across class lines. The Coalition to Save Our Children and the SCLC coordinated with STOP to conduct a "prayer pilgrimage" across the city to broadcast the terror against poor black children in Atlanta. The march of over 800 Atlantans began in front of SCLC National Office on Auburn Avenue and stopped at the Central City Park Amphitheater. Along the way, the Atlanta Muslim community, the Black Caucus of the American Federation of Teachers, the Boy Scouts, and a children's choir joined in the marching and singing while religious leaders like SCLC President Reverend Joseph E. Lowery, Reverend Howard W. Creecy, and Bishop Joseph C. Coles addressed the crowd.

³³⁹ "Child Murders," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 2, 1980, pg. 236; "Black Community Distressed Over Death of Yusef Bell," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 17, 1979, pg. 2.

³⁴⁰ "Missing Child Subject of Extensive Search," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 1, 1980, pg. 2C; "Committee to Stop Murder of Children," *The Atlanta Daily World*, September 14, 1980, pg. 1.

Lowery provided some surprise criticism of City Hall's response to the child murders, stating that "Atlanta must not only boast of having the biggest airport in the world. But must strive to be the community with the biggest heart in the world."³⁴¹

Besides constructing neighborhood patrols, negotiating childcare watch parties, and expanding publicity of the crisis, STOP countered City Hall's inflammatory statements against their children:

"Those are absolutely false statements that were perpetrated by our administration, that were sent purposely to sort of blame the victim for what happened to the victim..."³⁴²

STOP's organizing simultaneously launched the Atlanta Child Murders crisis into the sphere of the federal government and created a working-class solidarity movement across the nation. Bell utilized her publicity to connect with CBS records, which raised over \$60,000 to fund the investigation. Working class spaces across the nation also protested for black Atlanta workers in many ways. One thousand supporters marched across Chattanooga, Tennessee chanting, "WE WANT IT STOPPED!" In Columbus, Ohio, the "Columbus Cares" campaign raised \$37,000 for STOP. In Harlem, New York, 30 community groups organized a candlelight vigil. The Coalition for Black Colleges and the National Black Child Development Institute called for black ribbons with the slogan, "We Must Do More." When the pressure was too much to ignore, President Ronald Reagan solicited \$1.5 million federal funds to finance the investigation. Finally, by April 1981, people across the United States wore green, black, and red ribbons to express sympathy and solidarity with working class Black Atlanta.³⁴³

³⁴¹ "Marchers Rally in 'The Save the Children' Prayer Pilgrimage," *The Atlanta Voice*, October 11, 1980, pg. 21.

³⁴² "Black Children: Can We Do More?," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 4, 1981, pg. 4.

³⁴³ *Ibid*, pg. 4.

As STOP's prominence grew, the state and city increased their attacks against the black mothers. In July 1981, Dr. Tim Ryles, the director of the Office of Consumer Affairs publicly denigrated STOP for "questionable spending." Ryles argued that a sizeable portion of the funds raised by the committee was "indiscreetly given directly to some of the parents of the slain children and not used for noble purposes" like establishing a trust fund for disadvantaged children. Even African American Harvey Gates, a columnist for *The Atlanta Voice*, lambasted STOP for raising funds for mothers of victims. "I am opposed to raising money for the parents of these murdered children," Gates wrote. "It does not make sense. It would make a little more sense if they had lost the breadwinners. But this is not the case...It is bad enough for citizens to have to subsidize the investigation of these murders."³⁴⁴

As African American sociologist and Atlanta University professor Bernard D. Headley argued, this was a hypocritical attempt by the Atlanta bourgeoisie to demean the working classes for supporting each other while the affluent generally collect on the life insurance policies that they can afford when loved ones pass away. Besides the loss of young life, the death of poor black boys in Atlanta in many cases meant an immediate loss of income for families. As Headley explained, money brought in from some of the boys' part-time work, like delivering a neighbor's groceries, selling water, or yardwork had contributed to the family and neighborhood income where heads of households were unable to work or denied stable employment. More clearly, the city attempted to transform the historical black communal practice of giving money in times of stress into an exploitative gimmick to turn public opinion against STOP.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ "Children's Funds Need Strict Accountability," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 21, 1981, pg. 2.

³⁴⁵ "Actions to Stop STOP Unwarranted," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 25, 1981, pg. 4.

In line with Headley, the Atlanta power structure's series of attacks and harassment against the black mothers and STOP was an attempt to destabilize an indigenous working-class movement by removing any attention to the plight of low-income black urbanites.³⁴⁶ City Hall utilized more energy in their attempts to destroy STOP than they did stopping the murders or solving the economic crisis plaguing much of black America at the time. Masking their attack on STOP by questioning their spending at a time when black workers struggled to protect themselves and their jobs demonstrated the anti-working-class interests of Atlanta decision-makers at the time.

Even after local and federal officials created a special task force, the neglect did not wane. Bell noted that 11-year old Patrick Baltazar and a friend called the task force before his death to report an encounter with a man who chased them in a car. Bell stated that the police task force did not respond to the call until several weeks after Baltazar's body was found on February 13, 1981!³⁴⁷ The Atlanta Child Murders further exposed the black urban regime pursuit of their class interests at the expense of black working-class lives, children, and safety.

STOP increased their pressure on the federal government to designate protective services for poor people against child kidnapping across the U.S. In October 1981, Bell appealed to the Senate investigations and oversight committee to adopt a federally run nationwide clearinghouse to coordinate information about missing children and unidentified bodies. She reminded the committee that when her son was kidnapped in October of 1979, "we had difficulty getting a search done, difficulty getting news coverage...We were not able to get the message out because we did not have the influence, the money, the power—the things that are necessary o get a story

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 4.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 4.

out.” Bell concluded with comments that point to the underlying class struggle that defined the African American urban experience moving forward:

“For those families not extremely affluent, there is not much hope you can give them. The families of the Atlanta victims, those 28 families whose children were slain, were able to offer solace to each other but were unable to provide much financial help in looking for the children.”³⁴⁸

The increased surveillance of working-class black activists and neighborhoods juxtaposed against the handling of the investigation of the Atlanta Child Murders throws into stark relief the growing distance between the black working class and Jackson’s BUR. This intraracial bifurcation along class lines would continue to shape the lived experiences of black working-class residents and the development of the City itself in the coming decades.

On June 21, 1981, African American Wayne Williams was arrested for unrelated murders. However, without hard evidence, City Hall and the federal task force quickly named him as the serial killer of Atlanta children. Although he was blamed for the Atlanta Child Murders, he maintains his innocence and the murders have not been solved. The debate over Williams’ guilt or innocence still takes place across class lines in Atlanta and perceptions of the resolution of this crime reflects the deep class divides in the city.

Conclusion

The Maynard Jackson Black Urban Regime set out to regress the gains made by black working class Atlantans during the Black Power Era. Through their partnership with the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Jackson administration sought to utilize a regressive tax structure, the manipulation of the elite-controlled media, the expansion of the police, and a pathological

³⁴⁸ “Camille Bell Calls for Federal Coordination of Missing Persons Information,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 17, 1981, pg. 11.

discourse against poor black women to promote their class interests in the city. As the next chapter will explore further, this retrenchment and police repression weakened the use values of black working-class neighborhoods to the extent that real estate, international business, and finance capital—combined with Reagan’s New Federalism—sieged the Central Business District and initiated the twin processes of neoliberalization and gentrification. As black Atlantans lost more control of the future of Atlanta, the New Nadir set in motion and the power structure established privatization as the only Atlanta that mattered.

**CHAPTER THREE: THE SECOND BURNING OF ATLANTA:
NEOLIBERALIZATION AND GENTRIFICATION AS POGROM, 1975-1990**

“All that we are is not our choosing—but all that we are to be **MUST BE.**”

-John Africa, MOVE Founder, 1985

“This land is like gold. It’s so cheap because this is still considered a low-income neighborhood. Anything Black in America is cheap in White America. As soon as they get everybody out, it becomes gold. The rules state that in order to obtain block grant money, ten percent must go to help low-income people. This community is one hundred percent low-income. So that gives them right to kick ninety percent of us out.”

-Florence McKinley, Auburn Avenue Neighborhood Resident and Activist, 1986

Introduction: “If That Ain’t Murder, What Is?”

At dawn on May 13, 1985, nearly five hundred Philadelphia police officers, Pennsylvania state troopers, and FBI agents fired over 10,000 rounds of ammunition, shot numerous tear gas canisters, and finally, at 5:27 PM that afternoon, dropped two FBI-supplied bombs into a row house on 6221 Osage Avenue in the Cobbs Creek area of West Philadelphia—killing all but two of the nine adults and five children inside and destroying 61 houses in the vicinity. One child, thirteen-year-old Birdie Africa, gathered the surviving children under a wet blanket to protect them from the blazes while police repelled unarmed adults who attempted to leave the house with more bullets. Ramona Africa noted that when she tried to save children from burning, “police fired in the air, not at them, and sent them back...Now if that ain’t murder, what is?”

When the smoke cleared, police charged Ramona Africa with aggravated assault, riot, harassment, criminal conspiracy, terroristic threats, and disorderly conduct. They also held her on \$4.15 million bail—an immoderate amount that accused murderers did not receive. The other survivor, Gerald Africa, pointed to the motivation: “Who did they [MOVE] kill? How many

airplanes did they blow up? How many hostages do they have...She's the victim they made the criminal."³⁴⁹

The targets of the massacre, MOVE—an African-American anarcho-primitivist organization that promoted anti-war, anti-racism, animal rights, natural living, and pacificism—endured police surveillance, blockades, and sieges at the behest of Philadelphia City Hall, led by Frank Rizzo, a former cop and city mayor notorious for his racist attacks against Black Philly urbanites, since its inception in 1972. Although African American Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode stated that MOVE's living conditions and activism presented “no violation on which we can make an arrest,” the surveillance, attempts at legal displacement, and the subsequent murder of MOVE members proved to be a deliberate, small-scale urban pogrom to cleanse Black radicals from the area.³⁵⁰

Working-class Atlantans made comparisons between the Atlanta power structure's attack on their neighborhoods and Philadelphia's destruction of MOVE. Ethel Mae Mathews noted that “Philadelphia is not too far from Atlanta. We (in Atlanta) are not safe. We're [we've] got some people here who would like to drop a bomb on people. We've got to be on our Ps and Qs.”³⁵¹ Both large scale pogroms against black urban residents like the 1921 Tulsa massacre and small-scale ones like in Philadelphia share a common, often undervalued trait with the neoliberalization

³⁴⁹ The 1985 massacre served as MOVE's second confrontation with the Philadelphia police. In 1977, Philadelphia police blockaded MOVE original house in Powelton Village, meaning that no one was allowed in or out of the house and water was shut off for 50 days. On August 8, 1978, 600 police surrounded the home and fired water into the house before police began shooting. After MOVE members surrendered, police ordered the house destroyed. 9 MOVE members were tried and convicted with many of them serving forty years in prison. John Africa was found not guilty and moved the remaining MOVE members to West Philadelphia. For more on MOVE, see “Attention MOVE! This is America!” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1985, pg. 16; “More Local Reaction to Massacre of MOVE in Philadelphia, PA,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1985, pg. 22; “MOVE Testimony,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 27, 1985, pg. 2;

³⁵⁰ “MOVE! This is America!” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1985, pg. 16.

³⁵¹ “More Local Reaction to Massacre of MOVE in Philadelphia, PA,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1985, pg. 22.

of U.S. urban spaces in the last quarter of the twentieth century: white capitalists purged a space of poor black and brown bodies for their racial class interests. Although the mass violence against blacks was more direct in pogroms of the past, many African Americans who struggled under the neoliberalization and gentrification processes experienced comparable structural consequences: mass displacement, violent repression, loss of life, and a loss of resources that impeded their capacity for social movement action against racial oppression.

This chapter examines how neoliberalization reshaped Atlanta into a neocolonial structure and weakened African Americans' capacity to resist. Using Atlanta as an example, I argue that neoliberalization in American urban spaces served as a contemporary, structural form of pogrom against poor black people. Urban power structures like Atlanta's Chamber of Commerce and City Hall enacted neoliberalization to disrupt and reshape power dynamics in working-class black neighborhoods in three specific ways. First, they undermined black civil society, weakening social institutions that undergird social movement formation. Second, capital globalized and required new reorientation in urban structures for connecting information and finance networks across the world. As a result, white capitalists targeted land and built environment occupied by black poor and working-class residents, blighted and cheapened it through resource usurpation and the expansion of the underground economy, and the deterioration of housing ultimately removed blacks from the land. Third, neoliberalization altered black residents' capacity to sustain livable wage labor. The reorientation of capital around the information and financial sectors of labor decreased productive labor opportunities like construction, auto and textile manufacturing, and other livable wage labor professions. Additionally, housing landlords manipulated land rents to destabilize and ultimately, displace the black poor from gentrifying areas. While General William Tecumseh Sherman burned Atlanta to

march towards Confederate surrender during the Civil War, neoliberalization and gentrification represented the second burning of Atlanta. It destroyed the residence-centered spaces of the area and reoriented the metro region towards a user-centered, international private fortress.

A Feasibility Study: 1973 Chile and the Neoliberalization Model

In September 1988, African American Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young grandstanded in front of dozens of corporate executives at the National Press luncheon regarding Atlanta's courtship of foreign investment. He bragged that after a meeting with the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Paul Volcker, Secretary of State George Schultz, and economist Arthur Burns, he steered Atlanta's political economy away from the public and towards international private investment. "The failure is not the failure of the poor, but the failure of the rich," Young stated. "There is enormous wealth being generated, but there is no longer disciplined framework."³⁵²

Young went on to scapegoat decreased government spending to explain why Atlanta, like so many other urban regions, had privatized public space with international capital in the 1980s:

"Look at what some us have done as mayors. When money was pulled from us by the federal government and when state governments abandoned us, we had no choice but to find ways to give incentives to bring some of that money and apply it to our needs...we brought in 200 Saudi businessmen who sit on the boards of major holding companies...As a result, we have no problem selling bonds on the world money markets to almost any of our municipal projects."³⁵³

Young concluded that Atlanta generated over \$52 billion from international capital over the previous five years with \$15 billion in 1987 alone. The reason, Young argued, is that his urban regime opened the floodgates and removed restrictions for private capital to take any action it

³⁵² "On the Hill: The New Andrew Young," *The Atlanta Voice*, October 8, 1988, pg. 4.

³⁵³ *Ibid*, pg. 4.

wanted in the Atlanta Metro Region (AMR). “The reason it [foreign capital] comes to Atlanta,” Young noted, “is that we make it safe, and give the kind of governmental support...that gives [investors]...free of red tape.”³⁵⁴ In other words, Young’s primary role in transforming Atlanta into a neoliberal state meant that capital’s reorientation towards counter-Keynesian principles in the mid-1970s enjoyed a public partner in local Black Urban Regimes that cleared the path of the black urban majority through laws and practices.

To fully critique Atlanta’s neoliberalization, it is appropriate to first conceptualize neoliberalization through a brief history of the neoliberal state in theory and practice. On September 11, 1973, the U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the CIA, and multiple global corporations funded a coup in Chile by Augusto Pinochet against the democratically elected Salvador Allende government. The coup drove back Allende’s political, economic, and cultural push towards socialism with violent repression of grassroots social movements, leftist organizations, and most critically, the dismantling of all forms of community institutions—including neighborhood health centers in poor areas. Next, the U.S. backed government deregulated the labor market from institutional restraints, including unions, and accountability to the citizens.³⁵⁵

Afterward, the coalition enlisted the guidance of the “Chicago Boys,” a group of right-wing theorists and intellectuals, to reconstruct the political economy of Chile around neoliberal principles. In fact, the U.S. funded most of these figures, like economists James McGill Buchanan and Milton Friedman, as part of a decades-old Cold War program to counter leftist

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁵ For a documentary history of Pinochet’s coup, see Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*. The New Press; Second Edition, 2013; For firsthand accounts of the Pinochet coup, see Ariel Dorfman, Salvador Allende, Pablo Neruda, Victor Jara, Beatriz Allende, and Fidel Castro, *Chile: The Other September 11. AN Anthology of Reflections on the 1973 Coup*. Oceana Press: 2nd Edition 2016;

movements in Central America. Consequently, the Chicago Boys were familiar with Chile's political economy and within a few years, they served as Pinochet's economic advisors. In 1975, they utilized the International Monetary Fund to secure sizable loans that gave them the power to reverse nationalization and privatize public assets. This meant that the Pinochet regime opened Chilean natural resources like fisheries and timber to unregulated and exploitative privatization, scaled back the quality of social security, and courted foreign investment and trade as their primary labor sectors. Pinochet won the hearts of international capital by guaranteeing companies the right to repatriate profits from their Chilean operations. Buchanan described his strategy as "formulating constitutional ways in which we can limit government intervention in the economy and make sure it keeps its hand out of the pockets of productive contributors." To balance the budget after these reforms, Pinochet kept the copper industry as a state property. As historian Nancy MacLean succinctly argued, this neoliberalization process insulated the capitalist class from popular challenges and redistributive justice by reducing the public resources the working class needed to resist.³⁵⁶

As a result, between 1975 and 1982, Chilean private investors reaped surplus profits. Foreign investors enjoyed high rates of return on their Chilean properties. Although the 1982 Latin America debt crisis stalled the turnaround, the experiment proved feasible with minor adjustments. In other words, the Pinochet coup served as a test case for capital that informed the restructuring of the global political economy. Great Britain, the United States, and China made the neoliberal turn in the late 1970s and 1980s. India and Sweden followed suit in the late 1980s and early 1990s.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. Penguin Books, Reprint Edition, 2018, pg. 158.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 9-12

As urban geographer David Harvey posited, the uneven spatial development of neoliberalization on the world stage and its “frequently partial and lop-sided application from one state and social formation to another, testifies to the tentativeness of neoliberal solutions and the complex ways in which political forces, historical traditions, and existing institutional arrangements all shaped why and how the process of neoliberalization actually occurred.” State governments across the world responded to the postwar upsurge of labor militancy from soldiers returning home through a measure called “embedded liberalism,” or a “class compromise” between capital and the union bureaucracy. Union leadership promised less militancy for more direct involvement in the political structure. By the mid-1970s, liberalism dominated labor movements in advanced capitalist nations. Governments embraced, to a certain extent, redistributive politics, collective bargaining, regulation over the movement and power of capital, the expansion of public expenditures, welfare state-building, state intervention and planning the political economy. Nationalist sentiments in mass movements also helped subdue militancy into a “moral and social economy” that decreased the critique of the state. In essence, as Harvey argued, the state internalized class relations as working-class institutions wielded a noticeable amount of power in the state apparatus.³⁵⁸

By the early 1970s, capitalists had grown weary of Keynesian policy as well as embedded liberalism. The global political economy entered the stagflation phase that lasted throughout the 1970s and fiscal crises rocked multiple nations. Increasingly, corporatist notions of austerity gained traction, as bourgeois interests jumped at the opportunity and waged a campaign for the liberation of corporate and business power from the state. The 1973 Chilean experiment demonstrated how forced and deregulated privatization could skew the benefits of

³⁵⁸ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 9-12.

capital accumulation higher than ever. Alongside increasing surplus value, widening social inequality through the loss of public resources weakened the capacity for the working-class resistance. After nations adopted neoliberal policies in the late 1970s, the share of national income of the top one percent of income earners in the U.S. soared to reach 15 percent by the end of the century. The top 0.1 percent of income earners in the U.S. increased their share of the national income from 2 percent in 1978 to over 6 percent by 1999. Concurrently, the ratio of the salaries of CEOs to the median compensation of workers increased from just over 30 to 1 in 1970 to nearly 500 to 1 by 2000.³⁵⁹

Neoliberalization derives from neoliberal theory—free market principles of neoclassical economics that grew popular in the late nineteenth century. Neoliberal theorists argue that the state must favor individual private property rights, the rule of law, and the institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade. The state must exercise its monopoly of violence and if necessary, repression, to preserve these freedoms at all costs. What is crucial here is that neoliberals legally regard corporations and businesses as “individuals.” Thus, they contend that these same freedoms must be extended to capitalist institutions and that their function within this framework of free market is a fundamental good for society. Under this structure, neoliberals believe that competition between individuals, firms, and territories (regions, nation-states, etc.) produce “trickle-down theory”—the idea that the wealth and innovation of a few uplifts the entire population and eliminates poverty over time.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality*; Kees van der Pijl, Libby Assassi, Duncan Wigan, eds. *Global Regulation: Managing Crises After the Imperial Turn*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 41-63; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 7-17.

³⁶⁰ Ha-Joon Chang, *Globalisation, Economic Development, and the Role of the State*. London: Zed Books, 2003; B. Jessop, “Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective,” *Antipode*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2002, pp. 452-472; Nicos Poulantzas, *State Power Socialism*, trans. P. Camiller. (London: MacMillan, 1991; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 64-65.

In this structure, individual responsibility takes precedence. The deregulated market ensures freedom among its competing institutions, but individuals in society must be held responsible for their own welfare. In other words, individuals must strive to attain self-improvement through privatized institutions such as education, health care, welfare, and pensions. Neoliberals interpret individual loss or failure in capitalist virtues as personal weakness. In clearer terms, neoliberals advocate that if individuals fail in a free market society, it is because of some intellectual or physical shortcoming, such as not investing enough in one's own human capital through education or a fragile personality that kept someone from competing with a peer to climb the corporate hierarchy.³⁶¹ As chapter 4 and 5 of this project demonstrate, the petty bourgeois class in Atlanta assumed the role of propagandizing this psychological wage against working class collective movements for social change. By championing poverty and inequality as personal weakness and failure, the bourgeois and petty bourgeois power structures in urban spaces like Atlanta normalized the *irrationality* of collective movements and the *rationality* of supervisory, individualized solutions to poverty such as non-profit corporations and symbolic diversity.

Lastly, neoliberal theory emphasizes the global movement of capital freely between sectors, regions, and nations. Neoliberals oppose any barriers to this movement, such as tariffs, state planning, environmental controls, and trade union power. They see global capital movement as a tool to simultaneously control problems—inflation— and promote accumulation—low prices, monopolistic competition, higher productivity. Thus, the power structure of a neoliberal state surrenders sovereignty, state or popular, to the will of the global market. Institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the G8, and the North American Free

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

Trade Agreement help to advance the neoliberal project beyond the national stage and publicize open markets to local spaces like the Atlanta Metropolitan Region.

Noted economist Karl Polanyi pointed out the dialectics of “freedom” at the heart of neoliberal theory. Polanyi commented that two types of freedom exists: the “good” freedom—self-determination and democratic rights—and the “bad” freedom—the freedom to exploit one’s fellows, to make inordinate gains without commensurate service to the community, to keep technological innovations from being shared for public benefit, or to profit from public catastrophes engineered through private privilege. Also, Polanyi explained, “the market economy under which these freedoms thrive also produced freedoms we prize highly. Freedom of conscience, freedom of association, freedom to choose one’s own job...” However, Polanyi concludes, the championing of private ownership as the essence of freedom counters these other potential freedoms. As a result, planning, control, and government are deemed the antithesis of freedom and the freedoms that the antithesis creates, such as welfare liberty, and justice for all are decried as “a camouflage of slavery.” More specifically, the idea of freedom simply devolves into an advocacy for free enterprise for those whose material interests require no enhancement—and the good freedoms are lost under the authoritarianism that enforces the free market.³⁶²

These policies took form in the U.S. in October 1979 under President Jimmy Carter’s chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank Paul Volcker. Known fittingly as the “Volcker Shock,” the Federal Reserve eliminated Keynesian fiscal and monetary policy in addressing spiraling inflation. Volcker rendered the real rate of interest (which had been negative during the during the double-digit inflation rise of the 1970s) positive, which meant that he raised the

³⁶² Karl Paul Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1954, pp. 254-258.

nominal rate of interest overnight and by July 1981, it stood close to 20 percent. This initiated the period of “structural adjustment,” where capital reorganized and resulted in one of the worst economic downturns in American history.³⁶³

Neoliberalization is only operable through a public-private partnership. Here, businesses and corporations not only interact intimately with the political structure but also acquires a leading role in writing legislation, determining public policies, and setting regulatory frameworks. Ronald Reagan’s victory and ultimately, partnership with Volcker signaled the federal political backing to facilitate forced privatization at the local level where neoliberal urban regimes such as Atlanta’s under Andrew Young justified unregulated international investment. Reagan’s administration deregulated multiple industries, passed regressive tax cuts, slashed social spending, busted unions, and stalled real wage growth to the point that the rate fell 30 percent below the level set in 1980 by 1990. The Reagan regime also passed legislation that allowed states—many of them controlled by conservative legislators—to determine and consequently, reduce their social spending. As will be discussed in chapter 4, these conditions plummeted aggregate consumer demand in urban regions like Atlanta and opened a void in which black pro-growth administrations could implement free market practices at the expense of their constituencies.

What is often overlooked in studies of the neoliberal state is that neoliberalism is not necessarily a *new* ideology or set of practices; rather, it is an *expansion* or shift in liberal practice. Historian N.D.B. Connolly correctly equated neoliberalism to *neocolonialism*, which forces us to “attend to capitalism’s extractive relations.” To recognize liberalism and neoliberal and colonialism and neocolonialism as critical analytic categories for unpacking the American

³⁶³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 13-27.

political economy is to challenge, as Connolly asserted, the notion that neoliberalism represents a break from the pre-1980s welfare state. In other words, understanding neoliberalization as a process of furthering liberal ideas of exploitative racial capital, neocolonialism, and anti-working-class policy is to attend to the *actual* political, economic, and social, and cultural processes of structure.³⁶⁴

Because of these crucial characteristics of the neoliberal state, I argue that scholars must analyze neoliberalization through a dialectical lens. By critiquing the neoliberal state primarily through a macrolevel framework, scholars miss the true function of neoliberalism: privatizing public goods and services to transfer their social capital away from the working class to jeopardize their capacity for collective resistance and to maximize surplus value. There is perhaps no better space to examine this devastation of neoliberalization on the lives of black urbanites than in Atlanta. The struggles of working class black Atlantans in the late 1970s and 1980s undercut black neighborhood resources and steered them to international business and tourist interests for the future. A close study of this process in Atlanta is thus useful for understanding how neoliberalism has ravaged and continues to ravage black working-class urban communities throughout the United States.

Black Working-Class Struggles Against the Neoliberal Pogrom in Atlanta

Historian Charles L. Lumpkins assessed mass anti-black violence in 1917 East St. Louis as a “pogrom,” or “an assault, condoned by officials, to destroy a community defined by ethnicity, race, or some other social identity.” Lumpkins identified black East. St. Louis residents’ attempts to gain autonomy from white control as the core motivation for whites to seek

³⁶⁴ N.D.B. Connolly, “Black and Woke in Capitalist America: Revisiting Robert Allen’s Black Awakening...for New Times’ Sake,” *Social Science Research Council*, March 7, 2017.

the political, economic, and by 1917, the geographical degeneration of African Americans in the urban space. Blacks met similar fates in Atlanta in 1906, Chicago in 1919, and Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921. In each instance, the white ruling class perceived a threat to their racial class power and organized a systemic cleansing of the area. They utilized racist, pro-growth, and morality propaganda to whip white working-class allies into a frenzy against black residents.³⁶⁵ While Lumpkins and other scholars on mass anti-black violence focused on the motivations and violent actions that characterize pogroms, they sometimes overlooked the hostility to social solidarity and resistance that pogroms targeted. In other words, while Lumpkins and other scholars of pogroms captured displacement and death as macrolevel functions of anti-black pogroms, they often undervalued the destabilization and resource deprivation at the neighborhood level as key variables of in racial oppression.

At its core, gentrification—a leading byproduct of neoliberalization—provided the white ruling class with a contemporary, structural, more “acceptable” form of anti-black pogrom. The twentieth century civil rights and human rights movements and the technologically dominant age with its abundance of television, computer, and cell phone screens phased out direct mass racial violence as a tactic of racial oppression. As a result, political, economic, and social

³⁶⁵ Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008, pp. xi-xiii. Although these scholars did not classify mass anti-Black violence as “pogrom,” the episodes fit the framework. On the 1898 Wilmington Massacre, see Leon H. Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup in 1898*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1984; David S. Cecelski and Timothy B. Tyson, eds., *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its Legacy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. For the Atlanta pogrom of 1906, see John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977; Gregory Mixon, *The Atlanta Riot: Race, Class, and Violence in a New South City*. University Press of Florida, 2005; Rebecca Burns, *Rage in the Gate City: The Story of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009. For Philadelphia’s 1918 pogrom, see Vincent P. Franklin, “The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* Vol. 99, No. 3, July 1975, pp. 336-350; the 1919 Chicago pogrom, see William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970; For the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, see Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982; Karlos K. Hill, *Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.

marginalization undergird a secondary, more “palatable” mechanism for exploiting, and when necessary, removing superfluous black bodies and spaces. Through a combination of pro-growth ideology, liberal discourses on freedom and crime prevention, and “race leaders,” the white ruling class replaced explicit *mass* anti-black racial violence (while still wielding state sponsored and private racial violence as a tool) with a more clandestine, structural form of cleansing.

Anti-black pogroms during the Nadir Era in 1898 Wilmington, 1906 Atlanta, 1917 East St. Louis, 1919 Chicago, and 1921 Tulsa, Oklahoma share many comparable characteristics with neoliberalization in urban spaces in the final quarter of the twentieth century. First, officials in each episode directed an organized, physical destruction of a racially defined neighborhood, community, or space. Public and private partnerships, including federal, state, and local officials, real estate executives, business owners, police, and liberal pro-growth groups and individuals instigated and participated in surveilling, displacing, and in some cases, killing predominantly working-class African Americans.

Class is a crucial variable in examining the distinction between Nadir Era pogroms and the neoliberalization and gentrification that began in the late 1970s. In many Nadir Era instances, mass anti-black violence responded to African Americans’ attempt to build political influence equal to and independent of white dominated institutions. In East St. Louis for example, progressive reformers and real estate figures utilized the pogrom to eliminate black elected officials, restructure the municipal government and enact stronger apartheid legislation. However, in gentrification under a neoliberal state, the white ruling class did not seek to completely expel black elected officials. Instead, in black majority cities like Atlanta, Birmingham, Gary, Detroit, and Newark, white-dominated power structures drafted black elites for two purposes: to act as symbolic racial power brokers of progress and uplift, and facilitate the

privatization and globalization of urban space that ultimately displaced the majority of African Americans from these spaces. Therefore, as the neocolonialist framework accentuates, class is as central a feature as race in the planned destruction of poor African American urban neighborhoods in contemporary America.

“We Destroyed the Village to Save it!”: The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and the Push for International Capital

Scholars often overlook Chamber of Commerce records and sources in urban studies. This valuable evidence provides succinct testimony to the public-private partnership driving neoliberalization pogroms in urban spaces. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, comprised of executives from multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola and Marriot and real estate moguls like Tom Cousins (who developed much of the commercial real estate in the city like the Omni International Hotel) and Herman J. Russell (the most powerful African American construction and real estate magistrate in the city’s history) played primary roles in neoliberalization—influencing legislation, conducting pro-growth and anti-poor propaganda, and destabilizing social movements that threatened their investment agenda, such as labor strikes or fair housing protests.

These documents also allow us to reevaluate the scope of Atlanta’s power structure in moving the city away from the black working-class residents. For example, scholars often credit Andrew Young with introducing international capital into the central city. However, both Chamber of Commerce records, black working-class sources like *The Atlanta Voice*, and radical periodicals like *The Great Speckled Bird* confirm that this process began earlier when Maynard Jackson’s Black urban regime initiated the longstanding public-private partnership with the

Chamber of Commerce (ACOC) immediately after he announced his candidacy to become the first African American mayor in the city's history. At a June 15, 1973 press conference, the ACOC laid out its vision of a privatized Atlanta. The ACOC's vision included rapid completion of the central city's tollway and expressway system, the construction of a second airport and the Georgia World Congress Center, and the consolidation of Atlanta and Fulton County School systems. Although the ACOC had no comment on questions regarding neighborhoods or jobs, when pressed about community control of services, the ACOC recommended "new police precincts and jails." Jackson refused to condemn ACOC's proposals like his mayoral opponent, African American state senator Leroy Johnson. Jackson concluded with a suggestion that citizens provide input in the study and implementation of tollways and a new highway, but there is no evidence that Jackson followed through with this. As a result, residents did not obtain any decision-making power over the study, which provided the ACOC a monopoly over the direction of the city.³⁶⁶

The ACOC's influence on black displacement from the city also began during that 1973 election year. In a June 15 press release, the ACOC stated "Low income housing needs to be less concentrated in the central city." Additionally, Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. (CAP)—the ACOC's planning and development apparatus—sent a memorandum to Atlanta Housing Authority's director of development James W. Henley titled, "Atlanta's programs for public housing may be COUNTER PRODUCTIVE!" The memo expressed that public housing projects should be abandoned, and Atlanta should "increase the supply of housing available to the low-income family within the City of Atlanta from the top down." In other words, the ACOC and CAP attempted to privatize public housing so that the black poor needing shelter had to obtain

³⁶⁶ "Jackson, Johnson Respond to Chamber's Platform Proposals," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 23, 1973, pg. 2.

public housing outside the city limits. Evidence supports that black elite leadership facilitated this early displacement. According to Research Atlanta, HUD and the AHA built an estimate of 2,000 subsidized public housing units to replace the 22,000 units torn down in the 1960s. Real estate built more middle and upper-income housing while the number on public housing waiting lists climbed into the thousands over the 1970s.³⁶⁷

The most powerful real estate tycoons in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce headed Central Atlanta Progress, Inc. John Portman, the architect who designed and built Atlanta's Peachtree Center downtown, served as president. CAP's vice president, Tom Cousins, who owned Cousins Properties, the most powerful realtor firm in the area—was responsible for most of the downtown commercial real estate, the Omni, and multiple office parks outside the central city. African American realtor William Calloway served as both the second vice president and the conduit between the white business community and the black petty bourgeois class. Harold Brockley, the chairman of Rich's, Inc. and president of the ACOC, held CAP's third vice presidential position. The final officers, George S. Craft (treasurer) and Mills B. Lane (treasurer), controlled the largest Atlanta area banks, Trust Company of Georgia and C&S Bank, respectively.³⁶⁸

Following Jackson's victory, the ACOC secured its public partner and thus intensified its neoliberal push. In December 1973, the Board of Aldermen approved a \$45,000 contract for CAP to construct a housing plan for the region. CAP in the previous six months had purchased 78 acres of public land from the AHA in the predominantly black working-class Bedford-Pine

³⁶⁷ "Low Income Housing," *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 23, 1973, pg. 4.

³⁶⁸ Re/C.A.P. Newsletter for Central Area Progress, Inc., June 1975, Box 16, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

neighborhood to redevelop as private housing. CAP enlisted Philadelphia city planner Dan Crane, who held a reputation for segregating Philadelphia neighborhoods, for their Bedford-Pine redevelopment. According to Crane, CAP's private housing sought to entice middle and upper-income whites by guaranteeing them a "safe enclave with buffers protecting them from Black Bedford-Pine residents." Thus, this latest contract demonstrated a clear conflict of interest as CAP purchased public lands while also acting as planners for the city. The lone Alderman that objected to the purchases, white liberal Nick Lambros, argued that the deals compared to "my purchasing real property from the city and then, as alderman, voting to zone it for development." Lambros concluded that he opposed "developers working as planners for this city."³⁶⁹

What is interesting of note is how CAP manipulated the locational advantage of Bedford-Pine to leverage pressure against the AHA. CAP's winning bid for the property was \$3 million less than its competitor, Franklin L. Haney Company of Chattanooga. Haney sought to build the Georgia World Congress Center on the Bedford-Pine land. However, CAP wanted to build the center on the westside with public funding near the Omni arena downtown. Thus, CAP's plan held the potential to reap more lucrative profits for the public-private partnership than the out-of-town Haney company, who did not possess the geographical strategy to maximize profits with their plan.³⁷⁰

In true neoliberal fashion, the ACOC and CAP also elicited a contemporary spoils system to tighten their relationship with their public partners. First, CAP drafted Maynard Jackson's law firm partner, George Howell, to this Board of Directors. Next, AHA commissioner Michael Rich held the vice-presidency of Rich's, the department store corporation chaired by CAP's

³⁶⁹ "Chamber of Commerce Moves," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 29, 1973, pg. 1, 11.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 11.

president Harold Brockey. CAP and the Atlanta Board of Education also struck a \$200,000 deal in 1973 for the corporation to conduct a study of Atlanta Public Schools. Based on their findings, CAP expressed “deep concern with the image of Atlanta’s public schools that exists in the minds of businesses and professional people who are thinking of moving to the city.”³⁷¹ Additionally, all but four African American members of the Atlanta City of Council received over \$15,000 in cash contributions to their political campaigns from the ACOC.³⁷²

Atlanta City Hall also gave CAP the power to direct gentrification and the reduction of public space downtown and beyond the city limits. Atlanta City Hall funded \$200,000 of the \$250,000 for the Central Atlanta Study where CAP and the U.S. Department of Transportation outlined Atlanta’s first phase of gentrification. While the study used abstract phrasing like “spiritually satisfactory milieu” to list objectives for the redevelopment, the data clearly pointed towards razing thousands of residents out of the city. The report promoted adding an additional 160,000 parking spaces surrounding the central city and proposed spending \$326.7 million over a 25-year span to redevelop Atlanta’s midtown and southeast areas. The study allocated \$111.1 million for widening and extending existing streets and building new streets.³⁷³ Based on Atlanta’s 1950s and 1960s urban renewal history—where the city destroyed 19,000 low income housing units that left over 40,000 predominantly African American poor people seeking shelter on housing waiting lists—many black working class residents recognized that their neighborhoods, schools, and social spaces lie in the path of bulldozers. One anonymous resident

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* “Downtown’s Missing Link Proud of Accomplishments,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 13, 1974, pg. 8.

³⁷² “Four Council Members Not on Chamber’s List,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 17, 1977, pg. 1; Those four unfunded African Americans council members were James Bond, Morris Finley, James Howard, and Arthur Langford.

³⁷³ “Appearing Soon in Your Local Neighborhood: Progress,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 10, 1972, pg. 4.

told *The Great Speckled Bird*, “Where will all the land for widening streets, building parking lots and freeways come from? People’s homes mainly.” When residents continued to challenge the Central Area Plan at public hearings, one Chamber of Commerce member exclaimed, “It’s ridiculous for you people to ask us to change this plan or to call for a new study. This research cost us a quarter of a million dollars, and the only thing we can do now is hurry up and adopt it.” Thus, Atlanta’s private-public power structure rejected public participation in decision-making of residential space.³⁷⁴

What is revealing about this study, however, is how little it attended to spatial segregation. Expanded traffic capacity through the construction of more roads generally produces more traffic because the more streets widened, the more it disperses the local population. Families need more access to transportation to travel more and for longer distances to work, shop, and school. As a result, transportation reform linked with urban redevelopment threatens the use value of working-class neighborhoods as more and more of the family’s income is put into buying and maintaining automobiles and insurance and paying taxes for roads. Market failure also came into play. City Hall disposed of pollution-inducing waste from accelerated redevelopment in poor black neighborhoods like East Lake Meadows, Bedford-Pine, and Vine City.

CAP also deployed their relationship with City Hall to introduce Tax Increment Financing (TIF) bonds to utilize public funds to bankroll neoliberalization. TIF bonds are public-funded trusts issued by local governments and backed by a percentage of projected future (and higher) tax collections. With TIF bonds, the higher tax collections are dependent on the

³⁷⁴ Central Atlanta Progress, Inc., “Central Area Study,” 1971; “Central Area Study Says No!” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 11, 1972, pg. 5; “CAS Plans Ignore City Dwellers,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 25, 1972, pg. 12.

increased property values and heightened business activity in the gentrified area. When a metro region, like Atlanta for example, designates specific areas—like downtown—as TIF districts, the property value of all the real estate within those boundaries at the time is designated as the “base value.” The base value is the amount that for a set number of years after the fact (generally between 15 to 25 years) generates revenue through the city’s property tax process. Everything over and above that, through an increase in value of existing real estate and new development in that time frame (CAP’s Central Area Plan that gentrified areas surrounding downtown Atlanta) goes into a separate fund earmarked for economic development. The city then uses that second money source to lure private investors (many of them international and financial institutions) to the area with loans and subsidies for commercial projects, thus ensuring higher private returns. Thus, the more private investment activity generated in an area funded by TIF bond projects, the more capital accumulation returns that private investors and the municipal government generate on their investments. TIF bond proceeds pay for the present-day public improvements in the first year, but they are also projected to create economic conditions—such as gentrification/displacement or increased privatization of public spaces—leading to incremental increases in tax revenues.³⁷⁵ In other words, the ACOC sought to implement TIF bonds as a long-term surplus value-generating plan at the expense of the lowest-wage earners in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region.

Many TIF bonds are revenue backed, meaning they are not backed by the credit of the sponsoring government. However, other TIF bonds require a general fund in order to access cost-effective bond terms. In this case, the municipality is responsible for repayment. To determine the viability of TIF, a local government must determine the market and financial

³⁷⁵ Tanvi Misra, “The Trouble With TIF,” *CityLab*, September 12, 2018; “Tax Incremental Financing,” *The World Bank Group*, 2015.

feasibility of the proposed new development, estimate the project's financing gap (the amount of public subsidy required) without which the private sector would not invest. The municipality then identifies a geographic area (in this case, CAP chose Atlanta's central business district) from which a tax increment would be drawn. Next, the city establishes the initial assessed value of all the land and existing tax collections within the designated area. The city then estimates, based on the proposed development program, market feasibility, and estimated absorption rates, the likely incremental taxes that could be generated within that area over the tenor of the bond. At this point, the city assesses whether the incremental increase in tax revenues would generate enough to pay for the financing gap.

TIF bonds reroute public funds towards a different, more exploitative purpose and one that minimizes residents' decision-making power. TIF bonds are generally very opaque. The municipality provides general information regarding redevelopment, but according to researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, very little of the public money in TIF bonds is used for public projects. Many TIF bonds are used for gentrification projects, including sporting facility construction, extravagant hotel renovation, and commercial development. In fact, some scholars argue that TIF bonds essentially act as roving displacement factions—they contribute to uneven development and increase apartheid in urban spaces. "On average," scholar David Merriman noted, "TIF may be moving development from one part of the city to another, and changing the timing of the development, but there's not more development than would have otherwise been made." Merriman suggested that TIFs generally do not generate any benefit to residents—they cost poor urbanites resources in the long run. TIF bonds sometimes capture tax revenue above the capped base value, like surplus value in capital accumulation. This is money that taxpayers might use to directly fund institutions that strengthen the use value of their neighborhoods,

including public school construction or food banks—but often this money is diverted from such neighborhood sustainability projects.

For a contemporary example, Chicago, Illinois maintains many TIF districts. \$660 million, a third of their property taxes, go solely into TIF districts. Two independent journalists, Ben Javorsky and Mick Dumke, uncovered documents that revealed that Chicago’s TIF fund was a shadow budget. According to their findings, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley in 2009 used TIF money to revamp skyscrapers and issue subsidies to large corporations in closed-door deals that gentrified parts of the city. By 2017, Mayor Rahm Emanuel continued his predecessor’s exploitation. The Better Government Association found that \$55 million in TIF funds that the Emanuel administration earmarked for fighting poverty, were spent to renovate the Navy Pier waterfront tourist attraction instead.³⁷⁶

In their June 1975 Re/C.A.P. newsletter, CAP targeted the poor neighborhoods south of Five Points (a White upper income area) for their Atlanta TIF plan. CAP outlined three major redevelopment goals for TIF: a major revival of Downtown retail (including the development of a major enclosed mall regional shopping center along Alabama Street from Underground Atlanta to Omni International, increased middle and upper-income housing, and a “downtown people mover” structure that connects major central business activity centers.

CAP applied state constitutional power to exclude working class residential opposition to TIF bonds. CAP’s newsletter cited that Section 2-5901 of the Georgia Constitution permitted “a city and/or county to contract to pay other public agencies and/or public corporations to provide services to the city and county where the parties to the contract have the power to do the function for which the services are being provided.” In clearer terms, CAP disingenuously promoted their

³⁷⁶ Misra, “The Trouble with TIF.”

predominantly privatized redevelopment plan as “public services” so that the City of Atlanta supplied the power to both carry out revitalization and enforce a contract for repayment of the front-end debt for a 50-year period. Additionally, CAP explicitly stated that their interpretation of the state constitution allowed them to bypass public consent in directing public funds towards private interests. According to the group, the City acting as a the redevelopment agency provided the investors with an assurance that they “can issue revenue bonds on the strength of Tax Increments without needing a referendum.”³⁷⁷ Apparently, CAP’s statements portrayed the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce as benevolent pioneers who righteously assumed power to determine the urban structure because working class input proved to be a nuisance. This element of TIF-directed urban gentrification allows an endless money supply from public tax funds without the input or support of the working classes whose living and social spaces serve as the development sites.

As CAP mapped out business goals for colonization throughout the city, the ACOC took up the public relations campaign to sell Atlanta to international tourists, corporations and entrepreneurs. In late 1975, newly elected chamber president Joel Goldberg, who also chaired Rich’s, Inc., kickstarted the “Talk Up, Atlanta” program, a multi-media advertising effort “designed to sell...Atlanta” and to “remind people of the good things about Atlanta.” The ACOC invested millions of dollars into the campaign with automobile bumper stickers, billboards, newspaper articles, television commercials, commissioned artwork, neighborhood canvassing, and radio spots. Nationally, chamber members spoke with Osbourne Elliot, editor of *Newsweek*, Jack White of *TIME* magazine, Austin Scott of *Washington Post*, and Fred Powledge

³⁷⁷ Re/C.A.P. Newsletter for Central Area Progress, Inc., June 1975, Box 16, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; Georgia State Constitution. Art. 2. Section 5901.

of *Journal of American Institute of Architects*. To court the black student population in the propaganda, the ACOC enlisted the Morehouse College Glee Club in a special concert where the 60-member group sang historically significant Georgia and Atlanta songs and a new “Talk Up, Atlanta” tune.³⁷⁸

Early neoliberalization efforts produced results for the Atlanta power structure. The Chamber of Commerce and Jackson’s City Hall reported that in 1975, they held extensive meetings with multiple international businesses interested in moving their headquarters to the central city. According to the ACOC’s July 1975 briefing sheet, they negotiated with “a Swedish trade delegation, a group of British investors with potentially \$20 million to invest in Atlanta, another investor with \$17 million potential investment in downtown, Arab consortium with \$10 million to invest, and others.” The mayor also met with a visiting French delegation and New York investors who invested \$50 million in the city.³⁷⁹

The Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) opened its doors on September 9, 1976 and served as the ACOC’s key recruitment institution for international investment. In fact, the ACOC endowed the facility with extravagant technology and space to stand out amongst other U.S. international convention sites. The ACOC viewed the \$35 million plaza as the Southeastern hub for the international market. According to CAP’s 1975 GWCC opening press release, the center functioned simultaneously as a “convention, trade show, and international meeting facility.” The center’s layout, the GWCC’s 350,000 square foot central room was the single

³⁷⁸ Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Press Release, “Goldberg Elected Atlanta Chamber President; Unveils Talk Up Atlanta Campaign,” 10 December 1975, Box 16, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁷⁹ Briefing Sheet for Central Atlanta Progress marketing the Central City Program, July 1975, Box 15, Folder 15, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

largest exhibition room in the United States at the time. The ACOC equipped the additional 22 meeting rooms inside (70,000 square feet) and the two thousand-seat auditorium with “complete simultaneous interpretation/translation facilities” which enabled the center to accommodate large international meetings—making GWCC the only space in the nation with such capabilities at the time.³⁸⁰

Atlanta’s power structure regarded the GWCC’s return potential for the metro region and Southeast as paradigm-shifting. CAP estimated (and predicted correctly) that over two million visitors passed through the plaza each year. In its first two years, CAP expected the center to generate over \$526 million to Atlanta’s economy through attendance, state sales tax revenue, hotel-motel tax revenue, concession, and international business migrating to the city. In its first year in operation, Atlanta hosted over 700 conventions and brought nearly three quarters of a million delegates to the metro region. This new revenue stream added \$125 million to Atlanta’s economy in 1976.³⁸¹

The first few years of neoliberalization skyrocketed Atlanta’s rank in lucrative U.S. regions. In December 1976, CAP and Mayor Jackson held a special investors group gala where they presented the top U.S. companies—whose combined investment in the city by that time totaled \$1.5 billion—with a sweeping neighborhood revitalization plan documenting the new market for growing professional and managerial class people moving into the central city. As a result of construction of new middle and upper-income housing in the Northeast, ACOC promoted building new office parks and retail shops, dubbed “Peachtree Walk,” adjacent to

³⁸⁰ Re/C.A.P. Newsletter for Central Area Progress, Inc., June 1975, Box 16, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁸¹ Re/C.A.P. Newsletter for Central Area Progress, Inc., June 1975, Box 16, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

Virginia-Highlands, Ansley Park and other gentrifying Northeast neighborhoods. Other sites targeted for gentrification at that time included West End, where city officials took real estate appraisers from the Atlanta Mortgage Consortium on a residential bus tour and documented rehabilitation strategies.³⁸² As will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, the West End's revitalization removed crucial resources from the area for working-class Blacks—particularly access to fresh food grocery stores.

Although their domestic recruitment of international investment reaped major results early, the Atlanta power structure extended the neoliberalization process by spending significant time and public funds overseas recruiting foreign capital to overtake black working-class space in the central city. Although scholars like Charles Rutheiser credit Andrew Young with igniting the neoliberal push for global capital in the metro region, the first overseas recruitment for Atlanta's private-public partnership can be traced to Maynard Jackson's Black urban regime in 1978. Chamber of Commerce records show that the ACOC's first black president, Atlanta Life Insurance Company president Jesse Hill, Jr. joined United States President Jimmy Carter on a trade mission to Nigeria that year. While there, Hill established a business network with over a dozen Nigerian capitalists and worked with Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson to coordinate a "major private sector economic mission from Nigeria to Atlanta" from Sunday, June 25 to Wednesday, June 28 that same year. Twenty-seven top Nigerian business leaders made the journey to Atlanta and held meetings with multiple local business executives focusing on textile manufacturing, agriculture, maritime shipping, telecommunications, hotel management, beer and soft drink production, water treatment, hospital and medical supplies, food processing, legal

³⁸² CAP's Re/C.A.P. monthly newsletter, No. 80, December 1976, Box 16, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

services, and construction. Chief Dotun Okunbanjo, the President of Lagos Nigerian-American Chamber of Commerce and mission leader, emphasized the desire to establish agriculture ventures because of the demand in his home country. “Instead of eating Uncle Ben’s [rice],” Okunbanjo stated to over one hundred Atlanta businesspeople, “we should be eating Uncle Niger.”³⁸³

In November the following year, Jackson and the ACOC upped the ante and hauled dozens of Atlanta metro capitalists, Southeastern state governors, and various regional business executives to China and Japan for ten days of investment recruitment. The American group hosted an all-day “Georgia Investment Seminar” at the Okura Hotel in Tokyo, Japan on November 7 with over one hundred Japanese capitalists in attendance. Both the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and Kajima International, the Tokyo equivalent to a chamber of commerce, presented on their respective political economies. The ACOC highlighted Right to Work Law in Georgia, which limited the power of organized labor, in their pitch to entice Japanese firms. The following day, Tokyo held the Japan-U.S. Southeast Conference at the Imperial Hotel where U.S. state governors of Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia delivered pitches for Japanese investment in their respective states. Georgia governor George Busbee stood out amongst his peers in his international recruitment experience. He took numerous trips to multiple European and Asian nations to promote foreign investment in the metro region and even formed a Japan-Southeastern United

³⁸³ Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, “Special Opportunity: Nigerian Trade Mission to Atlanta,” June 1978, Box 61, Folder 23, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; “Nigerian Delegation Emphasizes Investment by Small Businesses,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1978, pg. 10.

States free trade association. He often promoted his goal that “Atlanta-area counties could work together to sell the urban region to out-of-state business executives.”³⁸⁴

Jackson also recruited capital in West Germany during the final year of his second tenure. According to Jackson’s personal records, between May 30 and June 2, he met with “Dr. Jordan, President of the German-American Chamber of Commerce” and “various business interests in Germany.” Jackson visited governments and capitalists in three cities, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Munich, to maximize German business profit for Atlanta’s growing convention trade.³⁸⁵ It is safe to assert that Atlanta’s power structure wanted their international recruitment trips shrouded in secrecy. No local or national media outlet reported on this trip and Atlanta City Hall did not speak of the trip on returning to Atlanta. Additionally, these trips occurred during Atlanta’s revenue crisis, discussed in chapter 2, where the Atlanta power structure campaigned for a local option sales tax that disproportionately affected the income of Atlanta’s poor. It is possible to ascertain that Atlanta’s ruling class traveled in secrecy because they sought to avoid further fuel for the working-class militancy erupting throughout Black neighborhoods at the time.

Andrew Young’s election to the Atlanta mayoralty in 1981 amplified the neoliberal interests of Atlanta capital in many ways. First, Young’s international travels to 122 nations as

³⁸⁴ Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Memorandum on Important Travel Information for Atlanta Far East Mission Participants, 21 September 1979, Box 3, Folder 13, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; “\$1 Million Campaign Launched to Draw Business to Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, May 3, 1983, pg. 1, 6.

Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s *Forward Atlanta* Newsletter, Vol. XIII, No. 5, 25 February 1980, Box 3, Folder 9, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁸⁵ Memorandum Detailing Maynard Jackson’s trip to Germany, 29 May 1980, Box 112, Folder 10, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

the United States Ambassador under President Jimmy Carter allowed him to establish corporate networks for American capital. Second, Young's mentor as ambassador and later mayor was George Schultz, Ronald Reagan's secretary of state and former CEO of Bechtel.

Young's history in oil capital is of particular note for both his neoliberal ideology as mayor of Atlanta and his current reputation as a "crony capitalist." Investigation by the *New York Times* and other independent journalists discovered that when Young served as UN ambassador between 1977 and 1979, he met and built a business relationship with Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, a CIA-installed operative who came to power with a U.S. backed military coup in February 1976. "Obasanjo and I kind of hit it off immediately," Young stated to the *New York Times*. "We were mainly interested in democracy." The truth is that the U.S. attempted to annex Nigeria's oil reserves using Obasanjo and Young after the OPEC oil embargo damaged the American monopoly over global oil. *International Herald Tribune* reported that Obasanjo "monopolized power the day he entered office" and keeping "the oil portfolio for himself" and using "Nigeria's vast oil wealth for political ends." By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Nigeria held the sixth largest oil reserves, but Obasanjo—directed by the IMF—ended government subsidies and violently repressed working-class protests. Concurrently, close to 75 percent of Nigeria's 140 million people, who reside in a nation with vast natural resources, survived on less than \$1 a day in 2007.³⁸⁶

When Young took the mayoralty in 1981, he involved his brother Walter Young in his Nigerian oil annexation. In November 1983, *The Washington Post* reported that Ashland Oil,

³⁸⁶ "For U.S.-Nigeria Go-Between, Ties Yield Profits," *The New York Times*, April 18, 2007; Lawrence Porter, "Andrew Young, bagman for US capitalism in Africa," *WSWS*, April 30, 2007; "Worldwide Propaganda Network Built by the C.I.A.," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1977; "Nike Appoints Andrew Young to Review Its Labor Practices," *The New York Times*, March 25, 1997; "Nike's Asian Factories Pass Young's Muster," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1997.

Inc. paid Walter Young \$2 million to arrange a supply of crude oil for Ashland from Cameroon. Walter Young set up a company to buy oil from Cameroon, sell it to Ashland, and collect a mark-up of between 25 and 30 cents on each barrel sold. *Washington Post* discovered that Ashland bought about 5.5 million barrels of oil from Cameroon through Young between March 1980 and March 1981, paying Young \$1.5 million for the oil and another \$500,000 in consultation fees. The Securities and Exchange Commission stepped in to determine if the payment was a form a bribery and part of a broader SEC probe into intermediary companies at the time attempting to monopolize the oil business. Although Andrew Young denied any role in this specific deal, his free market neoliberalism essentially defined the means by which U.S. capitalists exploited international oil reserves in the latter half of the twentieth century.³⁸⁷

Young's neoliberal mentality went far beyond colonizing Nigerian oil reserves for American capitalists. He founded GoodWorks International, Inc. in 1996, which assisted corporations like Nike and Wal-Mart—who are notorious for human rights abuses and exploitative labor practices—with global privatization. In the Nike episode, GoodWorks published a seventy-five-page exoneration of the shoe corporation's Asian factories, stating that “there was no evidence or pattern of widespread of systematic abuse or mistreatment of workers.” Young also attached photos—most taken by Young himself—of smiling workers playing guitar on breaks and watching television in their dorms. However, the photos raised many questions, especially from Ernst and Young accounting firm. Their visit to the same factories revealed conditions rivaling human slavery and subsequent report condemned GoodWorks' report as “lies.” Since then, Young has helped private banks and oil companies

³⁸⁷ “Andrew Young's Brother Object of SEC Oil Probe,” *The Washington Post*, November 22, 1983.

break ground in the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa.³⁸⁸ In other words, before and after his two terms as Atlanta's mayor, Andrew Young played a leading role in pogrom actions against working class populations both in the U.S. and across the world.

By 1980, the Atlanta power structure's recruitment paid off: when Andrew Young returned to the city, foreign capital entrenched tourist-style, non-productive spaces throughout the metro region that provided little benefit to the black working-class residents. European and Kuwaiti dollars helped complete the two bastions of the new international character of the city, the Omni International (CNN Center) and the Atlanta Center, Ltd (Hilton Hotel and Tower). The Netherlands and Saudi Arabia purchased two major downtown Atlanta institutions, Life of Georgia and the National Bank of Georgia, respectively. Atlanta real estate's long-term manipulation of urban land rents, through blight, city policies that expanded the underground economy in poor black neighborhoods, and purposely neglecting housing repairs—allowed international financial institutions to build headquarters in the central city. The world's twenty largest banks at the time constructed branches in the central business district. In fact, by 1984, international capital had poured over \$3 billion into private metro Atlanta companies. According to Charles Rutheiser, foreign capital in 1984 Atlanta broke down like this: One-third of all foreign investment derived from Canada capitalists, \$500 million from British and Dutch companies each, \$400 million from Japanese companies, and \$109 million from German businesses. By that same year, foreign companies totaled over 780 with 240 being the U.S. headquarters for the firms. By 1990, that number exploded to over 7,800 foreign companies in the Atlanta metro region.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Bruce Dixon, "Andrew Young: Shameless Son," *The Black Commentator*, March 7, 2006.

³⁸⁹ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 181-185.

Mayor Young continued the Atlanta power structure's practice of recruitment abroad to the extent that Atlanta residents nicknamed him the "absentee mayor." One such trip that captured notoriety occurred on April 17, 1985 when Young accompanied African American Fulton County Commissioner Michael Lomax, African American Atlanta City Council president Marvin Arrington, and one hundred Atlanta Chamber of Commerce members to Paris, France to "sell Atlanta," according to ACOC vice president Gerald L. Bartels. "If Atlanta is truly to be all together better," Bartels continued, "it is vital we foster strong ties in the international marketplace." The week-long trek attempted to lure close to fifty French businesses to the metro region to join the other sixty there at the time. Young also spearheaded the growth of Australian capital in the metro region. Between 1984 and 1988, Australian businesses doubled from 18 to 38. 3,270 employees worked in Australian Atlanta-based companies in 1988 with 8 of those firms serving as U.S. headquarters. Young participated in the signing of a treaty between the U.S. and Australia that established increased international flights between the nations. Young also opened negotiations with the U.S. Department of Transportation to determine direct air service routes from Atlanta to Australia—creating more convenience for Australian capital to privatize the Atlanta Metropolitan Region leading up to the Olympics Era.³⁹⁰

By 1987, 70 major metro area commercial real estate properties operated through international capital. Dutch, British, Canadian, and German businesses accounted for three-fourths of that total while Korean, Indian, Saudi, and Taiwanese capital entered the market in smaller amounts. Japanese capitalists also made a splash in Atlanta real estate that year with the \$300 million purchase of the One Atlantic Center in upper Midtown, better known as the IBM

³⁹⁰ "Chamber and Mayor Intend to Sell Atlanta to France, *The Atlanta Daily World*, April 9, 1985, pg. 1, 6; "Atlanta Chamber Seeks Air Link to Australia," *The Atlanta Daily World*, March 30, 1989, pg. 7

Building. They also constructed multiple banks, insurance companies, and pension funds that generated nearly \$1 billion into central business district real estate alone.³⁹¹

Domestic capital also wanted a piece of Atlanta's newly privatized pie. U.S. insurance companies like Equitable Life Assurance and Metropolitan Life Insurance set up offices across the Northeast and Northwest sections. Place entrepreneurs also took advantage of the cheapened land and the rebounding stock market with real estate investment trusts (REITs). REITs act as a more profit-inducing form of real estate capital (under the proper conditions) because the corporation invests most of its money in real estate to accumulate surplus profit and must distribute at least ninety percent of its income back to shareholders. Smaller-scale place entrepreneurs prefer REITs over a sole proprietorship because REITs allow them to purchase large land and built-environment that would otherwise be too expensive for individual investment. REIT shares in the 1980s averaged between \$10 and \$20, so they opened participation in major real estate ventures for numerous upstarts, expanding the commercial real estate boom that decade. Additionally, because REITs are tax-exempt under most circumstances, the profit potential for shareholders is even more attractive. For example, the New York-based National Securities and Research Corporation reported that between 1976 and 1985, the annual returns on the index of equity REITs—commercial real estate such as office buildings, shopping centers, nursing homes, industrial properties, and hotels/motels—averaged 28.2 percent. Mortgage REITs for residential real estate averaged 20.8 percent per year in returns during that same time frame. In fact, REITs on average outperformed stocks and bonds on a total return basis during that same period, rebounding from the early 1970s.³⁹²

³⁹¹ *National Real Estate Investor*, vol. 29, November 1987, p. 32; *National Real Estate Investor*, Vol. 31, 1989.

³⁹² "Real Estate Trusts Offer High Yields," *The Atlanta Constitution*, November 15, 1985, pg. 1L; "REIT's Popularity Building Again," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1988, pg. 26.

REITs especially thrived in Atlanta because in the 1980s, the Atlanta Housing Authority and the Andrew Young Black urban regime filled the area with an array of cheap land and low-income housing stock for purchase. The Atlanta Housing Authority sold public housing properties and bourgeois and petty bourgeois individuals provided a demand for a boom in office park, shopping center, and middle and upper-income housing in the region. With REITs, the lower price that shareholders buy land and built environment, the higher the dividend yield (dividends stay the same regardless of share price, so if shareholders can buy the shares cheaper, they obtain a higher percentage). Additionally, REITs expanded with stabilized, moderately low interest rates after the economic crises of the 1970s. Thus, corporations established REITs through the office space construction boom and middle and upper-income housing boom at the time because they both provided stable rents for REIT shareholders. Because of this, Atlanta became one of the national leaders in REITs, with five trusts that ranked among the largest: Great American Mortgage Investors, Citizens & Southern Realty Investors, Cousins Mortgage and Equity Investments, Tri-South Mortgage Investors, and Atlanta National Real Estate Trust.³⁹³

The opening of the \$400 million Hartsfield-International Airport on September 21, 1980 facilitated easy access and circulation of capital, consumers, and labor across the global free market. As the largest employer in the city with an estimated 35,000 employees, the airport facilitated the flow of 60 million passengers in its first years of operation. Alongside passengers, the international airport shuttled an estimated 115,000 tons of mail, 10 tons of express and 220,000 tons of freight.

³⁹³ “The REITs are Coming Back Strong,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 7, 1985, pg. 1K.

The airport's primary architects emphasized that this airport relieved "the present rush-hour crowds, landing delays, taxiing to distant gates, waiting for gates to be free to accept planes or passengers...in spite of...100% increase in traffic."³⁹⁴ Hartsfield acts as the major hub of Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines and ensured that most international flyers changed planes at least once in Atlanta. Concourse E terminal, as the largest terminal in the United States, is dedicated exclusively to international travel and scheduled 24-hour a day nonstop service to Mexico City, London, Brussels, and the Netherlands. Upon its opening, the Hartsfield airport provided nonstop service to 110 cities and one-stop service to 44 cities.³⁹⁵

Atlanta businesses took full advantage of the airport's expansion to maximize accumulation. In its first year, Concourse E increased Hartfield's international traveler base by 385 percent since 1973. This increase not only positioned Atlanta as number two in the nation for foreign travel, but it also sped up the region's tourism profits. Over three-fourths of the 700,000 convention-goers in Atlanta arrived from foreign nations.³⁹⁶

Georgia businesses also organized multiple events to tap lucrative overseas markets. On February 11, 1983, the Georgia World Congress Center hosted "Matchmaker '83," where statewide capitalists met with export management companies to strengthen trade ties between

³⁹⁴ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 80-81; Hartsfield International Airport, December 1978, Box 60 Folder 1, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁹⁵ Hartsfield-Atlanta International Airport Welcome Guide and Brochure, December 1978, Box 60, Folder 1, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; Real Estate and Business Atlanta clipping detailing the economic impact of Hartsfield-International, January/February 1978, Box 59, Folder 18, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

³⁹⁶ Newspaper clipping from *The Atlanta Journal* regarding the airport's lure of international tourists, 7 August 1979, Box 59, Folder 17, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.

metro region business and global commodity markets. The University of Georgia's International Trade Development Center hosted the expo and emphasized "opening the free global market" through "simple promotion of products overseas or foreign exporters handling domestic products." The Atlanta-based M&M Products, an African American hair care company, offshored its production to Jamaica in 1983. M&M president Cornell McBride praised the move as "a giant leap in international marketing" during a trade and business recruitment trip in Kingston headed by Mayor Andrew Young and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.³⁹⁷

Young's neoliberalization also extended to public education. Under his black urban regime, Atlanta faced its first serious attempt to privatize schools throughout the metro region. In May 1981, federal neoliberals began pushing for tax credits for parents who sent their children to private schools. The Congressional bill offered a \$250 tax credit that promised to increase to \$550 at a later time. The fact is that the private school tax credit introduced a new tool in class war against the poor people. By definition, a tax credit only applies to people whose taxes exceed the amount of the credit. Therefore, the legislation restricts poor people who do not meet that threshold to underfunded public schools. Additionally, the bill's secondary purpose was to increase profits. Once a tax credit is passed, tuition rises, and the tax credit encourages inflation in private education. As public education funding faced deep cuts from both "new federalism" and fiscally conservative state legislatures, public schools, particularly in resource-deprived Black working-class neighborhoods, professional and managerial class people would refuse to support taxes that fund public schools that their children no longer attended.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ "Export/Ga. Manufacturers to Meet," *The Atlanta Voice*, January 8, 1983, pg. 7; "M&M to Start Production in the Caribbean," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 9, 1983, pg. 2.

³⁹⁸ "Targeting Public Schools for Destruction," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 30, 1981, pg. 5.

The Georgia Department of Education followed the federal neoliberal trail, cutting \$4.8 million from public school funding at the request of Democratic Governor Joe Frank Harris. Most of the education cuts disproportionately affected poor black Georgians, whose household income levels limited their post-secondary educational opportunities to vocational programs or in some cases, junior college. The cuts included the following: \$758,067 from state education operating expenses, \$342,603 from public library spending, \$435,735 from centers for severely emotionally disturbed children, \$40,723 from junior college vocational programs, \$1.55 million from area vocational technical schools, \$716,247 from high school vocational programs, and \$35,816 from adult education.³⁹⁹

Black middle-class parents facilitated Young's drive toward privatized education throughout Atlanta. In fact, the black bourgeois and petty bourgeois joined white elites seeking "diversity" in private schools in recruitment drives in the metro region. The U.S. Census stated that black private school enrollment in the City of Atlanta increased from 2,043 in 1970 to 2,332 in 1980. Across the Metro region, black private school student population increased by 1,542 pupils during the same period. Woodward Academy, one of the largest private schools in South Atlanta in College Park, contained a higher black student population—15 percent—than any other private school in white upper-class areas in North Atlanta. It is safe to assert that locational advantage on the Southside provided black middle-class parents close proximity to Woodward Academy.

In Fall 1986, an organization called Minority Atlanta Families in Independent Schools (MAFIS), comprised of blacks parents whose children attended private schools in the metro region, held multiple recruitment fairs to expand private school population. Joanne Crump,

³⁹⁹ "Education Budget Cuts Plague Public Schools, *The Atlanta Voice*, November 12, 1983, pg. 14.

whose seven-year old son Eric Crump attended Atlanta International Private School in the affluent White Northwest Atlanta, played a pivotal role. However, Crump and other private school proponents misinterpreted private education as viable for all Black Atlantans. In reality, if working class Black parents grew tired of the delapidated conditions and supplies in Black public schools and wanted to send their children to Woodward Academy in 1986, the tuition rates locked many of them out of the opportunity. In fact, private school tuition in 1986 generally ranged from \$1,440 to \$8,895 a year per child. Woodward day school ranged from \$2,150 to \$4,675 while the boarding school cost \$8,895 per year per child.⁴⁰⁰

Additionally, many working-class black parents opposed the individualism, isolationism, and lack of cultural and social connection to African Americans that often resulted from private school education. However, many black middle-class parents relished the competitive edge that they believed private schools provided. An anonymous parent whose two children attended Benjamin E. Mays High School in Southwest Atlanta—considered one of the premier black public schools in Atlanta at the time—stated that she considered transferring her students from Mays because the public school’s 1-to-23 teacher to student ratio meant that “all students can’t be stars.” She argued that her son “will excel in a private school atmosphere with one-on-one instruction.”⁴⁰¹

Andrew Young also introduced privatizing Atlanta highways. In November 1988, Young and the City Council vetoed an anti-toll road bill, leaving the Georgia 400 highway and other

⁴⁰⁰ “Minority Parents Seeking More Students for Private Schools,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 25, 1986, pg. 4D.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

potential roads to become toll highways. Young justified his unpopular veto by arguing that privatizing Georgia 400 was the only way that the state would build the expressway.⁴⁰²

Andrew Young's Reagan-like policies depowered neighborhood participation in decision-making. Young ensured that City Hall's planning processes involved no neighborhood grassroots activists. Young also attacked city preservationists, who represented the only petty bourgeois challenge to gentrifying developers. Young also extended beyond Maynard Jackson's pro-police stance to protect violent officers. The most publicized example occurred in September 1987 when officers R.A. Watson and M.L. Long shot and killed a handcuffed African American Eddie Callahan in his back in view of multiple witnesses. One witness, African American paraplegic Jack Jordan, recounted his testimony:

“I was sitting, facing this way and I saw this car come down the street, right? And it hit that first pole over there and landed on that man's porch. and the guy got out and didn't know whether to run this way or that way. by the time one of the officers got out and had his pistol out and pistol whipped him down to the ground before his buddy got to him, then both of them went to pistol whipping him to the ground. But he was handcuffed when they shot him...By the time I got out from here and rolled down there, I was looking right at them when they were pistol whipping him and shooting him in the back...he pressed that pistol against his skin and kept shooting. Cause you could see the gunpowder... Time we got up on them, they were trying to get them handcuffs off man, but they didn't have time cause people came from everywhere.”⁴⁰³

Despite these officers' notorious history of brutality against black youth in their four years on the Atlanta police force, Young and his Public Safety Commissioner George Napper immediately rushed to the aid of the shooters. They recommended the officers be suspended with pay to the opposition of the city council. Young spoke on statistics involving civilian

⁴⁰² “Mayor's Veto for Georgia 400 Filed; Proposal to Eliminate Free Passes,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 12, 1988, pg. 3.

⁴⁰³ Jordan's full statement given to the Atlanta Police Department was reprinted in *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3, 25.

attacks on policemen. “We’ve had 47 hundred arrests this year. In five hundred of those, police have been attacked...three policemen have been killed, and two have been paralyzed,” Young explained. “I don’t think we can legally suspend them...they deserve due process. However, Young barely spoke of Callahan, a Vietnam veteran and resident of low-income Carver Homes neighborhood, unless in the context of defending his killers. “They didn’t just walk up and shoot him...it’s a highly emotional situation.”⁴⁰⁴

Black working-class Atlanta fired back at Young’s seemingly support of rampant police violence in the city. Many Carver residents denounced Young as “Eddie Callahan’s real killer” and that “the only way out of the present situation of increasing violence toward those who are workers and poor is to set out on a course free of appeals to the old liberal politicians who can now, as with Andy Young, be seen as turning fascists where the methods of fascism, police violence, are used to rid society of those who are deemed unfit.” Carver Homes residents organized multiple protest marches, a petition, and discussed forming a self-defense gun club. However, Andrew Young’s support of the officers influenced the courts to exonerate Long and Watson for the killing. Young’s reputation as a Reaganite mayor only deepened his unpopularity among the black working class in the city.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ “Eyewitnesses Describe the Murder of Eddie Lee Callahan,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3, 21; “mayor Young, City Officials Support Murders,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3, 21; “Courageous Mother Stands Up to Murderers,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3; “Coroner on the Question of Handcuffs,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3, 10; “Polygraph Intimidation,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 19, 1987, pg. 3, 18. “Carver Homes Only Mad Over Shooting: Moore,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 26, 1987, pg. 2, 21.

⁴⁰⁵ “Dr Khalid Muhammad Calls for Self-Defense,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 26, 1987, pg. 2, 21; “John Brown’s Body,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 26, 1987, pg. 3; “Questionable Evidence for Callahan Murder,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 3, 1987, pg. 3; “Atlanta Police Officer Indicted in Shooting of Eddie Callahan,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 17, 1987, pg. 3; “Frustration Over Investigation,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 17, 1987, pg. Cover, 21; “No Justice in Callahan Killing,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 21, 1987, pg. 20; “Jury Condones Callahan Killing: Killer Long Found Not Guilty,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 21, 1987, pg. 21.

Working-class black Atlantans struggled to fend off the consequences of ever-increasing privatization into their neighborhoods. In fact, working-class sources reveal that black working-class neighborhoods fought encroaching privatization early and often because of its threat to their neighborhood social movement capacity. Their most immediate fight focused on access to food. For his two years as an employee of the A&P grocery store in predominantly black West End area of Atlanta, African American James F. Smith received over 1600 complaints from customers regarding spoiled and freezer-burnt fruit, vegetables, and meat. In one particular case, Smith noted that the company sent 125 thirty-pound boxes of freezer-burnt beef neckbones to the West End store. When Smith investigated A&P stores in the White Northeast area, he found very little spoiled food. Smith told *The Great Speckled Bird* that A&P refused to send his store “good” grade meat and that A&P made more money selling “choice,” or lower quality meat. Plus, Smith noted, A&P made the most money in black neighborhoods where the percentage of customers to store square foot is the largest.⁴⁰⁶

On November 4, 1974, Smith alongside other residents living near the West End organized a picket that extinguished most business in the A&P within ten days. The after-work rush that usually jammed the A&P parking lot diminished as residents refused to cross the picket lines. Smith stated that the pickets reduced A&P’s business from \$125,000 to \$3,000 a week. A&P panicked and by the fourth week, with a 95 percent effective rate (according to the picketers), they began to lower their prices to lure customers back. Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Council (MASLC) negotiated for the picketers, demanding that A&P buy food and services from black companies, advertise in black media like *The Atlanta Voice*, and reinstate

⁴⁰⁶ “Metro Summit Picketing A&P,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 9, 1974, pg. 6; “Pickets at West End A&P,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 14, 1974, pg. 4; “West End Picket Continues,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, November 21, 1974, pg. 6.

James Smith. The picketers also instituted a boycott. Neighborhood solidarity remained relatively strong for this movement, to the point that the store remained empty even when picket lines stopped at certain times of the day.⁴⁰⁷

When the talks failed and the pickets and boycott strengthened, Mary Vowels, the wife of the president of the Atlanta NAACP president and the dean of the Atlanta University Business School, organized a counter protest against the pickets—called the West End Consumer Club. Vowels, alongside other middle-class blacks who joined her group, argued that the picketers set a bad example for the black community by “causing trouble” and they should allow the Community Relations Council to resolve any problems. However, Vowels revealed that her main opposition to the pickets was that they interfered with private business. “I have learned from my husband,” Vowels said, “how much businesses depend on profit...the pickets [are] certainly spoiling their business.”⁴⁰⁸

Black Atlanta elites rallied to support Vowels and shut down the working-class protest. The Free For All Baptist Church pastors demeaned the picketers on a radio show on station WAOK, the most popular Black radio station in Atlanta at the time. Bill Watson, the African American administrator for A&P, went on a speaking tour of black churches in Atlanta where he admitted that A&P neglected residents at the West End store. However, he still appealed for black ministers’ support to shut down the pickets and “protect the business.”⁴⁰⁹

However, the black working class considered the Community Relations Council as a petty bourgeois tool for City Hall because of their history of pacifying militancy. Other

⁴⁰⁷ “A&P Boycott,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, December 12, 1974, pg. 2.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ “MASLC Ends A&P Strike,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 11, 1975, pg. 3; “A&P vs. Metro Summit,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, January 9, 1975, pg. 3.

conservative black media joined Vowels' counter-protest. *The Atlanta Daily World*, known for its conservative, anti-protest perspective during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, published multiple front-page editorials attacking the picketers and rallying support for the counter-protests. The picketers organized residents into shopping trips to other grocery stores to keep the picket line strong. After two months, A&P conceded to black residents' demands and agreed to improve the quality of produce and meat at the West End store.⁴¹⁰

The Social Costs of Neoliberalization: The Black Great Depression in Atlanta and the U.S.

In August 1990, 22-year-old African American Jerry Clark joined his 2,200 coworkers and walked out of the Lakewood General Motors automobile manufacturing plant for the final time. The 64-year-old, 1.8 million square foot factory that produced the Buick Estate Wagon and the Chevrolet Caprice sedan and wagon closed without relocation, leaving Clark and other black and white working-class people without viable work. Clark saw his pay crash from \$16 an hour or \$640 a week to \$350 a week from a pay clause in his union contract. The loss in wages, labor, and time necessary to find supplemental employment destabilized Clark's daily round. Located in Southeast Atlanta, the plant possessed locational advantage for black working-class residents. As one of many illiterate workers, the plant closure almost guaranteed that any work he acquired would not compensate for the social costs of worker displacement. "You're not prepared for them to shut down so quick." Clark stated.⁴¹¹

The rest of the Atlanta metro region reeled from this relatively small-scale deindustrialization as well because the manufacturing sector provided some of the most stable

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹¹ "GM Negotiating to Sell Old Lakewood Plant," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 20, 1991, pg. C3; "Atlanta-Area Workers Not Sure About the Future," *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 4, 1991, pg. F.

labor in the area for black workers. However, by 1987, auto-production across the board declined from 12,242 people in June 1987 to 7,316 people in June 1991. Mindis International, a newly arrived European business, bought the closed GM facility and land for \$5 million and transformed it into a scrap metal recycling center.⁴¹²

The social costs of neoliberalization in U.S. urban spaces like Atlanta were significant, enduring, and extended across temporal and spatial nodes. As scholars Joseph Heathcott and Jefferson Cowie argued, “neoliberalization and the resulting deindustrialization and displacement was not a story of a single emblematic place or a specific time period, such as the 1970s and 1980s.” Rather, what scholars labeled as *deindustrialization* was a much more “socially complicated, historically deep, geographically diverse and political perplexing phenomenon.”⁴¹³ In other words, the social costs of processes like neoliberalization and the resulting displacement and gentrification is more accurately conceptualized as a structural pogrom against the working classes.

In fact, the results proved nothing short of cataclysmic to poor urbanites. In the 1970s and 1980s, U.S. capitalists jettisoned over 32 million manufacturing, construction, mining, and other stable, skilled, livable-wage industrial jobs from metropolitan regions. The decimation continued into the twenty first century with an estimated 700,000 firms shut down each year

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, “The Meanings of Deindustrialization,” in Cowie and Heatcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003, pg.2; John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon, “The Social Costs of Deindustrialization,” in Richard McCormack, ed., *Manufacturing a Better Future for America*. Alliance for American Manufacturing, First Edition, 2009.

between 1995 and 2004—displacing 6.1 million workers with non-productive, unskilled, temporary, low-wage, service labor in urban spaces like Atlanta.⁴¹⁴

The transfer of productive labor away from urban spaces also served to increase competition between low wage workers, drive down wages, and bust union activity in U.S. industries. This function of neoliberalization acted as a political threat to the black working class. Company owners increasingly demanded workers accept concessions, including pay cuts, longer hours, and loss of benefits, or risk shutting down the factory and moving productive labor overseas. Also, the U.S. bourgeois class sponsored legislation that funded research that encouraged underemployment. Reagan’s administration offered close to \$80 billion in tax incentives for technology development and plant and equipment purchases by industries designed to reduce the need for human labor. Concurrently, that same administration only spent \$25 million for employment training.⁴¹⁵ This demonstrates the federal government’s culpability in the public-private partnership in the pogrom displacing the working classes from productive labor.

Displacement is only one major consequence of the loss of livable wage labor in working class spaces. Neoliberalization undermined the social fabric—and as a result, the use value of neighborhoods—of black working-class urbanites by reducing or removing access to homes, healthcare, the tax base (which led to cuts in public resources like schools and fire safety), and community institutions. When black urbanites found work, it usually paid less, offered fewer benefits, did not have union protections, and in increasing cases, proved to be temporary. A

⁴¹⁴ Barry Bluestone, “Economic Inequality and the Macrostructuralist Debate,” in Charles J. Whalen, ed. *Political Economy for the 21st Century: Contemporary Views on the Trend of Economics*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1995, pg. 177.

⁴¹⁵ “Jobs: The Neglected Issue,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 5, 1986, pg. 6.

1986 congressional study found that between 1980 and 1986, 11.5 million workers lost jobs because of factory closures. Only 60 percent of those workers found new jobs, most of them paying lower wages and less benefits than the productive labor jobs they lost.

Those who found jobs faced a minimum wage that ranked the lowest in U.S. history at that time. In 1988, a worker who clocked forty hours at the \$3.35 minimum wage earned less than \$7,000 a year, which equaled 79.8 percent of the poverty level for a family of three. Adjusted for inflation, the real value of the minimum wage in 1988 was only \$2.32. However, since the minimum wage last rose in 1981, consumer prices increased by 32 percent.⁴¹⁶ This gave blacks even more reason to seek multiple jobs and further destabilize their daily round.

The same study noted that only two out of five black workers found new jobs. Underemployment forced many African American workers to find multiple sources of income, thus further destabilizing the vitality of their neighborhoods. Underemployment disrupts the daily round to the point that black workers restructure their entire day, from getting children ready for school or daycare to grocery shopping, home care, and emergency situations. As a result, underemployed blacks no longer possess the necessary time or resources to produce and sustain a successful social movement against ever increasing consequences of neoliberalization like gentrification.

The social costs of Atlanta's neoliberalization on black workers demonstrates this point succinctly. Atlanta's position as the dominant wholesale and retail trade and distribution center in the Southeast meant that manufacturing was not dominant in the metro region. With only two major automobile manufacturing plants in the area, manufacturing only accounted for 14.5 percent of labor in 1980. Across Sun Belt cities, most manufacturers located their plants outside

⁴¹⁶ "Minimum Wage Must be a Livable Wage," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 30, 1988, pg. 4

urban spaces to take advantage of lower wage rates and the lack of a strong union presence. Thus, the General Motors automobile plants located at Lakewood, Doraville, and Hapeville served as outliers and beneficial resources to poor Atlantans. Textile industrial work in the Southeast region also dropped considerably at this time. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that employment during the first quarter of 1986 averaged 481,500, down 1,600 jobs from the 4th quarter of 1985 and down 9,300 jobs from first quarter 1985. In fact, between 1973 and 1986, textile labor dropped 29 percent. Georgia outpaced other states in the region in textile jobs lost. The Labor Bureau concluded that overseas production and automation displaced textile workers at a faster pace than normal.⁴¹⁷

A combination of the national political economy and neoliberalization severely regressed black working-class urbanites' social conditions in the 1980s. In fact, black working-class data from the early 1980s revealed the long-term damage of neoliberalization on poor black bodies and spaces. African Americans at the time considered the period a "Black Great Depression," because while the white working class struggled against the U.S. ruling class as well, white working-class social conditions generally improved over time because they did not possess the generational poverty, inequality, and historically-rooted racial discrimination at the center of the labor market. In other words, as scholar David Swinton pointed out, "recessions come and recessions go, but racial inequality remains with us, year in and year out, in good times and bad."⁴¹⁸

The rising neo-conservative wave at the time concocted pathological arguments as to why black workers suffered disproportionately during the recession. According to the Reagan White

⁴¹⁷ "Regional Textile Employment Declines," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 5, 1986, pg. 3B.

⁴¹⁸ "State of Black America, 1983," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 12, 1983, pg. 4.

House, 52 percent of the black unemployed lost their jobs for reasons unrelated to layoffs—subtly insinuating that blacks are undisciplined workers. The White House also released reports in 1985 stating that of the 7.2 million blacks not participating in the labor force, 5.7 million “do not want a job” while only 1.5 million do want a job.⁴¹⁹ As will be discussed in chapter four, both neo-conservatives and liberal pro-growth coalitions propagandized Black pathological stereotypes to expunge the black poor from the ruling class agenda.

The 1983 statistics on black labor market inequality demonstrate that neoliberalization produced pogrom-like consequences. Adjusted for inflation, the median black family income *regressed* to its lowest level since 1967. The typical black family in 1983 possessed \$651 (in constant dollars) less than they did at the end of the 1960s. The typical black family earned about \$56 for every white family with the decline in real income concentrated in the working classes. Additionally, David Swinton calculated that the income cost to black workers of labor market inequality (unequal pay, unemployment, layoffs, and underemployment) in the year 1980 totaled “a loss of \$54.3 billion.” These losses followed a full decade of labor market inequality where African American workers lost an estimated \$543 billion!⁴²⁰

Thus, it is appropriate to conclude that white and black ruling class neoliberalization, acting as an anti-black working-class pogrom, decimated the resources black workers needed to not only survive, but in many instances, build resistance to consequences of neocolonialism like gentrification. As Swinton put it, “despite the progress made as a result of anti-discrimination efforts, the operation of the labor market institutions and processes continue to explicitly rely on characteristics, practices, and processes which are disadvantageous to blacks.” Additionally, the

⁴¹⁹ “Analysis: Black Employment and Unemployment,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 6, 1985 pg. 2.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid*, pg. 2

data demonstrates that the shift from industrial capital to global finance capital as the dominant mode of production shrunk the level of opportunities relative to the increase in the work force and increased the degree of inequality that exists among the racial classes.⁴²¹

As the labor market worsened, black working-class women—the subproletariat group in the American political economy—increased their labor participation rate by holding multiple jobs to survive. In fact, the Urban League reported that in 1983, black women generally held higher labor force participation rates than white women during economic downturns, but their earnings data demonstrate how triple oppression curtailed their opportunities under neoliberalization. Black women who completed college and worked full-time earned less income than white males who never finished high school.⁴²² The stress on black working-class women to head households and work multiple jobs resulted in a new labor position for many black youth in the 1980s. In 1982, the Census Bureau reported that single women headed 95 percent of households receiving federal assistance. Many children left school and found work at a young age to support their households and neighborhoods.⁴²³

Reagan’s federal cuts in 1984 strengthened neoliberalization and further reduced working class resources across urban spaces. The administration canceled the cost-of-living adjustments for two million low-income Social Security beneficiaries, cut over half a million low-income pregnant women and children from a nutrition supplement program, and reduced food stamp benefits for 20 million low income recipients to their lowest level ever—below the cost of the federal government’s lowest cost minimum food plan. Additionally, Reagan cut close to \$63

⁴²¹ “State of Black America, 1983,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 12, 1983, pg. 4.

⁴²² “The State of Black America 1983,” *The National Urban League*.

⁴²³ “Children in Poverty: We Are Losing Our Children,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 17, 1983, pg. 17; Poverty Rises Sharply in the South,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1984, pg. 1.

billion in education, social services, employment, and income transfer programs between 1986 and 1988. To put the severity of the reduction in social programs in a clearer perspective—the Congressional Budget Office calculated that 96 percent of the cuts came from the 40 percent of the federal budget that consisted of domestic programs—the same 40 percent that Reagan slashed during his first term. In other words, the Reagan administration purged funding in programs like employment and training by 69 percent in outlays and 73 percent in appropriations.⁴²⁴

Cuts to programs like energy assistance increased the vulnerability of poor urbanites to destabilization. Between 1980 and 1984, Georgia heating costs increased 47 percent. “For the poor and those on fixed incomes,” explained Frances Pauley, chair of the Home Energy Assistance Team Advisory, “paying these increasing winter heating bills has become a serious problem...Thousands of Georgia families need help but will not receive any energy assistance this because government funds will be exhausted so quickly.” Even with \$500,000 in emergency energy assistance from Georgia Governor Joe Frank Harris, Reagan’s cuts ran so deep that only 4,666 of the over 300,000 Georgia households eligible for energy assistance received any help in the winter of 1984-1985.⁴²⁵

The rise in the black health care crisis further demonstrates how neoliberalization operated as a pogrom against working-class blacks. These increasing strains on the social conditions of the black poor played a pivotal role in fueling their health care crisis in the 1980s. In 1986, the Department of Human Health and Services released a report indicting evidence of

⁴²⁴ “Programs for Poor Targeted for Deep Reductions,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1984, pg. 4.

⁴²⁵ Heating Costs Increased 47 Percent Since 1980,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 14, 1984 pg. 27; For alternative coverage, see “Energy Assistance Funds Need Boost from the Public,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 12, 1984, pg. 3-H; “Home Heating Funds Available for Some Low-Income DeKalb Citizens,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 12, 1984, pg. 14-C.

increasing health care inequality for low-income blacks nationwide. Black infant mortality rates were double those of whites and far higher than any other industrialized nation. Black life expectancy was five and half years less than that for Whites. Black deaths from stroke and heart disease far exceeded the rate for Whites. Blacks also suffered higher rates of cancer-related deaths than whites. African American women, for example, experienced a 27 percent increase in cervical cancer compared to a 20 percent drop in White women between 1978 and 1988. The report concluded that these disparities resulted from the fact that black health crises are social diseases—meaning that social conditions like poverty, which results in stress, vulnerability to diseases based on nutritional deficiencies, and inability to access quality health care. In other words, the increase in the disproportionate black poverty under neoliberalization resulted in disproportionately higher black death rates.⁴²⁶

Federal and state cuts on hospitals also restricted access to health care for poor urbanities. One 1983 study estimated that 200,000 people were denied emergency hospital care and 800,000 were denied routine care for lack of money. By 1988, 37 million Americans—20 percent African American—lacked access to healthcare, an increase of 11 million people over a nine-year span. Capitalists utilized the cash-strapped hospital industry to privatize health services across the board. For-profit hospitals and skyrocketing pharmaceutical and health insurance costs exacerbated social diseases in poor black neighborhoods.⁴²⁷

Black working-class Georgians experienced an exceptional form of poverty. By the end of the 1980s, Georgia ranked third in infant mortality in the U.S. with 12.7 per 1,000 live births. Fulton County's rate exceeded that number, with 13.2 per 1,000 live births. The Atlanta metro

⁴²⁶ "Health Gap Grows," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 28, 1987, pg. 4; "Changing Healthcare System Hurting African Americans," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 12, 1988, pg. 4.

⁴²⁷ "Health Gap Grows," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 28, 1987, pg. 4.

region's rate of adult illiteracy grew at three to five percent each year, a major factor to underemployment. Black workers had little access to low-cost daycare (the waiting list averaged 10,000 children per year), another impetus to stable employment. By 1989, approximately nearly 250,000 Atlantans lived in poverty—which meant that they averaged an income of \$11,203 for a family of four and less than \$5,572 for a single person.⁴²⁸

Early Gentrification in Atlanta

For the first five months of 1984, African American “Mary Hill” woke her five children up to no water nor plumbing fixtures in their \$360 per month Dekalb County area house in Southeast Atlanta. The City of Atlanta cut off her water in late December because the inadequate plumbing sent water spewing into the street. When a plumber finally arrived in early January, he removed the toilet, sink, bathtub, and all the pipes and never returned to replace the items. By late January, rats and opossums entered Hill’s apartment frequently through the gaping holes in the bathroom floor. Despite Hill’s efforts through the proper channels, including frequent phone calls, a lawsuit, and a citation, the landlord refused to repair the apartment. Legal Aid filed a \$20,000 lawsuit on Hill’s behalf while the Bureau of Buildings inspected and issued a citation directly to the landlord. Hill expressed frustration at the neglect towards her and how neighborhood resources helped her survive over time:

“It’s unbelievable what’s been happening to me...living like this in the city of Atlanta. Since January...me and my five children have been using a bucket and digging holes in the

⁴²⁸ “African American Unemployment Rate Three Times that of Whites,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 6, 1987, pg. 1; “The War on Poverty: Another Look,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 16, 1988, pg. 4; “Mayor Young on State of the City: It’s Healthy,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 16, 1988, pg. 9, 10; “New Home on Gammon Ave. Beginning of New Efforts,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 9, 1988, pg. 2, 3; “Economic Status of African Americans Poorest in United States,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 3, 1988, pg. 2; “Breaking the Cycle of Poverty,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 18, 1989, pg. 1,2; “The Future of Poverty in Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 25, 1989, pg. 1, 3.

back yard to bury our waste. We've been bringing in jugs of water for cooling and bathing at relatives' houses. We've been getting sick all winter, especially me and the baby that's here all the time...Then in December the sewage started coming back up in the bathtub and sink. My daughter went to wash up one morning and came back out crying."⁴²⁹

Hill, like so many other tenants renting from landlords, did not have access to better housing. As a section 8 recipient, many landlords refused to accept her subsidy certificate. Additionally, because of her five children (four girls, one boy), she had difficulty finding a four-bedroom house for the maximum \$361 a month that the Atlanta Housing Authority was willing to spend for her voucher. In many cases like this, Section 8 terminated the assisted payment because of unfit housing conditions. However, this placed an even greater burden on poor tenants because it immediately evicted any occupants from the dwellings and forced them to seek shelter among the low housing stock available and put them back on the ten thousand-plus waiting list for housing. Thus, she utilized her neighborhood kinship network to improve her daily round. Neighbors shared water and plumbing, carpooled with her, and exchanged services. For example, whenever Hill's pipes froze, her neighbor fixed it and she returned the favor by cooking dinners for their families. Lastly, *The Great Speckled Bird's* deep investigation of her problem reached Interfaith, a fair housing organization. They successfully found a house for Hill's family that met the Section 8 housing quality standards.⁴³⁰ Thus, Hill's case demonstrates how poor black urbanites fought the effects of neoliberalization in housing. They often established community institutions by incorporating public resources that benefited multiple area residents.

⁴²⁹ "Tenant Terror," *The Great Speckled Bird*, June 1984, pg. 5-6.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.* "Mary Hill" Gets House At Last!," *The Great Speckled Bird*, July 1984, pg. 11.

Hill's case also demonstrates how land and property *devalorization* produced gentrification, which proved to be a more difficult consequence of neoliberalization to counter. Hill's landlord engaged in a common practice where rentiers leasing land and built environment in an area undergoing gentrification purposely *devalorized* their property. As urban geographer Neil Smith contended, many property owners favored undermaintenance for many reasons. First, Georgia's "repair and deduct" statute gave tenants the right to deduct the cost of repairs from their rent payments if landlords did not make rehabilitate within a reasonable period. However, urban landlords preyed on Section 8 residents because urban housing entities like the Atlanta Housing Authority continued to pay the rent for Section 8 residents under a housing assistance payment contract. In other words, landlords accrued profits by forgoing the cost of rehabilitation. Second, devalorization freed capital that could be invested in other properties in the city or suburbs. Additionally, under the *devalorization cycle*, if undermaintenance progresses throughout the neighborhood, landlords lose even more incentive to repair dilapidated housing and the area experiences a net outflow of capital.⁴³¹

Undermaintenance also leads to active disinvestment as capital depreciates and the landlord's stakes diminish further. This prompts financial institutions to also disinvest in the area through redlining. As a result, banks deny loans to black and brown working-class people seeking home ownership in the devalorized area. The final group to disinvest, homeowner insurance companies, also redline the neighborhood, ending all incentive for repair and undermaintenance. Next, real estate encourages local government to designate the neighborhoods as blighted. As discussed in chapter two, urban municipalities manipulate the political economy of crime to simultaneously expand the underground economy in the

⁴³¹ Neil Smith, *The Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London and New York: Routledge Press, 1996, pg. 62-68.

neighborhood—by containing and allowing the distribution and competition for narcotics sales—and propagandize negative pathologies of the neighborhood. Landlords also welcome vandalism because it further devalorizes the property. After a short period, landlords themselves disinvest totally from the property, only paying the necessary costs that generate rents until they abandon the property when they can longer collect enough rent to cover the necessary costs.⁴³²

Typically, landlords abandon properties at the neighborhood wide scale. The properties are generally structurally sound, but because they no longer yield surplus value, landlords deem them infeasible and many cases, destroy the property. For example, landlords abandoned the Techwood and Clark Howell Homes housing projects in Southeast Atlanta, coopted their tenants' organization when they began protesting devalorization, then displaced the residents before demolishing the buildings (this is discussed in full detail in chapter four). Gentrification generally commences following this devalorization. However, as Smith notes, devalorization is not an organic nor inelastic process—meaning that gentrification does occur at times without devalorization.⁴³³

Although I have discussed the State's role in neoliberalization and gentrification in previous sections and chapters, it is worth noting here how the state's participation in devalorization affects poor urbanites. By assembling properties at a "fair market value" and returning them to developers at the lower assessed price, the state bears the costs of the last stages of devalorization, thereby ensuring that developers could reap the high returns.⁴³⁴ For example, Atlanta's revenue crisis at the end of the 1970s resulted from City Hall and Fulton

⁴³² Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, pp. 67-75

⁴³³ *Ibid*, pp. 67-75.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 67-75.

County's appraisal of city real estate at lower assessed prices. Thus, the city of Atlanta and Fulton County lost millions in tax revenue, debt spiraled out of control and Mayor Maynard Jackson sought to alleviate their negligence by taxing commodities that disproportionately affect the income of the working classes. In other words, devalorization both directly and indirectly regressed the social conditions of working class Black Atlantans.

To understand why this benefits gentrification, it is appropriate to conceptualize how property devalorizes from use versus its rate of *revalorization* through adding additional value during the gentrification process. In clearer terms, the sale price of built-environment represents not only the *value* of the house, but also *rent* on the land. Karl Marx contended that *ground rent* is a claim made by landlords on tenants of their land. Thus, ground rent is a reduction from the surplus value created over and above cost. *Capitalized ground rent*, however, is the actual quantity of ground rent that is appropriated by the landowner based on the land use. For rental units, the landlord produces a service on land which they own and the landlord's capitalized ground rent returns mainly in the form of rent paid by tenants. For instance, landlords in Atlanta typically created amenities like garbage collection or more recently, a physical fitness center for their residents to use at an additional cost built into the rent payment. On the other hand, with owner-occupied homes, ground rent is capitalized only when property sells and therefore appears as part of the sale price. This equation sums up Marx's conceptualization of sale price:

$$\text{SALE PRICE} = \text{HOUSE VALUE} + \text{CAPITALIZED GROUND RENT}$$

When we apply this framework to urban neighborhoods undergoing gentrification, we observe how landlords with property that holds locational advantage possess the ability to obtain higher capitalized ground rent if the land is used in a different, better manner. Specifically, this

potential ground rent is the amount that could be capitalized under the land's highest or best use.⁴³⁵

Neoliberalization opened the market for rentiers to aggressively pursue potential ground rent in Atlanta. In fact, the consumer price index for Atlanta in May of 1986 shows that rents rose that year by 5.3 percent. Residential rents rose 7.9 percent while homeowners' cost increased 7.5 percent. Amenities that affected income paid towards rent, like fuel and utilities, rose 1.5 percent and prices for household furnishings and operation ticked up slightly.⁴³⁶ Additionally, landlords manipulated urban rents to accrue greater profits based on a newly favorable locational advantage. By the 1980s, Atlanta real estate moguls recognized the effects of neoliberalization in the area: construction of luxury commercial properties, middle and upper income families moving to the redeveloped Southeast, and international capital buying land and revitalizing it into lucrative financial sector businesses. As a result, landlords accumulated higher extensive differential rent (EDR) by raising rents on housing near the newly renovated Georgia World Congress Center, Georgia State University, and Underground Atlanta shopping center.⁴³⁷ Thus the neoliberal push in Atlanta facilitated the manipulation of urban rents by building extravagant beacons of international capital next to working class neighborhoods—pushing low-income residents out of the area and towards the cheaper suburban areas surrounding the central city.

One area that the Atlanta power structure gentrified through rent manipulation in the late 1980s was the predominantly black lower-income Auburn Avenue neighborhood in the

⁴³⁵ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume II*. Translated by David Fernbach. Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1978; reprinted in 1992, pp. 497, 532, 561-562.

⁴³⁶ Bureau Labor Statistics, May 1986.

⁴³⁷ For a detailed explanation of Extensive differential rent, see the introduction of this dissertation. The other form of rent, Intensive Different Rent, is discussed in depth in Chapter 5 because landlords sought to accrue additional profits this way in the late 1990s and early 2000s by gutting abandoned factories and warehouses.

Northeast. Once dubbed the “richest Negro street in the world,” Auburn Avenue became the social and commercial epicenter of black Atlanta by the 1920s after the Atlanta Pogrom of 1906—where white Atlantans waged a violent assault of black businesses and homes in downtown Atlanta—pushed all black enterprise east of the predominantly white downtown business district. These black businesses included Citizens Trust Bank, Atlanta Life Insurance Company, and *The Atlanta Daily World* newspaper. The two largest churches in the city, Big Bethel AME Church and Ebenezer Baptist Church, also belonged to the neighborhood. However, in the 1950s, the federal government built the Northeast Expressway and South Expressway through Georgia and elected to construct a highway connector, State Route 295, through the city of Atlanta. This early urban renewal, known as “Negro removal” at the time, displaced two black streets in Sweet Auburn, Techwood Drive and Williams Street. Most crucially, the project destroyed street grids east and south of downtown and divided Auburn Avenue into two halves. Additionally, the interchange with I-20 highway leveled the significant portion of the Washington-Rawson District.⁴³⁸ This eliminated the black business and residential base in the area, transforming the neighborhood into a poverty-stricken area by the 1970s.

For 45 years, 81-year old Alma Gibson worked at Scripto and collected \$1 an hour salary, participated in community activism, and raised one child and grandchildren at 491 Auburn Avenue. In September 1986, the combined powers of white capital, the Martin Luther King family, the federal government, and the black petty bourgeois class targeted Gibson and her neighbors for displacement. Gibson resided in a locational-advantageous property behind the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Change—one of the most lucrative tourist attractions in the city. Additionally, the National Park Service owned five renovated houses near

⁴³⁸ Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 115-116. See Appendix A, Figure A.5 for a map of Auburn Avenue Neighborhood following Urban Renewal Displacement.

Gibson's residence. Her house, on the other hand, resembled a shantytown. The owner, Mr. Bradberry, paid little for the dilapidated house in July 1986 and refused to maintain it. However, in August, he notified Gibson that her rent increased from \$130 to \$330 per month, or face eviction. Other houses in her neighborhood received similar notices that month. Gibson's neighbors organized an investigation and discovered that Gibson's eviction carried profitable potential for Bradberry. According to the residents, the Martin Luther King Jr. site had just begun redevelopment, so the owner of Gibson's house could receive lucrative grants to restore the land and property for tours through the neighborhood.⁴³⁹

Strengthened laws protecting private property allowed landowners like Bradberry to exploit housing tenants. Because he owned the property, he had no responsibility to repair the property while tenants resided there. However, Bradberry followed in the footsteps of the National Parks Service—an all-black administration in the Atlanta office. Years prior, they blighted the houses they owned, evicted the tenants through rent manipulation, and refurbished the abandoned property for higher extensive differential rent accumulation. As a result of the higher rents, working class blacks who lived in a neighborhood for decades like Gibson no longer possessed the economic capacity to remain in the area. “What they are doing,” Thomas Tyler, a lifelong friend of Gibson explained, “is buying them [houses] up and fixing them up but not letting people back in. The people don't know why they can't get housing...people are robbing this community of its housing.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ “Threatened Eviction Part of Conspiracy,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 20, 1986 pg. 2, 4. For more detail on Auburn Avenue and the city, see “Sweet Auburn now a tarnished shrine to King's Memory,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 20, 1986, pg. 1-C, 3-C.

⁴⁴⁰ “Threatened Eviction,” pg. 2, 4.

Gibson's struggle against displacement also demonstrates how the black bourgeois and petty bourgeois served the interests of white capital. Auburn Avenue activist Florence McKinley noted that Bradberry worked in partnership with the King family and the Martin Luther King Center. When speaking on Coretta Scott King, McKinley exclaimed, "[Ms. King] is supposed to be fighting for people rights over in Africa, but...she's partly responsible for this situation." Gibson noted the hypocrisy in Coretta Scott King's allegiance to the city power structure: "Martin Luther King didn't go to no rich neighborhood...he wouldn't let no rich folks kick poor folks out." When McKinley, Tyler, and Gibson sent multiple letters to the King Center attempting to stop the eviction, they never received a response.⁴⁴¹

Other black civil rights leaders either shunned Auburn Avenue's requests for aid or outright declared their allegiance to Bradberry and the King Center's interests. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference president, Reverend Joseph E. Lowery, told McKinley that he "didn't want to do anything about it," and that they should abandon the neighborhood to those who want to redevelop it. According to Tyler, the black churches supported gentrification because they planned to build a new sanctuary behind the old sanctuary at Ebenezer Baptist Church. "[Ebenezer], they are waiting for the property value to go up," Tyler proclaimed.⁴⁴²

In some instances, the State gentrified poor black spaces by razing full neighborhoods. In August 1988, most of the residents in the Lightnings neighborhood near the Georgia World Congress Center received sixty-day eviction notices without any prior communication. A few tenants reported that the property owner told them that if they did not leave by next week, their rent doubled. Lightnings residents represented one of the poorest segments of the city with a

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 2, 4.

⁴⁴² *Ibid*, p. 2, 4.

high percent of illiterate, elderly, and disabled individuals. Although the Fulton County Commission passed an emergency subsidy legislation that provided the tenants two months of rent, the landlord still displaced them.⁴⁴³ With few resources to their names, many of the displaced became part of Atlanta's skyrocketing population of people seeking shelter. Displacement is essentially a class struggle in Black Atlanta and key evidence that gentrification, produced through neoliberalization acts as an anti-Black working-class pogrom in Atlanta.

The largest struggle of working class black Atlantans fighting displacement in the late 1980s occurred in Vine City when Atlanta and Fulton County public officials voted to put a new domed stadium on 32 acres of the neighborhood. Without hesitation, the Georgia Stadium Corporation, the company that spearheaded the displacement and construction of the stadium, publicized that Vine City's locational advantage to the international convention center made Vine City residents superfluous:

“We found that one option, one combination stood head and shoulders above all the rest, and that was an enclosed stadium of some sort located adjacent to the Georgia World Congress Center and managed as an extension of the World Congress Center... We found that if we constructed an enclosed sports arena and operate it as a convention center... we could use that stadium literally year round... generate income, enough economic activity, enough jobs and enough tax benefits to justify its construction as a public investment.”⁴⁴⁴

Residents reported that the Georgia Stadium Corporation rolled over residents' requests to talk about the Georgia Dome, despite a June 1986 study where researchers spoke with dozens of Vine City residents who stated they wanted affordable housing, not stadiums. “The only interest appears to come from the [Atlanta] Falcons and the Governor's office,” the study read.

⁴⁴³ “Unsavoury Displacement Practices Reported,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 3, 1988, pg. 2, 4; See also “Lomax Eyes Plan to Aid Dome Site Residents,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, August 6, 1988, pg. B-1.

⁴⁴⁴ “Georgia Dome's Effect on Vine City Questioned,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 28, 1987, pg. 1, 5.

The report concluded what residents already understood: “this project could be a tool to displace blacks from the core of the city.” The president of the Georgia Stadium Corporation, Lowell Evjen, reiterated his lack of care for residents when questioned about the quality of the neighborhood. “As I look out over the site...I see primarily empty land,” he told a crowd of black elites at the Hungry Club Forum. “I see [abandoned] warehouses, an abandoned rail line, many, many acres of empty, unproductive property. I can’t image that a \$158 million investment on that land adversely affecting anyone.” Residents had organized multiple protests and movements to either save jobs in those abandoned factories and warehouses or pressure the city to build affordable housing for Vine City’s growing number of homeless.⁴⁴⁵

The protests ignited quickly. In late November 1987, 41 black children from Mount Vernon Baptist Academy—which sat on the designated site of the Georgia Dome—stormed a Hungry Club Forum at the Butler Street YMCA to protest the president of the Georgia Stadium Corporation’s speech. Many of the children carried signs that read “Don’t Take Our Future Away” and marched alongside Vine City residents and ministers in disrupting the event.⁴⁴⁶ Protests mounted enough pressure that at-large City Councilperson Carolyn Long Banks called for a public hearing and/or referendum before the city allocated thirty percent of the \$158 million to start construction. However, private interests argued that since they invested seventy percent of the construction budget, they would take charge in a study of the area to determine public perception of a proposed dome. The Andrew Young Black urban regime, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlanta Progress, the Fulton County Commission, the Georgia Governor’s Office, and the State Legislature supported Evjen and did not consider the voice of Vine City

⁴⁴⁵ The June 1986 report was reprinted in *The Atlanta Voice*, November 28, 1987, pg. 1, 5.

⁴⁴⁶ “Georgia Dome’s Effect on Vine City Questioned,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 28, 1987, pg. 5, 21.

residents valuable in the decision making of their neighborhoods. City Council President Marvin Arrington best summed up the ruling class position stakes at the heart of the Georgia Dome debate: the Georgia Dome represented the culmination of neoliberalization in Atlanta:

“The long term interests of our city and our state must drive this decision. The Georgia dome is an integral part of the future growth and expansion of Atlanta’s role as the regional leader in the Southeast, and of it’s emerging role as a national and international city.”⁴⁴⁷

The 1988 session of the Georgia General Assembly approved of \$3.36 million for three parcels of land in Vine City for the Georgia Dome. The state of Georgia also approved designing, engineering, and provision of additional parking space, which cost more residents their homes. However, the Georgia General Assembly voted down any funds for relocation for displaced Vine City residents.⁴⁴⁸ As construction plans began, 150 families and counting received eviction notices. Vine City church leaders Reverend W.L. Cotrell of Beulah Baptist Church negotiated with Fulton County Commissioner Michael Lomax, who proposed a \$6 million trust fund to house displaced residents. Suddenly, Vine City ministers changed their tune on the stadium, shifting from opposition to ambiguity when Fulton County put money on the table. “We don’t know what the development would be across the street,” Cotrell stated. “But if there is to be a development and you are to support it, we hope that support will be conditioned to at least making sure that we have \$6 million to go in a community development fund...this would be a token in the right direction.”⁴⁴⁹ By summer 1988, relocation funds for displaced poor

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.* “Council President Arrington Backs the Dome Stadium,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 8, 1988, pg. 4.

⁴⁴⁸ “1988 Session One of No State Flag Change, Domed Stadium Approval,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 19, 1988, pg. 1.

⁴⁴⁹ “No Housing for Vine City, No Domed Stadium, Says Lomax,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 18, 1988, pg. 2, 12.

people transformed into “community development funds” and fractured the solidarity across class lines in Vine City.

Both sides of the movement addressed each other at a heated July 12 city council meeting. Many of the anti-stadium protestors attempted to appeal to the council’s sense of historical legacy. One older resident, Dorothy Bolden, explained that “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. thought so well of Vine City that he indicated that he wanted to move there one day.” Others argued that constructing the dome threatened to destroy one of Atlanta’s oldest neighborhoods. In a surprising move, Vine City’s councilman and future mayor of Atlanta, Bill Campbell, announced his opposition to the stadium on grounds that sporting arenas in the U.S. never turn a financial profit or enhance to the community to which they reside. In a statement that rallied cheers from Vine City protestors, Campbell suggested to councilman D.L. “Buddy” Fowlkes that anyone interested in building a domed stadium in his district—the white upper-class Buckhead area—would consult residents of Buckhead prior to going ahead with it. Dome supporters told the council that they must approve the resolution to finance their portion of the dome so that the construction cycle could extend from September 1 to Summer 1991.⁴⁵⁰

On August 1 that year, the Atlanta City Council approved the resolution to provide money raised from the hotel-motel tax to pay for the debt service and any operating deficit to the Georgia Dome. According to *The Atlanta Voice*, the decision became a priority vote after a series of private meetings among city officials and Georgia Dome investors and supporters. *The Voice* witnessed the following mini-conferences in City Hall that day: Finance Chairman Ira Jackson met with Georgia World Congress Center president John Aderhold; Aderhold also met with Lowell Evjen, City Council Human Resources chairman Robb Pitts, and Finance

⁴⁵⁰ “City of Atlanta Appears Not Ready for Domed Stadium,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 16, 1988, pg. 1.

Commissioner Pat Glisson. When the meeting began, many city council members denied a public hearing before the vote. Additionally, Vine City's other councilman, Jabari Simama, stated that he felt the public had "enough input." "The city council needs to say what its going to do," Simama exclaimed. "The community has spoken." Next, Bill Campbell changed his vote from residents to pro-stadium, joined Simama and attempted to justify displacing residents by pointing to the housing crisis and the expanding and increasingly violent underground economy in Vine City. "Look at the dilapidation," Simama told the council. "Look at the drugs. Look at the teenage pregnancy. Look at the boarded housing...we'll feel very proud of the decision we made today."⁴⁵¹

By September 1988, the combined expansion of the GWCC and construction of the Georgia Dome set hundreds of black Lightning and Vine City residents on the road to housing insecurity. The Atlanta power structure did not instill confidence in the residents that they would ever find new homes. At the September 28 Housing Forum sponsored by the Economic Opportunity of Atlanta (EOA) office, residents grew angry that their Vine City council representatives did not attend after voting in favor of dome construction. The residents' fear regarding relocation funds rang true. Councilmember Tom Cuffie told the attendees that the city may cut into their relocation housing trust fund. Residents predicted that this resembled the 1966 Summerhill displacement where the city evicted an estimated 10,000 poor blacks with no relocation plan. "If they do us like they did Summerhill, we're going to look like trash on top of trash," Vine City resident Dorothy Bolden stated. "Rankin Smith [Falcons owner] took all those people to Dallas last Sunday to show them that domed stadium. And everything where that domed stadium is sitting, in 1973, was black neighborhoods." When some residents suggested

⁴⁵¹ "City Agrees to Georgia Dome, Now Up to Fulton County," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 6, 1988, pg. 1-2.

raising property taxes so affluent Atlantans could rebuild the relocation fund, councilpersons shut down that idea.⁴⁵²

The meeting ended with a resurgence for a social movement for self-determination against the stadium. Lightning resident Sister Haniyfa Ali announced a new organization, Community Concern and circulated a petition to move the dome to public referendum. “If the people of the City of Atlanta want to have the onerous burden of a domed stadium to bear,” Ali stated, “then it is only fair and right that that should be determined by them at the polls.” “Representative government on this issue has obviously failed, we believe to express the real will of the people with what we believe are false claims of what is in the public good.”

On May 15, 1989, the Atlanta city council passed a memorandum of understanding to pay for the relocation of Friendship Baptist Church and Mount Vernon Church out of Vine City. By Summer of that year, the Atlanta power structure, in demonstrating their hierarchy of importance, had decided every aspect of the Georgia Dome except who would fund housing relocation for displaced residents. The ministers stated that the M.O.U. made them “happy,” but were only concerned with “the time table for relocating the churches.”⁴⁵³ It is clear by this point that when the churches held no responsibility for paying for relocation, the evicted Vine City residents no longer served the interests of their petty bourgeois counterparts. “We are a Christian body, so we feel as though we will be treated fair,” Mount Vernon Baptist Church’s Deacon Harris expressed. “We have that much faith in our commissioners.” To quiet anti-dome protestors, the Atlanta power structure propagandized their “sincere commitment to diversity” with hiring Sports Design Group, Inc., an African American company to assist in designing the

⁴⁵² “Relocation Forum on Georgia Dome Results in Tension and Suspicion,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 8, 1988, pg. 1.

⁴⁵³ “Council Says Ye to Dome Stadium and Georgia 400,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 27, 1989, pg. 1, 3.

Georgia Dome. Additionally, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution in response to unanswered questions regarding displacement. The resolution stated: this Board of Commissioners cares very deeply about the people who live, work, and worship in Vine City.”⁴⁵⁴

Details of the relocation housing trust fund for displaced residents show an organized removal of poor blacks from the city. The community trust fund did not provide real money. Rather, residents had to apply for mortgage loans to obtain housing. The trust fund paid the interest on bonds issued for constructing homes priced from \$40,000 to \$60,000, as well as for rehabilitation of existing homes. The problem, however, is that many of the displaced residents did not meet the income requirements to maintain middle income housing. To qualify for the mortgage loans offered through the trust fund, residents must have a \$17,000 a year income. Some who did qualify based on income failed the credit check. As a result, many of the displaced left the city for cheaper suburban housing, added their names to the ever-increasing waiting list for public housing placement, or became housing insecure and shuffled from place to place. One former Vine City resident said of their eviction, “I define what we have experienced from the dome as rape.”⁴⁵⁵ As will be discussed next chapter, the construction of the Georgia Dome contributed to the explosion of homeless individuals in the metro region leading into the 1990s.

⁴⁵⁴ “Dome Jumps Two Obstacles,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 17, 1989, pg. 1; “Commission Sides with Vine City,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 11, 1989, pg. 12.

⁴⁵⁵ “Dome Housing Gives Vine City a Fresh Start,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 30, 1990, pg. 28.

Conclusion

As neoliberalization accelerated in Atlanta, global private capital flowed into the city and replaced black working-class resources. The new capital influx did not result in increased investment in working-class communities, but instead occurred alongside a decrease in support of public services. Neoliberalization also destabilized long-standing black working class neighborhoods with development projects that did not serve local residents. Projects such as the Georgia Dome jettisoned poor and working-class black residents from the city, while providing few if any resources for relocation. The combined impact of these development decisions accumulated into a structural pogrom against black poor and working-class residents—perhaps less obviously violent than those in the Nadir Era, but just as devastating to their lives and future prospects as residents of Atlanta. Thus, early gentrification efforts in Atlanta served as an anti-black working-class pogrom that left black residents with minimal capacity to build social institutions and sustain protest movements for autonomy. Planned privatization conflicted with the interests and lives of black Atlantans, which would prove even more devastating during the Olympic Period.

**CHAPTER FOUR: ‘DON’T WORK YOURSELF INTO A SHOOT, BROTHER!’:
A’NUFF, THE NEW NADIR, AND TOOLS OF CLASS WAR IN OLYMPIC ERA
ATLANTA GENTRIFICATION, 1990-1996**

“A nebulous process of displacement and dispossession has started, a protracted struggle for land and control over its use and by who, has clearly begun.”

-Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A’NUFF), August 16, 1991

“The list of projects which have destroyed our homes and neighborhoods is mindboggling: the Atlanta Civic Center, MARTA, the World Congress Center, Lenox Square, the Atlanta Fulton-County Stadium, and now the [Olympic Stadium]. Somehow the people who prey on the poor can always justify why our neighborhoods are the best place, the most feasible, and the only place for their new projects.”

-Gene Ferguson, Summerhill resident and A’NUFF activist, December 28, 1991

“What was the point of electing these various officials to office when they demonstrate a clear inability to support grassroots principles and interests when they possess no inner-directed collective vision of the good and just city, when they have expected outer-directed versions of growth and progress which, at best, only provide haphazard implications for the vast majority of Atlantans, especially its institutionalized poor...This is a situation we in the “Other Atlanta” have tolerated for far too long and it must be addressed in words and deed of A’NUFF and others.”

-Ethel Mae Mathews, chairman of Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A’NUFF)

Introduction: The Battle of Fair Street Bottom

Between the evenings of Thursday, April 30 and May 1, 1992, multiple African American working-class Atlanta neighborhoods—particularly around the Central Business District—erupted in rebellion against City Hall, police forces, the Atlanta University Center administration, and other symbols of racial class conflict in the area. The day began as a march by Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, Spelman College, and Morris Brown College students protesting the acquittal of four white police officers in the Los Angeles Rodney King trial. However, by late afternoon, it escalated to physical altercations with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and Atlanta Police (APD) when the officers refused to let the student

activists march through the poor areas surrounding the campuses. When riot-gear police erected a barricade and helicopters circled the demonstration, hundreds of student activists—joined by Atlanta residents at that point—fought through the barricade with their fists, bricks, and bottles and reorganized at the corners of J.P. Brawley Drive and Fair Street—the street separating Morehouse and the University Homes housing project. From that point, the black rebels spent the next twelve hours destroying GBI and APD vehicles, fighting police officers, and burning and looting both non-black and black-owned businesses. By the early morning, the police, with over 60 National Guard troops on standby, blocked multiple passageways throughout the area and fired so much tear gas that the rebels retreated. When the uprising officially ended in the early afternoon, the police jailed 320 rebels, at least 41 people suffered injuries, and property damage totaled close to \$1 million.⁴⁵⁶

Although the Los Angeles Rodney King trial served as a catalyst for multiple black working-class rebellions across black urban spaces like Los Angeles, Detroit, and Oakland in 1992, these uprisings revealed a fiery black working-class bloc of residents and students frustrated at their exploited role in the transformation of metro regions. In fact, with many of these spaces governed by predominantly black administrations, the 1992 urban rebellions revealed that black working-class urbanites understood their relationship with the black petty bourgeoisie as a “work,”—a superficial social reality characterized by false connections and predetermined conditions. This chapter argues that as a “work,” white capital and the black petty bourgeoisie in the final decade of the twentieth century purposely misled black working class

⁴⁵⁶ “The Battle of Fair Street Bottom: No Justice, No Peace,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 9, 1992, pg. 1, 7; “What Happened Here is No Surprise,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 9, 1992, pg. 3; “A Student’s Account of AUC Disturbance,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1992, pg. 8; “The anger spills into Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 1, 1992, pg. 1.

urbanites away from the *rationality* of collective social movements in defense of their public resources and neighborhoods and towards a more bureaucratic, supervisory, individualistic, and anti-working class apparatus. More clearly, the combined forces of Black Urban Regimes, the federal government, and liberal growth machines like the Coca-Cola Company and real estate, manipulated their already-tenuous relationship with the black working class to appropriate grassroots strategies and tactics for their own class interests. These institutions propagandized themselves as anti-poverty allies of the black poor through superficial diversity initiatives—including race-based scholarships, monetary donations to black institutions, an increase of blacks in management and CEO positions, and the creation of community development corporations and non-profit industries—to mask their neoliberalization and gentrification of urban space in the 1990s. As a result, the ruling classes utilized these cosmetic gestures to justify the *irrationality* of grassroots collective social movements. Consequently, working-class African Americans struggled against “working themselves into a shoot.” They fought against the anti-working-class propaganda and policy to procure what little resources they could to defeat long-term threats like gentrification, but often depleted their movement capacity mobilizing against immediate threats like the expanding underground economy. These factors produced the contemporary racial formation, the New Nadir.⁴⁵⁷

This chapter points to the early 1990s recession, Clinton’s pathologizing of the black poor, and the retreat from public supported social services in preference for private sector,

⁴⁵⁷ The term “work,” is a literary device in professional wrestling in the scripted scenarios called “kayfabe.” Kayfabe is the portrayal of staged events in wrestling as “real” specifically the depiction of competition, rivalries, and relationships between participants, colleagues, and the wider community as being genuine. Thus, “don’t work yourself into a shoot,” describes the attempt to not blur the superficial façade in kayfabe with reality outside of the sport. For example, some professional wrestlers become angered by a “work” action and develop harsh feelings towards their colleague in real life, which is a “shoot.” The wrestler has in fact allowed the superficial relationship based on a lie inform the reality-based relationship, resulting in a problem. Additionally, for the conception of the New Nadir, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, “The New Nadir: The Contemporary Black Racial Formation,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2010, pp. 38-58.

capitalist driven philanthropy, as the catalyst for the “work” relationship between the black working class and the urban petty bourgeoisie. More clearly, this chapter examines how Atlanta’s power structure coopted working class movements against urban redevelopment in the Olympic period. As black grassroots power weakened and Atlanta initiated Olympic preparations, poor black Atlantans experienced a heightened precariousness as liberal growth machines like Central Atlanta Progress, the Atlanta City Council, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, and Summerhill Neighborhood, Inc. monopolized decision-making power over their already-fragile neighborhoods for a corporate Olympic fever-dream.

The rebels’ attack on black businesses during the 1992 uprising particularly demonstrated their anger at black elites’ primary role in driving the metro area further towards a New Nadir—the relatively ineffectiveness of black social movement resistance and the subsequent drastic devolution in African Americans’ role in the political economy, position in the polity, social status, and cultural representation.⁴⁵⁸ This aspect of the 1992 urban rebellions demonstrates how the relationship between race and class had evolved in black working class neighborhoods since the 1960s civil disorders. Black urbanites in the 1960s often spared black businesses from damage during uprisings because they targeted sites of white supremacy. However, by the 1990s, the expansion of both the black bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie as antagonists to the interests of low-income blacks informed black Atlantans’ decisions to attack black businesses.

⁴⁵⁸ Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro*. For an expansion of Logan’s thesis, see Sundiata Cha-Jua, *untitled*, publication unknown; for critiques of Logan’s thesis, see Kenneth Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, “Toward a New African American Urban History” Kenneth Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (eds.), *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996), 5.

Thus, the Battle of Fair Street Bottom perfectly encapsulates the class warfare waged throughout black Atlanta.⁴⁵⁹

Additionally, working class black Atlantans resented Black elected officials for exploiting their neighborhoods for capital accumulation—especially pathologizing the black poor as inherently criminal—to justify removing decision-making power, movement resources, and ultimately, their homes via gentrification. Thus, between 1990 and 1996, working class resistance in black neighborhoods often experienced fragmentation and subversion. This chapter examines how the global political economy helped shape Atlanta’s power structure deployment of the 1996 Olympic Games preparation to further disenfranchise black residents and eliminate the capacity for resistance to gentrification.

This chapter further argues that the New Nadir in the African American experience operated in dialectical fashion along class lines in African American Atlanta. The New Nadir weakened the Black working-class capacity to build and sustain social movements against oncoming gentrification by reducing the use value of their neighborhoods, while at the same time creating an apartheid that benefited those in charge of Atlanta’s power structure. I argue that the New Nadir advanced the class interests of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes in two ways. First, Atlanta’s power structure promoted the low-income black spaces as crime-infested, yet they did not provide serious resources to reduce the underground economy. In fact, through a combination of neoliberal federal, state, and municipal policies and neo-conservative attitudes towards government spending, black unemployment and underemployment forced many black workers out of the class structure and into an expanding lumpenproletariat. With the

⁴⁵⁹ For pathbreaking research on urban rebellions in the 1960s as tactics of resistance for the black working class, see Ashley M. Howard, “Prairie Fires: Urban Rebellions as Black Working Class Politics in Three Midwestern Cities,” PhD Diss, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012.

underground economy growing inside their neighborhoods, low-income black urbanites utilized their meager resources to fight more immediate threats. As a result, black working-class neighborhoods in 1990s Atlanta focused so much on the *symptom*—underground economy—and not the *problem*—racial oppression (political subjugation, economic exploitation, and social humiliation) that they struggled against the longterm threat—gentrification and other pro-growth forces. Concurrently, Atlanta’s power structure allowed the underground economy to thrive in black working-class neighborhoods to cheapen the land and property values for private investors. As a result, this chapter concludes that Atlanta’s Olympic gentrification period deepened apartheid in the region and initiated the push of the black poor into the rural suburban areas that surrounded the city.

This chapter also examines how the lack of organizing time and resources left black working-class movements vulnerable to cooptation and subversion by their middle-class counterparts. The organizing rise and decline of A’NUFF against Olympic Stadium construction in Summerhill, Peoplestown, and Mechanicsville proved that black leadership in Atlanta consciously destroyed residents’ efforts to protect their neighborhoods and lives from displacement and deterioration. In other words, this chapter proves that the Olympics exposed deep class fractures in African American Atlanta by hastening the region’s move away from its Black majority and towards its corporate finance future.

Setting the Stage for a Nadir: Apartheid and the Impact of the National Recession on 1990s Atlanta

By 1990, class boundaries demarcated black Atlanta. To the east of Cascade Road in Southwest Atlanta, Black workers resided in Carver Homes, Vine City, Perry Homes, Auburn

Avenue, Summerhill, Pittsburgh, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, and Capitol Homes, University Homes, and Techwood/Clark Howell Homes. Black women headed over three-fourths of poverty stricken African American homes in the city. Dilapidated and abandoned housing plagued most neighborhoods and many of them served as offices for illegal capitalists (drug dealers) in the crack-cocaine trade. Police helicopters and cruisers surveilled these areas twenty-four hours a day.⁴⁶⁰

Most notably, blacks to the east of Cascade faced a crisis of disappearing productive, livable wage labor. 32-year old Leroy Wilson and his 34-year old brother Lonnie Foster—a certified mechanic—served as two of the thousands of skilled, working-class African Americans who migrated from black urban spaces like New Orleans to Atlanta in the early 1990s in search of viable work. However, as was the case in many metropolitan areas at the time, the demand for skilled black tradespeople like mechanics did not meet the supply in the City of Atlanta as automobile repair shops moved to suburban spaces for cheaper costs and quicker access to more affluent car owners. Additionally, banks refused to issue loans to many blacks like Wilson and Foster who wanted to start a business but did not possess the capital. Thus, for six days a week between 11AM and 6PM, Wilson and Foster shone shoes on the corner of Popular and Forsyth Streets in the Central Business District. “We’ve been here about a year now,” stated Wilson, “and unless forced into working for someone, we will be here until we can get our [repair] shop or something.” On their best days, the brothers made enough money to sleep at a motel that night, but on many occasions, they ended their days at the Salvation Army. Atlanta police arrested them multiples times for working on a public street without a permit. On each occasion,

⁴⁶⁰ “The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in Metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades,” *Research Atlanta, Inc.*, 1993, pp. i-v. Georgia State University Digital Collections Archive, Atlanta Georgia.

the judge sentenced them to jail time because they were too poor to afford the \$75.00 per person fine. This cycle repeated because the brothers continued to illegally shine shoes for their regular customers on that corner to make enough money to fund the permanent address and fee required for the work permit.⁴⁶¹ Many African Americans in poor black urban enclaves found themselves in similar predicaments. Uneven development constructed colonial barricades between Black workers and access to viable work that builds sustainable wealth.

To the west of Cascade Road, however, sat Cascade Heights and Ben Hill, referred to as the “Gold Coast” because of an array of upscale houses owned by bourgeois African Americans. Cascade Heights and Ben Hill represented the most significant economic expansion in black Atlanta. *Ebony Magazine*, *Black Enterprise*, and other black publications that showcased the perceived “Black Mecca” of the United States often highlighted the Gold Coast as the premier destination for upper class Blacks on the move. A who’s who of black elites resided on this side of Cascade: Elected officials Maynard Jackson, Andrew Young, prominent capitalists like C.A. Scott and Jesse Hill, and celebrated civil rights movement icons like Joseph Lowery and the King family. Additionally, Atlanta’s burgeoning \$300 million entertainment industry attracted African American celebrities such as actor Emmanuel Lewis, singer Bobby Brown, former Bowen Homes resident and heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield, and music producer Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds to the Gold Coast. To put the level of disparity between the west and east sides of Cascade in perspective: The Gold Coast’s median household income was \$48,333 in 1991. Within a five-mile radius, the median household income dropped to \$32,816. In the poorer areas surrounding the Central Business District beyond the westside of

⁴⁶¹ “All We Want to Do Is Work,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 8, 1991, pg. 8.

Cascade Road, the medium household income did not top \$22,000 with many households hovering around \$10,000.⁴⁶²

As discussed in Chapter 3, Andrew Young's black urban regime gentrification program transformed the previous low-income Southwest sector into the Gold Coast. He issued several hundred permits to real estate companies to develop upscale residential and commercial built-environment. Between 1987 and 1993, place entrepreneurs constructed subdivisions, including Cascade Park, Mays Manor, McMurray Woods, and Cascade Glen, ranging in property value from \$96,000 to more than \$180,000. Additionally, Quality Living Services, a development corporation specializing in extravagant senior citizen living, signed a \$5.4 million deal in 1993 to build luxury retirement homes on Campbellton Road on top of Granada Park Apartments. According to Atlanta Economic Development Corporation Vice President Keith Melton, City Hall's direction over the past few decades provided capital the impetus to reinvest within the city limits:

“What you see happening throughout Southwest Atlanta is developers taking advantage of the pent-up demand for middle and upper income housing. You are seeing the culmination of efforts the city has marshaled to focus attention on the upscale market in Southwest Atlanta. Now developers are responding.”⁴⁶³

According to president of Urban Systems Realty, Davey Gibson, “People from Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, and elsewhere are asking to specifically to be relocated in southwest Atlanta. It is a new trend.” Longtime City Councilman Jim Maddox, known as the “Global Advocate” in Atlanta and heavily criticized for using public funds for international investment trips, expressed

⁴⁶² “The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in Metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades,” *Research Atlanta, Inc.*, 1993, pp. 10-11. Georgia State University Digital Collections Archive, Atlanta Georgia.

⁴⁶³ “Southwest Atlanta's Gold Coast is Booming,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 24, 1993, pg. 1, 3.

enthusiasm at City Hall’s efforts in gentrifying Southwest Atlanta. “I’m very excited about what’s happening...Clearly the pendulum has swung. We have been working for years to encourage more growth and development.”⁴⁶⁴

After a rebound in commercial real estate in 1992-1993, Mayor Maynard Jackson marked his return to the Atlanta mayoralty by ramping up revitalization in Southwest Atlanta.

Developers brought three new supermarkets, two major shopping centers, two banks, two upscale restaurants, and multiple fast food outlets to accompany new bourgeois and petty bourgeois residents. Black City Councilpersons C.T. Martin and Sheila Brown also sponsored a Community Empowerment Conference at the African-American Hoosier United Methodist Church that year to “explore why the southwest is still underserved by retail establishments, compare the composition of retail establishments in Southwest Atlanta with those in northeast Atlanta (the White, upper class section of the city), and make recommendations for improving the level of retail in the area.”⁴⁶⁵ With the “retail revolution,” City Hall and Fulton County sought to ensure Atlanta capitalists that the newly gentrified space possessed enough growing locational advantages to warrant continued private investment into the twenty-first century. In other words, as Jim Maddox stated, the region’s pro-growth leadership believed that, “you should go to Lenox Square if you want to, not because you have to...we’ve been able to encourage businesses to give us what we need, where we live.”⁴⁶⁶

The 1990-1991 Great Recession—often overlooked by urban scholars—played a pivotal role in deepening apartheid in Atlanta and expanding the New Nadir. The U.S. invasion of

⁴⁶⁴ “Atlanta’s Global Advocate Jim Maddox to Retire,” *Global Atlanta*, September 16, 2009.

⁴⁶⁵ “Southwest Atlanta’s Gold Coast is Booming,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 24, 1993, pg. 1, 3; “Retail Revival at Cascade & I-285,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 1, 1993, pg. 1, 3; “The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in Metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades,” *Research Atlanta, Inc.*, 1993, pp. 9-18.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pg. 9-18.

Kuwait in Summer 1990 shocked oil prices and dropped aggregate consumption demand, but as urban scholar David Geltner pointed out, the Gulf War only acted as the proximate catalyst. The antecedents that caused this proximate spark—the drop in aggregate consumption demand—tied directly to struggles in black America. Fiscal tightening, such as Reagan’s Recovery Tax Act of 1981, did not produce a viable supply-side effect to offset its impact on federal revenue. It reduced income tax rates 25 percent over three years and cut the top rate from 70 to 50 percent. Reagan also attached generous benefits to corporations, allowing greater deductions against taxes for investment outlays.⁴⁶⁷

As per the case with any major tax reduction, the working class carried the brunt. The Congressional Budget Office concluded that the wealthiest 1 percent of the population paid 36 percent less in taxes in 1990 than under the 1977 tax code. However, poor families paid as high as 14 percent more than they previously did under the same tax code. Consequently, income taxes by the mid-1980s claimed 7.5 to 8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the same level as in the 1960s, and down from 9.2 percent in the late 1970s. As the federal deficit continued to expand, Reagan gradually gutted social program spending across the board.⁴⁶⁸

Reagan and liberal democrats responded with the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The bill increased the basic deduction to remove the poor from tax rolls and most importantly, cut the number of income tax brackets to three, ranging from 15 to 28 percent. By 1989, tax receipts

⁴⁶⁷ David Geltner, “Commercial Real Estate and the 1990-91 Recession in the United States,” *The Korean Development Institute*, January 2013, pp. 15-19; Wyatt Wells, *American Capitalism, 1945-2000: Continuity and Change from Mass Production to the Information Society. The American Way Series*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003, pp. 113-115. “The Budget Crisis: Reaping Bitter Harvest of Reagan Voodoo Economics,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 3, 1990, pg. 4; Reagan’s attack on social spending programs is detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁴⁶⁸ Geltner, “Commercial Real Estate and the 1990-91 Recession in the United States,” pp. 15-19; Wells, *American Capitalism, 1945-2000*, pp. 113-115. “The Budget Crisis: Reaping Bitter Harvest of Reagan Voodoo Economics,” pp. 4; Reagan’s attack on social spending programs is detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

totaled 8.2 percent of the GDP; the tax receipts generated more revenue, but they did not significantly reduce the deficit. Reagan tax policy also cut real wage growth at the knees. The tax breaks did not command capital to increase productivity at a commensurate rate, so wages—and thus consumer demand—plummeted towards the end of the decade.⁴⁶⁹ This hit African-American workers especially since they sat at the lower end of the wage gap and disproportionately cycled in and out of the labor participation pool more than white workers.

Additionally, failure to relieve the federal deficit weakened the financial position of the federal government. The Reagan and Bush Administrations relied so heavily on borrowing to balance the budget that it further increased the debt burden and negated the government's capacity to stimulate the economy during the 1990-1991 Recession. In fact, the federal government's spending declined so significantly that foreign lenders not only paid for the Gulf War, but also financed much of Washington's borrowing. Reagan failed to reduce the federal deficit while his anti-working-class policies spiraled American debt out of control. During his tenure, the U.S. deficit ballooned from \$74 billion to \$155 billion.⁴⁷⁰

This impacted real estate prominently, thus extending cuts across sectors. The federal deficit kept interest rates high. Inflation hovered between 3 and 4 percent, so the cost of money skyrocketed. High interest rates limited private borrowing, but it also allowed Washington to finance its debt without expanding its money supply through inflationary means. As historian Wyatt Wells suggested, Americans paid for these longstanding deficits with higher interest rates while under the illusion that tax cuts solved money woes. High interest rates, a leading factor in

⁴⁶⁹ Wyatt, pp. 135-138.

⁴⁷⁰ Wyatt, 123; Office of Management and Budget, Whitehouse.gov. "Historical Tables, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables/>," Accessed Nov. 3, 2019.

the size of a mortgage payment, forced potential homeowners to take on high monthly payments or settle for cheaper housing.⁴⁷¹ On the supply side, real estate developers responded with a significant drop in housing construction in the late 1980s. From a peak rate of new housing at nearly 2 million per year in the middle of the decade, the rate fell to below 1.4 million annually by the beginning of the 1990s. Consequently, this also meant a steep decline in construction jobs and in other affected areas—especially retail.⁴⁷² Construction and retail companies cut African Americans first, increasing the underemployed and stagnating their wages.

Commercial real estate also played a part in exacerbating the black economic crises. Inflation placed banking executives into a difficult squeeze in the early 1980s. Because banks are largely depository institutions, meaning that they obtain most of their surplus value from depositors who withdraw their monies at any time, inflation causes banks to either pay their depositors higher interest rates or risk losing the depositors. Savings and Loans banks, which operated under much stricter regulation than commercial banks, encountered the inflation-profit squeeze the most. As a result, S&L bank executives turned to commercial real estate to determine whether easing regulations on commercial mortgages would reverse their surplus value woes. Through a combination of regulatory agencies and federal legislation, S&L deregulated and by the mid-1980s began issuing commercial real estate mortgages. However, S&L inexperience and lack of expertise in commercial real estate led to an aggressive lending campaign that overwhelmed the market. The proportion of S&L assets in commercial mortgages and land loans ballooned from 7 percent in 1982 to 20 percent in 1989.⁴⁷³ The commercial real

⁴⁷¹ Wyatt, p. 138.

⁴⁷² Geltner, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁷³ Geltner, p. 24.

estate asset market sent commercial and multi-family mortgages from \$315 million in 1978 to a shocking \$1.1 trillion in 1990. To keep in front of the impending bursting of this real estate bubble, banks extended increasingly risky and often predatory loans— many to African Americans who did not possess the income nor job stability to pay exorbitant interest rates. When inflation subsided after 1987, investment demand for real estate followed, exacerbating the oversupply problem in commercial real estate and driving down commercial real estate prices to their lowest level in 1992.⁴⁷⁴ In summary, Reagan Era fiscal and monetary policy, the S&L banking crisis, and the onset of the Gulf War contributed to the 1990-1991 recession.

These factors hurt black Atlantans in numerous ways. Residential real estate volatility intensified housing insecurity in the metro region. As black migration to the metro region exploded over the 1980s, they found fewer low-cost housing stock available. The Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy from Clark Atlanta University estimated that new housing in 1992 Atlanta cost \$72,000 while rental rates averaged \$525 a month for a two-bedroom apartment and \$600 for a three-bedroom apartment. Thus, many black Atlantans who made less than \$20,000 a year either struggled paying close to 75 percent of their wages in rent or took a cheaper, one-bedroom apartment where multiple family members slept in the same room.⁴⁷⁵

With the Reagan administration slashing federal housing subsidies for the poor by 75 percent—more than any other domestic program—the rate of black Atlantans seeking shelter swelled at the end of the 1980s, prompting two long term consequences. The black poor competed over the low quantity of affordable housing. Second, it led to a sharp rise in the

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 25-28.

⁴⁷⁵ “The Status of Black Atlanta 1993,” *The Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy*, Clark Atlanta University, 1993, pg. 90-91.

number of poor families spending upwards to 60 percent of their income in rent. In fact, the Southern Center reported that more than 62 percent of black Atlantans who earned less \$10,000 paid a disproportionate share (30 percent or more) of their income for gross rent.⁴⁷⁶ As rents remained high, housing quality deteriorated. Atlanta metro region landlords “unsatisfactorily housed” more than 13 percent of Atlanta renters. This meant that close to 40 percent of the rental units did not have adequate plumbing and close to 60 percent lacked heating. Thus, the City of Atlanta’s own Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy for 1992 underreported that 78 percent of rental units and 73 percent of single-family residences classified as “standard” condition. It is safe to assert that the fixation on commercial real estate both at the federal and local level shrank the availability of affordable housing.⁴⁷⁷

The 1990-1991 recession also exposed the City of Atlanta and the Atlanta Housing Authority as culpable in the housing crisis in the metro region. In examining the vacancy rates during this period, Atlanta’s power structure displaced Blacks out of housing faster than they re-housed them. Between 1980 and 1992, the vacancy rate in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region increased from 6 to 10 percent. Additionally, the 15 census tracts in 1992 with vacancy rates above 25 percent were all located in Atlanta. In other words, the number of vacant housing units rose during the recession while homelessness increased, meaning that over 14,000 federally subsidized housing stock was available for poor people.⁴⁷⁸ However, the City of Atlanta chose to either demolish the housing or leave it vacant while the homeless filled the AHA waiting lists.

⁴⁷⁶ Avis C. Vidal, “A Community Based Approach to Affordable Housing,” *The New School Commentator*, Spring 1990, pg. 1.

⁴⁷⁷ “The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades,” pp. 51-57.

⁴⁷⁸ “The Status of Black Atlanta 1993, pp. 89-90.

The recession assisted in setting back working-class wages and disproportionately damaged black wage growth. The drop in aggregate consumer demand played a major role in the loss of construction and retail jobs. As a result, many blacks picked up low wage work that did not supplement the loss in income. In 1977, the poorest 20 percent of American families received 4.4 percent of national income. By 1993, their share dropped to 3.6 percent. Thus, real earnings for the superexploited—the black and brown working classes—declined while the wealthiest 20 percent of families increased their share of total income from 43.6 percent to 48.9 percent. By the end of 1980s, the top ten percent of wealthy Americans controlled nearly 70 percent of the wealth in the United States. Particularly in low-income urban spaces, changes to the political economy played a crucial role in wage regression.⁴⁷⁹

Although many scholars categorize this 1990-1991 recession as “minor,” it was a major factor in poor black urbanites losing major ground in their struggle for improved social conditions. It served to validate the African American aphorism that “when white people catch a cold, black people get double pneumonia.” In other words, this economic downturn contributed to the New Nadir. The largest declines in average household income in 1990 Atlanta (when adjusted for inflation) occurred in the Central Business District and the Hartsfield International Airport area—the same spaces that experienced significant racial transitions from white to black over the 1980s. In fact, the airport area skyrocketed from 28 percent black in 1980 to 68 percent black in 1990. Concurrently, the three largest increases in average household income during this time occurred in Northeast Atlanta, Buckhead, and most notably, north Fulton County, east of Cascade Road—the Gold Coast.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴⁸⁰ The Atlanta Regional Commission, 1990; The U.S. Census Bureau, 1990.

The decline in manufacturing—productive labor—reduced the number of livable-wage, skilled jobs. Concurrently, the rapid growth of the information, technology, and financial-based sector—non-productive labor—restricted individuals without the appropriate education and training background to command premium wages. Lastly, federal and state legislatures opposed raising the minimum wage for close to a decade after 1982 despite rising costs of living.⁴⁸¹ Non-productive labor included banking institutions, the stock market, and most importantly, middle management and human resources.

Non-productive labor gradually invaded Atlanta's inner city alongside the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes. *Research Atlanta* documented that by the early 1990s, the expansion of white-collar managers transformed the inner city from a retail, transportation juggernaut to an agglomeration economy—meaning that a new class of middle-management professionals in sky-level office spaces allowed the power structure to focus labor growth around the flow of ideas and processes instead of on shop floors and distribution centers. In other words, the Atlanta Metropolitan Region political economy became a processor of *ambiguous information*—the fragmented and technical nature of negotiations and exchanges of ideas that occur in the offices of decision makers in both the private and public sectors as well as those occurring at conferences and meetings with other white-collar specialists. FIRE jobs—Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate—added close to 50,000 new jobs in the 1980s, most of them located in the metro area (Fulton and Dekalb Counties).⁴⁸²

Productive labor, especially manufacturing, fled the city limits. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of manufacturing jobs in the City of Atlanta declined from 48,986 to 36,054. Most

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

of those jobs either relocated to the northern suburbs or disappeared forever. Between 1970 and 1990, the total share of jobs in that area almost doubled from 29 percent to 52 percent.

Productive labor sought suburban advantages such as lower land and labor costs, lower property taxes, lower insurance premiums, and greater availability of outdoor amenities. Retail and services each added the most jobs to the metro region, each providing over 90,000 jobs each in the 1980s.⁴⁸³ Atlanta's black workers who did not possess the necessary skill sets to work in non-productive labor sectors found themselves confined to a restrictive selection of jobs after 1990.

The recession only contributed to an already-established anti-black working-class municipal polity. Class stratification and aggressive private investment gave the majority of black Atlantans little to show after twenty years of black urban regimes. In 1993, Clark Atlanta University, a leading institute in the research of the political, economic, and social conditions of African Americans at the time, conducted the first comprehensive study of black people living in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region through its Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy. The 126-page report not only revealed how black social conditions in the city regressed since Maynard Jackson's historic mayoral win in 1973, but also indicted black elected officials for pushing class interests at the expense of black suffering.⁴⁸⁴

Although the study reiterates many publicized statistics at the time—such as black men and women unemployment was three times that of white men and women—other findings uncovered a human rights crisis within the city. In University Homes housing project, 94 of

⁴⁸³ The Atlanta Regional Commission, 1990.

⁴⁸⁴ Bob Holmes, *The Status of Black Atlanta 1993*. Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy, Clark Atlanta University, 1994; "The Status of Black Atlanta," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 8, 1993, pg. 1, 5; "The Status of African American Women," The Metropolitan Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women, 1992.

every 100 persons lived in poverty (below \$13,254 for a family of four), making it the poorest community in the state of Georgia by federal standards at the time. Additionally, under the Andrew Young regime, African American poverty in Metro Atlanta increased by more than 34,000 people, pushing the poverty rate to four times that of whites in the area. The Black-White income disparity gap widened as well. In Fulton County, 14,330 black families possessed an annual income exceeding \$50,000 compared to 58,493 white families with the same income. At the same time, 33,968 black families held an income of less than \$10,000 compared to only 12,878 white families with the same income.⁴⁸⁵

When the Clark Atlanta University researchers questioned anonymous black elected officials on the findings, they reportedly “lacked consensus” on the issues and provided excuses like “...unless you put these things[statistics] down, people will not notice.” Atlanta’s Black Urban Regime placed so much of their focus in the 1994 Super Bowl preparation, the 1996 Olympic Games preparation, and general pro-growth development that the apartheid conditions almost went unacknowledged. City Councilman Bill Campbell, who succeeded Maynard Jackson as Atlanta mayor in 1993 after Jackson refused to run for a fourth term, scapegoated black residents and defended City Hall’s pro-growth direction in his criticism of the report. “While there have been divisions, I am not aware that the business of the city was in any way hampered by those problems,” Campbell stated. “[researchers] would probably do better to look inward...it was a very disappointing and inaccurate portrayal.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Bob Holmes, *The Status of Black Atlanta 1993*. Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy, Clark Atlanta University, 1994; “The Status of Black Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 8, 1993, pg. 1, 5; “The Status of African American Women,” The Metropolitan Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women, 1992.

⁴⁸⁶ Bob Holmes, *The Status of Black Atlanta 1993*. Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy, Clark Atlanta University, 1994; “The Status of Black Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 8, 1993, pg. 1, 5.

Most black women in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region remained locked in a subproletariat position by 1993. In the Metropolitan Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women's study, "The Status of African American Women," black women not only earned less than both black and white men, but they also still worked generally in the lower paying industries and lowest paying service and clerical jobs. "We are economically at the bottom," Miriam Chivers, a member of the coalition stated. "Companies hire black women to fill the hourly job without insurance, and when they offer insurance, it's not affordable. Many African American women are uninsured or underinsured." Additionally, the coalition found that 60 percent of the income of black women was less than \$25,000 with 50 percent falling below \$10,000. The number of unemployed African American women in the region—47,373—was greater than that of white women in the work force. Further, the report cited that black women outnumbered black men in unemployment and underemployment.⁴⁸⁷

Lastly, black Atlantan women's subproletarian position hindered their ability to live long lives. Black women comprised 93 percent and 90 percent of unwed mothers in Atlanta and Fulton County, respectively. When they are born, black women maintained the same infant mortality rate as black men. However, as they grew older, black women's mortality rate increased as they struggled to survive and raise children on their low wages in the dirtiest (lowest paid, lowest position) jobs with limited outreach environments, thus continuing a cycle.⁴⁸⁸

The expansion of black elected officials across the metro region meant that black elites played a more active role in the direction of Atlanta into the beginning of the twenty-first

⁴⁸⁷ "The Status of African American Women," The Metropolitan Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women, 1992; "Metro Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women Release Their Status of Black Women Report," *Atlanta Daily World*, June 3, 1993, pg. 3.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 3.

century. By 1990, African Americans controlled the City of Atlanta and held dominant majorities on the Atlanta City Council, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, the Atlanta Board of Education, the leadership of the Atlanta Police Department, and increasing numbers in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce—the Atlanta decision-making power structure. Under these structures, Atlanta expanded rapidly while ranking second in the United States in highest poverty rate behind Newark, New Jersey.⁴⁸⁹ The Atlanta Metropolitan Region grew at the third largest percentage change in the United States—from 2.2 million in 1980 to 2.9 million in 1990, at a 33+ percent change—only trailing Chicago, Illinois, and Phoenix, Arizona. The Atlanta Metropolitan Region ranked 20th nationally in 1970; by 1990, it reached 13th.⁴⁹⁰ A considerable portion of the growth of the Atlanta region was mostly due to the in-migration of residents from other parts of the country and abroad. Between 1985 and 1990, nearly half a million people moved to the region from other areas. Additionally, residential movement rates from city-to-suburb or suburb-to-city within the region accelerated in that time span. For example, 30 percent of inner-city residents moved to Dekalb County suburbs, more than any other metropolitan county in the region.⁴⁹¹ This data suggests that gentrification, and the displacement that results from it, during the end of the Andrew Young regime initiated a small suburbanization of working class African-American Atlantans. Lastly, black urbanites driven away by the rising costs of living in the central city sought cheaper land and built environment in surrounding urban areas outside the central city. In 1970, nearly 80 percent of blacks in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region lived in the city. By 1990, that total dropped to less than 40 percent. African Americans during

⁴⁸⁹ Bureau of Labor Statistics 1990; “A Real Tale of Two Cities,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 1, 7.

⁴⁹⁰ Population Totals are based on revised census metropolitan area definitions, effective December 31, 1992. U.S. Census Bureau, *1980 and 1990 Census of Population and Housing*.

⁴⁹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 1990.

the 1980s found cheaper housing and accessible transportation via the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority development in surrounding urban areas. In fact, African Americans increased 313 percent in Clayton County, 91 percent in Dekalb County, and 76 percent in Fulton County outside the city limits during this decade. White flight helped drive this trend in these counties, except in affluent sections of the counties where bourgeois and petty bourgeois Blacks and Whites lived amongst one another.⁴⁹² However, hypersegregation within the municipality continued into the final decade of the twentieth century. 90 percent of blacks in the City of Atlanta resided on the south and west sides in the city limits—a trend that continued from the late 1960s.⁴⁹³

“GET LOST!”: Bourgeois and Petty Bourgeois Tools of Class Warfare in 1990s African American Atlanta

By the middle of the 1980s, federal, state, and local confiscation of resources expanded the needs of the black working class with very little relief in sight. Many black elected officials funneled the relief for the oppressed through programs that addressed their own racial class insecurities—making themselves and their white counterparts richer. In fact, since the 1960s, as African American elites gained control of federal, state, and local public policy for the next thirty years, spending for the needs of the poor increased 25-fold. Yet, the number of children, particularly African Americans, living in poverty expanded during this time. Much of the funding designed to alleviate social crises in poor black communities bankrolled a new class of what scholar Larry Thompson dubbed the “Poverty Pentagon”—counselors, bureaucrats, social

⁴⁹² “The Dynamics of Change: An Analysis of Growth in Metropolitan Atlanta Over the Past Two Decades,” *Research Atlanta, Inc.*, 1993, p. v.

⁴⁹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics 1990; “A Real Tale of Two Cities,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 1, 7.

workers—middle managers who command high salaries to simply *supervise* the poor and provide sparse, symbolic monies to diversity and poverty initiatives. This new tool in class warfare exploited the poor in order to create a new professional class to manage the poor, not alleviate them. In New York City, the Community Service Society (a 100-year old social work agency) examined how social welfare programs spent funds intended to meet the needs of the city's 1.4 million poor people. Of the \$14.5 billion spent to help poor New Yorkers in 1983, 74 cents of every dollar went to the service industry; programs only spent 26 cents of every dollar on rent, food, clothes, and other necessities.⁴⁹⁴

I argue that this marked the beginning of the non-profit industrial complex in the United States and in turn weakened the call for collective social movements in the public sphere. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci noted that for capitalist societies to maintain legitimacy, political society (state institutions that rule through force, including the carceral state, courts, and police) and civil society (those aspects of the state that rule through consent, particularly government bodies) work in tandem to explicitly and implicitly reinforce and perpetuate ideology. To maintain class stratification, both groups propagandize—through the three dominant cultural production institutions (education, church, and media)—solutions to social crises rest in their hands. For example, a non-profit may promote that the solution to large-scale political problems is donating to an organization that uses those funds to hire a lobbyist, create a human resources position, or hire an outside firm to conduct a study, as opposed to giving the money directly to the affected group to hire a community organizer and build a social movement.

⁴⁹⁴ “Larry Thompson, “How to Handle Poor Neighborhoods,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 5, 1991, pg. 4.

In other words, by framing the solutions to problems in a specific manner, non-profits, at the behest of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes, *define* where social problems come from in the first place.⁴⁹⁵ For one example, in order to address homelessness, organizations focus on finding a bed for each person on a day-by-day basis—an individualized solution, which in turn individualizes the problem. As a result, the spread of this hegemonic understanding of social problems as individualized becomes the dominant ideology, making collective solutions like social movements against a structural problem appear irrational. Therefore, individuals with a desire to fight for social change are funneled into the non-profit industrial complex that incentivizes them to conform to liberal ideologies of race, class, and poverty.⁴⁹⁶

While the neoliberalization of the 1980s and 1990s catalyzed the growth of the non-profit industrial complex, corporate philanthropy had long propped up urban power structures while deterring collective working-class social movements in the United States and other capitalist, industrialized nations. Steel robber baron Andrew Carnegie argued in his 1889 article, “The Gospel of Wealth,” that the wealthy possess the ability to undermine social protest by donating money to causes that directly impact the material conditions of the workers. Thus, Carnegie set the parameters for capitalist hegemony moving forward. Noted nineteenth and twentieth century robber barons such as John Rockefeller, John Hopkins, and Leland Stanford utilized

⁴⁹⁵ For more Gramsci’s theory of political society and civil society, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971; 2014, pp. 12-13, 260-263, 268.

⁴⁹⁶ Medical scholar Susan Rosenthal detailed this phenomenon in more detail in her article, “Philanthropy: The Capitalist Art of Deception,” *Socialist Review*, No. 402, May 2015, retrieved 11-11-2018. She also argued that while the capitalist class only gives away money to stifle protest, the working class gives legitimate philanthropy to the wealthy in three ways: 1)workers produce a surplus for employers, 2)workers pay taxes that support the wealthy, and 3)workers donate to charities.

philanthropy to ensure that civil society supported capitalism and confused the working classes.⁴⁹⁷

Frederick Engels summarized the purpose and execution of philanthropy as a tool of class warfare for the bourgeoisie in his examination of the working class in England in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution:

“The capitalist class is charitable out of self-interest; it gives nothing outright, but regards its gifts as a business matter, makes a bargain with the poor saying if I spend this much upon benevolent institutions, I thereby purchase the right not to be troubled any further, and you are bound thereby to stay in your dusky holes and not to irritate my tender nerves by exposing your misery. You shall despair as before, but you shall despair unseen...It is infamous, this charity of a Christian capitalist! As though they rendered the workers a service in first sucking out their very life blood and then placing themselves before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity when they give back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them!”⁴⁹⁸

This kind of philanthropy played a supporting role in reinforcing racial formations in America. Rockefeller’s philanthropic institutions positioned biology as the root of disease—meaning that he dismissed social problems as purely ideological and not contributing factors. As a result, workers are given medication to treat high blood pressure that addresses the symptom, not the social problems that cause the symptoms. Reducing social problems to biological defects pathologizes ailments like hypertension and diabetes and embeds racism in multiple institutions. Thus, actors fail to consider the social cause and therefore, collective social movement solutions.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ Andrew Carnegie, “The Gospel of Wealth,” *North American Review*, No. CCCXCI, June 1889.

⁴⁹⁸ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. Translated by Florence Kelley. Anodos Books, 1845 (2018), pp. 205-210.

⁴⁹⁹ Medical scholar Susan Rosenthal detailed this phenomenon in more detail in her article, “Philanthropy: The Capitalist Art of Deception,” *Socialist Review*, No. 402, May 2015, retrieved 11-11-2018. She also argued that while the capitalist class only gives away money to stifle protest, the working class gives legitimate philanthropy to the wealthy in three ways: 1)workers produce a surplus for employers, 2)workers pay taxes that support the wealthy, and 3)workers donate to charities.

As the non-profit industry expanded in urban spaces in the 1990s, black elected officials gradually stopped fighting for social welfare spending, signaling dire consequences for the black working classes. Black leaders tended to either shrink away from responsibility in defending their disadvantaged racial counterparts, or fully supported the dismantling of social programs and privatization of public resources. In late 1991, 24 members of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus voted to cut \$415 million from the state budget of Georgia—the largest cuts in Georgia history at the time. According to African American state representative Tyrone Brooks, the legislature understood before the vote that the cuts involved programs and jobs that predominantly served black workers. As expected, Governor Zell Miller cleared 3,000 jobs from the state payroll.⁵⁰⁰

Black leaders also redistributed funds amongst their own professionalized classes. According to reports, 350 African American middle-class organizations spent an estimated \$16 billion in annual meetings in 1990. Additionally, black elites spent an estimated \$500 million at the annual Congressional Black Caucus event in Washington D.C.⁵⁰¹ At the local level, black elected officials funded external firms to tell them how to best protect their class interests. In March 1991, the predominantly black Fulton County Board of Commissioners, including Martin Luther King III, Michael Hightower, Nancy Boxill, and chairman Michael Lomax, hired Switzerland-based think tank Egon Zehner International to conduct a search for their county manager. The county paid the firm over \$300,000 for the search—but according to reports, the county had the ability to hire a manager through the Personnel Office for free. Egon Zehner

⁵⁰⁰ “Black Group Slow to React,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 9, 1991, pg. 1-2; “State Layoffs Not as High as Expected Here,” *The Atlanta Daily World*, December 17, 1991, pg. 1, 6.

⁵⁰¹ “What About Me? Is the Problem,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 4.

selected a white former military general who both Lomax and King favored because he acquiesced power to the board chairman.⁵⁰²

Atlanta's power structure manipulated control over black working-class populations through corporate philanthropy in the 1990s. In fact, it is safe to assert that corporate diversity philanthropy not only fragmented black resistance to gentrification during Olympics-era Atlanta, but it redefined racial class relations in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region for the next two decades. Multinational corporations that migrated to Atlanta in the 1980s coordinated partnerships with City Hall to push their class interests. As discussed in chapter 3, corporations in black urban spaces in America coopted Black Urban Regimes because they recognized the connection between the social conditions and the political structures in these spaces. In other words, corporations crafted a role as benevolent benefactor in poor black areas to mask their long-term investment in their neighborhoods and bolster the private/public partnership in Liberal Growth Machines. This strategy decreased the protest actions against corporations in black urban spaces in the 1980s and 1990s. In fact, black working class protests generally did not target corporations like Coca-Cola, which drove many of the gentrification efforts in urban spaces. For example, Coca-Cola and Georgia Tech University—both known for philanthropic donations to black public schools in Atlanta and both employed black figures in high ranking positions—initiated the destruction of Techwood and Clark Howell housing projects in downtown Atlanta for almost a decade leading up to the Olympics. However, black activists heaped most criticism on City Hall and the ACOG.⁵⁰³ For much of the twentieth century, Coca-

⁵⁰² “Fractured Foolishness from Fulton County,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 1-2;

⁵⁰³ I discuss the Techwood Homes gentrification in greater detail in the second half of this chapter.

Cola's diversity philanthropy allowed it to masquerade as a benefactor to black community progress and an entity outside of the structural problem caused by black elected officials.

In March 1991, Mayor Maynard Jackson joined the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in hosting a "warm welcome" ceremony for 100 companies at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel Plaza. These businesses, including American Honda, Lockheed Aeronautical Systems, Co., and WORLDSPAN, a 500-employee computerized reservations operation, either relocated to the city or established new operations in 1990. With these new additions, Atlanta's Chamber of Commerce grew to over 7,000 members, one of the largest in the United States.⁵⁰⁴ This event broadcast City Hall's deep relationship with capital and attempted to blur the lines between public and private interests in the region. Around this period, as diversity and affirmative action seared in national debates, corporate press conferences emphasized a "commitment to minorities and underprivileged communities." When neo-conservatives and Black Urban Regimes explicitly cut funds to low-income black neighborhoods, corporations filled the void—albeit symbolically—to subdue resistance to their attack on Black urban residences.

Pepsi-Cola's diversity philanthropy competition against Coca-Cola in Atlanta set the bar for symbolic gesturing in the 1990s. Pepsi's "Minority Entrepreneurship...A New Generation" campaign highlighted the company's funding of nearly \$400 million to minority businesses owned by African Americans, Latinos/as, Asians, and Native Americans. African American Betty Darrell, director of supplier development for Pepsi, stated that "the featured suppliers are role models for us all. Not only have they accomplished a great deal in the business world, but they continue to use their influence to give something back to their communities...inspiring others to follow in their footsteps." Pepsi also donated \$10,000 to the African American

⁵⁰⁴ "100 New Atlanta Companies Recognized," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 3.

Panoramic Experience (APEX) Museum—the Black History museum located on Auburn Avenue. The contribution derived from a city-wide promotion where Pepsi donated five cents on the sale of every two-liter bottle of Pepsi during Black History Month. Pepsi also commissioned a free poster for all children who visited APEX. Lastly, Pepsi created a diversity position that same year, titled “Vice President of Corporate Development and Diversity.” The company promoted African American Maurice Cox from his role as chief lobbyist for Pepsi. Craig Weatherup, President and CEO of Pepsi-Cola North America, expressed that the new position demonstrated that “our commitment to a customer-focused, service-oriented company run by people of diverse backgrounds, skills, values, and gender.”⁵⁰⁵

Coca-Cola vied for the same benefactor perception in Black Atlanta. With the World of Coca-Cola located in downtown Atlanta and neighboring the Olympic Centennial Park, Georgia Tech, and Techwood and Clark Howell Homes (the oldest public housing projects in U.S. history), the soda giant understood both its locational advantage as well as its profit potential in partnering with African American leadership. Together both entities helped propagandize Coca-Cola as a part of the daily life of Atlantans. Their most publicized community grant, Share the Dream, divided \$130,000 annually to ten students who wrote an essay on a theme usually centered on cultural diversity. The company chose popular African American comedian Sinbad to promote the initiative across multiple black media platforms, including *Ebony*, *Jet*, and *Essence* magazines.⁵⁰⁶ Between 1991 and 1995, Coca-Cola also pledged to buy \$1 billion worth

⁵⁰⁵ “Pepsi-Cola Salutes Economic Success in Minority Entrepreneurship,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 5, 1991, pg. 1, 2; “Pepsi-Cola Adds Position to Foster Diversity in Workforce,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 27, 1991, pg. 3; “Pepsi-Cola Raises Funds for APEX,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 1.

⁵⁰⁶ “Coca-Cola Offer Scholarships Through “Share the Dream,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 19, 1991, pg. 6;

of goods and services from minority and women vendors. The beverage company sought to publicize that they wanted to donate even more funds towards symbolic diversity than in the 1980s, which had totaled \$680 million.⁵⁰⁷ Lastly, Coca-Cola and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce recruited boxing legend, Olympic gold medalist, and former Bowen Homes housing projects resident Evander Holyfield for the “Real Deal” advertising package. By 1995, Holyfield appeared in countless television commercials, speaking engagements, and touring schools with the Olympic mascot, Izzy, to promote Coke’s philanthropy in African American schools.⁵⁰⁸ Coca-Cola utilized a well-known working class African American Atlantan who the black community recognized that helped reshaped Coke’s image in the city.

As a result, evidence suggests that Coca-Cola escaped any widespread scrutiny or organized resistance from black residents during the Olympic period. Behind the scenes of this philanthropy, CEO of Coke Paul Austin disparaged poor blacks through memos and conversations, telling other executives that the more African Americans in a space, the higher the homicide rate. He also spent the 1970s and 1980s attempting to demolish Black public housing in the city and replace it with shopping malls and upper income housing.⁵⁰⁹

The telephone corporations also fought to subdue black protest through symbolic diversity philanthropy. Southern Bell gave a \$25,000 grant to Georgia State University to support “the establishment of Benjamin E. Mays Chair of Urban Education Leadership.” African American and former Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Alonzo A. Crim held the chair first, stating that “few companies have demonstrated the unswerving support of education

⁵⁰⁷ “Coke Plans to Buy More from Women Businesses,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 11, 1992, pg. 2.

⁵⁰⁸ “World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Evander Holyfield Signs Coke Pact,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, February 2, 1991, pg. 7.

⁵⁰⁹ Paul Austin, Memo to Robert Woodruff, 11 June 1971, Robert Woodruff Papers, Emory Special Collections, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

that is a hallmark of Southern Bell. If all in the private sector were as committed to education as this company, the problems in the educational arena would be greatly diminished.” AT&T targeted black education—where working class Blacks often protested lack of funding and support. Beginning in 1988, AT&T partnered with the National Coalition of 100 Black Women to establish a \$1000 scholarship to black women interested in becoming engineers. The following year AT&T gave grants totaling nearly \$2 million to engineering and science programs at to the four black schools at the Atlanta University Center. AT&T also donated \$208 million worth of business to minority-owned companies. Lastly, the telecommunications giant sponsored the Urban Bush Women dance company debut of contemporary African artists through a touring exhibition.⁵¹⁰

Other corporations joined the multinational giants in growing their power through symbolic diversity initiatives. Xerox gave Clark Atlanta University’s School of Business Administration \$20,000 in what they call “Xerox scholarships” for Black MBA students.⁵¹¹ Burger King, which basketball legend Earvin “Magic” Johnson partnered with across Atlanta, allocated \$100 million to draft African American men and women into franchise ownership. “This is a way of making sure our franchisee community is representative of our consumer community,” stated Scott Colabuono, Chief Financial Officer and Chairman of the Company’s Diversity Action Council. In a somewhat ironic move, civil rights organizations heaped praise on the fast food giant, citing Burger King’s investing in “the financial health of minority communities,” never mind the actual nutritional health impact of the growth of fast food in Black

⁵¹⁰ “Georgia State Receives Grant,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 5, 1991, pg. 3; “AT&T Gives Four \$1,000 Scholarship,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 28, 1991, pg. 4;

⁵¹¹ “Xerox Corporation Contributes to Clark’s Program,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 10, 1991, pg. 6.

neighborhoods. In fact, Burger King established this diversity program after being sued in 1988 for \$500 million by twelve black franchise owners for racist practices by the corporate office.⁵¹² Symbolic corporate philanthropy served as a crucial tool for the bourgeoisie in class war against the black poor because it not only challenged the grassroots collectivization of protest action, but it also coopted individual blacks into professionalized supervisory positions in capitalist structures as diversity middle management.

The New Nadir

Corporate partnership with the black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie aligned with the neoliberal turn of the Democratic Party in the 1980s. Together, these forces worked to demonize the black poor in the public sphere, resulting in declining support for resources for neighborhoods. Whereas the working poor used to represent a source of power for political strategy following the Great Depression, liberal Democrats concocted an analysis of the social crises of America that abandoned the poor classes. Political economist Robert Reich, who served on Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Baraka Obama's administrations, argued that as global financial economies replaced older nationalist economies, America's competitive edge rested on only a fifth of the work force. The remainder of the people, Reich believed, had "jobs on a steeply declining ladder of importance, ending finally with the least fortunate members of society." In Reich's framework, the poor are not only superfluous, but burdensome to the future direction of a global capitalist structure.⁵¹³

⁵¹² "Burger King Earmarks \$100 Million for Minority Franchises," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 18, 1993, pg. 16.

⁵¹³ For Reich's theories on the poor, see Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism*. New York and Toronto: Vintage Books, 1992.

Bill Clinton's emergence as a major player in a new Democratic Party added a distinct anti-black poor fervor in liberal public policy. He and a group of mostly moderate Southern Democrats formed the Democratic Leadership Conference in 1985 to move the party towards middle class whites. Clinton and the DLC followed Reagan in exacerbating a racial stratification in the working class and casting blacks as the symbol of American degradation. For example, when Clinton launched a public attack on Hip Hop artist and political activist Sister Souljah for her critique of white supremacy following the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion, his presidential polling jumped from trailing by 15 points to a 30-point lead. In fact, many reports argued that Clinton's war against Sister Souljah won him the white vote and served as the catalyst to his upset victory over incumbent George H.W. Bush.⁵¹⁴

Clinton essentially promoted a moderate-conservative republican platform to the "forgotten white middle class" to win their support for the Democratic Party—a strategy that expelled the working class, especially low-income blacks, from the party's public policy platforms. By 1991, black working-class interests ranked so low on the list of Democratic Party priorities that according to reports, African-American delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton stressed that the Civil Rights Act of 1991—an anti-discrimination measure that challenged President George H.W. Bush's veto of the 1990 bill—was not meant to address blacks; but must benefit middle class white women.⁵¹⁵

It is safe to assert that Clinton's presidency inflicted more economic and social damage to the black majority than either the Reagan or Bush administrations. As neo-conservatives argued that affirmative action "oppressed" white males, Clinton worked to end what he called "abuses in

⁵¹⁴ "Bill Clinton's Debt to Sister Souljah," *Chicago Tribune*, "October 28, 1992; "There are No Political Saviors," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 8, 1992, pg. 3.

⁵¹⁵ "America is Certifying African American Inferiority," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 1, 1991, pg. 4.

federal government affirmative action programs.” He bolstered his reelection campaign with his “mend, it, don’t end it” slogan—but he chose to cut affirmative action in the Department of Transportation, leaving thousands of African Americans without jobs. Clinton’s crime and welfare legislation served as the most punitive and destructive bill in federal history against African Americans. The programs gutted drug rehabilitation and prevention funding in the middle of the crack cocaine epidemic, reduced youth employment and job training programs, cut thousands of poor people off welfare rolls, and gave white collar drug producers “slap on the wrist” punishments. Concurrently, the bill provided billions of dollars in militarizing police and building prisons, strengthened the death penalty, and enacted “three-strikes-you’re out” rules against non-violent offenders, predominantly black and brown people. Conservative and liberal Clinton apologists point to his appointment of blacks in his administration and his support of black redistricting. However, as discussed earlier in the chapter, much of Clinton’s symbolic diversity served to simultaneously offset his destruction of black spaces and bodies and weaken collective protest against his policies.⁵¹⁶

In terms of social humiliation, Clinton manipulated whites’ anger surrounding the O.J. Simpson verdict to reinforce racial pathology. After a predominantly black jury acquitted the NFL Hall of Fame running back of murdering his ex-wife and friend, Clinton stated the lie that “violence for white people too often comes with a black face.” He then added “it’s not racist for whites to assert that the culture of welfare dependency can’t be broken unless there is first more personal responsibility.”⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁶ I discuss Clinton’s “War on Drugs” legislation in Chapter 5 because its effects hold substantial implications for the late 1990s and early 2000s.

⁵¹⁷ Because the effects of Clinton’s 1996 welfare cuts do not take shape until after 1996, I discuss the destruction of welfare on Black Atlantans in chapter 5 of this dissertation. For more on Clinton and his war on Black poor, see

Clinton and liberal Democrats instilled confidence in the white and black petty bourgeois by scaling back government spending. Elites under this new racial formation structured their ideology around two points. First, with corporate philanthropic efforts and symbolic diversity initiatives, corporate leaders not only subdued working class resistance, but they also felt that they contributed enough capital to affirmative action to back away from support of race-based legislation.⁵¹⁸ Additionally, since liberal Democrats' revised ideology envisioned no role for the black poor under late capitalism, federal, state, and local officials promoted public policy to curtail the growth and upward mobility of the poor.

The abandoning of the black working class at the federal level is the impetus of the New Nadir because it eliminated the material support for the majority of African Americans under racial oppression. With little to no opposition from liberal Democrats—and many Democrats aligning with regressive federal and state legislation—white and black Neo-conservatives launched an anti-black working-class political strategy that reshaped racial oppression. As Black Studies scholar Sundiata Cha-Jua conceptualized, this contemporary racial formation, the New Nadir, is a consequence of the political economic transformation to financialized global capitalism. Cha-Jua's New Nadir model exemplifies the latter quarter of the twentieth century in Black America because it characterized the ineffectiveness of black resistance and the “subsequent drastic devolution in African Americans' role in the political economy, position in the polity, social status, and cultural representation.”⁵¹⁹ In other words, this racial formation

Robert Wilkes, “Examining President Clinton's Response to Welfare,” *Endarch* Spring 1997, pp. 18-35; also see “How Clinton Failed Black America and What Can Be Done,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 14, 1996, pg. 4; “How Clinton Failed Black America and What Can Be Done part 2,” *The Atlanta Voice*, Sept 21, 1996, pg. 16-17;

⁵¹⁸ “Civil Rights Veto: What Does it Mean to Us?,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 1, 12.

⁵¹⁹ Cha-Jua notes that New Nadir is an appropriate term for this period because like the 19th Century Nadir, coined by historian Rayford C. Logan, racial oppression reversed the forward trajectory of the Black liberation movement

must be defined as reactionary: it sought to scale back black gains and resistance through the loss of resources and rights. The New Nadir severed most African Americans from the concern of the political structure and reshaped the social atmosphere into a backlash against the Black poor.

The New Nadir (1978-present), in similar fashion to the second Nadir, breaks from the previous racial formation in many ways. First, *nadir* in both instances connotes “the place or time of greatest depression or degradation.”⁵²⁰ According to Cha-Jua, historian Rayford C. Logan chose this framing for the first Nadir Period (1877-1923) because a combination of Southern racial oppression and Northern benign neglect pushed African Americans’ struggles for equal rights to their lowest point in history at the time. Like the post-Reconstruction period, Cha-Jua asserts, the reversal or compromise of multiple human and civil rights won in previous historical periods plagues the New Nadir. Next, incorporation into the capitalist structure supplanted collective social movement and radical politics as the dominant form of Black empowerment. Fourth, the New Nadir resulted from white terrorist movements, operated through governmental and private forces. Fourth, it is constitutive of “the sociohistorical contexts in which capitalists transformed and internationalized the U.S. political economy. As the U.S. dominant mode of production shifted from an industrial corporate framework to a computerized information and financial service economy, the nation’s imperialist aspirations destabilized multiple working-class spaces across the globe, prompting massive labor migration out of those areas and towards the U.S. Unlike the previous Nadir where immigrants flowed mostly from Southern and Eastern Europe, refugees escaped Central and South America while

and precipitated a sharp decline in “Black social conditions, their incorporation into the polity, and portrayal in the national discourse. See Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, *Title Unknown*, unpublished, pp. 137-138.

⁵²⁰ Oxford University Dictionary, Third Edition, Revised with Addenda (London, 1955), p. 1307.

intellectuals, technicians, and other professional individuals migrated to the United States for education and service sector opportunities from Europe, South Asia, and Africa.⁵²¹

The New Nadir swept across all sectors in the final decade of the twentieth century. Increased police harassment and surveillance marked blacks. One anonymous police officer had no problem telling reporters that they target black men because “they are the ones who commit all the crimes.” However, investigative journalists videotaped police officers passing White law breakers in order to harass innocent blacks and sent the footage to major television shows like 20/20, Front Line, and 60 Minutes. Thus, police officers justified their surveillance of poor Blacks with questionable statistics reported through false arrests and harassment. In turn, the national conversation around police and low-income Black neighborhoods pathologized Black men as needing and deserving increased police surveillance.⁵²²

Strengthened police powers and draconian laws targeting the black poor resulted in mass racialized incarceration—arguably the most notable characteristic of the New Nadir. In Georgia for example, Democratic state legislators Judy Moye and Maretta Taylor introduced bills that enacted harsher punishments on any individual convicted of distributing drugs within 1,000 feet of parks and playgrounds. By wording the law this way, street-level dealers faced the brunt of punishment while drug producers at the top of the hierarchy—the main illegal capitalists, who do not directly distribute drugs themselves—escaped harsher punishments.⁵²³

As a result, black males particularly filled the expanding carceral state through the 1990s. By 1995, The Sentencing Project, a criminal justice watchdog organization, reported that one in

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 150-156.

⁵²² “Future of Black Males Threatened by Police Harassment,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 3, 1993, pg. 14.

⁵²³ “Anti-Gang & Drug Effort Gets Some Help,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 11, 1992, pg. 1;

three African American men between 20 and 29 years old served some type of criminal sentence—either prison, jail, probation, or parole. Using Justice Department data, the report exposed that on any given day that year, 32 percent, or 827, 400 young black men served some form of criminal servitude. 4.8 percent of black women and 1.4 percent of white women served some form of criminal punishment in 1995. 12.3 percent of Latinos and 2.2 percent of Latinas were under criminal supervision that year as well. The report argued that the mandatory minimum sentences and stepped up enforcement that began in the 1980s “war on drugs” fell disproportionately on black men.⁵²⁴

Additionally, the federal guidelines that levied harsh penalties on distributing crack cocaine far outweighed selling much larger amounts of powdered cocaine—a more expensive, affluent drug. In March 1991, Atlanta police charged 29-year old African-American William Hall with two charges of possession with intent to distribute 234 grams of crack cocaine and 208 grams of cocaine powder. He faced a mandatory 10 years and up to 15 years in prison. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, if police caught Hall only selling powder cocaine, he would have faced no mandatory sentencing and a minimum sentence of up to five years and three months in prison. In 1992, courts sentenced blacks for crack cocaine offenses in Georgia at a rate of 30 to 1 more than whites. “According to these new guidelines, if you’re black and poor you are ore reprehensible to society than a white professional who deals large amounts of powder,” said Hall’s attorney, Suzanne Hashimi.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Mark Mauer and Tracy Huling, “Young Black Americans and the Criminal Justice System: Five Years Later.” *The Sentencing Project*, October 1995, pp. 3-12. The report did not include African Americans awaiting trial or who served time before they turned 20, so it is safe to conclude that the real number was much higher when you include those variables.

⁵²⁵ “Crack Laws Tip Scales Against Blacks,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 20, 1993, pg. 3.

The story of 24-year old African American Kemba Smith served as another example of the New Nadir's carceral character. A Georgia judge sentenced Smith to a mandatory 24 years in prison for "associating" with a drug ring that her boyfriend operated. What is worth nothing is that prosecutors stated that Smith never handled, distributed, or used cocaine. Also, she did not have a prior arrest history. However, because of the new minimum sentencing rules, the courts sentenced a non-violent, first time offender to more time than an individual charged with kidnapping, robbery, rape, or murder.⁵²⁶

Georgia especially sought to separate itself from the rest of the pack as the toughest state on crime. In 1994, Governor Zell Miller signed a "two-strikes, you're out" bill. "You are going to be locked up for the rest of your life," stated African American Democratic state representative and global corporatist Thurbert Baker. "We are going to impose a life without parole sentence...no possibility of parole, no possibility of getting out..." Because of the fixation on incarcerating the black poor, legislators and capitalists alike diverted many resources away from social programs, pay raises for city workers, and other spending for the working class and towards prison purchase and construction. Reports estimated that by 1994, constructing one medium security prison cost between \$15 million and \$20 million; for a maximum-security prison, it cost \$25 million. Additionally, it cost the state \$20,000 per year to incarcerate one person like Kemba Smith.⁵²⁷

Georgia also outpaced other states in racial inequality in death penalty cases. In July 1996, Amnesty International issued a report condemning the state's application of the death

⁵²⁶ "Revisiting Mandatory Sentencing," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 22, 1996, pg. 4.

⁵²⁷ "Profiting from Prisons," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 7, 1994, pg. 5.; "Revisiting Mandatory Sentencing," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 22, 1996, pg. 4.

penalty as “racist, arbitrary, and unfair.” Compelled to research Atlanta because of their claim of being “the birthplace of the human rights movement,” Amnesty International released data that challenged the “city too busy to hate” mantra. Their report noted that Georgia ranked fifth in the total number of executions that have been carried out since the Supreme Court reversed its 1972 decree that capital punishment was “arbitrary and capricious.” Amnesty also reported that in 6 of the 12 cases since 1983, all-white juries sentenced black defendants to death after the court struck potential black jurors. The courts tainted the juries with racist language. For example, an all-white jury sentenced Wilburn Dobbs to death in 1974. However, during the trial, the judge and defense attorney referred to Dobbs as “colored boy” and two of the women jurors admitted after the sentencing that they found blacks “scarier than whites.”⁵²⁸

As Cha-Jua notes, the New Nadir “was born out of the machinations of American’s right wing, white ruling class through its political realignment congruent with the restructuring of both the U.S. and world political economies.” The racial discourse, “colorblind racial ideology,” recoded “poor” “violent” “unintelligent” and “lazy” as African American cultural characteristics. As discussed previously in chapter 3 and this chapter, the recessions of 1979, 1982, and 1990-1991 played a pivotal role in producing policy decisions that reinforced historic patterns of racial inequality. In 1991, the U.S. Department of Education, led by African-American Assistant to Secretary for Civil Rights in the department Michael L. Williams, publicly denounced “race-based” scholarships as “discriminatory and illegal.” More clearly, this forbade colleges from using money from the general operating budgets for scholarships designed specifically for racial and ethnic students.⁵²⁹ To be clear, this was not merely an attack against blacks; it served as an

⁵²⁸ “Report Slams Death penalty in GA,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 27, 1996, pg. 2.

⁵²⁹ “Protest Opposition to Race-Based Scholarships,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 4.

attack on black working-class people. Low-income African Americans overwhelmingly benefit from race-based scholarships over their elite counterparts because for many, they are the only financial means to attend college. Blacks elites, however, are typically financially stable enough to overcome discriminatory practices in college funding.

Neo-conservatives garnered support for anti-black working-class legislation on college campuses. A 1991 survey from the Atlanta-based Southern Regional Education Board revealed that white students overwhelmingly opposed race-based scholarships and special consideration to African Americans. The study polled 15,000 students and received an estimated 5,000 responses from both predominantly white institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. 81 percent of whites at majority-white institutions and 76 percent of whites at predominantly black schools opposed race and gender-based school aid. Concurrently, 85 percent of blacks on white campuses and 89 percent of blacks on black campuses supported race and gender-based aid.⁵³⁰ Additionally, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* printed a detailed essay from Jason D. Hill, a white Georgia State University student, who argued that race-based aid supports “members of an ethnic group” identifying themselves “with their own culture to the exclusion of other cultures” and that it “isolates themselves from the beliefs of other ethnic groups that might be compatible with their beliefs as individuals.” Citing black students at Georgia State who organized a movement to pressure the university to serve soul food in the cafeteria, Hill—and to a certain extent *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*—provided justification for white backlash (what Hill called “white rights”) to exercise “extreme reaction to ethnic glorification.”⁵³¹

⁵³⁰ The findings were reprinted in the article, “Students Divided on Some Racial Questions,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 3.

⁵³¹ “Focus on Ethnicity Can Be Harmful,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, January 6, 1991, pg. 18; “Untitled Letter to the Editor,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 4.

The black neo-conservative wave unleashed a round of anti-black working-class tactics and legislation that held the potential to make Booker T. Washington smile. Black students at Hampton University organized a massive protest against George H.W. Bush's commencement speech in 1991. However, university president and staunch conservative William Harvey threatened to suspend protesting students, delay graduation for seniors who boycott the commencement, and fire faculty and staff who assisted in the protests. Samuel Pierce, African American Secretary of Housing and Urban Development during the Reagan administration reportedly allowed black and white conservative landlords and real estate investors to steal housing money earmarked for the black poor.⁵³²

The 1990s witnessed more black neo-conservatives being placed in control of the federal agencies that disproportionately served African Americans—and rolling back living conditions for poor black Americans. The appointment of Clarence Thomas on the U.S. Supreme Court in 1991 proved disastrous for subjugated peoples. His first thirteen votes on the court matched conservative Antonin Scalia, voting against an incarcerated black man beaten by prison guards, weakening the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and in a surprising position, opposing the idea that “the federal Constitution must address all ills in our society.”

Georgia experienced a similar wave. The 1992 Georgia Legislature faced upheaval from a slush fund scandal, multiple retirees, and indictments. Also, this election utilized the newly drawn legislative districts that reflected the population shifts in the state during the 1980s. As discussed earlier, African American migrations out of the city of Atlanta into suburban counties, where black Republicanism dominated the black political spectrum. This shifted a significant amount of legislative power in the hands of black officials for the first time in the state's history.

⁵³² “When Negroes Discriminate Against Blacks,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 9, 1991, pg. 3.

Therefore, black conservatives challenged the dominant rural white Democrats that year for 65 seats in the Georgia House and 19 seats in the Senate.⁵³³ It was within this framework of a shifting political landscape, growth of the private-sector non-profit industrial complex, and the decline of public sector social spending that the Olympics came to Atlanta. Hosting the games would accelerate this unleashing of neoliberal forces in the city, resulting in dire consequences for working class black neighborhoods.

A'NUFF and Struggles Against Olympic Gentrification

In January 1991, Summerhill resident Mary Williams issued a stern warning to the Atlanta power structure after the Chamber of Commerce and City Hall held a press conference announcing their plans to use black businesses to redevelop land surrounding the Central Business District for the Olympics. Williams aimed her comments directly at white real estate lawyer Billy Payne—the individual most responsible for obtaining Atlanta’s Olympic hosting berth. “If it takes our marching in the streets, carrying pickets, sitting in front of the Olympics Committee’s office or holding this effort out to the world, you may rest assured that there are those among us who are willing to make such a statement.”⁵³⁴ Williams and her Summerhill, Peoplestown, and Mechanicsville kin understood that Payne’s motivations for bringing the Olympics to Atlanta endangered the social viability of their neighborhoods.

To fully understand the stakes of the 1990s Battle for Summerhill, it is appropriate to briefly examine Summerhill’s history of struggle against Atlanta gentrification up to that point. Black Summerhill residents understood the Olympic Era as a death sentence because of the long

⁵³³ “Clarence Thomas Joins Radical Right in First Supreme Court Vote,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 28, 1991, pg. 2; “Justice Clarence Thomas Follows Conservative Voting Pattern So Far,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 7, 1992, pg. 2; “Black GOP Gain More Power,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 18, 1992, pg. 2.

⁵³⁴ “Holding on,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 4.

history of broken promises by City Hall against the people. Summerhill, established in 1865 by freed African Americans, grew to a size of over 12,000 residents leading into the 1950s. However, Mayor Ivan Allen Jr.'s early gentrification efforts—urban renewal—threatened the community in 1966. Atlanta capitalists constructed Fulton County Stadium on top of parts of Summerhill to lure a baseball franchise to the city. Consequently, attracting the Major League Baseball Milwaukee Braves to relocate to Atlanta resulted in mass black displacement, housing and business demolition, and ultimately, locational disadvantage for remaining residents who lost employment, neighborhood stores, and kin in the process.⁵³⁵ Reports estimate that over 10,000 of the 12,000 residents in Summerhill lost their homes to the stadium construction and its effects. Black residents, outraged at City Hall's destruction of their neighborhood, waged a three-day rebellion against Allen, the police structure (who sparked the rebellion by beating a Summerhill resident), and City Hall in general.⁵³⁶

White flight from the central city to the suburbs in the 1960s followed interstate highway construction. Atlanta built three highways meeting just miles from Summerhill's center. As discussed in chapter 3, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designated Summerhill for the Model Cities program to revitalize the housing. However, City Hall utilized Model Cities as a displacement center and dwindled the Summerhill population down to three thousand by 1990. Most of the housing stock exhibited dilapidated and even dangerous

⁵³⁵ For examples of urbanization destroying communities in other urban spaces, see Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Rootshock: How Tearing Up Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*. New Village Press, Second Edition, 2016. Fullilove examines urban renewal policies in predominantly Black urban spaces Roanoke, Virginia, the Hill District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Central Ward in Newark, New Jersey.

⁵³⁶ "Summerhill Broken Promises," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 15, 1990, pg. 1; Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, p. 251. Historian Kevin Kruse provides a stellar macro-level study of white flight from Atlanta. See Kevin Kruse, *Whit Flight*, 2005.

conditions. However, when the International Olympics Committee chose Atlanta for the 1996 games, many people—particularly the residents—objected to the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) building a new stadium right next to Fulton County Stadium.⁵³⁷

Mayor Jackson stacked the ACOG with black capitalist brokers: Andrew Young (co-chairman, see previous chapter), Ray McClendon, former Jackson campaign official, AME Bishop John Hurst Adams, Jackson’s Chief of Staff Cecilia Hunter, and Atlanta Life Insurance President, former President of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, and director of the King Center, Jesse Hill. Adams denounced the student protests at Morris Brown College (AME Church runs the college). White capitalists John P. Crecine, President of Georgia Tech University and James Miller, President of the Dekalb County Chamber of Commerce (and founder of the Reynolds Plantation golf resort) completed the committee. Summerhill residents, keen on protecting their rights and seeking decision making power on the Olympics, immediately protested their exclusion from the ACOG. Jackson not only neglected their protests but worked outside of them with private interests within the community looking to make individual profits.⁵³⁸

Petty bourgeois blacks took advantage of this battle and attempted to leverage City Hall for black capitalist ventures. Douglas Dean, an African American former state representative who grew up in Summerhill, created Summerhill Neighborhood Incorporated (SNI), a non-profit community development corporation in 1988 to plan a revitalization “determined by the residents.” Ironically, Dean, who no longer lived in Summerhill, possessed no close ties to working class Summerhill. Dean and SNI served as foils to the anti-stadium movement.

⁵³⁷ “*Ibid*; Urban geography Larry Keating offers a broad description of SNI’s subversion of Summerhill protests. See Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.

⁵³⁸ “A Real Tale of Two Cities,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 16, 1991, pg. 1, 7.

According to longtime Summerhill activist Gene Ferguson, Dean and the other African Americans on the SNI executive board (who also did not live in Summerhill) exhibited hostility towards poor residents and often ignored their voices for input in SNI.⁵³⁹

Sensing the profit motive behind SNI, Ethel Mae Matthews called for the creation of an oppositional Black neighborhood citywide organization—transforming Tenants United for Fairness (TUFF) into Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A’NUFF) in December 1990. The group functioned as a coalition with elected officers and democratic process decision-making. The main neighborhoods—Summerhill, Mechanicsville, Peoplestown, Techwood/Clark Howell, and Pittsburgh—elected representatives from their respective communities and recruited from neighborhoods that were not immediately affected by the Olympic gentrification (Kirkwood, East Lake Meadows, etc.). The other leaders included Columbus Ward, Duane Stewart, Vice Chair, Terry Wilson, Secretary, and Shuretha Primorose, Treasurer. A’NUFF’s initial positions read as follows:

Our major position is that the proposed Olympic Stadium is Totally Unacceptable to us in our neighborhoods. We want plans presently adopted dropped, and another alternative site found.

We demand that the self-created and self-determining development programs we have, or are creating, to be the centerpiece to any revitalization plans for our neighborhoods.

We want a democratically-informed and publicly sanctioned discussion of all policies with regard to all Olympic and related developments in All neighborhoods affected.

In the long run, we want to work with all neighborhoods to effect the planning, programs, and outcomes of all future major developments in Atlanta. To integrate these major developments to an agenda of Human Rights and Fairness toward the further advancement

⁵³⁹ “Gene Ferguson, “The Crisis of Accountability in Atlanta’s Olympic Games,” published in *The Atlanta Voice*, December 28, 1991, pg. 1, 8.

of a more humane and just city in the 21st Century.⁵⁴⁰

When questioned about why she formed this opposition movement to the SNI, she stated clearly, “as poor people, we’ve got to come together and say no, we do not want another stadium sitting in our backyard.” She continued with a declaration of war against Billy Payne and Central Atlanta Progress, explaining that “Mr. Payne isn’t any kind of an elected official and he talks as if he was in charge of everything. We don’t want to be told by somebody who will never answer to the electorate what we will and will not do, and what is and is not negotiable.”⁵⁴¹

A’NUFF’s movement to stop stadium construction spread quickly. Within a week of forming, the group kicked off their first action with a statement to Juan Antoni Samaranch, the head of the International Olympic Committee. The letter dismantled the “city too busy to hate” myth by providing an alternative perspective of the city as a site of struggle between the oppressed and the power structure:

We are the other Atlanta...It is unfortunate you did not meet us during your many trips to Atlanta. We were there, but it was the intent of others not to let you see us...We are the poor within the underdeveloped neighborhoods...We are the lied to for whom endless promises have been unkept...We are the invisible people of Atlanta...The situation surrounding the 1996 Olympics has served to energize and make us gather together to end our invisibility...We are service notice that we will use every legal, democratic, and nonviolent means at our disposal to move the Olympic Stadium venue to another site. It is totally unacceptable to our neighborhoods to contain two stadiums which will only help to cause further deterioration of our quality of life...Also, these neighborhoods...contain structures and resources that are...significant... We respectfully invite the AOC and IOC to engage in serious and direct dialogue with A’NUFF...We hope the events of the next several years will lead to an improved quality of life for all involved.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ A’NUFF position statement was printed in full in *The Atlanta Voice*, December 22, 1990, pg. 4.

⁵⁴¹ “Summerhill About to Become Stadium Out,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 8, 1990, pg. 1, 3.

⁵⁴² A’NUFF’s Statement to the International Olympic Committee was printed in full in *The Atlanta Voice*, December 22, 1990, pg. 4.

A'NUFF increased the pressure on the ACOG by diversifying their tactics. On February 3 1991, A'NUFF gathered in front of Billy Payne's home in Dunwoody, waving signs and singing loudly "We Shall Overcome." After a few minutes of singing, various members made speeches under a candlelight vigil urging Payne and the ACOG to move the stadium elsewhere. "We are intent of stopping this stadium from being built in our backyard," Matthews exclaimed. The following week, A'NUFF held a press conference and presented their one thousand-signature petition to City Hall to stop the stadium. Additionally, the group spent the remainder of the press event reprimanding Atlanta City Hall and the Fulton County Board of Commissioners for "pathetic performance" as African American leaders "in their position on the Olympic Stadium in Summerhill." "We question if Olympic officials are giving full consideration to Summerhill's own development goals and aspirations without holding them hostage to private, nebulous negotiations," Matthews stated. "In any event, we know we have support in what we are saying and doing." Matthews then hinted at the SNI and other private interests in Summerhill fragmenting the anti-stadium movement: "Could it [ACOG community relations task force] be for the purpose of separating dissenters from collaborators? Could it be for the creation of a two-tier system of community inputs and manipulative outputs?" She concluded the press conference with a callback to black radicalism, demanding the fostering of a "renewed intellectual rigor and acumen within black Atlanta, a new dialogue which seeks proactive correctives to the intellectual laziness and unclear political and economic direction black elected leadership is taking us."⁵⁴³

After six months of operations, A'NUFF's anti-stadium movement grew in size, popularity, and tactics. On April 29, 1991, numerous A'NUFF members ascended on the

⁵⁴³ "Thousand on Petition vs Olympic Stadium," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 17, 1991, pg. 4.

downtown Ritz Carlton where City Hall often held business meetings for the Olympics. Another faction seized Inforum, the ACOG headquarters in the city that same day. Both groups swarmed the areas with signs like “No Stadium in Summerhill” and chanted “Billy Payne’s got to go!” However, word reached ACOG before the protests started, so they were able to keep A’NUFF out of the sight of International Olympic Committee President Antonio Samaranch.⁵⁴⁴ A’NUFF followed up this action with another mass protest to defend black land ownership against the ACOG. On July 26, A’NUFF gathered on African American Otis Hunter’s property—a parking lot that the Atlanta power structure threatened to annex for the Olympic Games. When Hunter refused to sell his property to the City, he received an intimidation letter from Properties Acquisition Inc., which stated the following:

In order that we may move toward the purchase of, the subject property, we have requested the real estate appraisal firm of Dabney and Associates to prepare an appraisal at the earliest possible date... upon completion of the appraisal report, I shall be in touch with you concerning the purchase of the subject property.”⁵⁴⁵

In response, A’NUFF called on Atlanta and Fulton County governments “to seize [cease] and desist from this avaricious and misapplied attempt to exploit small property owners out of their investments and livelihoods. We demand an immediate end to this practice, and we encourage all property owners who have received letters regarding properties in Summerhill not to sell their land now nor in the future...” Furious at black elected officials’ attempt to seize land owned by blacks in poor neighborhoods, A’NUFF then demanded a recall of all public officials involved:

“We are tired of people coming from outside Atlanta, who don’t know anything about Atlanta, coming in and disregarding us, what we need, and what we are asking for...if our voices are not heard

⁵⁴⁴ “A’NUFF Stepping Up Protests as Promised,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 4, 1991, pg. 1, 6;

⁵⁴⁵ Otis Hunter’s Letter was reprinted in *The Atlanta Voice*, August 10, 1991, pg. 7.

now, they will be heard on the ballot box in 1992...we have got a hit list on all those politicians and we are going to target all of them starting with the mayor going on down to the least.”⁵⁴⁶

As A’NUFF’s strategy gradually gained traction, Atlanta’s power brokers faced increasing pressure to counter and destroy the movement. Oliver Parker stated in a letter to the *Atlanta Voice* that A’NUFF deserves support and commendation “for their steadfastness in its opposition to the stadium, despite ignorance and arrogance from the Olympic organizing committee.” Parker concluded that A’NUFF exposed to many people that “Atlanta is not the city too busy to hate as its boosters claim...it has been and still is the city too busy to listen to black folks...the city fathers deserve a penalty for ignoring its citizens.”⁵⁴⁷

With more support pouring in daily, Atlanta elites steepened the uphill battle A’NUFF waged in the stadium crisis. As Liberal Growth Machines (LGMs), Atlanta’s power structure operated as a coalition of public and private interests to counter working class protests in an urban space. According to British urban geographer Neil Smith, LGMs generally possess the following four characteristics: 1) they work solely as an apparatus for capital—and therefore uphold market philosophy; 2) they do not concern themselves with the consequences their actions have on residents (pollution from a toxic dump, displacement, etc.); 3) They are predominantly class-based and multiracial with the majority being from the bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes, 4) they tend to oppose any action, movement, policy, or regulation that serves the interests of residents for fear that it adds credibility to any neighborhood cause in the public sphere.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Parts of A’NUFF’s Cease and Desist Letter were printed in *The Atlanta Voice*, August 10, 1991, pg. 7.

⁵⁴⁷ “Letters to the Editor,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 9, 1991, pg. 4.

⁵⁴⁸ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, pp. 57-67.

LGMs destabilize working class social movements in urban spaces through an ideological doctrine called Value Free Development—the notion that free markets alone should determine both land use and where and how production in the city should occur. More clearly, they work to force residents to surrender control over all parts of the neighborhood decision-making process and invite capital to produce and distribute in desired areas with locational advantage. LGMs accomplish this task in three specific ways. First, they devise an expensive and all-encompassing propaganda campaign to sell aggregate growth as a public good to urban residents because, they argue, gentrification brings jobs, expands the tax base, pays for urban services, and increases the safety of its residents. Atlanta capitalists utilized their ownership of the media to brand A’NUFF as “anti-progress,” and therefore, not in the best interests of the public. *Atlanta Journal* columnist Tom Teepen’s article, “Atlanta’s Olympic Sport: Singing NIMBY Blues,” distorted the organization’s position on the Olympics by painting them as “swearing to keep the games from occurring at all.”⁵⁴⁹

A’NUFF responded quickly in *The Atlanta Voice*, stating that “we have never advocate[d] as policy that there should be no Olympics in Atlanta.” They reemphasized the danger of gentrification, adding, “we have said displacement...another effects of the...stadium would amount to the death of these neighborhoods. Their most impactful point reorients the argument towards a sociohistorical struggle waged against poor blacks by wealthy elites:

Even more perplexing is the categorization of efforts to prevent the building of the Olympic Stadium as a “not in my backyard” approach. This trivializes the intent of those who are against the building of a second stadium...Twenty-five years of urban renewal, stadium building, and highway construction have served to maintain this area as an undeveloped enclave in the shadows of downtown.”⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ “Atlanta’s Olympic Sport: Singing the NIMBY Blues,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, December 9, 1990, pg. 103.

⁵⁵⁰ “Teepen’s Article Distorts A’NUFF Position,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 22, 1990, pg. 5

Atlanta elites next sought to damage A'NUFF's credibility by questioning their motivations for fighting the stadium. Both the Atlanta media and City Hall claimed that A'NUFF pursued "financial concessions from the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games." The movement responded immediately to the charges, demanding communal autonomy over pro-growth investment: "The Olympic Stadium, as plans are presently constituted, is totally unacceptable. Our intent is not to coerce but to determine the fate our homes and communities for our own selves to achieve self-determination. The determination should not be made by Billy Payne...or downtown businessmen."⁵⁵¹

Despite the searing critique in the response, Atlanta's media structure successfully muddled A'NUFF position, partly because SNI's continued role in Olympic gentrification. The second way LGMs destabilize working-class social movements is to coopt African American leaders into the pro-growth coalition. A'NUFF's fears rang true in 1991 when the Atlanta Olympic Committee appointed Douglas Dean to their team. Dean reiterated often to the public that SNI did not oppose the building of the Olympic Stadium, but rather they sought a "cooperate partnership" with ACOG to obtain concessions and special consideration for the neighborhood. As a community development corporation, SNI recognized the potential for individuals in the organization to reap major benefits from acquiring business deals with City Hall under the guise of community development. Dean, claiming to speak on behalf of Summerhill residents, proposed a cap on stadium parking construction, a portion of parking revenues, and a street-level retail complex to ACOG.⁵⁵² For Summerhill, SNI proposed a mixed income redevelopment: one-third of new housing construction built in Summerhill would be middle income; one-third,

⁵⁵¹ "Teepen's Article Distorts A'NUFF Position," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 22, 1990, pg. 5.

⁵⁵² Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 250-251.

upper income; one-third, lower-income. As A'NUFF activist Gene Ferguson noted, SNI's redevelopment plan displaced 66 percent of the current Summerhill residents out of the neighborhood. The Summerhill residents who made less than \$15,000 a year did not possess the capability to move to the middle and upper-income housing being erected throughout the city and real estate developers refused to tear down affluent housing for low-income housing. Therefore, as Ferguson concluded, SNI's gentrification plan embraced equal parts racism and classism.⁵⁵³ In other words, SNI wanted a slice of the Olympic pie regardless of how many of its residents the Atlanta power structure tossed in the oven.

Atlanta media continued to manipulate public opinion against A'NUFF—including instituting a blackout of their protests. The other major Atlanta black newspaper, *The Atlanta Daily World*, operated by African American staunch-conservative C.A. Scott (and criticized for its lack of coverage of protests during the Civil Rights Movement), stopped covering A'NUFF protest actions altogether. Consequently, *The Atlanta Voice* remained the last major news outlet covering A'NUFF's protests in 1992. Since *Voice* was a weekly aimed at a more progressive black audience, they published critical pieces that questioned the validity of the stadium. By 1993, however, the *Voice* ceased reporting on the stadium fight. A'NUFF struggled to get their message out on a timely basis to the people they wanted to mobilize.

As a result of these factors, Atlanta residents elicited increasing critique against A'NUFF. Eldon Frazier wrote to *The Atlanta Voice* that he wondered why the “hell-raisers who oppose the Olympic Stadium” were not “doing anything to enhance their communities” instead of letting the “Atlanta Olympic Committee do it for us.” Joe Collins expressed support for SNI, stating that “property owners have the right to do what they want...If they want to sell it to the Atlanta

⁵⁵³ Gene Ferguson, “The Crisis of Accountability in Atlanta’s Olympic Games, pg. 1.

Olympic Organizing Committee, that's their business...I personally have had enough with A'NUFF (get it?) raising hell."⁵⁵⁴ Henry Leroy Thomas invoked "bootstrap economics" in his reprimand of Summerhill residents: "if Summerhill and the neighborhoods surrounding it are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices to improve their own lots, then I will not support any opposition to the Olympic Stadium..."⁵⁵⁵

Meanwhile, City Hall planned for the Olympic Stadium to transform into the future Atlanta Braves Stadium. Thus, ACOG took SNI's proposal to Braves owner and Atlanta media corporatist Ted Turner, cutting A'NUFF out of the negotiations altogether. Turner at first refused to relinquish exclusive control over concessions, parking, and retail, essentially rejecting SNI's offer. However, by February 1993, all negotiating parties came to an agreement that set forth the demolition of public housing in Atlanta. Ted Turner and the Atlanta Braves received the most lucrative portion. They secured free use of the stadium and 60 luxury boxes, total control of stadium operations, 10,000 parking spaces (3,500 more than originally planned), nearly all of the parking revenue, and naming rights to the stadium post-Olympics. In a shocking concession by City Hall, Turner also assumed no financial liability for the stadium, meaning that Atlanta and Fulton County taxpayers paid the bill for any cost overruns associated with building and converting the stadium. This represented a significant loss for working class Atlantans because the ACOG underestimated the \$209 million needed for stadium construction. After Fulton County Commissioners stepped in to iron out the final points, ACOG and the Braves only

⁵⁵⁴ "Letters to the Editor," *The Atlanta Voice*, January 12, 1991, pg. 4;

⁵⁵⁵ "Letter to the Editor," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 9, 1991, pg. 4.

relinquished 2,000 parking spaces and capped taxpayer liability for capital improvements at \$50 million.⁵⁵⁶

The deal stated that Atlanta designated Summerhill the primary-stadium area neighborhood, meaning that they received a major share of any redevelopment funds that Central Atlanta Progress—with the assistance of the Urban Land Institute—raised over time.⁵⁵⁷ As a result, Summerhill received gentrification funds while Peoplestown and Mechanicsville suffered a more immediate loss. When Dean cut the deal with ACOG, he moved parking construction out of Summerhill into the adjacent neighborhoods, meaning that both Peoplestown and Mechanicsville lost land plots to parking and other Olympic venues. Lastly, the cooptation of SNI into Olympic gentrification undermined the political leverage that black working-class neighborhoods held against the Atlanta power structure.⁵⁵⁸

The third way LGMs destabilize urban working-class social movements is that they mobilize local governments to bolster pro-growth goals and secure interests through force. The most common tactic LGMs exercise is to overfund and discharge police surveillance and harassment in local activist areas. In other words, the public-side of the pro-growth partnership flexes its power to protect and serve—protect business interests and serve the power structure. Immediately upon taking office for his third term, Mayor Maynard Jackson and his transition task force called for a massive increase in police forces in the interest of “public safety.” In February 1991, Jackson announced that Central Atlanta Progress (CAP) issued funding for a transmitter for Atlanta police to use for what it called its “security communications network.” At

⁵⁵⁶ “Charles Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*, pp. 251-253.

⁵⁵⁷ Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race and Class and Urban Expansion*, pp. 173-175.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-175.

the time, Atlanta School Board President Joe Martin headed CAP and Underground Atlanta, making this funding ethically problematic. The transmitter allowed Atlanta Police Department to stretch its surveillance network beyond the Central Business District into black neighborhoods. With CAP's reputation for seeking control over Atlanta, it is safe to assume that CAP gained unlimited surveillance of the city.⁵⁵⁹

Jackson followed-up the CAP deal with a tax increase to fund hiring and pay raises for police. The Atlanta City Council voted to increase the millage rate by .96 percent, resulting in an increase of a little more than \$33 extra per year for property valued at \$100,000. The move received heavy criticism across Atlanta with many commenters calling out Jackson for misrepresenting the intent of the tax increase. "Mayor Jackson said that the money will be used for public safety purposes," said Robert Lee Smith. "However, if he is correct in claiming that crime has gone down since he has taken office this time, then I want to know why do we need to spend this additional money in public safety?" He concluded, "I believe the public safety argument was used because the citizens are outraged at the crime picture in the city."⁵⁶⁰

Fulton County followed suit in increasing police powers, aiding Atlanta City Hall in transforming the area into a makeshift military state for the Olympics. The County Board of Commissioners hired Major General John H. Stamford, a white career army officer who hailed from the U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, as the new county

⁵⁵⁹ Summary Report for the Transition Task Force of Maynard Jackson administration, 20 December 1989, Box 12, Folder 4, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records Series C: Third Term Mayoral Records, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; "Was a Tax Increase Necessary in Atlanta?," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 9, 1991, pg. 4.

⁵⁶⁰ Summary Report for the Transition Task Force of Maynard Jackson administration, 20 December 1989, Box 12, Folder 4, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records Series C: Third Term Mayoral Records, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia; "Was a Tax Increase Necessary in Atlanta?," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 9, 1991, pg. 4.

manager. What is most alarming about this appointment is that Stamford joined an emerging body of war veterans in Atlanta's power structure: General Donald L. Scott, the former second-in-command to General Norman Swartzkoff, as Maynard Jackson's Chief of Staff, Colonel Delmar Corbin in the Atlanta Housing Authority and Lieutenant Colonel Joel Hall at the Atlanta Taxicab Bureau.⁵⁶¹

If necessary, LGMs pass draconian laws to depower groups and individuals. To accomplish this, Atlanta's City Hall needed to manipulate public sentiment on the perceived threat of crime. This strategy carried three crucial ramifications for the capitalist class in gentrification. First, it simultaneously provided justification for increased police funding and surveillance and lessened critiques of police brutality in low-income black areas. Second, it blighted the land and built-environment. As this dissertation demonstrates, Atlanta officials often cried wolf about crime, demanding federal funding and tax increases to solve the crisis, but often allowed the underground economy to expand in size and power in black enclaves throughout the city. This plummeted the property values, allowing for land entrepreneurs to sweep in and buy the land and manipulate rents to expel working class blacks from the area. Third, because public officials neglected the underground economy in poor black areas, it left the struggle solely on the backs of the residents to protect themselves from the lumpen. Thus, anti-crime social movements exhausted neighborhood social movement capacity—an immediate threat to the use value of neighborhoods. As a result, community activists lost the time and capacity to protest long-term threats like gentrification until the bulldozers were at the gate.

Upon arriving for his third term in 1990, Jackson and City Hall implemented legislation militarizing the police in Atlanta. Jackson reinstated hollow point bullets to the Atlanta Police

⁵⁶¹ "New Fulton County Manager," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 6, 1991, pg. 1; "Atlanta Pre-Olympic Military State?" *The Atlanta Voice*, July 6, 1991, pg. 1-2;

Department, a telling statement to his constituency of the type of Atlanta he desired. City Hall also opened the door for many private security forces to open shop in the region. Jackson also adopted a Bush Administration program, Operation Weed and Seed, for Atlanta to serve as a demo site for the \$1 million federal operation. City Hall chose the Southwest neighborhoods of Englewood Manor and Thomasville Heights to “weed” out illegal capitalists via increased police foot patrol and technology and “seed hope” in the residents.⁵⁶²

The City Council passed legislation in 1992 to create a new version of its auxiliary police force called “Friends of the City.” The group comprised of volunteer citizens resembled the New York City and Los Angeles-based Guardian Angels “crime prevention” groups. They wore white shirts with red and black epaulets, white pants with red and black stripes on the sides and white bobby hats with an emblem. The 125-citizen brigade carried nightsticks and walkie-talkies, but City Hall did not allow them to carry guns. The security force received 200 hours of police training, \$6 an hour in wages (more than many African Americans were making at this time since the Georgia state minimum wage was \$5.15 an hour), and better insurance coverage than many blue-collar jobs. City Councilman Morris Finley acknowledged that they created the Friends of the City mainly to halt the spread of bad publicity of the city. “We cannot afford to continue to allow downtown Atlanta to get bad publicity,” Finley stated.⁵⁶³ These newly created police forces not only contained black working-class Atlanta in an isolated enclave during the Olympics, but they also recruited community members to oppress and subvert any protest actions against the power structure.

⁵⁶² “A Plan to Break the Cycle of Crime,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 27, 1992, pg. 12; “Atlanta Makes Efforts to Weed Out Drugs, Seed in Hope,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 11, 1992, pg. 1, 8.

⁵⁶³ “Fighting the Perception of Downtown Atlanta Crime,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 28, 1992, pg. 4.

Atlanta often publicized crime statistics—often questionable because of false reporting and police harassment—to rationalize their call for funding “in the interest of public safety.” In the report, “Crime in Metro Atlanta: 1989-1993,” the Metropolitan Crime Commission argued that Atlanta’s violent crime rate rose 5 percent while dropping nationwide. Property crimes, the report noted, rose 2 percent.⁵⁶⁴ City Hall flamed the fears of the business class by pathologizing the underground economy as inherent in the black poor. Mayor Bill Campbell stated that blacks should be more concerned about their crime problems than about being racially profiled because they’re black. “Black people are killing, robbing, and raping each other at an alarming rate...we need to deal with that.”⁵⁶⁵ Purposely neglecting the political economic problems of racial oppression in black working class America, Campbell utilized his first public state of the city address to issue empty platitudes for what he called “the curse of crime in Atlanta.”

“Somewhere, we’ve got to start talking to our young people about the basic values of morality; about what is right and what is wrong.” Campbell then pleaded for residents to put on a presentation for the Olympic visitors, because “none of us wants the world to come in the shape we are in today.”⁵⁶⁶

Campbell’s hollow pleas worked. The state of Georgia received \$300 million from President Bill Clinton’s crime bill and the Atlanta Metropolitan Region allocated the funds towards hundreds of additional officers, new computers and surveillance equipment, and a \$56 million jail in downtown Atlanta. Dubbed “Hotel 254,” the 882-bed jail opened amid dozens of

⁵⁶⁴ “Crime in Metro Atlanta: 1989-1993,” *Metropolitan Crime Commission*, July 1993.

⁵⁶⁵ “Unfair Targets,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 2, 1994, pg. 1;

⁵⁶⁶ “Campbell’s State of the City: Decries Crime,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 15, 1994, pg. 3, 5.

protesters, prompting Atlanta City Hall and police to threaten the group with being “the first guests in Hotel 254.” The Atlanta City Council let their feelings be known about the facility, with Council Michael Bond ecstatic that the jail is “humane for corrections officers.”⁵⁶⁷

Atlanta’s war on the homeless served as the defining subjugation of the Olympic Era. During this time, African Americans constituted no less than 85 percent of those seeking shelter. Thus, it is safe to assert that many African American Atlantans substantially lacked stable housing in the 1990s. Additionally, black women comprised most of African Americans seeking shelter. As black women are disproportionately positioned in the lowest paid, lowest sector, and non-union labor, they are more likely to experience financial precariousness and therefore lose their housing more than other groups. Consequently, there were significantly more beds available to house men—2,000—than women—500— in the state.⁵⁶⁸

A significant portion of Atlanta’s homeless originated in Techwood Homes and Clark Howell public housing, the oldest housing projects in the United States at the time. I argue that the Techwood Homes gentrification—and the ensuing housing crisis—demonstrates that black bodies and spaces were superfluous for capital investment in U.S. urban spaces. When City Hall announced the Olympics for Atlanta, CAP, the Atlanta Housing Authority, and the ACOG proposed to remove all Techwood Homes tenants, renovate the project, and house athletes there. Locational advantage played a pivotal role for City Hall targeting Techwood for gentrification. The federal government erected the project in 1935 as byproducts of New Deal funding and it originally housed whites. After the 1968 Housing Act outlawed segregation in public housing,

⁵⁶⁷ “Georgia Expects \$300 Million from Crime Bill,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 13, 1994 pg. 2; “Welcome to Hotel 254: New Atlanta Jail,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 4, 1995, pg. 1, 13.

⁵⁶⁸ Georgia Housing and Financial Authority, “Profiles of Homelessness in Georgia,” Atlanta, GA: Georgia Housing and Financial Authority, January 1994, pg.2; Robert Wilkes, “Homelessness in the City of Atlanta,” *Endarch*, Summer 1997, p. 38.

African Americans moved into the projects. In fact, between 1970 and 1990, African American residency in Techwood/Clark Howell jumped from 60 percent to 90 percent. When blacks took the majority in Techwood, CEO of Coca-Cola Paul Austin—the “darlings of diversity and philanthropy”—stated that the “the felony rate will triple.”⁵⁶⁹

Techwood consisted of thirteen three-story apartment buildings and seven building of attached houses. Clark Howell comprised 58 two-story buildings with 630 apartment units. The buildings sat directly across the street from the Georgia Tech campus and adjacent to Coca-Cola’s headquarters to the west. In 1991, Mayor Jackson formed the Techwood Advisory Committee to negotiate the redevelopment of the projects. The committee consisted of representatives from ACOG, AHA, CAP, and the Techwood Residents Association. Jackson also appointed the presidents of Georgia State University, Georgia Tech University, Atlanta University, and three real estate developers, an investment banking firm, and other various consultants. When the committee notified Techwood residents that they planned to develop mix-income housing, many protested on the justified fear of mass displacement.⁵⁷⁰ Additionally, the residents accused and sued Techwood Tenants Association President Margie Smith, who sat on the committee planning gentrification for abusing her power and remaining president past her term ending.⁵⁷¹

Through resident cooptation, questionable ethics in the committee related to a resident survey on redevelopment, and lack of protest resources, Techwood/Clark Howell residents suffered a devastating loss on March 17, 1995 when HUD approved the gentrification plan,

⁵⁶⁹ Larry Keating, *Atlanta*, pg. 175-176.

⁵⁷⁰ “Olympic Village Part of Bit by Bit Destruction,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 6, 1991, pg. 10; “Housing Tenant Quits Olympic Development Group,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 12, 1992, pg. 2; “Housing/Funding,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 14, 1996, pg. 1, 6; Larry Keating, *Atlanta*, pp. 180-182.

⁵⁷¹ Larry Keating, *Atlanta*, pp. 183-184.

dubbed the Revised Revitalization Plan. The development pledged that the AHA replace the 1,195 Techwood/Clark Howell units that redevelopment eliminated.

It must be noted how the Atlanta Housing Authority deliberately forced residential displacement to empty Techwood/Clark Howell and reduce the chance for protest movement among residents. Based on Larry Keating's findings, evidence suggests that not only did the AHA maintain a policy to reduce the projects' occupancy rate by 20 percent, but they utilized an individual that the community supported to manipulate them. In June 1990, residents occupied 531 of the 571 apartments (92.8 percent occupancy rate). AHA hired African American Earl Philips in March 1992 to great fanfare of black working-class Atlanta. He had a reputation for improving housing conditions in other urban spaces and often visited the residential organizations. However, by October that year, the occupancy rate of Techwood/Clark Howell dropped to 60.2 percent. By April 1993, residents occupied only 105 units (22.9 percent occupation rate). Thus, when the residents voted on the final plan to gentrify the projects, only 26 families remained. The AHA accomplished this by denying applications to all new residents. Also, AHA instituted and enforced strict lease regulations that proved too difficult for many residents. Lastly, Mayor Bill Campbell's police sweeps in 1995 enforced a strict eviction mandate for anyone suspected of involvement in the drug trade.⁵⁷²

Emptying Techwood/Clark Howell provided multiple advantages to the Atlanta power structure. First, it engineered a favorable vote for redevelopment. Second, it greatly reduced the cost of relocating residents.⁵⁷³ By the end of 1999, the AHA only built 49.4 percent of the

⁵⁷² Larry Keating, *Atlanta*, pp. 184; "A Plan to Break the Cycle of Crime," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 27, 1992, pg. 12; "Atlanta Makes Efforts to Weed Out Drugs, Seed in Hope," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 11, 1992, pg. 1, 8.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

housing lost to Techwood gentrification and by 2011 Atlanta destroyed the remaining units. Thus, it is safe to assume that half of the Techwood residents became housing insecure with many becoming homeless.

After expanding homelessness through their municipal polices, Atlanta City Hall followed the national wave in removing the black poor from spaces. In fact, the city council preyed on Atlantans' struggles with the underground economy to further criminalize the poor. In July 1992, the Atlanta City Council approved the nation's toughest anti-poor ordinance at the time. The bill read as follows: "It shall be unlawful for any person who enter and remain on any property which is used primarily as Parking Lot for Vehicles, unless such a person has a vehicle parked on the property." The power structure praised the region's "leadership" in passing such a strict anti-homeless law...it shall be unlawful for any person to enter and remain in a vacant or unoccupied building...It shall be unlawful for a person to solicit or beg for alms." "We're again taking the lead nationally on this issue," said Police Chief Eldrin Bell. "We intend to clean up Atlanta and this is another tool to correct undesirables behavior." In a surprising move, City Councilman C.T. Martin not only voted against the measure but spoke out on the oppressive nature of such legislation: "What we're doing criminalizing behavior that is class specific...that's not right. It has a chilling effect."⁵⁷⁴ Martin's critique remains succinct: by positioning any individual asking for money or assistance on the street as acting against the law, the Atlanta power structure further pathologized poor Blacks to ensure their status as superfluous for future private investment and gentrification. The Atlanta power structure—in line with the liberal ideology of the nation at the time to remove poor blacks from the public sphere—believed

⁵⁷⁴ "Council Approves Controversial Anti-Vagrancy Referendum," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 20, 1991, pg. 1, 2;

that once they displaced poor blacks, the less chance that residents identify with the “criminal” poor and therefore fight to protect them.

With this measure, City Hall provided the police another tool in the class war against poor blacks. Combined with the neoliberalization of public spaces in Atlanta over the previous two decades, black working-class Atlanta lost access to many spaces under this new “Vagrant Free Zone.” Police arrested poor blacks who set foot on private property without the property owner’s permission or complaint. Also, this measure proved to unintentionally expand the underground economy. Restricting panhandling meant that poor people lost access to a specific type of aid. Once that final pathway to aid disappeared, some poor joined the lumpen to acquire food, clothing, and shelter. As Atlanta scholar-activist Ajamu-Muhammad told Mayor Jackson, “When you think about the terminology—Guess who’s coming to Dinner?—The homeless may be visiting you soon.”⁵⁷⁵

As the Olympics inched closer, poor black Atlantans lost access to more space and resources. In late June 1994, the Atlanta City Council took their attack on the homeless even further and approved equipping 70 square foot rail boxcars with a makeshift kitchen and items for using the bathroom. The city planned concentrate even more poor blacks in meager spaces by placing the boxcars in Carver Homes neighborhood, one of the poorest spaces in black Atlanta at time. According to Wade Rogers, the project’s white architect, the boxcars met state requirements for housing and Atlanta requirements for the size of a single room. Also, Rogers set to pocket over \$6 million annually turning boxcars into makeshift homes. One lone city

⁵⁷⁵ “Passing of the New Ordinance,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 27, 1991, pg. 4.

councilperson, Gloria Tinubu, spoke critically of the measure, saying, “This is substandard housing for the homeless, while we have standard housing for everyone else.”⁵⁷⁶

Atlanta next targeted Woodruff Park at Five Points in downtown Atlanta for removing the black poor from public spaces. The park served as an aid bureau where the homeless slept on the park benches, met with free clinic nurses for medical care, and received meals from church organizations. The Woodruff Foundation funded a \$5 million renovation project in October of 1994 that closed the park for months, transforming a crucial resource space for poor blacks into a profitable tourist venue for the Olympics. “It’s obviously a rehearsal for the Olympics,” said Anita Beaty, executive director of the Task Force for the Homeless. “They’re desperate to get the homeless out of sight.” The new park added multiple security guards to keep the poor out of the park. The foundation also built new armrests on every bench to prevent reclining and sleeping. Finally, a new Georgia State University police precinct faced the park.⁵⁷⁷

Two months before the Olympic Games, the power brokers cleared the airport of poor blacks for the incoming tourists, vendors, and athletes. The city council passed a proposal in June 1996 to jail anyone for six months or fine them \$500 if they were “loitering” at Hartsfield International Airport—meaning that the police decided if someone was waiting for someone or a flight.⁵⁷⁸ A few months later, Atlanta City Council President Marvin Arrington proposed jailing the city’s homeless into a concentration camp. Arrington pushed a bill to make an abandoned factory in Southeast Atlanta into a prison farm to supply Atlanta capitalists with a cheap labor

⁵⁷⁶ “Designer of Boxcars for Homeless Awaits OK on Lakewood Factory,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 8, 1994, pg. 49; “Plan to turn boxcars into residences for homeless is on track,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 8, 1994, pg. 35; “Boxcar Willies,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 25, 1994, pg. 1.

⁵⁷⁷ “Homeless Lose Woodruff Park to Renovation,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 22, 1994, pg. 2.

⁵⁷⁸ “No Airport Homeless,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 22, 1996 pg. 1.

force that lived out of the region's public sphere. "I do believe that our working together with the business community will move us forward in the right direction," stated Arrington.⁵⁷⁹

As Atlanta's international guests arrived in July 1996, Atlanta stepped up their desperate attempt to mold the city as anti-black poor. The City Council pushed a law that made it illegal to remove anything from trashcans. Additionally, anonymous philanthropists bought one-way bus tickets out of town for thousands of poor blacks—a strategy used by Birmingham, Alabama Mayor Richard Arrington's Black Urban Regime as well.⁵⁸⁰ Many received a small amount of money if they signed paperwork stating that they would not return to Atlanta. Those that did not leave Atlanta nor followed the new laws faced intense police harassment and arrest. In fact, Anita Beaty claimed that she found piles of arrest citations pre-printed with the designations "homeless" and "African-American." When she attempted to organize a movement against City Hall for this violation of human rights, LGM members silenced her and told her "ya'll over there just need to chill."⁵⁸¹

As a result of these combined factors, the Atlanta power structure condoned and rationalized a wave of police brutality throughout pre-Olympic Atlanta. On November 13, 1991, narcotics officer Mike Polvilitis shot and killed eight-year old African American Xavier Bennett in East Lake Meadows during a raid on the neighborhood. When community members and reporters pressed African American police chief Eldrin Bell about Xavier Bennett's murder, he stated without hesitation, "There is no connection between Xavier Bennett and the gangs,"—changing the subject and erasing Xavier's agency in the process. On New Year's Eve, 1991, the

⁵⁷⁹ "Why Prison Farm?" *The Atlanta Voice*, November 23, 1996 pg. 1.

⁵⁸⁰ "Local News: Managers of a Program," *The Atlanta Constitution*, March 23, 1996, pg. 2; Bill Littlefield, "The Olympic Juggernaut: Displacing the Poor from Atlanta to Rio," *wbur*, August 5, 2016, <https://www.wbur.org/onlyagame/2016/08/05/autodromo-rio-atlanta-olympics> Retrieved August 20, 2019.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

police stopped 15-year old Arkala Lee—An African American resident of Summerhill with Down’s Syndrome—from entering his house, dragged him by his collar downstairs, and threw him in the mud. Officer R.J. Scapani put his knee in Arkala’s back while the youth screamed, “MAMA!” When Lee’s mother, Lucille came outside the stop the officer, Scapani told her to “shut up” or he would arrest her. When Scapani attempted to justify his behavior by accusing Lee of stealing a car, his neighbors stated that Lee did not possess the mental capacity to operate a bicycle, let alone an automobile.⁵⁸²

State violence against poor blacks ramped up as the Olympics drew closer. In December 1995, Atlanta police officer Wine L. Pinckney shot and killed 23-year-old African American Jerry Jackson while he laid on the sidewalk with his hands in the air. The police burst into a motorcycle shop without properly identifying themselves, causing the shop owner to shoot at the police. Jackson, an innocent bystander in the middle of the shooting, dropped to the sidewalk and put his hands in the air when four witnesses reported that Pinckney deliberately aimed his revolver at Jackson and pulled the trigger. “Can cops just go around...shooting people?” asked Sarah Jackson, Jerry’s 72-year-old grandmother. The mechanic in the shop, Tony Delly, exclaimed that blacks need self-defense to survive against the police. “This is not right. If a person with a badge can come in and take potshots at me, I’m going to protect my life.”⁵⁸³

Police sweeps terrorized black working-class neighborhoods in early 1996 leading up the games. In late November 30, 1995, Atlanta police and the Atlanta Housing Authority jointly

⁵⁸² “Don’t Expect Justice If Brutalized By Police,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 28, 1992, pg. 1, 8;

⁵⁸³ “Police Shooting,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 1996, pg. 2; “A Panel to Police Atlanta’s Police,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, January 4, 1996, pg. 14; “There is No Justice for Shooting Victim’s Family,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 9, 1996, pg. 36.

initiated their first 60-day series of sweeps on public housing projects, specifically targeting areas surrounding Olympic Stadium. The AHA financed daily walking patrols as well, arresting over 100 African Americans during that operation.⁵⁸⁴ The following month, as international guests arrived in the city for pre-Olympic events, Mayor Bill Campbell intensified police sweeps in the area and gave orders to evict any public housing tenants suspected of “criminal” activity.⁵⁸⁵ As promised, police raided poor black areas almost daily the month before the Olympics. A sweep of neighborhoods adjacent to the Atlanta University Center arrested 36 people in early July. The sweeps continued over the next few weeks, angering residents at City Hall’s façade put up for the international visitors. “This is unacceptable,” stated Linda Pittman-Cotton, former chairwoman of Neighborhood Planning Unit T. “There’s two Atlantas. It’s evident. It’s everywhere. When the Olympics are over, they’re gone, and that is not right.”⁵⁸⁶

Atlanta’s brutal tactics against poor blacks did not deter the underground economy in the region because a significant number of officers participated in illegal capitalism. In mid-1995, the FBI conducted a sting operation—Operation Dirty Three—on the Atlanta police department and charged 14 officers with corruption. According to the indictment, Sergeant Dale Hendrix and Officers Ronald Grimes, Jr., Willie Jackson, Edgar Allen, Jr., Michael Williams, and Williams Vaughn, Jr. patrolled Zone 3—the Peoplestown, Mechanicsville, and Summerhill neighborhoods surrounding the Olympic Stadium—and accepted payments of at least \$1,000 a week from drug dealers to protect a massive narcotics enterprise in the city. They also stole drugs and threatened violence against street-level dealers if they did not pay the officers. “He’ll

⁵⁸⁴ “Police sweeps of Projects Come and Go, But Do Little,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 7, 1996, pg. 1;

⁵⁸⁵ “What Police Statistics Mean—Numbers Don’t Tell Whole Story,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 7, 1996, pg. 65.

⁵⁸⁶ “Police Sweeps Near Colleges Decried,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 17, 1996 pg. 115.

go through your pockets and take whatever he want and let you go,” an anonymous dealer told *The Atlanta Voice*. “That’s the price of justice out here.” The sting also uncovered that rogue white police used Thomasville Heights as “their own private plantation for years, where they could go in and take whatever they wanted.” The sting followed numerous attempts by working-class black activists to expose corrupt police in Atlanta. However, one anonymous Summerhill woman stated when she gave her report to *The Atlanta Voice*: “if you print this story I’m afraid that me and my family will be killed. Don’t you know that the people who are dealing the drugs over here are the police.”⁵⁸⁷ This reiterates the argument that the Atlanta power structure never possessed the intent to decrease nor eliminate the underground economy or any criminal activity. Rather, they sought to isolate it from capital interests, hide it from international Olympic view and in some instances, control it and profit from it.

Conclusion

The New Nadir eroded the black working-class capacity for sustaining social movements against Olympic gentrification in the city. The combination of federal government’s anti-working-class platform, the rise of the non-profit industrial complex and “diversity” philanthropy, and increased police powers decreased the use value of black working-class neighborhoods and initiated displacement out of the central city. Neighborhood leaders like Ethel Mae Mathews challenged these policies with organizations like A’NUFF. However, community development corporations like Summerhill Neighborhood Incorporated fractured the anti-Olympic Stadium movement along neighborhood lines. SNI’s backroom deal with the city

⁵⁸⁷ “Corrupt Cops,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 16, 1995, pg. 5; “Atlanta Holds Six Policemen in Crackdown: F.B.I. Agents Help in Corruption Case,” *The New York Times*, September 7, 1995, pg. A17; For an extensive detailing of the corruption and the testimony in the case, see “From Dream Team to Nightmare, Blurring the Blue Line,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, September 10, 1995, pg. 84 (H6).

of Atlanta and Ted Turner positioned Mechanicsville and Peoplestown against Summerhill over revitalization funds and the Olympic Stadium parking lot. A'NUFF's damaged working-class resistance throughout the city with Techwood Homes residents unable to fight the combined threat of the ACOG, the City of Atlanta, Coca-Cola, and Georgia Tech University. As a result, the destruction of Techwood Homes initiated the planned demolition of all of public housing in Atlanta over the next twenty years.

In May 1995, longtime Summerhill activist and the head of the Atlanta Citywide Advisory Council on Public Housing Louise Whatley accurately prophesized the oncoming catastrophe for the black poor with Atlanta's fever rush towards full private gentrification. In a speech to the Concerned Black Clergy organizations, she argued that "They're gonna tear them [public housing projects] down and not bring them back... Whatley pointed to how the AHA sold huge chunks of land to private developers, calling out Coca-Cola for trying to buy the Perry Homes property. She concluded by pointing out the harsh reality: if the federal government allocated millions in public housing funds for renovation, why did the AHA sell land holding public housing funds to the increasing number of real estate developers coming to the region?"⁵⁸⁸

Within ten years, Whatley and her black working-class kin witnessed their housing stock destroyed for good. Because the New Nadir worsened the social conditions of Black Atlantans into the twenty-first century, formerly strong neighborhoods lacked stability and resources to fight their oncoming destruction. As the next chapter will explore, financial and information sector middle managers, entertainment moguls, and a growing number of college students replaced the black working class in Atlanta as the dominant racial class in the city.

⁵⁸⁸ "Is Public Housing on the Extinction Blocks?" *The Atlanta Voice*, May 13, 1995, pg. 2.

CHAPTER FIVE: REAPING A BITTER HARVEST: PETTY BOURGEOIS ACTIVISM AND THE ANTI-WORKING-CLASS AGENDA IN POST-OLYMPIC ATLANTA, 1996-2015

“What’s so perplexing is... to revitalize blighted communities where low-income, poor people lived and turn them into safe, decent livable communities with affordable housing...caught the eyes of the everyday capitalist. So the quest to make money drove the housing market to its maximum. When that occurs, you have those same low-income residents unable to afford to live in the place where they grew up. So the exact group we set out to help, we’ve now become their harm.

-Dwanda Farmer, Mechanicsville resident and activist, October 2003

“What they say is fair market value is not fair to us, and [if] you’ve got heart you will be with us. Because if you don’t, we’re gonna consider you as Osama bin Laden And Vine City as the World Trade Center.”

-Anonymous Vine City Resident to the Atlanta City Council, November 30, 2002

“If gentrification is an emancipatory practice, it is difficult to see it as anything other than political activism *against* the working class.”

-Neil Smith, Urban geographer, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, 1996

Introduction: “The Atlanta Way” and Petty Bourgeois Activism

In April 1997, 45-year-old African American venture capitalist, writer, and self-proscribed “community activist” Harold Barnett led his Atlanta Neighborhood Planning Unit—M—the residential organization responsible for planning and zoning recommendations for downtown Atlanta, Grady Homes, the Old Fourth Ward, Auburn Avenue, and Bedford Pine—in gentrifying their own neighborhoods. Barnett and Gallman Development Group (a member of Central Atlanta Progress, Inc.) targeted the Atlanta Brushworks Factory on Hilliard Street in the heart of Sweet Auburn Avenue. The 70,4000 square foot Victorian-style plant represented one of the last historic businesses that survived Auburn Avenue’s postwar urban renewal and subsequent displacement of poor blacks: it was originally built in 1905 and housed one of the

largest commercial laundries in the Southeast, Trio Steam Laundry. By the late 1940s, it employed hundreds of working-class African American Atlantans who resided in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhoods.⁵⁸⁹

As a primary investor on the project, Barnett's duplicitous chairmanship of NPU-M complicated the class dynamics of "activism" for poor black urbanites. While he claimed that he was not "politically persuasive" as chair, Barnett guided the NPU-M—which allowed any resident, property or business owner who attended three out of eleven meetings to vote on a planning or development recommendation—towards the newly revitalized Martin Luther King Jr. Historical Neighborhood Site and the recently expanded Georgia State University campus, which sat less than one mile away and less than two miles away from the Brushworks, respectively, as the model for neighborhood "empowerment." "People don't understand...wealth," Barnette stated. "Creating broad based prosperity for a range of people in a socioeconomic structure...I know development...I know the factors go into making the creation of wealth possible."⁵⁹⁰

While Atlanta media heralded Barnett as a "breath of fresh air" and "a new neighborhood leader," hundreds of predominantly black Auburn Avenue and Old Fourth Ward residents lost their relatively stable factory jobs when the NPU-M recommended to the Atlanta City Council that the building be rezoned for residential real estate. Gallman Development Group soon bought and closed Brushworks that year. By 2003, Gallman had transformed the plant into 22 condominium lofts, which skyrocketed surrounding rents and displaced the remaining poor into

⁵⁸⁹ "A New Neighborhood Leader," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 12, 1997, pg. 4; "In Downtown's Shadow, Three-Level Industrial Loft at Brushworks Building Costs \$300K," *Curbed Atlanta*, January 15, 2019, pg. 1; See Appendix C.5 for a picture of the Brushworks Factory Lofts.

⁵⁹⁰ "Councilwoman Threatens to Change NPU Voting Process," *The Atlanta Voice*, January 9, 1999, pg. 5.

various unstable housing positions: other poverty-stricken black enclaves in the central city, the rural suburbs in the metro region, or housing insecurity and homelessness. “They’re tearing down housing that people have been living in for years,” remarked African American protestor Gwen Griebler. “You can’t afford housing in Atlanta for minimum wage...now it’s being torn down for monetary gain.” By 2015, the Brushworks’ exposed brick interior, load bearing walls, and stone foundation condos boasted an average rent of \$275,000-\$300,000 and held locational advantage for numerous visitor market developments, such as the recently constructed Old Fourth Ward Distillery, the Edgewood at Hilliard Streetcar, and The Martin Luther King Jr. Center.⁵⁹¹

Barnett’s petty bourgeois activism embodied the class war transforming post-Olympic black Atlanta into a middle-class private fortress for the visitor market. Following the end of the Olympic Games, the African American professional and managerial class took a more substantive role as the junior partners of the capitalist class in restructuring the political economy of Atlanta away from poor residents. More clearly, petty bourgeois blacks under the guise of “building bridges,” “saving the streets,” and “breaking the underclass pathology,” pushed pro-growth ideology as anti-poverty, anti-crime, and wealth-generating in media, schools, and social organizations. As a result, their activism challenged the class interests of poor Afro-Atlantans, who sought to protect their public resources from neoliberalization.⁵⁹²

Scholars have yet to examine how the tumultuous political economy at the onset of the twenty-first century informed the power dynamics and warring activisms between the black working class, the black petty bourgeoisie and black bourgeoisie in urban metropolitan regions.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*, pg. 5. See Appendix C.5.

⁵⁹² “The Ending of an Era: All Housing Projects to be Demolished by 2010,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 12, 2009, pg. 1, 15.

This chapter investigates how the combined forces of the New Nadir and the pro-growth movement in the metro region restructured the political, economic, social and spatial conditions of the black working-class experience in Atlanta. I argue that the black petty bourgeoisie in post-Olympic Atlanta, as the subordinate allies of the capitalist class, waged pro-growth gentrification and privatization activism, which I term “petty bourgeois activism,” directed against the black working class.

Petty bourgeois activism is the means to which liberal pro-growth machines implement neoliberal policies. In other words, petty bourgeois activism refers to the strategy and tactics pro-growth advocates use to gain public support for liberal, anti-working-class reforms like gentrification and public resource privatization. Petty bourgeois activists seek to privatize urban spaces, and therefore they target state funded resources like schools, hospitals, and public housing. Petty bourgeois activists also adopt non-profit, anti-povert discourse to garner support among the public. Thus, I argue that petty bourgeois activism is the means to which the ruling and middle classes appropriate elements of working-class resistance to bolster their own class interests. As the Atlanta power structure privatized housing, health care, and public schools, it removed a substantial number of tools needed for resistance. Additionally, the Great Recession simultaneously exacerbated working class precariousness while also strengthening petty bourgeois activism. Understanding how racial classes construct distinct and warring activisms based on class interests in the twenty-first century provides deeper insight into how the New Nadir restructured the relationship between the global capitalist political economy, the black working class, the black petty bourgeois, the black and white ruling class, and the State. As a result, we obtain a ground-level view of the inner working of urbanization and racial oppression in contemporary U.S. cities.

Black Working-Class Struggles Against Privatization in Atlanta

For five days a week between 1985 and 1997, African American Carl Waller, a twelve-year veteran of the Atlanta Public Works Division of the Atlanta Water and Sewer Department labored over eight hours a day in sewage muck, twenty to thirty feet underground inside the city's decrepit sewer pipes that measured nine feet in diameter. A 1983 graduate of Fisk University, Waller chose the public sector labor force because it provided him a way to return a public good to Atlanta residents. "What I do is help the public," Waller expressed. "It feels good." However, in February 1997, Waller organized over a dozen of his coworkers and stormed the Atlanta City Council chambers in protest of Democrat Mayor Bill Campbell's announcement to privatize the city water and sewer system. Waller argued that Campbell's decision was a clear lack of respect for city workers as well as a tactic to allot more power to capitalists in government decision-making:

"Our concern is that privatization is just a political solution because the mayor can't really provide real leadership in managing these departments in an efficient and effective manner...Mr. Campbell is appealing to the private sector to tell him how to manage the Water and Sewer Department. He won't come to the workers and talk to us. He won't eliminate his bad Managers..."⁵⁹³

Campbell's privatization proposal was a sudden about-face following a relatively strong agreement with municipal workers to keep services public. Olympic-era Atlanta teased the ruling class with an urban space defined primarily through a 24-hour visitor market—capital flowing freely uninterrupted; isolated and surveilled poor black neighborhoods and residents; the concentration of the underground economy in poor Black enclaves like Vine City by

⁵⁹³ "City Workers Protest Privatization Push," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 1997, pg. 1, 5A, 9B; "Special Report: Remains of the Games," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 13, 1997, pg. 75, Section H.

increased police occupation; newly-constructed dormitories, athletic fields, and basketball gymnasiums for Morehouse College, Spelman College, Georgia State University, and Georgia Tech University replaced public housing (Techwood Homes and Clark Howell Homes); new private “mixed-income” housing (which was code for seventy percent middle income, twenty five percent upper income, and five percent low income) and parking lots decorated the periphery of poor black neighborhoods on the Olympic bus routes; and the \$250 million beacon to corporate capitalism, the Turner Field/Olympic Stadium complex.⁵⁹⁴

Thus, the Atlanta power structure sought to deepen neoliberalization in post-Olympic Atlanta to recreate the 24-hour visitor market on a permanent basis. The Bill Campbell black urban regime emerged as the vanguard in petty bourgeois activism and sought to reduce public control of resources and services through privatization. African American city council president and longtime Atlanta politician Marvin Arrington, Sr. had championed full privatization for years and used his career to strengthen corporate power. Arrington had practiced law for decades up to this point and his partnership with African American civil rights lawyer Donald Lee Hollowell in 1989 specialized in defending employer interests and acquiring corporate bonds. According to African American city councilman Rob Pitts, “President Arrington has been on record for a long-time supporting privatization.” While Marie Robinson, executive director of AFSCME Local 1644—the union for the municipal employees—defined Campbell’s policy reversal as “political,” his Chief Operating Officer, Byron Marshall, coded privatization in pro-growth discourse, stating that “we are faced with...trying to provide high quality service to the

⁵⁹⁴ “City Workers Protest Privatization Push,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 1997, pg. 1, 5A, 9B; “Special Report: Remains of the Games,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 13, 1997, pg. 75, Section H.

citizens in the face of state mandates and fines...so this gives us the opportunity to...make the system more efficient...at the lowest possible cost.”⁵⁹⁵

The Atlanta and Fulton County governments ramped up attacks on working class social conditions. In the first week of March 1998, the city council voted 14-1 to privatize the city water service. To subdue public outrage, Campbell engaged in a fearmongering speaking tour across the metro region, threatening to raise water rates over fifty percent if the city did not privatize. The lone opposing council voter, Felecia Moore, provided a succinct explanation as to how the city’s privatization proposal had less to do with solving financial and infrastructural problems and more to do with exploiting a new source of revenue:

“The first thing we are doing is privatizing the drinking water system, from administration down to billing. And that’s our revenue generator, it’s our cash cow. Our problem is with our waste water and our sewer system. That’s what we’re being fined for. We’re using our water system to subsidize those problems.”⁵⁹⁶

Atlanta’s 80-year-old water and sewer infrastructure allowed untreated sewage to flow into the Chattahoochee River. According to Campbell, rehabilitating this system would cost \$865 million, but privatization would save Atlanta over \$600 million over twenty years. Even if the city adopted this proposal with a private corporation, Moore continued, they still expected to increase sewer rates by 29 percent over four years, placing an undue burden on the poor residents. Moore cited additional evidence that Campbell and the city council preferred profits over solution. She stated that an outside consultant recommended eight options for revamping

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ “Atlanta City Council Votes Yes for Privatization,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 7, 1998, pg. 1, 3A; “Mayor Privatizes Water System,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 21, 1998, pg. 1; “Atlanta Resumes Control of Water Department,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 1, 2003, pg. 1, 27; “Atlanta Water Contract Signed Today,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November 10, 1998, pg. 60; “Water Privatization Spurs Flood of Big Jobs,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, December 4, 1998, pg. 65.

the outdated sewer system and the mayor selected the “the most risky and most intense” of those options.⁵⁹⁷

Campbell signed the twenty-year contract with United Water Service, Inc., a company from the French corporation Lyonnaise des Eaux, for \$21 million in November that year, hailed as “the largest and most closely watched privatization of a public water system in North America” at that time. However, city workers organized a movement to block implementation of the contract before its December 1 start date. On the week before Thanksgiving, the Fulton County Superior Court denied their lawsuit against the city and by the beginning of 1999, United Water had cut over 300 city jobs.⁵⁹⁸

When the contract ended abruptly and the water services returned to the city after four years of increasing public outcry over job losses, brown water, pipe leaks and boil water advisories, Atlanta had lost an estimated \$18 million in transition, hiring, and consultation costs. This did not include the millions Atlanta needed to rehabilitate the sewer system. Additionally, city auditor Leslie Ward reported that the \$21.4 million-a-year contract with United Water cost Atlanta twice that amount, \$42 million a year, when she included utilities, city monitoring staff, insurance, and other miscellaneous costs. That was about \$10 million less than the city had spent on the water system in multiple years before selling it to the French corporation.⁵⁹⁹ Thus, as with most transitions from public to private control, Atlanta, who lost over \$125 million over four years and hundreds of working class jobs in a business deal that they expected to reap significant

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ “Atlanta Braces for Water Transition,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 7, 2003, pg. F3; “Water Contract Dissolution Set,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 28, 2003, pg. C3; “City Vows Better Job on Water,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 14, 2003, pg. D1, D2; “Atlanta Resumes Control of Water Department,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 1, 2003, pg. 1, 19.

profits. At the end of their deal with United Water the city was in much worse shape than before privatization. Their budget revenue shortfall skyrocketed as they failed to address the increasingly expensive waste management crisis.

As privatization spiraled debt further out of control, Atlanta officials sought to privatize more public services for the working poor in cost-cutting efforts. Grady Memorial Hospital, the largest hospital in Georgia and the fifth largest public hospital in the United States, became a target after the city declared that it needed to be “saved from closure by privatization.” Located in downtown Atlanta right next to Georgia State University campus, the 124-year-old superstructure medical facility contained sixteen floors, six neighborhood health centers, over 5300 doctors, nurses, and staff members, and 950 beds. At the time, it was the only primary care provider for low-income, uninsured, and underinsured Atlantans. Besides its “public safety-net status,” it also housed the most advanced level-one trauma center within a 100-mile radius of Atlanta as well as a nationally ranked burn unit and stroke care center. Despite serving all nineteen of the counties in the Atlanta Metropolitan Region, Grady only received funding from Fulton and DeKalb Counties, who contributed almost twenty percent of Grady’s funding. For FY2007, both counties paid \$86 million and \$27 million, respectively.⁶⁰⁰

Years of blatant underfunding resulted in a \$60 million deficit and the threat of closure in 2007. On Grady’s 121st birthday, when asked “what were the most troubled years of Grady hospital?” Martin Moran, retired physician from Grady, answered, “the first 120.” The hospital barely met payroll in a 2007 and required over \$360 million worth of upgrades. Additionally, capitalists recognized the loss of substantial profit if Grady closed its doors. “It couldn’t close,”

⁶⁰⁰ “Report by the Greater Grady Task Force, 2007,” excerpts reprinted in “Citizens Fight Privatization of Grady Hospital,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 6, 2007, pg. 1, 9.

said Michael Frankel, the hospital's chief neurologist. "Shutting it down would've had a ripple effect on the health care community. Without Grady, profit margins at other hospitals are gone. It would be like shutting Hartsfield Airport and would have ramifications for decades."⁶⁰¹ Thus, the threat of destabilizing the health care profit industry provided justification for the Atlanta power structure to develop a plan to privatize the hospital.

In March 2007, the Fulton-Dekalb Hospital Authority, a politically appointed board selected by the commissioners of each county, aligned with the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce to form the Greater Grady Task Force. Atlanta elites on the task force included African American Michael B. Russell, CEO of H.J. Russell & Company, Carl Patton, Georgia State University president, and African American Renee Glover, executive director of the Atlanta Housing Authority and nicknamed the "Gentrification Queen," by fair housing activists. In September 2007, the group submitted a report that recommended that management turn the hospital over to a private, non-profit corporation "in order to attract funding from banks, the State of Georgia, and other sources." On August 21, the hospital's governing board approved a multimillion-dollar plan to fiscally stabilize the Grady Health System. The 10-member Fulton-Dekalb Hospital Authority approved \$125 million with a \$100 million line of credit from Citigroup and Morgan Kegan & Company with the guarantee that both counties cosign the loan. This new money proved crucial because it allowed Grady to pay its debt to both Emory University and Morehouse College, both of whom loaned staff to the hospital.⁶⁰²

The Greater Georgia Task Force saw fit to exclude neighborhood residents from participating in any decision-making regarding their hospital. According to the New Grady

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*

Coalition, a protest organization whose goal was to put the control (and therefore the fate) of Grady in the hands of the public, most planning for privatization was done in secret, closed door meetings that prohibited “non-task force members” access. Therefore, New Grady Coalition organized a series of sit-ins and community town halls to both educate residents on the dangers of privatizing public resources and broadcast how Atlanta’s elites quietly assumed decision-making power over the hospital. The most publicized and violent of these protests occurred on November 27th, the day that the task force met to vote on privatization. Outside of the meeting room inside Grady, hundreds of neighborhood residents, black AFSCME union officials, hospital staff, doctors, and progressive Atlanta officials like African American state senator and Morehouse College professor Vincent K. Fort flooded the hallways with loud chants, singing, and speeches to the press.⁶⁰³

According to *Atlanta Voice* reporters on the scene, physical confrontation with the police and hospital security almost grew into a large melee. At 3:30 in the afternoon, Fort, former city councilman Derrick Boazman, and two unnamed community members attempted to storm the board room when officers restrained them, handcuffing Fort and dragging the other three protestors outside the building to screaming protestors demanding the police stop. The crowd then alerted police that they refused to leave the building until Governor Sonny Perdue “deliver the money necessary maintain Grady’s existence.”⁶⁰⁴

By four p.m., all four protestors were released by the police and they rejoined the occupation. The protestors’ chants and singing had pressured the board members to include

⁶⁰³ “Grady Goes Non-Profit,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 29, 2007, pg. 1, 5; “How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death,” *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013; <https://creativeloafing.com/content-170678-how-grady-memorial-hospital-skirted>.

⁶⁰⁴ “Grady Goes Non-Profit,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 29, 2007, pg. 1, 5; “How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death,” *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013.

them in the final vote session without public comment. However, chants of “let the people speak” drowned out the board members and witnesses stated that “numerous members of the crowd were serious and ready to go to jail if they weren’t heard.” Finally, the board conceded and allowed everyone two minutes to speak. The protestors’ comments focused on the class warfare at the center of privatization in Atlanta. They accused the state of Georgia of scapegoating the poor after misappropriating state funds and tax revenue, the Chamber of Commerce of corruption in forcing Grady to go private, and the Authority itself of taking away one of the most vital resources for the black communities in the city. “In Houston, Boston, and in California, hospitals of comparable size as Grady all failed after switching to a private governance model,” stated African American activist and chairman of the New Grady Coalition, Ron Marshall. “When you start privatizing something, it goes bad. It affects the community as a whole...we lose the benefit of well-trained doctors. Who’s going to take in the indigent? There would be five thousand people out of a job at Grady.”⁶⁰⁵

Despite the hours of public testimony, the board approved of privatization on the following terms: increased state funding for the hospital of at least \$30 million a year; assurance that both Fulton and Dekalb Counties would increase their funding from \$86 million to over \$200 million total; Grady’s trauma center, one of the largest and highly reputable in the U.S., remain financially stable; assurance that both Morehouse School of Medicine and Emory University uphold their education programs at the hospital and that the debts be renegotiated; lastly, more abstract “promises” that “certain” current Grady employees keep their jobs and a “commitment to treating those less fortunate.”⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; “Grady Goes Non-Profit,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 29, 2007, pg. 1, 5.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

As Vincent Fort stated, “they did not save Grady, they took it over” to reap surplus profits. “What these business leaders adhere to is: never let a crisis go untaken advantage of,” Fort contended. “They made that point (that) Grady’s going to close and all that. But the fact is, they took advantage of that hysteria and unleashed the dogs. They were enlisted in the fight against the community in a shameful way.” Immediately after the agreement and seemingly vowing to oppose corporate restructuring, the FDHA, at the behest of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce reconfigured Grady’s leadership and transferred its oversight to a new body, the Grady Memorial Hospital Corporation (GMHC). Unsurprisingly, many of the new leadership included Greater Georgia Task Force members from the ACOC. “This is about green, not black or white,” stated Grady Hospital Chairman Pete Correll. “It’s about money.” Daniel Blumenthal, Associate Dean of the Morehouse School of Medicine contextualized this process as a corporate coup through exploiting a public crisis:

“So because of the alleged threat of the hospital closing, this new new board was created...the Fulton-Dekalb Hospital Authority was disempowered and a new board was empowered, so that the people running the hospital were now in the hands of the business community rather than the people...”⁶⁰⁷

Fort’s prophecy rang true as Grady became one of the most profitable corporations in the 2010s. Woodruff Foundation promised to shower Grady with \$200 million only if they moved from a public entity to a non-profit corporate management. With the Woodruff donation, Grady upgraded its infrastructure predominantly around billing, including a surprising \$40 million electronics records system that streamlined payment collections on patients. In other words, corporate management argued that transforming public health care into a business structure strengthened the profit potential. “In health care, just like any business, you’ve got to get the bill

⁶⁰⁷ “How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death,” *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013.

out the door and get it collected,” said Joh Hauptert, Grady’s Chief Executive Officer. By 2016, Grady Hospital had increased its net revenue by \$106 million a year. However, it cost workers hundreds of jobs and patients millions of dollars in extra fees. Despite management’s initial claim that they would find new funding (Woodruff’s donation was an exception), the corporate restructuring amounted to only slashing jobs and services. “Their goal was to cut waste, what they considered waste, and get Grady...to make a profit,” stated Dorothy Leone-Glasser, a neighborhood health activist. “That was their goal, with all disregard for the patients and that’s the part that, to me, was most upsetting.”⁶⁰⁸

Grady’s program slashing severely undercut health resources in black working-class Atlanta. Grady reduced the number of neighborhood clinics from nine to six without public input. As a result, poor Atlantans no longer possessed preventive care (a lesser cost) and many only saw doctors when they were sick enough to go to the emergency room when the costs for treatment were exorbitant. The most disastrous move under the neoliberalization of Grady Hospital occurred in September 2009 when they closed the dialysis clinic, a crucial resource for blacks. Baani, a 29-year old resident of Fulton County, was turned away from multiple hospitals for dialysis treatment because she was uninsured. Grady hospital did not treat her until after she made numerous trips to the emergency room. After a few years of regular biweekly treatment and relative stability in her life, Grady informed Baani and other dialysis patients that they closed the treatment center. “They were going to close the...clinic without giving us a place to go after that. My heart just broke,” Baani responded. Baani explained that Grady offered dialysis patients three options: emergency room care; moving to other states, which most could not afford; and for undocumented individuals, expatriation. In fact, Leone Glasser said that Grady

⁶⁰⁸ “How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death,” *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013.

hired an expatriation company, Mexcare, who offered a plane ticket, a small amount of money, and three months of dialysis care for any undocumented patient to move to their original country.⁶⁰⁹

Baani and other residents affected by the closure organized multiple rallies against Grady that captured the attention of both local media and legal representation. In less than a month, community pressure forced a court injunction that blocked the dialysis center's closure for over a year. Despite Grady's pleas of infeasibility, the court forced the hospital to locate and sign a funding agreement with three local dialysis providers to extend treatment to all Atlanta patients. As of 2013, Grady paid for kidney treatment of fourteen Atlantans while others moved out of the area for better options.⁶¹⁰

Michael Young, the Grady CEO at the time, expressed his contempt for poor black Atlantans at social events with city elites. At an October 2010 breakfast with Atlanta Chamber of Commerce members in Buckhead, taking full credit for "saving" the hospital, Young told his peers that Fulton County residents "should want to shine my shoes." Local residents and politicians were justifiably angered at this clear racist remark and public pressure led to Young's resignation less than a year later.⁶¹¹ His remarks to Atlanta capitalists undergird the mentality of Grady management's disregard for poor blacks.

Hospitals served as a strategic privatization target for liberal growth machines because of their fragile infrastructure. State funding cuts made hospitals especially vulnerable for takeover

⁶⁰⁹*Ibid.*

⁶¹⁰ "How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death," *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013; "Injunction Halts Grady Dialysis Closure After Board Approves It," *Atlanta Progressive News*, September 20, 2009, pg. 1; "Grady Dialysis Deal Finalized," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 13, 2010, pg. 1.

⁶¹¹ "Grady CEO Apologizes for shine my shoes remark," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 29, 2010, pg. 1; "How Grady memorial Hospital Skirted Death," *Creative Loafing*, February 28, 2013.

or privatization. Consequently, this allowed petty bourgeois activists to swoop in as “heroes” that “saved” a public necessity. This played a pivotal role in the relatively positive reputation of pro-growth interests at the turn of the century. When private interests publicized their “generous” donations to fund a public resource under their supervision, it created a complicated dynamic in low-income black spaces where resources are limited. Capitalists followed the same strategy with privatizing education as they attempted to convince parents that their structure and money was the key to saving “failing” schools and their children from the underground economy.

Public School Privatization

Public schools in Atlanta faced countless assaults by petty bourgeois activists to privatize and move further away from their role as a public resource. In the year 1999, over four hundred charter and private schools opened across the U.S. with a quarter of a million children enrolled, a forty percent increase from 1998. The Clinton administration bolstered the private and charter school movement when they allotted a \$30 million increase to the \$175 million federal funding for states to develop charter schools. Exclusion based on race and class increased in correlation with the rise of charter and private schools. Because both charter and private schools are free from state laws and regulations, they can set their admission standards, without legal scrutiny. By early 2000, the federal government designated that over 25 percent of all charter schools serve “specific populations.” Small school districts in Lufkin, Texas, Oktibbeha County, Mississippi, and Georgetown County, South Carolina all received nationwide criticism over their segregated charter school patterns. However, larger school districts like St. Louis, Cleveland, and especially Philadelphia, who each experienced declining property tax revenues, lost so much

funding that they faced a difficult choice: takeover by the state, or adopting charter and private schools. For example, Philadelphia schools only employed four psychologists who served 12,000 students in 15 schools for the 1999-2000 school year. Additionally, the system had \$2,500 less to spend per student per year, or \$75,000 less to spend on a class of 30 per year than did suburban Pennsylvania counterparts.⁶¹²

As black middle-class parents gradually gravitated towards private schools in the early 1990s, the Atlanta power structure took advantage of the vulnerability of public schools to destabilize them. More clearly, petty bourgeois activists and capitalists promoted “free choice” ideology, meaning that parents must possess the freedom to choose where their student received education. Liberal Growth Machines argue that public schools are intellectually, economically, and culturally degenerative, so offering the exclusionary private and charter schools allows parents the opportunity to uplift their child’s education. However, LGMs work behind the scenes to bankrupt public school funding and slash resources so that parents have no choice but to choose a private or charter school with plentiful resources over the poor public school.

Black public-school workers fought against early attempts to privatize the Atlanta Public Schools system. On the first day of the school semester in August 1997, 375 AFSCME Local 1644 food service, transportation, maintenance, and custodial workers in Atlanta Public Schools (APS) picketed multiple schools and the APS downtown headquarters on Pryor Street. The workers demanded the removal of APS Superintendent Ben Canada and new policies regarding budget cuts, and improved working conditions. Black workers like maintenance staffer Robert

⁶¹² “CBC Report: Educator Assails Efforts to Privatize Public Education,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 16, 1999, pg. 17; “Public Choice School Movement Growing,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 19, 2000, pg. 15, 18; “Public Education in Crisis,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 20, 2000, pg. 5.

Stevens and custodian Jackie Johnson proclaimed that their struggle was for the benefit of their neighborhoods because their public schools are vital to the strength of their communities. “This is our thing!” Johnson exclaimed. “This is for our kids that we have to raise!”⁶¹³

Black APS workers demanded reclassification of employees, which would simultaneously raise the salaries of veteran workers and combat job cuts by hiring more custodians, cafeteria workers, landscapers, and bus drivers. For example, Johnson, who cleaned Pitts Elementary School for three years, was supposed to move from step 3 (with an average salary of \$23, 141.50 a year) to step 7 (with an average salary of \$27, 851.50 a year) in November. “They’re telling me that I’ve got to wait until November 1998, she explained. “They’re only to give me \$13 (a month). Thirteen times twelve (months) is \$156.” Unfortunately, because APS designates custodians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, landscapers, and maintenance workers as “operational,” their salary ceiling was step 10 (\$30, 501.50 a year). Workers also contended that school budget cuts resulted in overworked operational staff. According to African American Marie Robinson, a custodian and one of the lead negotiators for the AFSCME labor negotiations, the predominantly black custodial staff plummeted from 407 to 307 in less than a year in 1997.⁶¹⁴

The Atlanta City Council attempted to offset those budget cuts and school renovation costs by selling public education to the highest bidder. In January 1999, Atlanta Public Schools officials requested proposals from private for-profit education management firms. The New York-based Edison Project, a seven-year old corporation that was the largest for-profit education management firm at the time with 51 schools in eleven states put forward a bid. In February,

⁶¹³ “Atlanta Public School Workers Picket Higher Wages,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 30, 1997, pg. 1, 5A.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 5A.

Edison held several closed-door meetings where they assured the Atlanta Board of Education that they had invested over \$40 million to research and implement “the best teaching methods used in public and private schools.” Edison proposed to operate three K-12 clusters of schools in different parts of the city, which amounted to about 6,000 Atlanta students.⁶¹⁵

In keeping with the gentrification of working-class black Atlanta, private and charter schools served as a primary catalyst for land rent manipulation in urban communities. The Edison Project chose Drew Elementary School in East Lake Meadows because it held proximity to the Villages of East Lake, the new middle-and-upper income housing that displaced the predominantly poor black residents out of the area in 1997. Tom Cousins, who had been responsible for a significant portion of the corporate real estate in Atlanta over the prior three decades like the Omni International Hotel/CNN Center, said of East Lake Meadows prior to his redevelopment that “if I had been born there, I’d be in prison or dead.” Consequently, Cousins revalorized the land and built environment to maximize its exchange value interests and price out the lower income residents. The new apartments, which averaged \$1100 a month for rent, exhibited a plantation façade with upscale interiors, built-in bookshelves, garden tubs, nine-foot ceilings, light oak kitchen cabinets, pantries, tray ceilings, private balconies, walk-in closets, and extra-wide doorways.⁶¹⁶

Cousins stated that, “if the new Villages at East Lake is to attract a solid core of middle-class residents, it has to have a top-notch public school.” Thus, Greg Girnelli, Executive

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ “Public Schools Draw Criticism Over Privatization,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 2, 1999, pg. 16; “Wanted; Tech-Minded Tutelage,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 7, 1999, pg. 268; “Edison Project is Bright Idea,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 26, 1999, pg. 40; “East Lake Charter School on Hold,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 22, 1999, pg. 185; “Villages of East Lake: Renewal at its Best,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 30, 2005, pg. HF14; CBC Report: Educator Assails Efforts to privatize Public Education,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 16, 1999, pg. 17.

Director of the East Lake Community Foundation—the nonprofit in charge of gentrifying the neighborhood and owned by Cousins—African American Shirley Franklin, the former city executive during Maynard Jackson’s third mayoral term, negotiated with the Atlanta Board of Education and Edison project to establish the Charles R. Drew charter school in East Lake Meadows. Edison’s promise to “place a computer in front of every student and in every home” gained popularity in black working class and middle-class neighborhoods.⁶¹⁷

Fierce resistance across the class stratum challenged Edison’s takeover of public schools in black Atlanta. In late March, Research Atlanta held a metro region-wide debate between forty educators, community residents, and college students. The Cobb County teachers’ union criticized Edison’s record. They claimed its profit was accrued by overrunning inexperienced teachers with overcrowded classrooms. Other teachers’ unions like the Georgia Association of Educators argued that Atlanta’s push to adopt the Edison Project demonstrated their destabilization of education as a resource for the working classes: “Instead of dedicating scarce resources to taxpayer-funded vouchers and tax credits that weaken public education for all in favor of...private instruction for a few, we should instead fund...class size reductions.” Three black petty bourgeoisie organizations, the 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Concerned Black Clergy (CBC), and the Atlanta chapter of the NAACP sponsored protest rallies and media conferences that both condemned Atlanta officials and exposed the Edison Project’s pursuit of school districts throughout the nation with predominantly low-income, “underperforming” students. They also reported that in each of the Edison project’s districts, students did not achieve higher

⁶¹⁷ “Public Schools Draw Criticism Over Privatization,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 2, 1999, pg. 16; “Wanted; Tech-Minded Tutelage,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 7, 1999, pg. 268; “Edison Project is Bright Idea,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, January 26, 1999, pg. 40; “East Lake Charter School on Hold,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 22, 1999, pg. 185; “Villages of East Lake: Renewal at its Best,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 30, 2005, pg. HF14; CBC Report: Educator Assails Efforts to privatize Public Education,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 16, 1999, pg. 17.

grades than their public school counterparts and they failed to turn around low-performing schools. “Edison...[has] never delivered anything that would make you proud with respect to poor black kids,” stated African American Asa Hilliard, professor of urban education at Georgia State University.⁶¹⁸ Therefore, privatization of public schools served as one pro-growth measure that both the black working class and black petty bourgeoisie united against the black and white bourgeoisie.

Despite these efforts, the 200,000 square foot Drew Charter Junior and Senior Academy with its 880 students from pre-school to eighth grade became the cornerstone of the \$103 million revitalization of the East Lake neighborhoods. Funded predominantly through Arthur Blank, the owner of the Atlanta Falcons and Home Depot, Inc., Chick-Fil-A, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Georgia Power, the Kendeda Fund, the Marcus Foundation, and the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, the school campus cost \$15 million. Drew also served as a hub for private school promotion in Atlanta. The school also holds locational advantage with the East Lake Golf Course, which hosted the PGA Tour since 2004. Edison and East Lake Foundation funded the First Tee program that moonlights as a golf prep course but more clearly served as indoctrination for the youth into capitalist interests and culture. According to First Tee, “students meet and play with business executives from all over Atlanta...because many business people do business while playing golf.” One former Drew Charter student told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that because of his time spent with executives at Drew Charter, he could “speak to any high-level executive about golf and interact with them.” Once students complete eighth grade, they are steered towards private high schools. Because of the profitability of both the pre-Kindergarten-

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.* “Privatization Consensus Still Elusive,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 1, 1999, pg. 152; “Is it Better for Michael and Maya: Contracting for the Management of Public Schools,” *Research Atlanta*, March 1999; “Charter School Will Add to East Lake’s Draw,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 17, 1999, pg. 82.

8th Grade program and the Villages of East Lake success in luring middle-and-upper class white families to the emptied area, Drew Charter expanded over the first fifteen years of the decades. By 2015, Cousins had spent another \$55 million to build a high school that resembled a modern airport terminal as a part of Drew Charter.⁶¹⁹

One of the most publicized struggles against school privatization in Atlanta occurred in 2004 when 48 year old Garry Ogden, a teacher at Atlanta Public Schools' alternative school, Community Education partnership (CEP), exposed his institution to *The Atlanta Voice* for acting as a profit-generating “dumping ground warehouse” for “disruptive” black students that principals did not want. “Instead of addressing their [students] deficiencies,” Ogden explained, “principals and administrators would rather remove these children from the learning environment and send them to an alternative...most of them [students] have been tossed away. They are not educating children; it is not a safe place. CEP is destined for failure.” As Ogden argued, CEP enforced their education motto in order of importance: “Be-here, so we can get paid; Be-have, so that you don’t break anything and we have to get it fixed; and then if you do those two things, and we have to get learning done, then Be-learning.”⁶²⁰

CEP became the first private alternative school in the state of Georgia in 2002 when APS contracted the firm to “educate” students who they designated as “too disruptive for the normal learning environment.” CEP also generated profit based on student quantity. The alternative school received \$9,300 to \$9,700 per pupil per year. In the 2003-2004 school year, an estimated 1,416 students, virtually all black, spent time at CEP with 722 students enrolled at the end of the

⁶¹⁹ “School Steers Students from Cradle to College,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 12, 2010, pg. B1, B5; “Golf Suits East Lake Students,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 24, 2005, pg. E10; “Charter,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, May 4, 2014, pg. B1, B6;

⁶²⁰ “Atlanta’s Alternative School Said to be Privatized, Profit Driven Prison,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 18, 2004, pg. 1, 19;

term. Based on these figures, CEP generated \$7.4 million in profit for what Atlanta Legal Aid attorney Craig Goodmark dubbed as incarceration for black students:

“There is a trend in regular education environments to send children who are labeled as bad kids out of the regular education schools, and then couple that with how difficult they’re making it to be returned to the regular education environment—it becomes almost like a prison without ever having a trial.”⁶²¹

In October 2004, proving that profit overruled student intervention, APS negotiated a five-year, multi-million-dollar extension for CEP to continue as the alternative school for the system. “It’s a for-profit business. I wish I owned it!” exclaimed William Shepherd, the principal of CEP in 2004. “I’m not going to worry about how much money CEP is making...call CEP and me what you want to.”⁶²²

CEP demonstrates how school privatization not only served to displace poor urbanites via gentrification; it also provided LGMs a tool of class war to further strip autonomy from marginalized groups who seek to determine how their children learn and develop. As Ogden claimed, “most of the kids at CEP come from homes where the parents are already marginalized...they don’t have a voice, so there’s no real clamor to do anything about it. There is no regard for what the public thought about it. It was just done because the kids and their parents don’t have a voice.” By suppressing the voice of the working-class masses, private school firms actively segregate disproportionately poor black students away from the dominant group, generate revenue off their relative imprisonment, and inflate testing scores by removing students most likely to perform poorly on state board exams. When children are isolated away from quality educational environments, they fall behind on learning skills needed to survive in a

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² *Ibid.*; “Former Principal Calls for Federal Probe of APS’ Alternative School,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 6, 2004, pg. 1, 7;

capitalist society. Those students either stay at CEP until they dropout or they return to their regular schools far behind their classroom peers. The ACLU reported that less than 23 percent of the students at the alternative school met or exceeded standards across all subjects. In 2006-2007, not a single student made it to their senior year.⁶²³

In other words, privatization often decreases or outright eliminates the public resource. According to multiple parents of students who attended CEP, the private firm simply imprisoned their children and refused to teach them. “No homework, no books, you sit and eat in class all day long, what kind of learning are you doing,” one anonymous person told *The Atlanta Voice*. Another parent, who identified as “Saleem” and participated in the PTA at Brown Middle School for his son, charged that CEP “is nothing but one step before going to a juvenile jail.” “They are just...criminalizing those kids,” Saleem continued. Tracy Ransom reported that after her son, Leroy, was sent to CEP for defending himself in a fight, “he’s not being advanced in terms of schoolwork. He says he does nothing but plays checkers on his computer. There is no actual education.” Pat Walker contemplated filing a cruelty and defamation lawsuit against APS because her eighth-grade child, Archie, was misdiagnosed with a learning disability at Bunche Middle School and sentenced to CEP for “special education curriculum.” Walker told the *Voice* that when Archie complained about his lack of learning at CEP, the staff called him a “snitch nigger” and further isolated him to a separate wing of the facility.⁶²⁴

⁶²³ “ACLU Suit Claims Atlanta School Virtually a Prison,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 2008, pg. 1, 15; “CEP Refutes ACLU Allegations,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 3, 2008, pg. 1, 2.

⁶²⁴ *Ibid*; “Atlanta’s Alternative School: Prison or School?” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 2, 2004, pg. 1, 5; “Prison or School—What’s the Solution?” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 30, 2004, pg. 1, 5; “ACLU Suit Claims Atlanta School Virtually a Prison,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 2008, pg. 1, 15.

When CEP's principal William Shepherd blasted the *Atlanta Voice* coverage as an "exaggeration" and "unfair," the former principal who resigned "in disgust," African American Irving Mitchell, escalated the protests against APS with a request for federal intervention:

There is enough information out there coming from a number of sources that makes it fairly critical to ask the state and the feds to investigate this for misrepresentation and misuse of funds...This [CEP] contract is for \$700,000 a month or more. Taxpayers are spending probably \$10 million for this program and it being misused. It warrants an investigation."

Mitchell also accused APS of outright fraud and corruption because they used CEP to generate revenue while simultaneously juking the federal and state education requirement data:

"CEP became a means of circumventing 'No Child Left Behind.' The concept is simple. Once you remove 800 kids—and I had 800 kids the beginning of last year—from the Atlanta Public Schools automatically things get better. Attendance, climate, behavior, test scores, because those kids are eliminated...there were reports made to the [Atlanta School] board, and the board knew these reports were not accurate. They accepted it because of the improvements that were automatically made at the regular schools by eliminating these kids. And they are not considered drop-out statistics because they are being counted on the regular APS school enrollment, and they are being paid for."⁶²⁵

The *Atlanta Voice* reports flamed a citywide discussion, outrage, and social movement organizing against CEP and the Atlanta Board of Education. In September 2004, Ogden organized CEP students, former juvenile probation officers who patrolled the halls, parents, and former teachers into the Greater Atlanta Ministerial Alliance (GAMA) to oppose the harsh conditions of the school, school privatization, and APS problems in general. They filed a lawsuit against Atlanta Public Schools that accused APS of "failure to follow procedures or policies pursuant to a federal law which is IDEA (individuals with disabilities education act). GAMA first toured the alternative school and conducted a three-month study of national, state, and local

⁶²⁵ "Former Principal Calls for Federal Probe of APS' Alternative School," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 6, 2004, pg. 1, 7;

schooling to better understand the plight of poor black children at CEP. They next constructed a report that they shared at a public townhall meeting in December. GAMA's report concluded that the private firm that imprisoned their children, most of whom were low-income African Americans, further reduced their access to resources they needed to survive. "According to a survey conducted by the Holistic Stress Control Institute," GAMA stated, "the kids in that school [CEP] have more needs for services than any other school in the nation—public, private, alternative, military, you name it...GAMA is going to treat and get answers to CEP's disease."⁶²⁶

APS officials and CEP Regional Vice President Anthony Edwards attempted to defend CEP as a space that at the bare minimum kept truant children away from the streets. More clearly, CEP officials ignored the profit and education critiques and relied on criminalizing children and seeking reprieve for principals, teachers, and the general student population. "We are not successful with every student referred to CEP; however, every student referred to CEP has been unsuccessful in his or her traditional classroom...we want to reduce disruption in the traditional classroom." Some parents echoed APS sentiments and argued that CEP's main purpose is to keep their children in a building, off the streets during school hours. One anonymous parent said she "had no problem with CEP...if we didn't have CEP where would our children be? In jail or in the streets selling drugs or worse." Angela Lane claimed that CEP transformed her daughter, Angelica, from a "destructive, fighting" teenager into a studious, college-oriented adolescent. "When I got there, I realized I had to mature," Angelica told the *Voice*. "CEP is not like a prison, it's cool because you get one on one attention with a teacher because there are not that many kids in their classrooms." "I don't see it [CEP] as a prison," Lu Shunder Barber, whose eighth-grade daughter attended the alternative school. "I see it as

⁶²⁶ *Ibid*; "Community Voices Concerns to CEP Officials," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 18, 2004, pg. 5.

somewhere for your kids to go rather than being on the street...a lot of the kids there just need love.”⁶²⁷ Thus, black working class Atlantans split over school privatization because they saw their children at risk of joining the underground economy. More succinctly, the concentration and relative expansion of illegal capitalism in black working-class neighborhoods by the city leadership and police restructured the hierarchy of needs and resources for black Atlantans. Autonomy took a backseat.

Over the next three years, GAMA expanded their movement to remove CEP from APS by aligning with the American Civil Liberties Union. In March 2008, Debbie Seagraves, ACLC executive director issued a civil lawsuit against APS on that grounds that “when the state set up an alternative school system, the intention was not to create a pseudo prison.” The ACLU suit described an environment where armed guarded patrolled the hallways, students were routinely searched, and female students had to raise their blouses and shirts to show that they did not have anything on themselves. The lawsuit also detailed principals of schools who sent students to CEP without due process and were denied education. The newly selected leader of GAMA in 2008, Pastor Darryl Winston, summed up the community outrage at the ACLU’s shocking report:

“Like a dog that returns to its vomit, CEP has returned to the vile and vicious practice of warehousing and dehumanizing our children; treating them like prisoners...despite their many promises to improve, the ACLU lawsuit shows that OEP is merely continuing its profiteering and caging our children like animals.”⁶²⁸

⁶²⁷ *Ibid*; “CEP: The parents and Students’ Perspective,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 15, 2008, pg. 5.

⁶²⁸ “ACLU Suit Claims Atlanta School Virtually a Prison,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 2008, pg. 1, 15; “CEP Refutes ACLU Allegations,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 3, 2008, pg. 1, 2.

In December 2009, both the ACLU and Atlanta Public Schools settled the lawsuit out of court; APS did not renew CEP's contract and took control over the alternative school. In a statement to the press, ACLU alleged that APS "pledged to treat students fairly and follow a curriculum similar to what is available at the system's other schools." GAMA's movement to retain public control over Atlanta schools was a success, but privatization continued to threaten the system.

During the 2012 standardized test cheating scandal where state and federal authorities indicted dozens of Atlanta Public Schools teachers, principals, and officials, APS Superintendent Beverly Hall announced the closure of ten schools, all located on the southwest and southeast sides of the city. Each school held close to 100 percent black and low-income enrollment. Hall did not choose to close any schools on the northside of Atlanta, who enrolled mostly middle and upper-class white students.⁶²⁹

Following this redistricting, APS brought in Superintendent Meria Carstarphen, a white administrator with a notorious reputation for slashing public school budgets and closing schools in inner city St. Paul Minnesota and Austin, Texas. Petty bourgeois activists secured her ascension. Republican Georgia Governor Nathan Deal campaigned on privatizing public schools in Georgia. Also, Carstarphen's largest supporter, former mayor Shirley Franklin, owned a multi-million dollar contract with APS to operate privatized schools on the southside of the city through her firm, Purpose Built, Inc. Franklin also operated for-profit schools in Kansas City, Missouri and concocted a similar model for a district in Omaha, Nebraska. Franklin and other Atlanta capitalists supplied Carstarphen's salary when she was hired in 2014, a move that was a

⁶²⁹ "ACLU Suit Claims Atlanta School Virtually a Prison," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 2008, pg. 1, 15; "CEP Refutes ACLU Allegations," *The Atlanta Voice*, April 3, 2008, pg. 1, 2.

conflict of interest—a public official received money from private interests, setting the stage for her to implement their neoliberal agenda in Atlanta schools.⁶³⁰

In the first two years of Carstarphen’s tenure, she brought sweeping neoliberal reforms that devastated an already reeling public education system in Atlanta. She immediately sold Thomasville Heights Elementary (the public housing in Thomas Heights had recently been demolished), Drew Elementary School, Slater Elementary, Price Middle School, and Carver High School to Franklin’s Purpose Built, Inc. and Gideons Elementary School to the Kindezi Corporation. Thomasville Heights Elementary school, which enrolled over ninety percent black and poor children and ranked at the bottom of all Georgia schools in 2015, served as Carstarphen’s testing ground for inexperienced charter schools, despite the fact that most parents polled ranked charter schools as their last reform option. When Carstarphen brought in Franklin’s Purpose Built, Inc. as a frontrunner to privatize the school, Thomasville Heights parents shouted Franklin down at a Thomasville community meeting, telling her “we didn’t invite you!” These new charter school foundations refused to be held accountable to the public for student performance, even though their funding was largely through public tax revenue. As a result, a group of teachers filed another federal lawsuit against APS for pushing charter school takeover across the board.⁶³¹

Additionally, 128 veteran teachers filed a federal class action lawsuit against APS for terminating higher-paid, tenured teachers without cause to replace them with relatively inexperienced teachers at entry level salaries. According to court documents, the teachers

⁶³⁰ “Meria Carstarphen Believes She Has Divine Right to Position,” guest column by Vincent K. Fort, *Jabari Simama Speaks*, September 30, 2019; “A Rotten Peach Poisoning Atlanta Public Schools,” *Tultican*, April 17, 2018.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*; “Can Charter School Operators Save Sinking Atlanta Schools?” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 20, 2016, pg. 1; As of the date of this dissertation, the lawsuit is still pending against Atlanta Public Schools.

accused the school district of conducting non-evidenced based witch hunts against teachers over age 40 to justify not renewing their contracts at the end of the school year.⁶³²

Carstarphens's petty bourgeois activism did expand capital accumulation for private interests, but it did not produce the desired uptick in education quality for parents. She closed and merged a number of schools under the guise of "improving student performance." However, the Mathematica Policy Research Report on the Atlanta Public Schools Turnaround Strategy demonstrated that science, reading, and social studies performance by students who attended newly privatized schools dropped. Only mathematics saw a slight uptick in performance. The black-white achievement gap also widened under privatization. According to the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, "school choice, closing public schools, and opening charter schools must be considered negative contributing factors, as they promote bold, disruptive change; scripted teaching; instruction delivery; personalized mechanistic learning; and rigid academic performance. Additionally, the report noted that suspensions increased at schools that turned for-profit."⁶³³

Lastly, in true neoliberal strategy, Carstarphen destabilized the resource base of APS to justify private takeover of schools. She randomly moved teachers around various schools so that they did not establish stability or relationships with students. When Carstarphen closed schools, teachers, librarians, and support staff had to reapply for their jobs with many not being rehired.⁶³⁴

⁶³² *Ibid*; "Carstarphen to Testify in Teachers' Age-Discrimination Suit," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, August 25, 2017, pg. 1.

⁶³³ *Ibid*; Kristin Hallgren, Naihobe Gonzalez, Kevin Kelly, Alicia Demers, and Brian Gill, "Year 2 Report of the Atlanta Public Schools Turnaround Strategy," *Mathematica Policy Research*, February 1, 2019.

⁶³⁴ I will provide greater details on the how gentrification affected Atlanta Public Schools in subsequent chapters. Anthropologist Karen J. Cook wrote a powerful masters thesis equating the redistricting and closing of black schools in Atlanta to hypersegregation. See Karen J. Cook, "Atlanta Public Schools (APS) Case Study: A Tale of Two Schools," Thesis, Georgia State University, 2013. For more data on Atlanta Public Schools, see Eric Wearne,

By the end of 2015, Atlanta Public Schools had embraced its newfound neoliberal position as a “Charter District.” APS posted on their website a notice titled “Walton Family Foundation to Support Atlanta Public Schools Turnaround Efforts; \$2.1 million investment will also expand access to student and school performance data.”⁶³⁵ Thus, the Atlanta power structure’s demolition of both public schools and decision-making power in the city’s neighborhoods over the early twenty first century served as a model for how private schools facilitate gentrification and displacement in urban spaces. Similarly, with New Orleans, Louisiana, Oakland, California, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis, Indiana school boards, LGMs profit from school privatization in two ways. First, it increases the land and property values around poor neighborhoods, which results in more working-class displacement. Third, it reduces government spending on public education, which forces people to pay out of pocket for funded, but generally lower quality schools. This results in surplus profits for private school capitalists. These factors fuel gentrification and increase the hardship for working class urbanites to resist displacement in twenty-first century cities.

Privatization of public services ranged from sewage service to health care to public education. Decision makers typically devised these privatization efforts behind closed doors, muting the opportunity for public input and protest. Such privatization undermined public input into the operation of long-standing public services, threatened decent paying jobs held by black workers, and undermined black working-class communities. This privatization occurred

⁶³⁵ “Atlanta’s Segregated Schools-I 2004,” *Cato Institute*, May 17, 2004, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/atlantas-segregated-schools-2004>
Michelle Cohen Marill, “Resegregation,” *Atlanta Magazine*, April 2008; Max Blau, “Picking Up the Pieces of Atlanta Public Schools,” *Creative Loafing*, July 10, 2014; Rachel Aviv, “Georgia’s Separate and Unequal Special Education System,” *The New Yorker*, September 24, 2018.

alongside and was indeed in part fueled by an aggressive gentrification of Atlanta's remaining working class black neighborhoods.

Community Development Corporations and the Supervision of Gentrification

Following Summerhill Neighborhood, Inc.'s record-setting deal with the Atlanta Braves and the City of Atlanta in gentrifying its neighborhood and razing Mechanicsville and Peoplestown neighborhoods for Olympic Stadium parking lots, other black petty bourgeois activists determined that they could fund their pro-growth interests through business activity centered on "community uplift." In fact, community development corporations (CDCs), which operate under the assumption that they improve neighborhoods and living conditions for poor people in general, threaten to supervise the black urban poor under the control of a petty bourgeois non-profit industry or administrative office. In other words, CDCs represent a new form of neocolonial *soft power*, where indirect rulers usurp state resources away from the oppressed for their own bourgeois interests while they lock the poor into poverty and transport their bodies and spaces around the region.

By the 2010s, over 3,600 CDCs operated throughout the urban United States. Although they sprang up throughout black neighborhoods during the Black Power Movement as a vehicle for conservative nationalists, CDCs really came to dominate urban revitalization in the 1990s as the non-profit industrial complex cornered the poverty reform market. Most CDCs, like all non-profits, are run by paid employees and directed by petty bourgeois residents who often do not live in the neighborhoods for which they make decisions. Over the past twenty years, direct and indirect federal subsidies fueled CDC redevelopment initiatives. With funding designated for alleviating conditions that create urban poverty like unaffordable housing, lack of livable wage

jobs, and rising land and property values, CDCs waged neighborhood-destroying campaigns through LGMs and created hundreds of high-salaried administrative supervisory positions, constructed thousands of high-rent housing, and displaced millions of working class people from U.S. cities.⁶³⁶

CDCs, while politically centrist in nature, prey on leftist, anti-poverty sentiment to garner their support among the working classes and activist organizations. Their recruitment discourse often cites their mission to “advance social and economic justice” and promote community solidarity” in a “displacement-free zone.” In some cases, they adopt and misuse Marxian rhetoric to produce the illusion that they “challenge capitalism through struggle against the state.” More clearly, CDCs publicize anti-capitalist critiques of the system while operating as a capitalist venture. Through these means, CDCs effectively move into marginalized spaces and take funding from the government and banks for their own means. In fact, the Community Reinvestment Act, which “encourages” banks to solicit funds to low-income areas at the threat of financial strain and delays to merger approvals, influenced banks to form public-private partnerships with CDCs to gentrify poor urban spaces. Besides investment funds, CDCs raise other monies for redevelopment through low-interest mortgages made available to them by state housing finance agencies. Public authorities borrow at below market interest rates and funnel the monies to CDCs.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁶ Howard Husock, “Don’t Let CDCs Fool You.” *City Journal*, Summer 2001; <https://www.city-journal.org/html/don't-let-cdcs-fool-you-12175.html>. For extensive detailing of the relationship between CDCs and private interests, see Deborah L. Myerson, “Community Development Corporations Working with For-Profit Developers,” *ULI Land Use Policy Forum Report*, Washington, D.C., October 3-4, 2002. For an alternative perspective, see “CDCs Revitalized America’s Poor Neighborhoods. What is Their Role as a Community Gentrifies?” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 2018.

⁶³⁷ Husock, “Don’t Let CDC’s Fool You.”

Because CDCs ensure that their investments guarantee profitable returns, they are generally able to pay back those loans. Thus, displacing poor urbanites and manipulating land rents benefits CDCs greatly. In fact, one Boston CDC director bragged about how they were able to persuade HUD to set the fair market rent for their CDC-owned apartments in their low-income neighborhood at no less than \$2,300 a month. Additionally, CDCs use their “social justice” reputation and favorable relationship to the federal government to leverage funds away from other investments. In other words, CDCs “work” the political economy of poverty to accrue surplus profits and investments for their own means.⁶³⁸

CDC-government relationship yields significant surplus profits through real estate development as well. Because residential developments are subsidized, the CDC earns large developers’ fees during the construction process and even higher management fees after completion. For example, a 28-unit apartment building renovation approved for tax credits by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency cost \$133,000 per unit for construction only. However, the *total* costs, including furnishings, plumbing, and other amenities were actually \$248,000 per unit, with \$33,000 per unit allocated to the CDC for acting as “general contractor,” and \$27,000 per unit for “overhead fees”—totaling \$1.68 million revenue for the CDC.⁶³⁹

More alarming is that the few low-income units that CDCs do construct are often marred with dilapidated conditions. According to On-Site Insight, an independent firm that specializes in assessing housing conditions, seven out of ten CDC developments needed repairs. They

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

recommended that CDCs set aside \$2,200 (in 2001 dollars) more per unit per year for maintenance needs.⁶⁴⁰

At the turn of the century, Atlanta CDCs functioned as brokers for capital to displace low-income African Americans from the central business district. Young Hughley, executive director of the Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation, and William McFarland, the leader of Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation, worked with investors who bought homes from residents whose rents and property taxes exceeded their budgets. For Reynoldstown, the price of existing homes rose more than 50 percent between 1997 and 2000 and averaged between \$62,000 and \$109,000. Instead of organizing a neighborhood movement to demand renovation without displacement, the best advice McFarland offered to those desperate Peoplestown homeowners pressured to sell was to “hold on a couple of years [to their homes] to cash out at a higher level.” Peoplestown, which had a median income of \$13,000 in 2000, witnessed developers buying houses and properties for cheap and renovating them with higher prices and relatively higher property values that forced neighboring residents to either sell or lose their homes. However, McFarland argued that his activism was the best means to neighborhood growth. “Peoplestown is a great...place to live,” McFarland stated. “There are lots of hills and trees, you can see the skyline of downtown Atlanta, it is a neighborhood that anyone would want to live in.”⁶⁴¹

The Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC), the oldest Atlanta CDC and the firm that displaced low-income Auburn Avenue residents in the late 1980s and early 1990s, adopted a block-by-block strategy for gentrification. By late 1999, HDDC had renovated only

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴¹ “Managing Gentrification: Atlanta’s Changing Landscape,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 13, 1999, pg. 1, 10; “The Resettling of Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 4, 1999, pg. 1, 3.

sixty low-income apartments, or roughly ten percent, into their affordable housing. In the Old Fourth Ward adjacent to Auburn Avenue, houses sold for \$300,000 to affluent whites. HDDC also worked closely with two economic development programs, Studioplex on Auburn Avenue and the Herndon Plaza Expansion Project, who promoted the expansion of cultural tourism in revitalized Auburn Avenue as revenue generating projects.⁶⁴²

Another CDC, the Atlanta Development Neighborhood Partnership (ANDP), which oversaw redevelopment across the central city and provided training and technical assistance to other metro area CDCs, utilized their six million dollar yearly budget to raze Lakewood Village residents for a new complex with 170 new single-family housing units on the south side of Atlanta. They also partnered with a private developer and razed residences on Pryor Road to build 115 new homes in Highland Estates that listed from \$125,000 to \$225,000. The City of Atlanta also demolished the Joyland Plaza site for a new shopping center on Pryor Road as part of their “Southside Redevelopment Initiative.” The other sites that Mayor Bill Campbell targeted for redevelopment on the southside included Carver Homes, High Point Estates, Amal Heights, and Betmar Lavilla.⁶⁴³

In 2001, Lakewood Partners LLC, a public-private CDC comprised of the Atlanta Development Authority and New Pryor Development Company, built the new 38-acre, \$68 million housing development, Park Place South, along Pryor Street just south of downtown Atlanta. The land once held the Lakewood Village Apartments, which housed predominantly low-income people who worked at the Lakewood auto plant. According to New Pryor Development, the new housing catered to “people at various income levels.” However, Ron

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ “The Resettling of Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 4, 1999, pg. 1, 3. “Southside Renewal Project,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 9, 1999, pg. 1, 5A.

Keller, the managing director of development and finance for the ADA, stated that the price floor for the 434 townhouses, condominiums, and single-family homes that encompassed Park Place South was \$130,000. This automatically priced out any low-income urbanites and displaced virtually all of the previous Lakewood Village Apartment tenants from Pryor Street.

Additionally, Park Place South's locational advantage with Hartsfield International Airport, the Hi-Fi Buys Amphitheater, and the revitalized downtown tourist scene offered little hope for any price or rent decrease.⁶⁴⁴

Summerhill, which gradually lost poor black residents to Olympic-era gentrification, listed houses for \$200,000 by the end of the twentieth century. SUMMECH CDC, which challenged SNI during the Olympic Era for control over development in the black working class neighborhoods surrounding the Olympic Stadium, displaced nearly one hundred low-income Atlantans along Ralph Abernathy Boulevard for a 16-unit townhouse development called "Ware Estates" that priced between \$96,000 to \$125,000 per unit. "We were able to sell these units in a matter of 25 days, bragged Janis Ware, president of SUMMECH and publisher of *The Atlanta Voice* newspaper. "The appraised value of these units [are] \$20,000 minimum higher than what we sold them for." Ironically, she named the development after her late father, J. Lowell Ware, the founder of *The Atlanta Voice* and activist for working class rights in Black Atlanta. Hattie Dorsey's summation of this new petty bourgeois and bourgeois activism in twenty-first century Atlanta demonstrates how it represented the latest tactic in class war against black working class Atlantans: "This [is] one of the more successful community development activities in the whole of the city...we have people moving back into this community who represent Who's Who of

⁶⁴⁴ "Southside Renewal Project," *The Atlanta Voice*, October 9, 1999, pg. 1, 5A;

Atlanta...the story is not often told about what happens in our neighborhoods that are seen as being off the radar screen.”⁶⁴⁵

Gentrification through devalorization fueled much of the displacement against black Atlantans in the 2000s. Petty bourgeois activists cheapened land and property values by exaggerating or outright fabricating crime in the working-class neighborhoods surrounding the Olympic Stadium (re-named Turner Field at this point). In April 2000, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, notorious for their conservative, anti-black working class coverage, published a report by the Crimes Against Persons Index, a Philadelphia based “crime-forecasting” firm, which identified Summerhill, Mechanicsville, and Peoplestown as neighborhoods where people were most likely to be robbed, raped, or murdered. Neighborhood leaders from all three areas quickly denounced the report as fraudulent for using police reports from a decade ago to make their case. Douglas Dean, the former state senator who led SNI in razing Summerhill, reduced the issue to simply racial identity politics: “I just believe it is just bias by the *Constitution* because we gotta a black Mayor and black people in power.” Dean also exploited this issue to publicize his success in razing poor blacks out of the very areas that the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* criticized: “People who used to run away from these areas are now coming back to the area and paying top dollar for land in these neighborhoods and buying good homes in that area. The last house we sold in Summerhill was for \$300,000.”⁶⁴⁶

These reports continued to cheapen property values in black working-class neighborhoods for private purchase. In 2002, Morgan Quitno Press, a national organization that

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid*; “Ware Estates Adds to the Changing Face of Mechanicsville,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 29, 1999, pg. 5.

⁶⁴⁶ “Residents Blast Turner Field Crime Report,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 15, 2000, pg. 1, 10A.

uses FBI crime figures to rank urban centers based on danger, listed Atlanta as the third most dangerous city in the United States behind St. Louis and Detroit.⁶⁴⁷

Young members of Atlanta's emerging black bourgeoisie eagerly joined the war against the black working class. 22-year old Clarence Artis represented the Atlanta capitalists' 24-hour visitor market vision. As a member of the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce, he purchased his first property in 2002 and created his real estate venture, theartiscompany, to spearhead projects geared towards revitalization in East Atlanta. Between 2005 and 2006, Artis purchased at least six properties for over \$150,000 with one valued at \$630,000. He participated in razing East Lake Meadows neighborhoods for his development, twentyfour twentyfour ELV, located next to the East Lake golf course. According to Artis, this property "boasts both resident living and retail space boasting boutique coffee shops and business specializing in dining." Despite displacing poor blacks for his developments, Artis couched his gentrification in petty bourgeois activist discourse, claiming that "although development is our profession, growing communities by nurturing people is our passion."⁶⁴⁸

48-year-old Trena Ross, the vice president of Brokerage for Ackerman & Company, one of the largest full-service real estate firms in Atlanta, and 29-year old Tarsa Hawkins, the co-owner of Cornerstone Finance Corporation, both lead the charge in renovating the city's dilapidated spaces for expensive lofts and booming businesses. For Ross especially, she set her sights on building shopping centers for profit. "To develop a center that is 20 to 30,000 square

⁶⁴⁷ "Atlanta Ranked Nation's Third Most Dangerous City," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 14, 2002, pg. 1, 17; "Despite Gains, City Ranks 3rd in Crime," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, December 28, 2002, pg. E1.

⁶⁴⁸ "Clarence Artis: Real Estate's Rising Star," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 23, 2007, pg. 9; See home sales in *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* in the years 2005 and 2006 for Artis property purchases.

feet,” Ross explained, “could cost \$75 a square foot, which could easily be a million-dollar project. Before taxes and expenses, add in the average profit from renters over a five-year-term, I could make about \$3 million.”⁶⁴⁹

Leah Braxton, a developer with W.C. Bradley Real Estate firm, converted a cotton mill into condominiums in the downtown area that price between \$154,000 to \$569,000 in 2009. She stated that she refuses to lower the unit prices because “we want to uphold the values of the people who have already purchased.” Courtney Dillard, who *The Atlanta Voice* dubbed the “black Donald Trump,” stated to *The Atlanta Magazine* that acquiring property was like “finding a lost girlfriend and being overjoyed by her return.”⁶⁵⁰

“The Wizard of Oz Touched Atlanta”: The Empowerment Zone Crisis

The “Empowerment Zone” catastrophe was the first major petty bourgeois activism between the City of Atlanta and real estate developers for post-Olympic Atlanta. Empowerment Zones derived from the federal “Enterprise Zones” program of the 1980s. Washington declared that urban centers would be given special tax breaks to encourage business investment in the areas. Jack Kemp, the former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in the Reagan and Bush Administrations, was the most ardent supporter of Enterprise Zones, remarking that “ghettoes are akin to a third-world socialist economy and capitalism would make them blossom.” The truth is that Enterprise Zones were the next attempt at liberal urban renewal, complete with the same ideas, slogans, and tactics of the War on Poverty of the 1960s and 1970s. As one report

⁶⁴⁹ “African Americans Build Wealth in Commercial Real Estate,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 20, 2007, pg. 8;

⁶⁵⁰ “Courtney Dillard: The Black Donald Trump?” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 26, 2007, pg. 6; “Clarence Artis: Real Estate’s Rising Star,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 23, 2007, pg. 9; “maybe Reinvent the Wheel—if You Want to Sell Condo Units,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 20, 2009, pg. 3.

stated, Enterprise Zones were only “a means of *redistributing* investment and employment,” not a means of *increasing* either.⁶⁵¹

Atlanta’s Enterprise Zone deal with the federal government dated to December 1994, when the Clinton Administration granted the city \$100 million for poor black neighborhoods to be designated as “Empowerment Zones.” According to reporters who attended Mayor Bill Campbell’s press conference, he “gushed unabashedly” and proclaimed that he would “rebuild 30 poverty-stricken neighborhoods, give hope and opportunity [to] some 50,000 people and provide some 5,000 new jobs.” “It’s like the Wizard of Oz has touched Atlanta. Hope and salvation is on the way,” Campbell told the 300-plus crowd. The zone was originally a 9.2 square-mile vise around downtown, gripping the central business district on the east, west, and south. Campbell chose these coordinates because the area had nearly three times the city’s unemployment rate at 17.5 percent and the median income was \$8,910.⁶⁵²

Petty bourgeois and bourgeois African Americans descended on the funds to bolster their exchange value interests. Sulaiman Mahdi, a Mechanicsville representative on the Empowerment Zone Board, announced plans to start a “youth community development corporation” with \$4 million “that will go towards...establishing more businesses in the community.” Before long, the Atlanta Empowerment Zone Board functioned as a supervisory administration that managed, transported, and profited on poverty instead of resolving it. In May 1995, the Atlanta City Council granted Herman J. Russell, the most prominent African American real estate developer in Georgia, special enterprise zone status for his Peachtree Street mini-mall construction project—a status usually reserved for impoverished areas. This allowed one of the

⁶⁵¹ Nicholas Lemann, “The Myth of Community Development,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 1994, page 27.

⁶⁵² *Ibid*; “Atlanta Wins Empowerment Zone,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 1, 1994, pg. 1.

richest corporations in the area to escape paying over \$33.3 million in property taxes for over a decade. After securing the enterprise zone status, Russell built a 200,000 square-foot shopping mall and theater where Peachtree Street passes over I-85. He also justified why his firm deserved enterprise zone status by stating his willingness to increase the property values around Peachtree Street to bring the middle and upper class to the city. “The designated site is in a commercial enterprise zone, which is a technique that cities and states use to create enterprise, jobs, and...high property values that spur additional development,” Jerome Russell, Herman Russell’s son and president of H.J. Russell & Company explained. “Without it, you’re not going to get any kind of development in that area.”⁶⁵³

As the years went by, the black working-class neighborhoods further deteriorated. The problem was that Atlanta officials sat on the Empowerment Zone funds. By January 2002, the federal government stripped Atlanta of its Empowerment Zone status. The city had squandered a record \$100 million in federal grant money and another \$150 million in tax credits, proving the older working class residents right: with Empowerment Zones, like urban renewal, Model Cities, the War on Poverty, and Community Development Corporations, the racial class interests and voices of poor African Americans contradicted the interests of the petty bourgeois and bourgeois classes in urban power structures. “I do not think the money was well spent...just like many other social service programs in our community during the last 40 years,” stated African American Marie Cowser, an activist and resident of the Old Fourth Ward. “I don’t know if the community was ever totally knowledgeable of what the Empowerment Zone was supposed to do.”⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵³ *Ibid*; “A Sweetheart Deal? Or is it Just Good Business Sense?” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 20, 1995, pg. 1, 25;

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 25.

To make matters worse, only \$58 million of the \$250 million Empowerment funds remained after alleged misappropriation and embezzlement. Activist Ruthie Garrett-Wells accused the chair of the board of stealing funds for her family and friends and paying for a personal attorney. Board members openly attacked each other in the media, which resulted in Mayor Shirley Franklin dissolving the Empowerment Zone Board and creating a new public-private partnership, Renewal Community. Similarly, to the Empowerment Zone program, Renewal Community was a federally subsidized program that employed tax credits to promote economic development and revitalization in poor neighborhoods. Franklin appointed ANDP to oversee Renewal Community and dispense the remaining \$58 million.⁶⁵⁵

Once again, problems arose and the ANDP defrauded poor black neighborhoods of the millions promised to them. In July 2004, Franklin fired ANDP for not doing any work. ANDP responded by requesting that the Atlanta City Council pay them \$426,000 for their efforts. The city did not approve ANDP's expenses and the only work to show for their efforts were a couple of disorganized community meetings that resulted in no follow-up planning. "ANDP has engaged in complete discord," stated African American Atlanta activist Darren Smith. "That's why they've been given their pink slip...their community meetings were a complete joke. Their strategic plan is laughable."⁶⁵⁶ After another four years, the federal government requested that Atlanta return all of the Empowerment Zone funds. By July 2009, less than \$30 million remained from the initial \$250 million and the designated empowerment zone neighborhoods were in worse condition than before 1994. The Empowerment Zone fiasco provides an example

⁶⁵⁵ "Atlanta' Empowerment Zone Mess," *The Atlanta Voice*, September 21, 2002, pg. 1, 8, 18; "Empowerment Zone Replacement," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 15, 2003, pg. 3.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid*; "More Problems, More Delays for Empowerment Zone Communities," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 3, 2004, pg. 2;

of how CDCs typically do not serve the interests of the people and only promote supervisory programs to manage poverty and exploit it for profits.

As discussed in previous chapters, LGMs evaluate land value in targeted black working-class neighborhoods based on their exchange value potential—which means that they gentrified tracts that held favorable locational advantage for *future use*. Under these circumstances, very few parcels of land and built environment were safe from devalorization (blight, undermaintenance, sale to residential or commercial real estate developers) and revalorization (revitalization, land rent manipulation) because so much of black working class Atlanta sat in close proximity to profit generating spaces in the central city. In 1997, Green Pasture Ministries, a Decatur-based religious organization, purchased a \$60 million parcel of land in the West End neighborhood from the Sears building that sat near the MARTA West End Station, one of the busiest locations for public transportation in the city, and the Atlanta University Center. Although the organization stated that their purchase was “in the business of Jesus,” West End neighborhood residents like Rae McCall discovered that Green Pasture had partnered with Atlanta developer Walker Jackson, Inc., former Atlanta mayor Maynard Jackson’s real estate firm, to construct high rise apartments in the area. McCall also brought to light that Carol Gould, a residential real estate developer who facilitated the West End land acquisition for Green Pastures, had razed another neighborhood in the area to build an upper income townhouse development that also held locational advantage with the MARTA West End Station.⁶⁵⁷

Despite McCall’s attempt to galvanize neighborhood support against gentrification, these projects jumpstarted more interest in the area by Atlanta capitalists. Within the next few years, the Bill Campbell black urban regime joined developers in pouring \$150 million into another 15

⁶⁵⁷ “West End Sears Site Pits Residents Against Ministers,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 1997, pg. 2;

acres that stretched along Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, from James P. Brawley Drive (where Morehouse College sits) west to Lowery Boulevard and then north to Thurmond Street. This new “Westside Village” included 70 three-story townhouses priced from \$95,000 to \$175,000, 100 loft units, and 66 three-story apartment units. Commercial real estate included a new grocery store, pharmacy, restaurants, a movie theater, and laundromat. The H.J. Russell real estate giant joined Green Pasture Ministries in purchasing and razing significant portions of the West End neighborhood as well. The Russell-Green Pastures LLC built Sky Lofts Phase II, an \$18 million development for 102 residential units, at the corner of Lowery Blvd (formerly Ashby Street) and Oak Street next to Sky Lofts Phase I, the commercial retail development. Both encompassed a full city block within reach of thousands of Atlanta University Center students and hundreds of downtown businesses.⁶⁵⁸

“This is what is known as the new urbanization,” stated Kevin Hanna, president of the Atlanta Development Authority.⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, the gentrification of the West End demonstrated that low-income blacks had no place in the future of central city. From a political, economic, and cultural standpoint, this new urbanization, accomplished through the petty bourgeoisie’s “new activism,” created a middle-class Atlanta. At the onset of the twenty-first century, working class blacks existed on the neocolonial fringes of this new urbanization, either in isolated poverty nodes in the city or thirty miles away in the rural suburban parts of the region.

Around the same period, pro-growth interests attacked the remaining non-gentrified segments of working-class Auburn Avenue. In 1999, the National Parks Service and the King

⁶⁵⁸ “Citizens Trust Bank, H.J. Russell & Company Rebuild West End Atlanta,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 29, 2007, pg. 20.

⁶⁵⁹ “Multi-Million Dollar Project for Westside Atlanta Breaks Ground,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 20, 1999, pg. 2, 11A.

family who owned and operated the Martin Luther King Historic Site and the Martin Luther King Center jointly, spent an additional \$10 million to renovate two blocks of late-Victorian-era style homes. They tapped the Historic District Development Corporation CDC to serve as the housing wing of their revitalization. HDDC aggressively redressed both Auburn Avenue and the Old Fourth Ward sections. They purchased a vacant lot for the twenty-home Rosa Edwards Commons development on Howell Street. These developments raised the property values in the Old Fourth Ward to over \$500,000, some reaching as high as \$900,000. After some criticism for housing unaffordability, HDDC committed to finding housing only for middle income families. HDDC nor the Shirley Franklin Black Urban Regime mentioned the low-income residents losing their homes nor locating housing for the displaced.⁶⁶⁰

Some residents continued to fight displacement. One resident refused to sell his home to the developers for anything less than \$1 million. “We couldn’t do it,” said Frank Catroppa, the National Parks Service developer who wanted to take the home from a family for tourism. “It’s unfortunate. It’s the only property we’d like to have because it’s between the birth home and the King Center.” Another Auburn Avenue resident, Johnnie Haughabrook, used the National Parks Service’s valorization tactics against them. After refusing to take a low offer for his home, Haughabrook spent the summer of 1996 painting his home. He then skyrocketed the asking price for his home and justified it through the new paintjob. 92-year old Annie Johnson, who lived in her two-story beige house on the corner of Auburn Avenue almost her entire life, stated that no price would force her to leave her space. “I’ve been here a long, long time,” she told *The Atlanta Voice*. “I don’t want to move until I’m dead and gone. Can they make me move? Well, they’ll have a fight trying.” Despite displacing over three quarters of the original working-class

⁶⁶⁰ “King’s Neighborhood Restoration Almost Complete, Almost,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 28, 1999, pg. 1, 2; “HDDC’s New Modular Home Effort,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 24, 2003, pg. 4.

residents from black Auburn Avenue, the National Parks Service and the King family concluded that “You can’t own everything.” At the end of 1999, they purchased the final two homes they expected would come under their ownership. By the early 2000s, homes listed on Auburn Avenue ranged between \$300,000 to \$400,000. African American J.C. Thomas, who owned an eatery in the neighborhood, lamented how gentrification destroyed his black neighbors and the resident-centric aspect of Atlanta:

“The new houses being built next to us start at near \$350,000...that tells you that the people who are there now are not going to [be] living there very long. Black folks are getting uprooted and they don’t have the means to hang on...”⁶⁶¹

Tom Davis, an African American Auburn Avenue resident who operated Love Radio Internet Station, echoed similar sentiments, pointing to racial class characteristic of displacement in the area:

“Blacks are losing Auburn Avenue...It is being priced out of a black entrepreneurs ability to buy...white developers are taking over the entire area, and they raise the prices. Gentrification is likely to be Auburn Avenue’s death knell.”⁶⁶²

“I’m very happy to see what’s happening there,” Coretta Scott King stated. “I think without it the neighborhood would have been destroyed.”⁶⁶³

Neoliberalization and gentrification upended Atlanta’s racial class demographics dramatically. By 2004, Clark Atlanta University’s Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy reported that “while [blacks] are moving outside the city into subdivisions and housing developments,” whites purchased 95 percent of the newly built condos and lofts in the central

⁶⁶¹ “Sweet Auburn now Attracting Everyone,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 2002, pg. 1, 2.

⁶⁶² “Sweet Auburn now Attracting Everyone,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 15, 2002, pg. 1, 2.

⁶⁶³ “King’s Neighborhood Restoration Almost Complete, Almost,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 28, 1999, pg. 1, 2.

city that replaced torn down public housing projects.⁶⁶⁴ In fact, the Southern Center predicted that the first decade of the twentieth century would see a drastic demographic shift as more new housing, tourism, night life, and upscale businesses lured white middle and upper class families to the central city. Kathy Holland, a 54-year-old white Chief Operating Officer and President of the Mescon Group consulting firm, moved her six children away from their two-story Gwinnett County home in Duluth, Georgia to buy a 1,250 square foot loft overlooking downtown Atlanta in 1998. She traded in her ninety-minute daily car trip to her office for a daily ten-minute walk to work. Anchor Charles Sheperd left their three-bedroom, two-story house in suburban Cobb County to reside in a 1,600 square-foot, \$1,400-a-month loft in a renovated office building downtown. According to Terry Morris, the executive vice president of Northside Realty, Holland and Shepherd's experiences were an exception to the rule. Most middle and upper-class whites that moved to the central city around the turn of the century were single, divorced, childless, or recently graduated from college.⁶⁶⁵

The Southern Center's prophecy proved true. Between 2000 and 2008, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. posted the largest increases in white share of a city since 2000, each up five percentage points to 36 and 44 percent, respectively. Other significant reverse white flight occurred during the same time frame in New York City, Boston, and San Francisco, which demonstrates that Atlanta was only one part of a late capitalist push to privatize major metropolitan centers.⁶⁶⁶ Collectively these gentrification efforts pushed black working class

⁶⁶⁴ "Is Atlanta Becoming the White Mecca?" *The Atlanta Voice*, November 13, 2004, pg. 1, 2, 3; "The Whitening of Black Neighborhoods," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 26, 2003, pg. 7, 17.

⁶⁶⁵ "Suburbanites Slowly Moving Back to Downtown Atlanta," *The Atlanta Voice*, October 10, 1998, pg. 1, 3A.

⁶⁶⁶ U.S. Census Bureau;

Atlantans from the city center and into the suburbs, distancing them from the neighborhood networks, community resources, and employment opportunities.

Stranded at the Extended Stay: Black Working-Class Suburbanization in Metro Atlanta

Every weekday at 3:15 p.m in 2015, the Norcross school bus dropped off dozens of children in front of a cluster of dilapidated, three-story, yellow motels where they lived. In front of each motel sat abandoned cars, discarded mattresses, and scattered debris. Stranded at the Norcross Extended Stay Motel for \$169 a week, many of these individuals, like African American Reverend Harriet Bradley, did not possess access to stable transportation, especially since the public transit in Gwinnett County did not run on weekends. Instead, she planned her trips to her church in advance and remained at the motel for most days. At one point, Bradley, fed up at the County bus system, travelled to a Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners meeting to protest the lack of public transit. She spoke passionately about how this struggle contributed to deepening poverty in the county:

“The bus schedules don’t start early or run late enough. I’ve often heard people say, ‘They don’t realize I can’t get to work.’ Many have had to turn down jobs because they couldn’t get there.”⁶⁶⁷

After she realized the commissioners ignored her pleas, Bradley stated, “they don’t really want public transportation out here...they wouldn’t use it anyway.”⁶⁶⁸

Between 2000 and 2011, Atlanta’s suburban poor exploded by 159 percent, mostly because of displacement from the unaffordable, gentrified city. Similar trends defined the New Nadir in other metropolitan centers. In the early 2000s, 38 percent of blacks living in

⁶⁶⁷ Alana Samuels, “Suburbs and the New American Poverty,” *The Atlantic*, January 7, 2015; <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/suburbs-and-the-new-american-poverty/384259/>

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

metropolitan areas resided in suburban areas, up from 27 percent in 1980. Atlanta metropolitan region suburbs were 25 percent black by 2000, the third highest percentage in the United States at the time. As a result, U.S. Census also reported that the U.S. suburban poor grew by 25 percent between 2000 and 2008—five times the growth rate of the poor in the cities. Thus, for the first time in decades, a higher share of suburban residents held incomes below the poverty line than in the cities. By 2011, almost 16.4 million suburban residents lived below the poverty line.⁶⁶⁹

This points to a new black working class and sub-working-class population that either consciously chose to leave the increasingly expensive central city or were involuntarily dispossessed. Thus, this data demonstrates the class characteristic in black displacement to the suburbs. In fact, scholarship on gentrification often ends after revitalization occurs. Scholars have generally overlooked the suburban black working class in twenty-first century history. If scholars centralize black working-class actors over structural processes like gentrification, we can possess a better understanding of how displacement and dispossession restructures the racial formations for working class blacks under the New Nadir. Atlanta provides an effective case study of how working-class African Americans readjusted their lives from urban to relatively rural living spaces and marshaled resources for survival.

In 2003, the average cost of a home in the city of Atlanta approached \$250,000, more than double the going price in 1988. Concurrently, Central Atlanta Progress reported that over eighty percent of Atlantans who resided in downtown Atlanta made less than \$40,000 a year. In other words, eighty percent of Atlantans did not possess the capacity to buy a home in the city of Atlanta in 2003. What is most revealing about the neoliberal character of the city of Atlanta is

⁶⁶⁹ U.S. Census Bureau.

that the housing costs in the areas with the highest concentration of low-paying jobs were the highest in the city—averaging between an estimated \$300,000 and \$7 million.⁶⁷⁰

As African American Mechanicsville activist Dwanda Farmer eloquently expressed, much of the blame of skyrocketing cost of living in the city goes to the exploitative character of Community Development Corporations:

“What’s so perplexing is the city’s mission to revitalize blighted communities where low income, poor people lived and turn them into safe, decent livable communities with affordable housing was a great idea at the onset...the implementation...caught the eyes of the everyday capitalist. So the quest to make money drove the housing market to its maximum. When that occurs, you have those same low-income residents unable to afford to live in the place where they grew up. So the exact group we set out to help, we’ve now become their harm.”⁶⁷¹

Gentrification made metro region suburbs grow rapidly in the first decade of the twenty first century, but the class position of the majority of the displaced and the neoliberal policies that stripped state resources from local budgets, did not provide the necessary capital for these areas to develop more readily available social services. Most suburban metro regions in the 1990s and 2000 were relatively rural; they lacked infrastructure, thriving economies, and geographical proximity to living wage jobs.

Additionally, working class suburbs more frequently struggle with food insecurity for many reasons, all related to class position. First, many areas where black poor people reside lack grocery stores that provide fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables within a five-mile radius. Pawn shops, check cashing services, and fast food restaurants replaced grocery stores that used to be located in proximity to the Extended Stay in Norcross.⁶⁷² Alice and Richard Brown, retired

⁶⁷⁰ “Affordable Housing in Atlanta-Forget It,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 11, 2003, pg. 2, 15.

⁶⁷¹ “Affordable Housing in Atlanta-Forget it,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 11, 2003, pg. 2, 15.

⁶⁷² Alana Samuels, “Suburbs and the New American Poverty,” *The Atlantic*, January 7, 2015

African Americans who reside in predominantly black southwest Atlanta suburbs on Eleanor Terrace, lost their only grocery supermarket within eight miles of their home when the Piggly Wiggly closed in the early 2000s. In fact, the correlation between the disappearance of grocery stores that provide fresh foods and the abundance of fast food, dialysis centers, and retail in suburban metro regions is problematic.

Under these conditions, where reliable personal transport is unaffordable and public transportation relatively unstable, working class suburbanites are more likely to socialize and spend money in the proximity of their homes, where non-essential consumer materials dominate social needs. As Ellen Gerstein, the executive director of the Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services stated, “the poverty keeps increasing, but the county tries to mask it. We have...the working poor, there’s a lot of retail jobs because we have more shopping here than you ever imagine.”⁶⁷³ This intentional dialectic of plentiful consumerist commodities and a shortage of social needs in metro region suburbs is a crucial aspect of the political economy in the New Nadir. In other words, black working class Atlantans that ere forced out of the city for the suburbs encountered a geographically different apartheid that trapped them in poverty-stricken rural neighborhoods surrounded by low-wage unstable jobs and unaffordable consumer products that took the place of grocery stores and public schools. As a result, black working-class suburbanites generally do not possess the capacity to strengthen the use value of their neighborhoods and consequently, build protest movements for social change.

The second reason poor black suburbanites struggle with nutrition is poor blacks lack access to resources to improve general health. Children no longer take nutritional courses in public schools because neoliberal governments slashed home economics and health from

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*

physical education. Also, low-income suburbanites do not have the time to devote to healthy eating and meal preparation. As this chapter demonstrates, the consequences of the 2008 Great Recession produced a shortfall of stable, livable wage jobs. Therefore, many low-income blacks must juggle multiple low wage, unstable jobs that force them to work fifteen to eighteen hours a day for minimum wage.⁶⁷⁴

Between 2000 and 2010, Gwinnett County's black population added 112,000 new residents, growing 143 percent. Over 90 percent of students in some Gwinnett schools were eligible for free and reduced lunch. In 2015, the second greatest number of blacks in Gwinnett County were employed as cashiers (47,090) and earned an average of \$10,743 in salary.⁶⁷⁵ The county power structure, however, was fully white—the County Board of Commissioners, the school board, and all the county's state and superior court judges. Douglas County, twenty miles west of the central city, witnessed one of the most staggering transformations that resulted from gentrification. Between 2000 and 2010, Douglas County, Georgia's black population more than doubled, from 17,065 (19 percent) to 52,290 (40 percent). In every common job category, African Americans placed last in wages earned. In 2015, over 49,000 African Americans in Douglas County worked as cashiers and earned an average of \$12,000 a year salary. Most jobs

⁶⁷⁴ For more on food insecurity in urban spaces, see M. Nathaniel Mead, "Urban Issues: The Sprawl of Food Deserts," *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 116, No. 8, (Aug 2008), pA335; Amy Hillier and Benjamin Chrisinger, "The Reality of Urban Food Deserts and What Low-Income Food Shoppers Need," in Amy Hillier and Benjamin Chrisinger, *Social Policy and Social Justice*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017, pp. 74-86; Craig Gundersen, Brent Kreider, and John Pepper, "The Economics of Food Insecurity in the United States," *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (Autumn 2011), pp. 281-303; Sheila Mammen, Jean W. Bauer, Leslie Richards, "Understanding Persistent Food Insecurity: A Paradox of Place and Circumstance," *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 92, No. 1, May 2009, pp. 151-168; Janice E. Stuff, Michelle LaCour, Xianglin Du, Frank Franklin, Yan Liu, Sheryl Hughes, Ron Peters, Theresa A. Nicklas, "The Prevalance of Food Insecurity and Associated Factors Among Households with Children in Head Start Programs in Houston, Texas and Birmingham, Alabama," *Race Gender & Class*, Vol. 16, No 3/4, 2009, pp. 31-47.

⁶⁷⁵ In 2015, most blacks in Gwinnett County worked as drivers/sales workers or truck drivers. The third highest number of blacks worked as customer service representatives. U.S. Census Bureau.

held by Douglas County residents included administrative support services, retail sales, and transportation. Only 25,029 blacks held jobs as full time supervisors of retail sales workers and earned an average \$35,000 a year salary. Blacks led all races in poverty in Douglas County with over 41 percent.⁶⁷⁶

Fulton and DeKalb Counties, two of the main areas where poor black Atlantans fled to once displaced from the central city, bore a disproportionate share of the Atlanta metro region's burden of poverty at the turn of the century. By 1995, these two counties held only 37 percent of the region's population but also 66 percent of the poor people. On the other side, Gwinnett, Cobb, and Cherokee counties, the northern suburbs made up predominantly of upper working class and middle-class whites, held a smaller share of the region's poverty population as a whole. Cobb County had 11.1 percent of the region's poor, but 18.2 percent of the region's total population. Cherokee County had 2.1 percent of the region's poor, but 4 percent of the overall population. Additionally, higher income families resided in the region's northern and far southern areas, while working families who earned less than the area's median income of \$36,640 (city of Atlanta's median household income was \$22,275) were concentrated in poor enclaves in the central city, Dekalb and Fulton county suburbs.⁶⁷⁷

Black working-class suburbs in the Atlanta metro region were at least thirty miles from Atlanta's central business district. This meant that displaced blacks had to travel far for their jobs in the city or accept jobs in the emerging retail economy that enveloped their rural surroundings. To make matter worse, MARTA cut services across the board throughout the 2000s. In February 2004, MARTA dissolved or adjusted a record 91 of its 124 bus routes through the Atlanta metro

⁶⁷⁶ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁶⁷⁷ U.S. Census Bureau.

region. To accompany the new route schedules, MARTA laid off 304 bus drivers and maintenance workers. The Amalgamated Transit Workers union told *The Atlanta Voice* that their general manager conceded to MARTA and allowed job cuts and hour reductions. This affected all 212,311 weekly MARTA riders, who had to alter their daily routines, especially those who lived in the metro suburbs around Fulton Industrial Boulevard in west Atlanta, Camp Creek Parkway in East Atlanta, Stone Mountain in North Atlanta, and Cleveland Avenue in South Atlanta.⁶⁷⁸

Conclusion

The black petty bourgeoisie in post-Olympic Atlanta, as the junior partners of capital, waged petty bourgeois activism against the black working class by implementing neoliberal reforms that privatized public resources. Liberal Growth Machines targeted hospitals, schools, and public housing in an effort to reduce both the population of the black working class and their class interests from the future direction of the city. Petty bourgeois activism refers to both how LGMs implement pro-growth reforms and how they sway public opinion through a progressive, anti-poverty, anti-crime discourse. In other words, petty bourgeois activism is the capitalist class's strategy of appropriating tactics and discourse of the working class for their own class interests.

The Atlanta power structure's plan to transform the central city into a 24-hour visitor market meant that they had to replace low-income and non-profit generating public spaces and resources with new enterprises more attuned to middle and upper class individuals. Both state

⁶⁷⁸ "Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta," *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy*, 2000, pg. 4; "MARTA's Day of Reckoning," *The Atlanta Voice*, May 1, 2004, pg. 1, 7; "MARTA proposed route Changes-What's Affected?" *The Atlanta Voice*, May 1, 2004, pg. 2.

hospitals and public schools suffered from decreased funding and shoddy infrastructure. Therefore, petty bourgeois activists justified their privatization by highlighting their efforts to “save” these institutions for the people and upgrade them through private investment. As a result, middle and upper class residents exercised the freedom to choose what institutions they frequented—so they chose the privately funded, exclusive schools over the poorly-funded schools.

Community Development Corporations facilitated the displacement of poor residents by helping capitalists manipulate urban rents for middle-and upper-income developments. These institutions, which operate under the assumption that they improve neighborhoods and conditions for the poor, act as a neocolonial *soft power* by taking state resources meant for poor people and converting them in administrative and supervisory positions with high salaries. These bureaucracies work with developers to purchase land that poor blacks live on and sell it to the public as “ending poverty.” However, these forces only remove poor people and do not help them relocate or help them out of poverty. CDC investments generally guarantee profitable returns for themselves and developers, thus demonstrating that they achieve their capitalist objectives through anti-capitalist and anti-poverty discourse.

CHAPTER SIX: ‘ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL’: THE GREAT RECESSION AND THE NEOCOLONIAL PROJECT IN BLACK ATLANTA, 2007-2015

“Now they’ve taken the land away and have sent people to and fro on the earth. They put us out here with no lifeline.”

-Demetrious Richardson, former Bowen Homes resident of 25 years, displaced June 2009

“There’s no dispersal of poverty. It’s the general plan of the Chamber of Commerce and others to drive poor people out of downtown Atlanta and to bring gentrification in. This is a war on black people.”

-Dianne Mathiowetz, former Bowen Homes resident and activist, displaced June 2009

Introduction

In March 2009, Stephanie Marshall received a registered mailing alerting her that her rental unit was in foreclosure. “I couldn’t believe it,” Stephanie exclaimed. “I pay my rent every month...I hadn’t heard anything from the owner.” When she contacted the bank, the management refused to disclose the debt with her. The National Low Income Housing Coalition and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty issued a 2009 report that showed that close to 40 percent of families facing eviction due to foreclosures in the recession were renters whose landlords defaulted on mortgages. When these foreclosures hit, tenants who had consistently paid their rent on time faced eviction within a five-day span without further notice. Housing insecurity skyrocketed as many individuals like Stephanie Marshall found themselves on a waiting list for increasing diminishing public housing in the central city.⁶⁷⁹

The 2008 Great Recession provided the Atlanta power structure the opportunity to displace the remainder of low-income African Americans out of spaces they targeted for capital accumulation. Already reeling from a devastating revenue crisis, the stock market crash and

⁶⁷⁹ “Renters Hit By Foreclosure Crisis Too,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 3, 2009, pg. 1, 15.

ensuing permanent loss of working-class labor removed any significant revenue base for the city of Atlanta to provide services for public resources. As a result, African Americans lost even more ground in securing the means to challenge gentrification in the city. The chapter argues that The Great Recession reaffirmed the neocolonial relationship between the subjugated urban black workers and the dominant, multiracial ruling class oligarchy.

Consequences of the Great Recession and the New Nadir

In the 1990s, the Atlanta Metropolitan Region added more than 650,000 people and 350,000 jobs. Unlike in previous decades, however, much of the growth within the central city centered around white collar, non-productive industries such as office administration, banking and finance, and high technology. New jobs in these areas resulted in the metro region's per capita income rising more than 75 percent between 1970 and 2000. Labor sectors were geographically determined as well. For example, technology jobs developed in Alpharetta, the northern most part of Fulton County. Clayton County was the only county in the southern part of the metro region (which is predominantly African American) that expanded jobs. However, these jobs were mostly entry-level administrative, retail, and Hartsfield airport labor, which meant that low wage, low skill, no benefits service sector work surrounded working class black neighborhoods. In fact, over 75 percent of all entry-level jobs were located at least ten miles from the central city, where most poverty-stricken Blacks relocated in the 2000s. Despite this growth of sub-working-class labor, the black working-class population explosion in the suburban parts of Dekalb and Fulton outpaced the economy. These areas experienced a net loss of nearly

1,000 jobs in the 1990s. By 2000, South Dekalb County, which was 83 percent non-white and working class, had a net gain of only 324 jobs!⁶⁸⁰

Thus, this uneven development defined the first decade of the 2000s in black Atlanta as geographical and socioeconomic apartheid isolated poor blacks from the greatest concentrations of skilled, real wage jobs, neighborhood wealth, and public resources. For the first time, black working class Atlantans struggled to obtain blue collar jobs and settled for sub-working class labor.⁶⁸¹

The population and economic transformation proved unequal to the majority black working-class population. Most of the skilled, livable wage, stable jobs and residential and commercial development occurred far from low-income black neighborhoods. Thus, Olympic gentrification deepened poverty-stricken enclaves isolated from the rest of the city. To make matters worse, Bill Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act promoted racist, classist, and sexist ideology to not only blame African Americans for their own subjugation at the hands of capital, but to also transfer funds needed by poor people to the administrative and managerial class to supervise poverty:

Instead of paying money directly to unwed teenage mothers, the money they would have received through AFDC and Food Stamps should be given to the states. States could develop programs to assist teenage mothers, including promoting adoption, orphanages, or assisting young mothers in tightly supervised group homes. Since other families don't receive increased income when they have additional children, neither should women on AFDC and/or food Stamps. Eventually, direct federal payments to unwed mothers of all ages should be eliminated, so there is no longer a

⁶⁸⁰ U.S. Census Bureau; "Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta," *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy*, 2000, pg. 18-19.

⁶⁸¹ U.S. Census Bureau; "Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta," *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy*, 2000, pg. 18-19.

government reward for having children out of wedlock.”⁶⁸²

To understand why Clinton’s welfare programs played such a monumental role in extending the New Nadir for the African American working classes, black political scientist Mack Jones offers the most succinct summation of liberal ideology regarding poverty:

“Liberal philosophy rises to the occasion by defining such poverty as a pathological condition occasion either by the deficiencies of the individuals themselves or by the shortcomings of the groups to which the individual belongs. When the pathology is defined as resulting from individual deficiencies, it gives rise to rehabilitative policy solutions designed to reform the individual, while group explanations call forth policy alternatives tailored to alter the structural environment within which the individual lives.”⁶⁸³

As discussed in chapter four, liberals classify the poor in the binary of “deserving and undeserving” to reinforce pathological reasoning in poverty. More clearly, there is very little difference between Clinton’s welfare ideology and conservative Charles Murray, who argued that illegitimacy was the root of all social ills, or sociologist James Wilson, who publicized his draconian belief that all unwed pregnant youth should be confined to private-run group homes in order to receive government benefits. As scholar Robert Wilkes concluded, by racializing poverty, or “focusing on race instead of poverty as a significant but descriptive variable,” liberals do not seek to reduce poverty, but only to subtly classify African Americans (to separate themselves from staunch conservatives) as “irresponsible and undeserving of assistance.”⁶⁸⁴

Thus, the reason why Clinton is celebrated by liberals for reducing the number of individuals receiving welfare under his tenure is because he scrubbed an estimated 4 million poor parents and children off welfare rolls less than two years after his law went into effect. The

⁶⁸² Robert Wilkes, “Examining President Clinton’s Response to Welfare,” *Endarch*, Spring 1997, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁸³ “Mack H. Jones, “Political Philosophy and Public Assistance in Liberal Society,” *The Review of Black Political Economy*, Vol. 2, No. 1, April 1980, p. 10.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pg. 10.

problem is that over half of those scrubbed from welfare rolls were unemployed while the others were underemployed. By March 1998, 71 percent of welfare recipients earned less than \$250 a week. Across the U.S, one in ten families designated as housing insecure in 1998 declared that they lost their homes after welfare reform.⁶⁸⁵ The lesser known effects of welfare reform drastically undercut family and neighborhood stability. The Clinton administration refused to remove the burden of poverty by transferring people from welfare to work. Instead, once families were cut off from assistance, they were thrown in the fire of a volatile and racist political economy—where for many blacks, the job ceiling is temporary, sub-working-class labor. Children forced to move and change schools frequently because of housing insecurity fall behind in classes while parents find it increasingly difficult to balance assisting their children with schoolwork and looking for work. Clinton's welfare reform also reinforced triple oppression on black women. Because black women represented the majority of African Americans thrown off welfare rolls, their historical position as the lowest paid and most discriminated against by white unions, their social conditions worsened more considerably and further destabilized black working-class neighborhoods.⁶⁸⁶

A 1999 study reported by the Brookings Institute found that African Americans made up over 91 percent of welfare recipients in the central city, compared to only four percent for whites. In the Atlanta metropolitan region, 70 percent of African Americans lived in poverty compared to nineteen percent of whites. By 2000, fewer than ten percent of poverty-stricken individuals resided in neighborhoods where less than fifty percent of the population was African American.

⁶⁸⁵ "After Welfare, Many Families Fare Worse," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 19, 1998, pg. 4A.

⁶⁸⁶ Wilkes, "Examining President Clinton's Response to Welfare, pp. 18-19; "So Yu Think Welfare Reforming is Working?" *The Atlanta Voice*, March 13, 1999, pg. 5.

Lastly, the gendered dynamics of housing insecurity, and the political economy in general, following Clinton's welfare cuts offer critical insights into racial oppression in the New Nadir. In the mid-2000s, Pathways Study calculated that 84 percent of Atlanta homeless were male, while women and children made up 16 percent and 15 percent, respectively. As the exploitation and triple oppression of black women produced both precariousness in black female-led households and stigmatization of being identified as "welfare mothers," the mass incarceration of black men since the 1980s produced a different, gendered precariousness. Formerly incarcerated black males face crippling housing, job, and social restrictions that result in their disproportionality in housing insecurity and homelessness. Between 1980 and 2000, the U.S. prison population exploded from 500,000 to 2 million, with 70 percent being African American and Latinx. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that close to one million of the two million people incarcerated in the U.S. were African American and that an African American man born in the 1990s had a 1 in 4 chance of spending time in prison during their lifetime.⁶⁸⁷ Prior to the New Nadir, African American males faced a greater possibility of finding livable wage work in metropolitan centers and therefore helped stabilize housing for a family unit. However, mass incarceration removed a great number of black men from households and black female-led households no longer possess supplemental income to offset their subproletariat wages. Thus, government assistance becomes the only viable option. Although a greater number of black women must turn to government assistance under the New Nadir, black men are frequently cut off from access to those forms of assistance and have a greater propensity to become housing insecure and homeless after incarceration. In other words, the New Nadir racial

⁶⁸⁷ "Black Male Prison Population Increases," *The Atlanta Voice*, September 7, 2002, pg. 1, 3; "Blacks are one-third of population but 60 Percent of Prisoners," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 4, 2001, pg. 1, 15A; "As Crime Rates Come Down, Prison Rates for Blacks Goes Up," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 28, 2003, pg. 2.

formation reconstituted black male subjugation as a stigmatized, criminalized class rendered ineligible for the fraying public safety net programs.

This suggests that either black men were thrown off welfare more than black women, or that black men did not apply for the benefits perhaps discouraged by their unlikelihood for eligibility. Thus, despite the mainstream notion that Atlanta at the turn of the century represented a “Black Mecca” for black wealth, entrepreneurship, and opportunity, the dominant portion of African Americans in Atlanta were working class and lived in high poverty neighborhoods. The gendered contours of the oppression of black men and black women often differed, but the result amounted to life in an increasingly impoverished apartheid urban landscape.⁶⁸⁸

The social costs of imperialist wars in the Middle East paved the way for crippling anti-working-class policies at the federal and state level. In 2008, the Institute for Policy Studies Task Force issued a 54-page report documenting the exorbitant costs, both monetary and human, of the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Between the start of the war on March 19, 2003 and June 16, 2004, Congress approved \$151.1 billion and that the war would cost at least \$3,415 per U.S. household. In fact, the George W. Bush Administration mimicked their Reagan predecessor in redistributing spending away from social welfare and towards military while also cutting taxes for the bourgeoisie. This meant that from 2005 to 2008, the Bush administration virtually froze most domestic discretionary program spending other than the beefed-up homeland security.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, 1999, 2000; “Moving Beyond Sprawl: The Challenge for Metropolitan Atlanta,” *The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy*, 2000, pg. 9-10.

⁶⁸⁹ Erik Leaver, Jenny Shin, “Iraq Quagmire: Costs of War,” *Institute for Policy Studies*, March 27, 2008. https://ips-dc.org/iraq_quagmire_costs_of_war/

These attacks on social welfare are most glaring when we examine Bush administration programs that affected poor black children. His 2003-2008 budgets attempted to dismantle federal oversight of Head Start, a program that was 35 percent black (294,000 black children) and send it to states for termination, slash after-school program funding, shift Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program for at least 4.5 million poor black children in state block grants, and cut federal childcare by 30,000 children in 2003 and 200,000 over the next five years with a freeze on the Child Care and Development Block Grant for low-income families. Concurrently, Bush followed Reagan's lead in proposing deep social cuts and tax breaks for the wealthy simultaneously (\$670 billion stimulus plan and the elimination of federal income taxes on stock dividends).⁶⁹⁰

Atlanta's revenue crisis in the early 2000s further crippled black working-class social conditions. Mayor Shirley Franklin's first budget for the city in 2002 contained an \$82 million shortfall, the largest in the city's history. Because past administrations refused to collect delinquent tax payments from bourgeois property owners, the city had no cash reserves. Therefore, Franklin implemented a severe austerity budget that called for \$43 million in cuts, five mandatory furlough days for city employees, and over 600 city positions eliminated. Franklin considered increasing property taxes by as much as 51 percent but opted to eliminate that measure from the budget and borrowed \$72 million to pay the city's bills. Thus, Franklin's petty bourgeoisie administration executed their role as the junior partner of capital well. They strengthened the economic and social power base of the Atlanta bourgeoisie through the subjugation of the metro region's working classes. City council member Derrick Boazman

⁶⁹⁰ "George Bush has Already Declared War on Children," *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 2003, pg. 1, 27; "Black Children in Extreme Poverty Hist Record High," *The Atlanta Voice*, June 14, 2003, pg. 1, 5.

stated the obvious regarding this attack on social conditions of poor black Atlantans: “We have already balanced this budget not on the backs...but on the necks of our employees.”⁶⁹¹

Public outrage over the budget cuts pointed to a contradictory policy in the city government. Petty bourgeoisie leaders like former Commissioner of Public Safety A. Reginald Eaves challenged the Franklin Black Urban Regime on their willingness to cut jobs and services but refusal to collect back taxes from elite property owners like Tom Cousins. In fact, tax collection continued to serve as a tool of class war in black Atlanta in the 2000s. Fulton County had yet to collect over \$150 million in unpaid property taxes. Cousins Properties, Inc., the largest real estate company in the state owned by Tom Cousins, reportedly held the largest delinquent tax bill in the county. Across the state in May 2002, tax collections dropped for the 10th month in a row, down \$78.2 million, or 7.8 percent. As a result, collections for the first ten months of the fiscal year were at \$10.3 billion, down \$660.1 million, or six percent from the same period in April 2001. Democratic Governor Roy Barnes inflamed this issue when he proposed legislation that month to freeze tax assessment increases for property and business owners—a veiled attempt to boost his reelection campaign. The bill, which essentially continued Barnes’ 1999 program that shielded home and property owners’ value from taxation, prevented local officials throughout the state from increasing property assessments—the value from which tax bills are determined—by more than five percent in any one year. It applied to all residential, commercial, and farm property as well. ⁶⁹²

⁶⁹¹ “Atlanta Facing Huge Budget Gap,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 2, 2002, pg. 4; “Mayor Franklin Proposes Painful Remedy for Atlanta’s Budget Woes,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 9, 2002, pg. 1, 5A; “City Council Approves Tough Budget,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 2, 2002, pg. 1, 2.

⁶⁹² “Fulton County: Tac Collection,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 19, 1997, pg. 3; “Georgia Tax Collections Down for 10th Month in a Row,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 18, 2002, pg. 2; “Barnes Proposes Freezing Tax Assessment Increases,” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 31, 2002, pg. 2.

Outrage quickly escalated into action as city workers organized protests to protect their economic allotment against a neoliberal administration. In February 2004, hundreds of city workers from multiple public sectors initiated a “sick out” one-day protest, stormed the Atlanta City Council chambers and demanded an immediate four percent raise across the board or face an open-ended citywide strike. The council voted to approve the increase on the spot and the confrontation ended quickly. It was the first raise for city workers since 1998, and Atlanta at that point ranked last in pay and benefits for its city workers compared to thirty major U.S. cities. However, African American Roger Baker, one of the city workers who protested for the raise, stated that this small victory is “not enough” and does not resolve the Atlanta government’s “nasty” contempt for the public sector.⁶⁹³ Baker’s fears rang true a few months later when Franklin threatened to veto the council’s budget to scale back the raises to four percent for police and only one percent for other city employees. Although most city workers at the time made below the cost of living, Franklin told media that a four percent increase was “too high.” Once her comments circulated, hundreds of city employees, led by the firefighters, staged protests, both alongside one another and separate from other groups. The fire fighters stormed Turner Field on a Monday afternoon in late November and marched from the stadium to City Hall. During their march, dozens of sanitation, sewer, and water workers joined the protest and swelled the city council chambers.⁶⁹⁴

The confrontation also further revealed that class interests informed how the city council distributed funds. According to multiple councilpersons, they had hoped to spend the \$5 million

⁶⁹³ “Cops, City Workers Get More Money,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 21, 2004, pg. 1, 2; Atlanta City Workers Seek Parity,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 20, 2004, pg. 2.

⁶⁹⁴ “Cops, City Workers Get More Money,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 21, 2004, pg. 1, 2; Atlanta City Workers Seek Parity,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 20, 2004, pg. 2; “Atlanta Firefighters Lament Over Their ‘Second Class’ Status,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 18, 2004, pg. 4.

in surplus on property tax rollbacks, which would have bankrolled their petty bourgeois and bourgeois constituencies. The city council promised the workers to support parity raises of four percent across the board, but by the next month, they released their 2005 budget with the same one percent raises for all municipal employees except police—who played a vital role in the neoliberalization and gentrification of the city. Public workers like 36-year-old black fire fighter Carleton Jinks argued that their struggles with the Atlanta decision-makers is as political as it is humanistic. “Normally every fireman you meet has a second job or a third job to support his or her family,” Jinks explained. “What I don’t want is to have the wool pulled over our eyes again...I don’t want to receive another swift slap in the face...we need to get what we asked for and not accept anything less.”⁶⁹⁵ These revenue crisis battles in Shirley Franklin’s mayoralty between Atlanta workers and the State testify to the idea that neoliberal Black urban regimes, particularly after the turn of the century, stressed austerity for the working classes, but also excavated tax funds as a powerful tactic of capital accumulation.

The Great Recession began much earlier for black working class Atlantans than most. In November 2006, 3100 workers lost their jobs when the Hapeville Ford manufacturing plant in south Atlanta closed. Six other manufacturing plants followed suit over the next few years, which resulted in the disappearance of over 34,000 stable, livable wage, working class jobs from the Atlanta metropolitan region. Factory workers at Hapeville made an average of \$56,000 a year minus overtime; more senior workers earned \$5 more an hour. Atlanta was one of many metropolitan regions devastated by the Ford Corporation’s “Way Forward” program that closed multiple plants to consolidate production and cut costs. The Hapeville area had recently been hit by a massive layoff from Delta Airlines after filing for bankruptcy. 35-year old John Rape, who

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

had worked for Ford's chassis department and motor line since January 1995, represented most black workers who had no prospects after leaving such a stable job. "It hasn't sunk in yet," Rape told *The Atlanta Voice*. "Wait until Monday morning when I wake up and don't have anywhere to go." Unsurprisingly, the City of Atlanta set in motion plans to rezone the Hapeville plant, 127 acres that held locational advantage with the Hartsfield-International Airport, for "a more diverse use."⁶⁹⁶

The state of Georgia proved futile in protecting black Atlantans from the worse effects of the recession. In August 2008, all major revenue streams across Georgia decreased, including sales tax (6.5 percent decrease), income tax (6.5 percent decrease), and corporate taxes (33 percent decrease). Georgians bought less food, clothing, furniture, and cars. The only Georgia tax revenues that jumped during the recession were alcohol. State revenues tumbled seven percent while tax collections plummeted 6.8 percent, or \$180 million for the year 2008. The state also reported 50,090 new jobless claims, a 72 percent increase from August 2007 and the highest total since the stock market crisis in September 2001. In response, Republican Governor Sonny Perdue cut six percent of the state budget to close the projected \$1.6 billion shortfall that year. Perdue borrowed \$600 million from its cash reserves to make payroll and demanded that all state agencies develop plans that slashed their budgets.⁶⁹⁷

Perdue also attempted to exploit the recession to privatize public state resources. The governor targeted state controlled public health at a time when an increasing number of people sought mental health services to deal with the economic collapse. In 2009, Georgia's

⁶⁹⁶ "Ford to Close Hapeville Plant," *The Atlanta Voice*, January 26, 2006, pg. 1, 4; "Without Fanfare, last Ford Taurus Rolls off Atlanta Assembly Line," *The Atlanta Voice*, November 2, 2006, pg. 12.

⁶⁹⁷ "The Great Recession Tightens its Grip on Georgia," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 10, 2009, pg. 1, 5; "GA Revenues Continue to Slide, More Cuts Possible," *The Atlanta Voice*, September 18, 2008, pg. 3.

Department of Human Resources announced plans to privatize much of its public mental health hospital network and close its mental health facilities. They also drew up plans to consolidate the seven mental health hospitals into two and rely more heavily on “community-based services.” Although community protests, mental health advocates, state legislators, and even members of Perdue’s own mental health commission outlined clear evidence that privatizing public services does not save taxpayers money nor improve quality of service, Perdue sped up the process and expected to fully privatize by June 2011. In January 2011, Perdue closed the Northwest Georgia Hospital, which served 180 patients and employed 764 staff. He further restricted access to healthcare when he ordered state hospitals to refuse to admit developmentally disabled people and to discharge all remaining patients by July 2015.⁶⁹⁸

The class interests of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus impeded their willingness to intervene on behalf of the state’s black poor. As the nation’s largest black caucus at 53 members, the GLBC “Collectively the caucus is ineffective,” stated Rita Samuels, a former staffer for the Jimmy Carter gubernatorial administration. “The reason for it is their inability to mobilize the black community around issues...” Instead, the black lawmakers in the state spent their collective energy protesting symbolic slights against President Barack Obama. In March 2009, the entire CLBC staged a walkout after the Georgia House of Representatives decided to delay a vote on a resolution that “would have honored President Barack Obama as a politician with an unimpeachable reputation for integrity, vision, and passion.” In a surprising defense of his symbolic bill that would have made Obama an honorary member of the GLBC, State Representative Keith Heard argued that since the GLBC often voted for other “privileged”

⁶⁹⁸ “Northwest Georgia Regional Hospital Set to Close,” *Northwest Georgia News*, January 13, 2011, pg.1; “Georgia Proposes Privatization of Mental Health Services,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 17, 2009, pg. 3.

resolutions, including a 2005 commendation for then-President George W. Bush's response to Hurricane Katrina and President Ronald Reagan, the house should have supported his bill.⁶⁹⁹

Atlanta revenues at the onset of the recession fared much worse as Franklin continued to shield the bourgeoisie from tax collection and instead destroyed crucial public resources for the working classes. Sales tax revenue dropped 14 percent while the city deficit ballooned to an estimated \$60 million. Franklin responded by reducing the property tax rate from a \$43 increase for a \$100,000 home to a \$7.31 tax increase for the same property value. In fact, Franklin decreased property taxes so low that under her revised plan, the increased tax for property valued at \$300,000 (\$41.71) was less than the lowest increase added to property valued at \$100,000 (\$43). According the Fulton County Tax Commissioners, over 10,000 property owners still believed the reduced tax plan was too high and appealed the City Hall's decision. Upset at Franklin's appeasing wealthy Atlantans during a financial crunch, African American Councilman C.T. Martin gave a candid interview to *The Atlanta Voice* in which he called out Franklin's partnership with real estate, finance, and tourism to control the city:

“So the biggest struggle for Atlanta other than race is the private sector outmaneuvering the public sector, which is what I call the shadow government...the shadow government is the real estate industry which covers the banks, developers, appraisers, the agents, and others.”⁷⁰⁰

Martin continued to name the social organizations that orchestrated Atlanta's neoliberalization: “You...have the...Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlanta Progress, the Buckhead Coalition, the Buckhead Business Association, and the Midtown Alliance...all of those organizations represent interests of Ellis Street north to the city.” Martin's admissions

⁶⁹⁹ “Georgia's Legislative Black Caucus at a Crossroads,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 27, 2009, pg. 3; “Georgia: Black lawmakers Walk Out of House After Obama Vote,” *The Atlanta Voice*, March 27, 2009, pg. 3.

⁷⁰⁰ “Atlanta's Shadow Government,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 6, 2008, pg. 1, 15.

pointed to the idea that Franklin, and the Atlanta black petty bourgeoisie in general, served as the conduit for real estate to gentrify black working-class areas in Atlanta. “I submit to you that about 20 years from now that southeast Atlanta and southwest Atlanta will look like Buckhead.”⁷⁰¹ Martin only reinforced what the working class Atlantans knew about the city government structure for decades: City Hall operated through the interests of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. However, the expanded capitalist class in the city from Andrew Young’s neoliberalization push in the 1980s and 1990s produced new social organizations for private interests to collaborate and carve up Atlanta.

In his most startling comments to the press, Martin revealed the details of how the bourgeoisie utilized TIF bonds and devalorization to profit from the City Hall’s regressive tax structure:

“Tax Allocation Districts. Much of this growth that you see in Atlanta for the past 15 years hasn’t been revenue producing. The real estate people have been driving this. To spur development in a number of blighted areas in the city, the City Council has approved a number of low tax districts for businesses and homeowners for mostly a ten-year period. The taxes would increase in increments each year after five years. It takes about 10 houses valued at \$100,000 or more to bring in what about one commercial business should pay. Whether it’s paying or not is another question. You have commercial buildings that sit on property in Atlanta, but the corporation is in another county. So we lose the business license renewal fees and some of the taxes. Most of the real estate deals are a losing proposition for [the residents].”⁷⁰²

The state’s lax tax collection exacerbated dwindling revenue for monies for the poor. By July 2009, Georgia had lost over \$1.9 billion over the previous twelve months because of tax

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*

collections plummeting 15.7 percent. Corporate income tax receipts dropped over \$248 million—more than 26 percent—between fiscal year 2008 and 2009. Individual tax receipts fell about \$1 billion, or about 9 percent, over the same period.⁷⁰³ With no cash reserves, a budget shortfall, job cuts, a state revenue crisis, and Franklin’s refusal to raise taxes on the wealthy, City Hall drained the viability of black working class Atlantans to withstand the onslaught of real estate capital.

In fact, Franklin instead chose to fire over one thousand city workers, cancel numerous concerts and festivals, and close ten recreational centers.⁷⁰⁴ This drastically undercut the black working-class community’s after-school and summer programs where neighborhood volunteers taught courses like health, reading, cooking, and computer literacy, and tutored students. The recreational centers also provided intramural sporting leagues for children. Without rec centers, black parents no longer possessed a resource to supervise and teach their children while they worked or searched for additional labor. Lastly, social organizations like black fraternities and sororities, neighborhood associations, and protest movements held planning meetings and training sessions at recreation centers. In other words, the loss of these spaces was a major consequence of the New Nadir neoliberalization in inner cities. It severely destabilized the daily routine and the social organizations of black working class Atlantans.

Franklin’s hardship cuts also stagnated wages for those who remained employed. She implemented a 36-hour work week maximum, which resulted in a ten percent pay cut for 99 percent of all public workers. Although Franklin sought to position herself as suffering alongside blue-collar city workers by cutting her mayoral salary, it was widely known that

⁷⁰³ “Georgia Revenue Collections Continue to Fall,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 17, 2009, pg. 5; “GA Revenue Falls Again in September,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 16, 2009, pg. 3.

⁷⁰⁴ “No Federal Bailout for Cities Atlanta Makes Deeper Cuts,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 11, 2008, pg. 1, 18;

Franklin owned some for-profit ventures both inside and outside Atlanta. As the Atlanta metro region sometimes totaled \$10,000 foreclosures in a single month in 2008 and 2009, public housing waiting lists swelled and shelters reported that families stayed for months instead of the usual ten to fifteen days because of a lack of housing.⁷⁰⁵

The combined housing crisis and plummeting real wages worsened precariousness throughout the black working class. While the Atlanta metro region averaged close to 10,000 foreclosures per week in July 2009, the Atlanta city council piled on a 12.5 percent increase in water and sewer rates. The black labor participation rate did not top 62 percent. Thus, during the nadir of the Great Recession, close to forty percent of Georgians were actively looking for work.⁷⁰⁶

The permanent loss of working-class jobs that paid real wages aggravated black urbanites' struggles to hold on to the little resources they had. More clearly, the stagnation and regression of wages undercut black working-class capacity to stabilize their daily routines, family units, and neighborhoods. In 2009, the federal minimum wage rose from \$6.55 to \$7.25 an hour, or \$13,920 a year for an individual that worked forty hours per week. Sixty percent of Georgia households that year were led by women while only 43 percent of those households with one child had an income below the minimum budget required to support a household. Sixty one percent of single women two children or more earned below that level. 25-year-old African American Heather (last name anonymous) raised her two children alone and earned an annual income of \$23,040 a year as a worker in the auto industry. To meet the bare minimum of her bills, she worked the maximum allotted hours, which caused her to miss significant time with her

⁷⁰⁵ "GA's Public Housing Taxed Amid Economic Downturn," *The Atlanta Voice*, August 28, 2008, pg. 4.

⁷⁰⁶ "The Great Recession Tightens its Grip on Georgia," *The Atlanta Voice*, July 10, 2009, pg. 1, 5.

children. According to the *Self Sufficient Standard for Georgia 2008*, a publication that measures how much money families of various compositions in certain areas, need to adequately meet their basic needs without private or public assistance, Heather and her children required a minimum yearly salary of \$39,007 to reside in Dekalb County and cover the rising costs of food and transportation. Despite the precariousness, Heather was determined not to take on more than one job like most workers who make sub-working-class wages must do. “I’ve never considered working two jobs,” Heather stated. My time is much more valuable than money. And, in the long run, what they’ll remember is me being home with them.”⁷⁰⁷

23-year-old also Vakelvion Holmes struggled to raise her 5-year old son, Eric, and her two-year-old son, Evontay, on her annual income of \$20,448. Even by cutting costs as much as possible, she had to budget day-to-day. “I try not to eat out,” she explained. “I got to work and come home to save gas. I buy a lot of stuff in big packs, like tissue, so I won’t have to worry about it the next month if I can’t afford it.”⁷⁰⁸

The Social Costs of the Recession in Atlanta

The recession sped up the devastation of working-class social conditions in the United States. Prices exploded, wages collapsed, jobs disappeared, police surveillance worsened, and displacement ramped up. Black unemployment shot up to 16.5 percent nationwide, compared to 9.5 percent for whites. Black men unemployment reached a height of 20 percent while black women peaked at 12.4 percent. Unemployment for white men hit nine percent while white women peaked at 7.3 percent. Black labor force participation, however, did not top 63 percent

⁷⁰⁷ “Robbing Peter to Pay Paul,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 4, 2008, pg. 1, 15.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 15.

during the first years of the recession—which meant that the real black unemployment rate hovered around 37 percent. According to the Center for Labor Market Studies, joblessness for black men aged 16-24 reached Great Depression levels—34.5 percent in October 2009, more than three times the rate for the general U.S. population. The most crucial data referred to the types of jobs that African Americans lost. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that construction and manufacturing experienced the most severe job losses, both of which generally provide high working-class salaries. As per the historical trend, African Americans were the last hired and thus were the first fired. Employers eliminated the apprenticeship, internship, and on the job training programs that supplied thousands of black youth entry into blue-collar, stable, livable wage labor.⁷⁰⁹

Journalist Arlene Holt Baker’s prophetic summation demonstrates the long-term stakes of the Great Recession on the New Nadir in black working-class America:

“This is no ordinary recession. The fabric of whole communities has been unraveled. The economic scarring of African Americans may endure for generations. The child who is hungry today and can’t concentrate in her over-crowded classroom starts with the deck stacked against her. Maybe her state has cut teachers, guidance counselors, police and funding for higher education. Twenty or 30 percent of the adults around her may be unemployed. Her pain is not hers alone—with so little opportunity, her pain will also be her children’s.”⁷¹⁰

Black working class Atlantans did not escape the collapsing working class job market. The Metropolitan Region lost over 12,000 jobs in 2010 alone. The unemployment rate in the city was 10.4 percent for the first quarter of 2011. Black workers faced the harsh reality of

⁷⁰⁹ “Black Unemployment Reaches Great Depression Levels,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 11, 2009, pg. 4, 11; “Expert: Black Male Unemployment Comparable to Great Depression,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 20, 2009, pg. 3; “White Unemployment Goes Down as Black Unemployment Goes Up,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 16, 2010, pg. 4.

⁷¹⁰ “Create Jobs Where the People Are,” *The Atlanta Voice*, January 29, 2010, pg. 6

precariousness—not just finding a job, but also keeping a job. 37-year old Tonya Pinkston, a college graduate and single mother with an eight-year old daughter, was laid off three times over the span of the Great Recession. “I never dreamed I’d be faced with no job security and wondering how I’m going to feed my family,” Pinkston shared. Another anonymous individual stated that as a homeless man, he could not get employers to accept his job application because they refused to list the shelter as a permanent address. Dracy Blackwell explained that her husband, who had been out of work since losing his job at the onset of the recession in 2007, was suicidal because he saw no end in sight. A seventeen-year-old high school student said she had to find a full-time job after her mother could no longer pay the electricity bill.⁷¹¹

Despite the lack of resources, working class black Atlantans pooled support for the unemployed and underemployed in their neighborhoods. In April 2011, the 9 to 5 National Association of Working Women and the Atlanta chapter of Jobs with Justice hosted the “Speak for Jobs” Forum at Trinity United Methodist Church. Speakers shared their struggles in finding work, videotaped testimonials of those who found work and posted them on Youtube to encourage others and conducted a Q&A with supportive state officials like Vincent Fort. After the forum, Jobs with Justice served free lunch and provided legal aid for those fighting home foreclosure and eviction, a resume-writing workshop, food stamps and Medicaid applications, career counseling, childcare network signup for parents to have the freedom to search for work, health screenings, and free massages and haircuts. Alvin McCordy told reporters that simply getting a haircut for a possible job interview brightened his outlook in his bleak situation. “The barbers treat people like me with compassion,” he explained. “I’m going to feel better and look

⁷¹¹ “Residents Tell Riveting Tales of Unemployment,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 8, 2011, pg. 1, 13.

better.”⁷¹² McCordy alluded to the historical significance of the barber and barbershop in black working-class neighborhoods as an institution that provides of community socialization and pride.

The recession also provided the Atlanta power structure capacity to further distance the poor away from the planned 24-hour visitor market. More clearly, petty bourgeois activism took advantage of the political economy to isolate the black poor from spaces of capital accumulation. Similar to Governor Sonny Perdue, they accomplished this by restricting access to public resources. For example, MARTA chose mid-2009 during the worst months of the recession to announce a higher bus fare of \$2 for one-way rides, higher parking fees, reduced service, and lay-offs to fill a \$109.8 million shortfall. Because MARTA received most of its funding from a penny sales tax in Fulton and Dekalb Counties, a significant decrease in sales tax revenue meant reduced services.⁷¹³

The circumstances of working-class urbanites desperate to pay their bills and avoid eviction produced the expansion of the payday loan structure. By 2010, payday lending had become a \$33 billion industry nationwide that preyed on poverty to profit. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, each year, payday loans obtain \$5 billion from working families to pay for interest on loans from one of 24,000 payday lenders in operation. For 2010, the average payday borrower had nine repeat loans per year. For context, a \$300 loan typically costs \$50 in interest by the end of the contract, and the borrower actually owes more in interest than in principal. Additionally, the Center found that nearly 59 million repeat payday loans actually account for 76 percent of the industry’s revenue. Among repeat borrowers, 87 percent occur

⁷¹² *Ibid*, pg. 1, 13.

⁷¹³ “MARTA Fees Raised—services reduced,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 5, 2009, pg. 8.

within two weeks of a previous loan. Thus, payday lending with interest as high as 400 percent is a debt trap that deepened financial trouble for thousands of poor urbanites.⁷¹⁴

Black working class Atlantans did not recover from the Great Recession—primarily because they no longer had access to stable, livable wage labor. According to multiple reports, over 80 percent of the jobs created between 2008 and 2015 were sub-working class, temporary, low wage labor with no access to benefits like healthcare. In another instance of petty bourgeois activism, Atlanta City Hall exploited the economic crisis to replace blue-collar labor with an abundance of retail jobs in low-income black areas. In December 2010, Shirley Franklin’s successor, African American Democratic Mayor Kasim Reed, held a press conference to announce and celebrate the news that Wal-Mart was constructing a new store in the poverty-stricken Westside Village section of Vine City. Reed attempted to sell Wal-Mart’s arrival in the community as a gamechanger for black job growth in the recession. “Walmart is bringing more than jobs, goods, and services to the residents of the community and the 12,000 students of the Atlanta University Center,” Reed told the crowd. “The company is providing the spark this community needs to continue its transformation and become a healthy, thriving place where people want to live and study.”⁷¹⁵ Thus, Reed promised Vine City residents both the possibility of underemployment—minimum wage, low skill labor without benefits—and increasing development that would price them out of their homes over time.

The petty bourgeois activists continued their campaign for public support for the Wal-Mart acquisition by propagandizing it as the way to defeat poverty. “We recognize an opportunity to make an impact in Vine City and metro Atlanta by bringing jobs, convenience,

⁷¹⁴ “Gary Rivlin, *Broke, USA: How the Working Poor Became Big Business*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.

⁷¹⁵ “West Side Walmart to Sur Jobs, Growth,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 17, 2010, pg. 1, 3, 15.

fresh options, and everyday low prices to the community,” stated Greg Sullivan, the Walmart executive who spoke next to Reed at the press conference. Construction giant Jerome Russell told Vine City residents to be happy that they get a Wal-Mart, even if the jobs created were low wage or temporary. “With Wal-Mart’s everyday low prices in general merchandise and groceries,” Russell stated, “the company is the ideal fit for the residents of this community and the broader Westside community.” I know the store...is going to generate over 150 jobs. As far as construction jobs go, they won’t be permanent, but there should be about 200 of them.” The truth is that Atlanta City Hall only cared about the increased tax revenue that Wal-Mart brought to urban spaces. They leaders also brought in other business owners to sell Wal-Mart to the residents. The owners of Johnny’s Pizza Bistro and Busy Bee Café, a soul food staple in black working-class Atlanta spoke at great length about the benefits of Wal-Mart in Vine City. “The traffic and the jobs it will bring is a win-win for the whole corridor,” said Mims, whose family owned a significant amount of land around Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. “So seeing this happen is wonderful.”⁷¹⁶

City Hall also promoted underemployment at McDonald’s restaurants as the means to uplift neighborhoods out of the recession. In April 2011, McDonald’s announced that they would hire 1,000 people in metro Atlanta on National Hiring Day on April 19th. Some black Atlantans who struggled to find work for over three years settled for McDonald’s minimum wages. By the early 2010s, companies that offered real wages did not invest in black working-class neighborhoods unless the very residents who needed them did not possess the capacity to benefit from them. Twenty-year-old Nana Amanquah, who could not find stable work at that point, eagerly applied to the restaurant because they “offered a wealth of opportunities for all

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*

employees from their teens to their sixties.”⁷¹⁷ LeQuinta Snell who had not found work in over two years, best summed up the rush of black Atlantans competing for jobs at McDonald’s: “I think there are so many people here because there are so many of us out of work...I applied to several companies, including several McDonald’s, and I’m determined to get a job.” Nineteen-year-old Dwight Hanchard added “I’ve been looking for work since I graduated last May.” However, the \$200 billion fast food industry paid a median wage of \$8.69 an hour for core front-line workers in 2011. Only 13 percent of fast food jobs provided health care benefits.⁷¹⁸

Underemployment became the long-term consequence of the Great Recession for the working classes. Automation, outsourcing, and gentrification permanently eliminated productive blue collar industrial and service labor from urban centers. After five years as a salesman for Tractor company, Tarik Kaintuck lost his job and only worked ten months over a two-year period. As a result, Kaintuck registered with a temporary employment agency to pay his bills. Besides temporary work, underemployed workers sought seasonal jobs during the Christmas holidays. With an abundance of shopping centers like Greenbriar Mall, Lenox Mall, Lenox Square, Cumberland Mall, and many others, black workers, who had access to transportation, found seasonal retail work lucrative.⁷¹⁹

Nevertheless, underemployment did not produce real wages to offset skyrocketing cost of living in the 2010s. The Economic Policy Institute’s 2014 report, “Raising’s America’ Pay,” stated that over the previous thirty years, productivity growth far outpaced wage growth with black workers disproportionately affected. The study reported that the number of black and

⁷¹⁷ “McDonald’s Set t Hire 50,000 Employees,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 15, 2011, pg. 1, 4.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid*; “Thousands Line Up for McDonald’s Jobs,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 22, 2011, pg. 1,2; “Study Shows Majority of Low Pay Workers on Public Assistance,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 18, 2013, pg. 5.

⁷¹⁹ “Thousands of Job-Seekers Hoping to Land Season Work,” *The Atlanta Voice*, October 28, 2011, pg. 5.

white workers that made poverty wages increased between 2000 and 2014. However, the number of blacks increased to 36 percent compared to 23 percent of whites. The study also concluded that black males earned less than \$15 an hour working full time, compared to their white male peers who made more than \$20, even with the same levels of education. Because black men tend to be crowded into lower-paying occupations, the oversupply of workers in the newly crowded sub-working-class sector lowered wages for blacks in retail, fast food, and minimum wage service sector jobs. Thus, as worker productivity increased about 90 percent since 1979, wages for production and non-supervisory workers, especially African Americans, had not budged. The dominance of the Great Recession on the black working classes meant that black workers received an even smaller slice of the pie over time.⁷²⁰

The most significant consequence of the Great Recession was the decline of the working class, the swelling of the sub-working class, and the expansion of the lumpenproletariat. While the working class and sub-working class differed by type of labor (stable, skilled, living wage vs. unstable/temporary, unskilled, minimum wage), the lumpenproletariat are outside the class structure and the general political economy—making it an underground economy. The political economy of the recession supplied the conditions for the expansion of the underground economy in both black and white working-class America. More clearly, the plummeting quality of life indicators for low-income people increased demand for drug use as a means of self-medicating. However, poor black people, especially in metropolitan urban regions, suffered disproportionate joblessness, underemployment, housing and food insecurity, and surveillance and violence from the police, and wage stagnation, regression with little to no relief. At its highest in 2008, African Americans represented 13 percent of drug users in the United States, with 59 percent of those

⁷²⁰ “Black Workers Stuck in Poverty Wages,” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 20, 2014, pg. 1, 6.

convicted for drug offenses. Particularly for black males who were formerly blue-collar workers and remained unemployed or underemployed for significant periods of time, alcohol and drugs, especially marijuana, served as a coping mechanism.⁷²¹

Concurrently, black petty bourgeois leadership, who allowed the underground market to grow, condemned the violence of growing competition between underground markets without addressing the class struggle that fueled it. “Atlanta has become a very scary, dangerous and violent city,” Derrick Boazman proclaimed. “We got some mean-spirited young people out here,” stated black city councilperson C.T. Martin. “We’ve got to get control of our streets.”⁷²² Through their liberal understanding of crime and violence, they held dozens of “Summit Against Violence” events where petty bourgeois activists and politicians wagged their finger at the youth and ignored the criticism against government cuts, job closures, displacement, and police violence. In other words, the black petty bourgeoisie treated the expanding underground economy like they treated the recession: they exacerbated class struggle by deepened poverty in black colonial enclaves throughout the city and extracted more capital and did very little to address the class struggle.

“The Atlanta Way”: The End of Public Housing and the Vine City Pogrom in Atlanta

In 2008, as the recession gripped poor urbanites across the Atlanta metropolitan region, the Atlanta Housing Authority launched their “Qualify of Life Initiative” to “servicing and proving families with the ability to access affordable housing and build ultimate communities.” They then demolished a dozen public housing complexes, including the Leila Valley Jonesboro

⁷²¹ “Just One More Hit,” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 3, 2008, pg. 1, 14;

⁷²² “Enough is Enough: Are Atlanta’s Streets Too Dangerous?” *The Atlanta Voice*, July 31, 2009, pg. 1, 10.

North and South, U-Rescue Villa, Englewood Manor, Palmer House, Bowen Homes, Thomasville Heights, Bankhead Courts, Hollywood Courts, Roosevelt House, and Herndon Homes, all by the end of 2009. Over 9,000 individuals, many of them children who do not contribute income, and senior citizens on meager fixed incomes, lost their homes and either used their meager housing vouchers to join the growing waitlist of the small quantity of public housing left in the city or move to the leave the city altogether.⁷²³

In other words, the city of Atlanta's final phase of extinguishing subsidized public housing from their future 24-hour visitor market commenced during a period where black residents possessed little to no capacity to sustain social movement protests against impending displacement. The truth is that the Great Recession, through its extended joblessness, underemployment, and budget cuts to social welfare, accelerated this petty bourgeois war against black working class Atlantans. By 2010, very little safety net nor blue collar, working class labor that produced real wages existed in the city. As a result, black working class Atlantans no longer possessed funding, time, agency-laden institutions, and leadership—the components necessary to construct and maintain a social movement. Although black workers attempted to challenge this petty bourgeois activism, the Great Recession not only set in motion a deepening of neoliberal policies that removed public resources, but it also facilitated the final stages of devalorization and gentrification. Those blacks who survived into the next decade resettled away from the new central business district centered on the Georgia World Congress Center, CNN Center, Georgia State University, and Mercedes Benz Stadium downtown. This middle class, international tourist city.

⁷²³ “Urban Renewal or Urban Removal?” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 2007, pg. 1, 16.

To draft liberal pro-growth advocates into their petty bourgeois activism, the city publicized its attack on black tenants as a progressive, “revolutionary change.” They elicited African American Renee Glover to be the spokesperson for their structural pogrom because of her esteemed reputation nationwide for “revitalizing” neighborhoods. In fact, since her arrival in Atlanta in 1994, Glover utilized her position as the executive director of the Atlanta Housing Authority to wage war against black public housing tenants through undermining property values in low-income neighborhoods for private developers to buy cheap, raze, and revitalize. “I am pleased with the progress we’ve made,” Glover stated. “With our private partners, we have demolished more than a dozen obsolete and distressed public housing projects, offering their residents vouchers...” However, Glover’s dealings with real estate capitalists made her one of the most powerful policy makers in the Atlanta power structure. According to African American State Representative “Able” Mabel Thomas, the black petty bourgeois leadership at the city and county level allowed Glover to exercise “unprecedented and unchecked political clout in the drive to dismantle public housing. Thomas concluded by pointing to the black leadership’s silence on displacement as evidence of the collusion. “There’s a lot of whispering about the Atlanta Housing Authority but the black power structure and political people must do something,” Thomas explained. “Most of the people...don’t speak up.”⁷²⁴

The Atlanta Housing Authority negotiated a “flexible timeline” of July 1, 2003-June 30, 2010 with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to raze all public housing structures within the city limits. The planned demolition was implemented in phases with private, “mixed-income” townhouses, multi-family units, garden-style apartments, and high rises that replaced public housing. The AHA admitted during the process that they had no intention in

⁷²⁴ “Atlanta Housing Authority: Are They the City’s Savior for the Future?” *The Atlanta Voice*, June 14, 2007, pg. 1, 19.

finding new housing for housing tenants within the city and that this was a forced relocation. They claimed that “people don’t always want to come back into the city” and that they were “planning and relocating committees that will make decisions on a case-by-case basis regarding who is eligible to return and who won’t. The AHA waffled on a “re-establishment” process, stating that “the criteria had not been set yet.”⁷²⁵

The AHA voucher system provided to the displaced residents revealed the insidious manner to which the private-public partnership controlling gentrification restricted tenants’ return to the city. According to the Atlanta Housing Authority, if residents received a tenant-based voucher, it provided incentives to move anywhere in the United States with the rent being adjusted to accommodate utilities. If residents received the private-based voucher, it tied the resident to the particular private development to which the AHA sold the land and property. If the resident ever attempted to move for any reason, whether it be increasing rent, transportation issues, or proximity to a new job or school, the landlord could revoke the subsidy. Additionally, as the Resident Advisory Board treasurer Shirley Hightower explained, the voucher system locked poor blacks into a “do or die” scenario where financial hardship equaled eviction, no questions asked:

“I want to make sure with this [voucher] thing there is enough affordable houses to move to and not be homeless two years from now...if you lose your job, it’s not like public housing. If you lose your job in public housing, you can ask for a hardship. [The voucher program] is not like that. You got to pay your utilities on time. You got to pay the rent. What happens when they get out there and they snatch it all away?”⁷²⁶

⁷²⁵ “Urban Renewal or Urban Removal?” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 2007, pg. 1, 16.

⁷²⁶ “Urban Renewal or Urban Removal?” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 2007, pg. 1, 16; Complaint Made by the Resident Advisory Board to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Against the Atlanta Housing Authority, reprinted in full in *The Atlanta Voice*, August 30, 2007, pg. 10.

The AHA gave out relatively few private-based vouchers to fulfill quotas for a select few low-income people to live in predominantly middle and upper income “mixed” properties.

Regardless of the voucher residents received, they had little control over their future living space, especially if they remained in the Atlanta metropolitan region.

Such public housing pogroms were not reserved solely for large metropolitan centers. A similar process occurred in West Palm Beach Florida in the 1990s. In the name of increasing an eroding tax base and revalorizing land and built environment previously blighted, West Palm Beach officials constructed CityPlace, a bastion of extravagant high-rise condominiums and high-end retail shops sitting in the heart of a city that displaced thousands of working-class African Americans. Just as the AHA reneged on their promise to replace the razed homes of poor African Americans with new affordable living in the city, West Palm Beach officials demolished the homes kicked the African Americans out of the city, and refused to track their migration to determine how they fared relocating elsewhere. A few dozen miles from West Palm Beach, Boynton Beach concocted a pogrom to displace low-income blacks for large-scale high-rise condos along Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd in the heart of their African American community.⁷²⁷ Boynton Beach chose to demolish that neighborhood because of its locational advantage to the beach: it sat on solid terra firma that is least likely to flood and interrupt a 24-hour market scene. The trend continued with Boynton Beach: private developers touted affordable housing for displaced residents to seek public support, but it quickly became a distant memory once the bulldozers arrived.

As working residents were systematically removed from ocean side properties in Florida, black Atlanta tenants proactively fired their offensive against the Atlanta Housing Authority

⁷²⁷ “Florida is a Prime Example of Urban Renewal,” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 22, 2007, pg. 16.

prior to the arrival of the bulldozers. In August 2007, the Resident Advisory Board (RAB), which represented all Atlanta public housing residents across the city, filed a civil rights suit with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. African American Diane Wright, the President of the RAB Board for Hollywood Courts, and African American Shirley Hightower, Treasurer of RAB and President of the Bowne Homes Tenant Association, issued the complaint that argued that the AHA plans to demolish or sell Atlanta's public housing stock violated the Fair Housing Act of 1968 by discriminating against the residents, an overwhelming majority of whom were black. Further, the complaint read, AHA failed to comply with HUD regulations requiring consultation with the residents about the plans to demolish housing. For example, AHA reportedly refused to comply with public records requests made by the RAB Board. "We wanted to look at the vouchers," Attorney for RAB Lindsay Jones explained. "We want to see how they're funding them. How many units of housing are out there? Is this a real opportunity? Information is not being shared. And there's how this is being spun to the public." The RAB complaint outlined read as follows:

Please consider this correspondence as a formal complaint of racial discrimination in housing opportunity in violation of the Fair Housing Act of 1968...This complaint seeks your office's intervention by way of investigation, conciliation and, or litigation as required and necessary to enforce the legally protected rights of the African American tenants currently living in the affected public housing projects to be free from racial discrimination in housing and community development opportunities.⁷²⁸

In the most revealing portion of the complaint, the RAB provided credence to the structural pogrom thesis: the Atlanta Housing Authority and Renee Glover waged a racial class war on low-income blacks with the intended purpose to permanently remove them from the city.

⁷²⁸ Complaint Made by the Resident Advisory Board to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Against the Atlanta Housing Authority, reprinted in full in *The Atlanta Voice*, August 30, 2007, pg. 10.

“Public is nothing but black people, number one,” Hightower told *The Atlanta Voice*. “That’s what public housing is all about. They have some Caucasians here. But they’re a few, you can count them on your hand.”

The intentional elimination of useful public housing projects occupied almost exclusively by low-income African Americans would be a double insult to the civil rights of African Americans, in so far that it would displace low-income African American families who had attained affordable housing security, while compounding the lack of fair share housing opportunities for low-income African Americans in general in the City of Atlanta by increasing the already significant affordable housing deficiency within the city.⁷²⁹

Hightower revealed that their struggle was not aligned with liberal idealism; in fact, she suggested that black revolutionary proto nationalism undergirded their strategy against the City of Atlanta. More clearly, the tenants sought agency for the black poor to determine their own living spaces. “The goal of the complaint is not to get into the judiciary, but to get power in the hands of the tenants,” Jones relayed to the AHA. “We want you to be conciliatory.”⁷³⁰

RAB escalated action after the complaint. On December 3 that year, over 200 black tenants from the soon-to-be demolished Bowen Homes, Palmer House, and Roosevelt House swarmed the second-floor main meeting room and disrupted the city council meeting. The goal of the occupation was to force the city council to pass a resolution to create a task force to review the implications of the Atlanta Housing Authority’s mass demolition of public housing and its discrimination against poor black people. During the public comments, one anonymous resident delivered an impassioned speech that outlined the true stakes of gentrification as pogrom—the transformation of Black Atlanta from a working-class space to a petty bourgeois private fortress:

“I want to encourage the council to stand in support of the many

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*

of thousands of people in this city who earn [low] wages or fixed income. I want them to support this resolution that investigates how it can be that thousands of units of affordable housing have been torn down over the last decade. What have been put in place are units that are not even affordable middle-income workers. There are instead million-dollar penthouses being built all over town in the places where the working people have raised their families... Take the time to find out how the shift of the housing is going to go to those with millions of dollars, and the people who make this city run—the sanitation workers, the nurses, the waitresses and others—are being put outside the perimeter.”⁷³¹

Numerous housing insecure and homeless people also provided their own experiences to offer the council glimpses of the dire future for public housing tenants if they allowed demolition. District 2 Councilman Kwanza Hall and District 3 Councilman Ivory Lee Young proposed the resolution, but at the end of the meeting, the resolution was referred back to the community development committee for further discussion. Thus, the council did not consider any concrete action and the movement suffered a bitter defeat.⁷³²

The Atlanta media played a pivotal role in portraying the rebel tenants as pathologically dependent on the welfare of the state. *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution* ran multiple articles that lambasted the residents and championed the AHA for “making the right decision years ago to phase out the projects and encourage public housing residents to take greater responsibility for their own lives.” Jim Wooten, a conservative white journalist and critic of public housing, parroted the ideological line that public resources, whether it be housing, school, Social Security, or healthcare, reinforced black cultural pathologies of irresponsibility for their own lives and dependency on the government. Of blacks in public housing, Wooten stated, “it took decades to cultivate dependency and after that, passivity, to train them out of the values and the behaviors

⁷³¹ “AHA Demolitions: No Resolution Yet,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 6, 2007, pg. 1, 18;

⁷³² *Ibid*, pg. 1, 18.

that moved the next generation upward. Simply moving them out of public housing projects, while essential, is only the beginning.” Of Renee Glover, Wooten praised her push to disrupt those alleged pathologies, stating, “Glover has been steadfast in insisting...that residents ‘buy’ their way back into attractive mixed-use communities by changing their behaviors, by taking responsibility for maintaining decent, crime-free apartments.”⁷³³ Thus, while petty bourgeois activists promoted gentrification as a revolutionary, progressive transformation of space to win support, they also propagandized the black underclass pathological argument to justify their “liberating” poor blacks from their “dependent relationship” to government assistance and helping them “grow up” and “be responsible for themselves.”

Glover’s lead in the city’s war against the black working class paid off well for her—especially at a time when the recession gripped the Atlanta metro region. In 2010, as she destroyed the last of the public housing, Glover took home \$644,000 in total compensation, which a national survey conducted by HUD showed to be the highest salary of a public housing director in the nation. Glover challenged the report, stating that she only made \$312,000 in base salary plus a one-time payment of \$126,000 which she explained “represented 12 years of accrued and unused earned vacation since 1998,” \$135,000 that covered the 2009-2010 fiscal years, a one-time payment of \$11,250 for accrued paid holidays during the year, and a one-time payment of \$4,100 incentive for nonuse of sick leave. Based on these figures, Glover defended herself by suggesting that she never took a vacation day or sick leave in over 14 years as the executive director of the Atlanta Housing Authority. Unsurprisingly, during the investigation into her income, Glover announced her departure from the position in 2012.⁷³⁴ She left a

⁷³³ “Lewis’ Help Will Be Right at Home,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 26, 2008, pg. A18; “Atlanta’s Public Housing Revamp Shows Real Hope for the Future,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, July 27, 2008, pg. B6.

⁷³⁴ “Your Tax Dollars: Atlanta Salary Stings HUD,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 6, 2012, pg. A1, A11.

reputation celebrated by pro-growth liberals; but despised generally by the black working class for her callous attitude towards their precariousness and unwillingness to consider options other than gentrification.

Working class activists celebrated Glover's long-awaited resignation. "Ding dong the witch is dead!" Diane Wright, former president of the RAB exclaimed. When Glover claimed to have ended "concentration camps of poverty" by demolishing all of Atlanta's public housing, Wright replied, "What concentration camps? No, she put them in poverty. Now they're on the street. It's a concentration of homelessness." "I'm so happy, I'm ecstatic. Hitler is gone, Hitler has left the building, thank you." When asked what Glover's legacy was, Joe Beasley, a member of African Ascension did not hold back. "I still call her the Gentrification Queen, to remove blacks from downtown Atlanta," he stated. "She privatized all the units. The few that are left have got to be held on to for the people who need them." "Renee Glover presided over the destruction of public housing in Atlanta. It's a very good thing she's leaving. It's a bad thing that she was allowed to be there for so long," said Anita Beaty, Executive Director of the Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless.⁷³⁵

Metro Atlanta followed the city's lead and demolished their public housing without favorable relocation plans for its majority black residents. The Marietta Housing Authority razed the last remaining project in Cobb County, Fort Hill Homes, in 2012. When pressed as to why they did not simply renovate the units, the MHA cited "prohibitive costs" made maintenance infeasible. The 120 families in Fort Hill received similar vouchers that moved them into private housing with rigid financial requirements. Many of the residents expressed their fear that they would not be able to pay a larger share of their utilities on their meager incomes. Soon after, the

⁷³⁵ "Activists React to Glover's Confirmed AHA Resignation," *Atlanta Progressive News*, October 10, 2011, <http://atlantaprogressivenews.com/2011/10/10/activists-react-to-glovers-confirmed-aha-resignation/>

Marietta Housing Authority announced the sale of the land to Traton Homes to build 43 to 45 houses that “will sell from \$250,000 to \$280,000.”⁷³⁶

Figure B.8 lists public housing projects demolished by the City of Atlanta and the development that replaced them by 2015. Since the city did not replace multiple housing projects with promised “renovated mixed-income housing,” it is appropriate to conclude that the goal of demolishing public housing in Atlanta for the most part was to remove poor blacks from the city. Thus, the Atlanta petty bourgeois activists served as the junior partners of capital in systematically displacing a significant portion of a population from their living and social spaces. In other words, class warfare and anti-black poor pogrom defined the “Black Mecca” in the twenty-first century.

The Assault on Vine City

With Vine City already reeling from the construction of the Georgia Dome, the Georgia World Congress Center, and the expansion of Georgia State University, the city of Atlanta enacted more structural violence on the working-class neighborhood. The Shirley Franklin Urban Regime inaugurated Vine City into the new millennium with a full military operation to prep for more gentrification. In April 2002, the Atlanta city council signed an order for the National Guard to raze parts of Vine City neighborhood. “What we are talking about is trained engineers and contractors who happen to wear fatigues to provide this free service,” city councilman Ivory Young, who first raised the idea to Franklin, stated to downplay the outrage of

⁷³⁶ “Families Look to Relocate as End Nears for Projects,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 13, 2010, pg. B1, B4; “Activists Object to Public Housing Closing,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, August 10, 2012, pg. B4; “Subdivision to be Built on Public Housing Site,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, December 27, 2012, pg. B4.

the residents. “My legislation really is symbolic. What we are doing is establishing a contractual relationship with the National Guard to do demolition.”⁷³⁷

The truth is that the military razing operation represented the culmination of the devalorization cycle for gentrification. After Atlanta city government had increased the size and funding of police to surveil and concentrate (not fight) the underground economy into sections of Vine City like “The Bluff,” it blighted the land and property values so low that undermaintenance, a key step in devalorization was no longer necessary. Thus, instead of destroying their own property, the city contracted out elements of their pogrom to the U.S. military. Per usual with LGMs, Young and Franklin exaggerated the dilapidation and crime in Vine City, espoused on the virtues of revitalization and safety, to placate public outrage and satisfy conservative critics. In fact, Young exploited the razing to advertise to eager developers to work with the city in gentrification. “A developer will look at this as a great opportunity to build a more affordable home because they are not tackling the cost of demolition onto the cost of a new home,” Young explained.⁷³⁸

Before the military had finished their infiltration of Vine City, the truth behind the demolition leaked: Franklin planned to construct her dream project, a new water sewer pipeline, through the neighborhood and condemn an additional twelve acres of land to transform into a park. The pipeline was a 26-foot diameter deep tunnel the city planned to run off from a 25-year storm drain. Thus, the city needed to remove all residents in Vine City within a 12-acre rectangle, including the entire Vine Street and Tyler Street blocks. Additionally, the city council

⁷³⁷ “National Guard to Raze Dilapidated Vine City Homes,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 13, 2002, pg. 4; “Atlanta Launches Operation Crackdown,” *The Atlanta Voice*, May 4, 2002, pg. 1, 2; “Vine City Residents Decry Plans to Bulldoze Their Homes,” *The Atlanta Voice*, November 30, 2002, pg. 4; “Where is Our Leadership?” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 7, 2002, pg. 4

⁷³⁸ “National Guard to Raze Dilapidated Vine City Homes,” pg. 4; “Vine City Residents Decry plans,” pg. 4.

drew up legislation to exploit dangerous flooding that ravaged 63 percent of Vine City homes in September 2002. According to the bill, if passed, Franklin assumed “broad authority to negotiate prices for mandatory sale or condemnation and seizure of any property deemed to have “flood damage.” Dozens of residents immediately stormed the Atlanta city council meeting the week after thanksgiving that year to demand the mayor cease her proposal. “I do not want to start over with another mortgage,” resident Colette Ward told the council. “I’m not going anywhere. I’m going to fight...I can’t afford to move to Buckhead, and I don’t want to move to Stone Mountain.” Mae Wofford offered the best summation of the community response to Franklin:

“If your car breaks down, you replace your car. Well, my grandmother’s house is broke down and we need it replaced...What they say is fair market value is not fair to us, and you’ve got heart you will be with us. Because if you don’t we’re gonna consider you as Osama bin Laden and Vine City as the World Trade Center.”⁷³⁹

In his weekly column for *The Atlanta Voice*, A. Reginald Eaves asked, “With all the talk about abandoning Vine City for more green space and the history of what has happened to Atlanta, with gentrification, over the past few years, is the African American community prepared [to] sit still and see this happen to those good souls in Vine City?”⁷⁴⁰ What Eaves failed to recognize was that the very leadership he spoke of were directing, or at the very least, facilitating petty bourgeois activism against Vine City. The fact that the Franklin regime chose to build a new park on top of Vine City residents instead of expanding Piedmont Park or Chastain Park, both located in affluent white areas, points to the deliberate displacement of poor blacks from the central city by the black petty bourgeoisie.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid*; “Get the Pharaoh’s Off the Community’s Back,” *The Atlanta Voice*, April 12, 2003, pg. 4.

⁷⁴⁰ “Where is Our Leadership,” *The Atlanta Voice*, December 7, 2002, pg. 4.

The struggle over Vine City quickly turned into petty bourgeois dueling between city council members with both sides exploiting the Vine City residents for political leverage. In December 2003, Young, who is the councilman for the Vine City district, voted against Franklin's proposed 45 percent increase in sewer and water rates, resulting in Franklin declaring that she could no longer afford to pay for repairs or the buyout because of Young. After a month of public attacks against one another, the Franklin administration agreed on a compromise. The plan called for a three-tier, five-year package of rate increases based on incentives for those who conserved water. For instance, in 2004, those who consumed 0 to 3 per100 cubic feet of water (CCF), or about 2,250 gallons or less per month paid a 10 percent increase. Those who used four to six CCF of water—3,000 to 4,500 gallons—were billed at a rate 25 percent higher. Those who consumed seven CCF of water or above—more than 4,500 gallons—paid a 45 percent increase. The Franklin administration predicted, and rightly so, that this plan was extremely lucrative for their water/sewer rehabilitation. In 2003, the average water user had consumed eight CCF.⁷⁴¹

Working class black Atlanta, however, called the deal another declaration of war against poor urbanites. "This so-called compromise merely confirms that there is no place for the poor in Atlanta any longer," stated Mechanicsville activist Dwanda Farmer. "The Mayor and the Council are hell-bent on urban removal." The council vigorously defended the plan as a savings vehicle "thousands of citizens." However, close examination of the bill exposed that the three-tiered CCF structure allowed for only 26 percent of residents to benefit from some type of savings. In fact, the remaining 74 percent received a hefty bill each month. With the new

⁷⁴¹ "Sewer Showdown Results in Bitter City Hall Politics," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 20, 2003, pg. 4; "Mayors and City Council Reach Sewer Compromise," *The Atlanta Voice*, January 10, 2004, pg. 1, 2;

sewer/water pipeline funded, the Franklin regime returned to gentrification in Vine City. After a few years of lobbying, Young persuaded the city council to approve the construction of the Vine City Park Project and the demolition and redevelopment of over 30 homes less than one mile from the Atlanta University Center. Most of the targeted homes sat on Magnolia Street and Walnut Street.⁷⁴² This process created the pathway towards the new Atlanta downtown hub because it cleared poor blacks out of the area between the historically black colleges and the Georgia Dome.

For the third time in less than thirty years, black working-class Atlanta faced impending stadium gentrification. In early March 2013, the city council approved a \$1 billion funding bill to build a state-of-the-art football stadium for the Atlanta Falcons in the Vine City and English Avenue neighborhoods. The Georgia World Congress Authority, which owned the bulk of the targeted land, approved of the plan under the conditions that the city not levy new property taxes. The city's share of the construction capped at \$200 million using the city's hotel-motel tax. Arthur Blank, the owner of the Atlanta Falcons, contributed the remaining \$800 million and would be responsible for any cost overruns. The city council also approved to contribute 39.3 percent of the hotel-motel tax to the stadium yearly through 2050 for operational costs—the same amount allocated to the Georgia Dome. The Falcons also contributed \$70 million for infrastructure improvements around the stadium and \$20 million for land acquisitions.⁷⁴³ This set the stage for influencing land rent and property value fluctuation in surrounding areas. In a sense, the Mercedes Benz Stadium meant more than a new source for capital accumulation and a

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*; "Atlanta City Council Addresses Issues Around AUC in Town Meeting," *The Atlanta Voice*, December 7, 2006, pg. 4.

⁷⁴³ "Hope Reigns on West Side over Falcons Stadium Deal," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 22, 2013, pg. 1, 2, 4; "Mt. Vernon Sets Vote on Stadium Deal," *The Atlanta Voice*, March 29, 2013, pg. 1, 5.

section of the new central Atlanta hub. Rather, it also provided the petty bourgeoisie an opportunity to price even more low-income blacks out of their target investment areas.

The last three entities that required approval for construction to commence were Invest Atlanta, the city's economic real estate development agency, and Friendship Baptist Church, and Mount Vernon Baptist Church, where Arthur Blank wanted the stadium located. The Vine City churches, both former agency laden institutions for numerous social movement planning, training, and resource pooling over the decades, held the fate of Vine City neighborhood residents in their hands. If they voted not to sell their land to the city, the stadium more than likely would be built north of the Georgia Dome on Northside Drive, a previously gentrified area with expensive lofts, trendy coffee shops and shopping, and a large population of Georgia Tech and Georgia State University students.⁷⁴⁴

Shirley Franklin's successor, Kasim Reed, a former state representative and state senator for Georgia, did not raise the question of holding public forums for a community study before making sweeping, top-down decisions about their neighborhoods. The truth is that Reed, who had a reputation for being a close friend of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, considered the Vine City site as the only choice for his vision of neoliberal Atlanta. Reed stated that he wanted Benz Stadium to be connected to the Vine City MARTA station, the Georgia Dome, and the Philips Arena⁷⁴⁵ Ivory Young joined Reed in championing the razing of Vine City. He believed housing this stadium in his district on top of Vine City provided lucrative potential for private investment. Thus, he embarked on a publicity campaign that emphasized philanthropy and bourgeois diversity, more symbolic than functional, to win the support for the stadium. Young

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 1, 5.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

negotiated an agreement with Arthur Blank and the Georgia World Congress Center Authority to develop an Equal Business Opportunity plan which “would ensure at least 31 percent participation by women and minority business firms in design and construction of the stadium.”⁷⁴⁶ As often the case with most construction companies and businesses, they were least likely to hire black unionized labor and preferred out of town, cheap non-union labor. Therefore, these bourgeois diversity project labor agreements did not mandate standards for real diversity on job sites. As a result, area residents who seek blue collar, livable wage work are excluded while external non-union labor razes their homes.

Critics of the Atlanta City Council’s string of empty promises warned Vine City residents to fight the stadium. African American James Sellers, a member of the Mount Vernon Baptist Church and owner of the Sellers Brothers Funeral Home on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, cited the gentrification and subsequent displacement at the Westside Village as an example of how the City of Atlanta operated:

“At one particular time, that area was a prominent and thriving part of the black business structure. All of those businesses that had been there from the 1950s and 1960s were moved before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games and what was left was mostly vacated land. Now some 18 years later, they finally get a Wal-Mart over there.”⁷⁴⁷

The August 1, 2013 deadline for Friendship Baptist and Mount Vernon Baptist approval passed with no decision made, but Mount Vernon’s hesitation did not necessarily pertain to Sellers’ sentiments of resistance against the city’s gentrification efforts. Rather, evidence suggests that the churches were holding out for the right price to abandon their lands. In fact, the

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Benz Stadium episode closely resembled the Georgia Dome negotiation in 1988, where the church leaders fractured the grassroots movement to stop the construction of the dome in Vine City. Instead, the churches gave the city and the developers the go-ahead once their pay and church relocation plans had been set. In the case of the Benz Stadium, the churches held significant leverage to secure a substantial buyout. Lloyd Hawk, the chairman of the Friendship Baptist Church Executive Board, told *The Atlanta Voice* that “we are definitely still negotiating. It’s going well. We’re waiting on some communication to come in...I would say we’re very close.” When asked how far, monetarily, the two sides remained apart, Hawk said “I won’t say a dollar amount, but if you look at the grand scheme of the budget for the stadium project, it’s a very, very tiny percentage of that.” Reed, who more than likely was seeking to gain leverage from public outrage at the church, alerted presses that he had offered Friendship Baptist Church \$15.5 million and had been turned down.⁷⁴⁸

Friendship Baptist became the first church to officially abandon the Vine City residents. In the first week of August, Red announced that he had purchased the Friendship’s land for \$19.5 million, but the Mount Vernon purchase was in doubt at that point. Reed offered Hawk \$6.2 million which he rejected, setting Reed and Young on a path of more petty bourgeois activism. Reed informed the media that attempting to build Benz Stadium north of the Georgia Dome was “fiscal folly” because of the crippling cost (caused by their previous gentrification of the area) and the environmental concerns about toxic soil, traffic gridlock, and many more “inconveniences” to the public.” At one press conference Hawk stood side by side with Reed, never mentioning the superfluous low-income Vine City residents, and stated that “We

⁷⁴⁸ “Deal or No Deal?” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 2, 2013, pg. 1, 4; “The Price is Right?” *The Atlanta Voice*, August 9, 2013, pg. 1, 5.

understand the potential benefits of the stadium being placed at the south site for the surrounding community.”⁷⁴⁹

This undoubtedly put public pressure on Mount Vernon to “ease the burden on the Atlanta City Council” and take the deal, but Mount Vernon held firm until Atlanta upped the offer by an additional \$8.3 million. In mid-September, Mount Vernon agreed to sell their land to the city for \$14.5 million: \$8.3 million from the city and \$6.2 million from the Georgia Congress Center Authority. The city paid a total of \$37 million to historic black churches to build a football stadium in Vine City. At this point, evidence suggests that Vine City residents’ displacement had not been discussed as part of the deal and the churches secured their funds and left. While Friendship Baptist Church only moved a mile away to Walnut Street, Mount Vernon moved over seven miles away to Lynhurst Drive near the 285-interstate exchange in southwest Atlanta. In the end, the middle class only tracked the progress of the bourgeois diversity initiative in constructing the Benz Stadium. When celebrating the deal, Kasim Reed best summed up his petty bourgeois activism, the class interests of the Atlanta power structure, and the sociohistorical treatment of poor black people in the “Black Mecca”: “We really think we’ve accomplished what we have accomplished today in the Atlanta way.”⁷⁵⁰

The Atlanta Falcons’ Mercedes-Benz Stadium currently serves as the new core of the convention and entertainment district in the city as it is connected to the Georgia World Congress Center, Philips Arena, the CNN Center, Centennial Olympic Park, the College Football Hall of Fame, the World of Coca Cola, the Civil and Human Rights Museum, the Atlanta Aquarium, and finally, the Central Business District on Trinity and North Avenues. This

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pg. 1, 5.

⁷⁵⁰ “Churches to Vote on New Stadium Deal,” *The Atlanta Voice*, September 20, 2013, pg. 1, 5.

location prevents Martin Luther King Jr. Drive from running through the downtown to the end of the city limits at Fulton Industrial Blvd, thus cutting the impoverished Vine City residents off from the CBD. The Atlanta bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie exploited black bodies and spaces for the locational advantage of constructing this new 24-hour visitor market. Petty bourgeois activism destroyed the viability of Vine City as a stable, working class neighborhood in black Atlanta.

Conclusion⁷⁵¹

The Atlanta power structure's petty bourgeois activism extended the superfluous character of black working-class bodies and spaces in twenty-first century Atlanta. Atlanta leadership utilized the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and non-profit capitalist organizations like the Edison project and community development corporations to target state resources like hospitals, public schools, and housing for private investment. Although working class resistance like GAMA attempted to protect low-income neighborhoods from further razing, petty bourgeois activism evoked a pathological discourse to recruit public support for pro-growth reforms. The section of Vine City with the most exchange value potential became the central hub for the 24-hour visitor market in the central city.

The Great Recession increased the precariousness of the black working class. Underemployment ravaged the already-diminished wage potential of black workers. Minimum wage, non-union labor like McDonald's and Wal-Mart replaced livable wage jobs. As a result, black workers did not possess the capacity to challenge Atlanta's gentrification efforts. With the majority of the black working class Atlantans now residing in suburban enclaves of poverty, the

⁷⁵¹ See Appendix A, Figure A.6 for an aerial view of Black working class Atlanta's gentrification over time.

relationship between apartheid and resistance for the black working class transformed for the foreseeable future.

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

“It is this ‘upper class’ which determines what kind of houses (if any at all) the producing class shall live in, the quantity and quality of food...the kind of raiment they shall wear, and whether the child of the proletariat shall in tender years enter the schoolhouse or the factory...And when the proletariat, failing to see the justice of this bourgeois economy, begins to murmur, the policeman’s club is called into active service for six days a week while on the seventh the minister assures him that to complain of the powers that be is quite sinful, besides being a losing game, inasmuch as by this action he is lessening his chance for obtaining a very comfortable apartment in ‘the mansions eternal in the skies.’ And the possessing class meanwhile are perfectly willing to pay the minister handsomely and furnish the proletariat all the credit necessary for this if he will furnish them the cash for the erection of their mansions here. When will you tire of such a civilization and declare in words the bitterness of which shall not be mistaken, ‘Away with a civilization that thus degrades me; it is not worth the saving?’”

-Lucy Parsons, *The Alarm*, August 8, 1885

“One of our problems was that we moved to the defensive too quickly without contesting the terrain at every point. Too little attention was paid to developing limited offensives, for only on offensives can you raise new questions.”

-Harold Baron, March 5, 1981

Overview of Research

“Apartheid and Resistance in the Political Economy of Gentrification: The Dialectics of Black Working Class Struggles in Atlanta, 1970-2015” demonstrates that the primary problem facing the African American working classes in the twenty-first century and the most pressing issue in the contemporary racial formation, the New Nadir, is intraracial class struggle. Granted, urban studies have either identified “class” as a characteristic in the African American sociohistorical experience or highlighted specific episodes where class position played a major role. However, African American urban scholarship has generally overlooked class as a *defining* struggle in the foundation of the African American sociohistorical experience. I argue that as the dominant political economy shifted from a largely industrial sector to a global finance and service sector in the early 1970s, the new black middle class, who grew out of the Black

Freedom Movement, assumed the role and function as junior partners of capital. This position, which required the privatization of public resources and spaces, conflicted with the interests of the insurgent African American working classes, who through the Black Power Movement sought autonomy, community control of institutions that directly affect black people, and resources that strengthened the use value of their neighborhoods, and in turn their neighborhood social movement capacity.

When black Atlantans became the demographic majority in 1970, it radically altered the power dynamics throughout the city. The new black working class majority, who were concentrated into the poor southwest and southeast sections of the city, brought a revolutionary proto-nationalist ideology and practice to their neighborhoods; they built labor strikes to take control of their work spaces, rent strikes and fair housing movements, protests for black neighborhood controlled schools and curriculum, rebellions against increasing police violence and surveillance, and neighborhood control over grocery stores. However, middle class black conservative nationalists, the other dominant Black Power group in Atlanta, sought to scale back neighborhood control in the name of black capitalism, or elite control. In other words, I argue that the two warring African American factions, the black working class and the Black petty bourgeoisie and black bourgeoisie, contested for control over the city's future. In fact, labor was one of the most prominent sectors where the class interests of black Atlantans clashed throughout the Black Power Movement.

Black revolutionary proto-nationalist movements presented two consequences for black Atlanta in the late 1970s and early 1980s. First, they shattered the "City Too Busy to Hate" moniker that defined the city in the national mainstream since the postwar era. Second, they compelled the Atlanta power structure, who saw black working-class autonomy and as a

detriment to their capital interests, to concoct a strategy to destabilize black working-class neighborhoods. More clearly, I argue that the Atlanta power structure's response to urban black social movements—particularly retrenchment and repression—planted the roots for neoliberalization and gentrification. By depriving Black working class neighborhoods of resources like local movement centers, stable, livable wage labor, and the safety of their children, the Maynard Jackson Black urban Regime weakened the neighborhood social movement capacity against oncoming privatization. This is never more apparent than Jackson's police expansion throughout the central city. Although Jackson invested millions of federal, state, and local revenues into new weaponry, increasing the size and number of special squads of police, and passing laws that strengthen police powers, they only concentrated the underground economy into low-income enclaves while also neglecting the kidnapping and murder of dozens of poor black children for three years. Therefore, black working-class activists no longer possessed the same capacity as in prior decades to build and sustain social movements. However, organizations like STOP, the Atlanta chapter of the Black Panther Party, and the Techwood Homes Tenants Association challenged the majority black city hall over their neglect of black residents and their class interests.

By 1980, the roots of gentrification provided the Atlanta power structure the means to recruit international and domestic capital for investment in blighted, devalorized working class spaces. In fact, both the Maynard Jackson and Andrew Young regimes partnered with the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in traveling to African, Asian, and European nations to offer black working-class residential space to finance corporations, sports franchises, and hotel conglomerates. I argue that this planned removal of the black working class equates to a contemporary, structural form of pogrom. More clearly, the black petty bourgeoisie and

bourgeoisie enacted neoliberalization to disrupt and reshape the power dynamics in working class black neighborhoods. The reorientation of capital around the information and financial sectors of labor restructured the Atlanta metro region into an international, private fortress.

Thus, 1980s Atlanta experienced a “Black Great Depression” for most black residents. The combination of Reagan Era cuts to the federal and state governments and the Andrew Young regime’s sweeping private investment diminished the funds available for public resources poor Atlantans. Vine City and Auburn Avenue especially faced unwanted attention from developers. While the former lost hundreds of residents from the expansion of the Georgia World Congress Center and the construction of the Georgia Dome stadium in the late 1980s, the latter challenged the combined forces of the Martin Luther King, Jr. family, the National Parks Service, and City Hall over the development of a King Historic District tourist site.

The 1990s fared much worse for black Atlantans seeking to salvage and rebuild their neighborhood social movement capacity. After City Hall won the bid to host the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in 1988, they instituted a full rebranding of the city as a progressive space where racial harmony and corporate investment had significantly decreased the poverty and crime and “uplifted” low-income blacks. Major enterprises such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Georgia Tech University, Georgia State University, and Burger King assisted their false propaganda campaign, many of which had previously been involved in displacing poor blacks from the city in the decade prior. Concurrently, black working class Atlantans resented these power blocs, led by a returning Maynard Jackson for his third term as mayor, for exploiting their neighborhoods for the Olympics and for pathologizing the poor as “inherently criminal” and “backwards.” More clearly, this period saw the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie redefine the solutions to social crises as resting in their hands—resulting in the promotion of both

supervisory bureaucracies to monitor poverty and individualization as dominant ideology. As a result, collective solutions to social problems like social movements, urban rebellions, and cooperative economics became not just unpopular, but *irrational*.

These conditions worsened the African American experience under the New Nadir because they deepened apartheid by essentially isolating low-income black urbanites from the remainder of the future interests of the city. As Black Atlanta revitalized the majority of the central city and devalorized lands that they recognized for their future potential locational advantage, enclaves of poverty, including Summerhill, Mechanicsville, and Peoplestown surrounding the Olympic Stadium and Vine City and University Homes near the Atlanta University Center and downtown, lost more resources, witnessed an expansion of the and grew further disconnected from the city. Thus, the New Nadir advanced the class interests of the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie as the Atlanta Housing Authority sold much of the cheapened lands and property to developers for mostly middle-and-upper income housing. As the affluent classes moved to the central city in the 1990s, the loss of public housing projects displaced black working-class residents to the suburban metro region counties and forced thousands of blacks into housing insecurity.

Black working class Atlanta consolidated its resources to fight the city, but black elites subverted their efforts. When Ethel Mae Mathews organized most of the low-income neighborhoods into Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness in 1990, they fought a two pronged war to stop the Olympic Stadium: the Atlanta power structure, and Summerhill Neighborhoods, Inc., a newly formed community development corporation that sought to profit from the development. A'NUFF coordinated many protest actions and gained a decent amount of traction with the public. However, City Hall and SNI utilized their control of Atlanta media to

both delegitimize A'NUFF and rebrand them in the public as “anti-Atlanta” and “against making the city safer and better.” By 1993, A'NUFF had faded into the background and they became the last significant social movement against the Atlanta power structure for decades.

The city's gentrification carried into the twenty first century as the Atlanta power structure sought to transform the central district into a 24-hour visitor market. Thus, they instituted “petty bourgeois activism” to sell their class interests to the public. Capitalists partnered with community development corporations and municipal governments to promote privatization of public spaces and gentrification as anti-poverty, anti-crime, and a progressive, organic consequence of urban expansion. This resulted in a truncated fight against the end of public housing. Atlanta media praised the displacement, especially the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, which believed that the end of public housing forced blacks to “take self-responsibility” and “end criminal behavior.” In other words, gentrification, as petty bourgeois activism, represented activism against the black working class.

Throughout these processes, City Hall refused to properly value property in the city and collect outstanding tax debts from the capitalist class. A combination of Chamber of Commerce's direction of City Hall and petty bourgeois class interests influenced the Maynard Jackson, Andrew Young, Bill Campbell, Shirley Franklin, and Kasim Reed regimes to squeeze dollars out of the working classes through regressive sales tax legislation.

The Great Recession made the black working class more vulnerable to petty bourgeois activism. Severe unemployment and underemployment increased the precariousness of black residents, who had few public resources to lean on for relief. Therefore, the movement of poor blacks further from the city, particularly the Mercedes Benz Stadium gentrification, faced little working-class resistance. The Mount Vernon and Friendship Baptist Churches negotiated with

City Hall for the highest payout and moved their churches off the land, leaving the poor Vine City residents to fend for themselves. As a result, the city of Atlanta's black population dropped from over 70 percent in the 1980s to only 52 percent by 2010. The 2020 census will more than likely reveal that the city no longer holds a black majority.

Concurrently, the suburban areas of the Atlanta metro region where black working-class residents migrated to did not possess livable wage labor, viable transportation to the city for work, or necessities like an abundance of grocery stores. Instead, capitalists turned these rural areas into retail complexes that offered mostly temporary and minimum wage work in residents' backyards. Therefore, many black working-class people in the 2010s struggled to dig out of poverty and find access to livable wage labor.

What is to Be Done? The Problem of Intra-racial Class Struggle in the Twenty-First Century African American Urban Experience

On March 5, 1981, white radical scholar Harold Baron sent a letter to African American scholar Akbar Muhammad Ahmad discussing the viability of mass grassroots social movements in the African American community:

“As I assess our work in the 1950's, one of our problems was that we moved to the defensive too quickly without contesting the terrain at every point. Too little attention was paid to developing limited offensives, for only in offensives can you raise new questions...In the midst of defending political and economic terrain that was important, the old left lost the capacity to project a vision of a viable alternative society. The only alternatives they put forth were cast in terms of the thirties and the Great Depression—revive the New Deal coalition...Are we menaced by a real fascist threat? When you take the racial realities of America into account, this situation requires a more complex analysis because the norms of bourgeois democracy have never been fully applied in the black community. For the black community, the major controls are still exercised through the traditional state and corporate

methods.”⁷⁵²

The African American sociohistorical experience has generally been defined through bourgeois frameworks, which shields the problem of permanence in social movement capacity. I argue that a conceptual framework defined by class struggle in African America forces us to rethink the problem of defensive social movements in our current historical moment. This research serves as a paradigm for how defensive strategy subverts movement permanence. The political economy under capitalism thrives under defensive social movements because as Baron stated, the lack of offensive tactics reduces the capacity for the black working class to effectively challenge capital’s new racial formations and means of accumulation. In dialectical fashion, working class resistance restructures and responds to the capitalist system. However, if the black working class, who continues to grasp at the increasingly diminishing resources runs in circles, they can never slow down, sit back, and analyze the current historical moment and test new offensive measures that hold the potential to unearth liberation strategies that correlate with late capitalism.

The other most pressing problem that the black working-class faces is the historical consistency to which the ruling class, and now the petty bourgeoisie, appropriate the agendas of the working classes to bolster their own class interests. As detailed in chapters four and five, the takeover of anti-poverty activism by the capitalist class, primarily through community development corporations, non-profit organizations, and diversity programs and scholarships, weakened the rationality of collective grassroots struggles for social change. However, the extralegal murders of African Americans Oscar Grant in 2009, Trayvon Martin in 2012, and Mike Brown in 2015 called into question this individualized and middle-class supervision of

⁷⁵² Letter from Harold Baron to Akbar Muhammad Ahmad, 5 March 1981, (Uncollected Box, Unknown Folder), Harold Baron Archive Collection.

social problems. Black Lives Matter, a petty bourgeois national organization with some local working-class nodes in areas like Atlanta and Milwaukee, became that mainstream challenge to systemic racial oppression. However, they defined their challenge through bourgeois interests that did not respect the history of class struggle in Black America and never made a genuine connection with the broader black working-class community. As a result, there is a more mainstream commentary on systemic racism, but it is generally one-dimensional and viewed through the prism of identity politics. BLM's main tactics included recruiting voters to the Democratic Party, accruing profits through speaking tours, and condemning working-class protests like urban rebellion.⁷⁵³ In other words, the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie misappropriated activism for their own class interests. This leaves black working-class activists and scholars with a disillusionment at the confusing framework for resistance.

Although chapter four and five detail historical examples of the appropriation of leftist ideology and practice the against the working classes, more contemporary crises deserve further examination. As U.S. healthcare costs continue to spiral out of reach of most residents, the grassroots movement for single payer healthcare and the goal of universal free healthcare has become a serious talking point for federal and state officials. Concurrently, the push for reparations for African Americans, a movement that dates to the eighteenth century, has gained enough traction on the ground that both the black and white bourgeoisie and the black petty bourgeoisie must take it seriously as a possibility. These efforts by historically anti-working-

⁷⁵³ Unfortunately, very few academic criticisms of Black Lives Matter exist at this point. There are many reasons behind this, but it is mainly due to its relatively young existence. However, some think pieces offer radical takes on the organization and the problems of petty bourgeois activism. See Bruce A. Dixon, "#BlackLivesMatter Introduces a New Visa Debit Card, and Revives the Toxic Old Myths of Black Capitalism," *Black Agenda Report*, April 13, 2017, <https://blackagendareport.com/BlackLivesMatter-revives-toxic-black-capitalism-myths/>; "Yes Black liberals Commodify Black Lives Matter too and it's a major problem," *Black Youth Project*, May 12, 2017, <http://blackyouthproject.com/yes-black-people-commodify-black-lives-matter-too-and-its-a-major-problem/>; Glen Ford, "Black Lives Matter Founder Launches Huge Project to Shrink Black Lives," *Black Agenda Report*, June 6, 2019, <https://blackagendareport.com/black-lives-matter-founder-launches-huge-project-shrink-black-lives>

class factions raises serious problems for grassroots activists and coalitions to break away from operating as defensive only when social crises develop.

What is to be done regarding the New Nadir? The answer lies in our willingness, as scholars and activists, to formulate the crises as problems and develop radical frameworks to address the problems. If we do not consider the means to frame the social crises in the historical moment, then the working classes will not possess the means to develop offensive measures and retreat the defensive position. More frankly, the black working class can no longer allow other racial classes who do not possess their sociohistorical experience to determine their course of action against racial oppression. Class struggle is a difficult and sometimes uncomfortable analysis for African Americans because it invites an internal struggle—something that has not been the most dominant problem in the African American experience. However, scholars, activists, and residents must confront the question of whether intraracial class struggle has either equaled or surpassed white supremacy as the most prevalent crisis black people face today.

In other words, we must embrace and then confront the dialectic in a genuine manner to construct a legitimate analysis and response to the contemporary racial formation. The New Nadir, like other racial formations of the past, can be successfully challenged and disrupted. The black working class cannot shift from defensive to offensive any faster without difficult and uncomfortable analyses, debates, and confrontations. However, they cannot put the cart before the horse and diagnose the symptom outside of the larger problem. I intend for this dissertation to be part of that initial step in the right direction.

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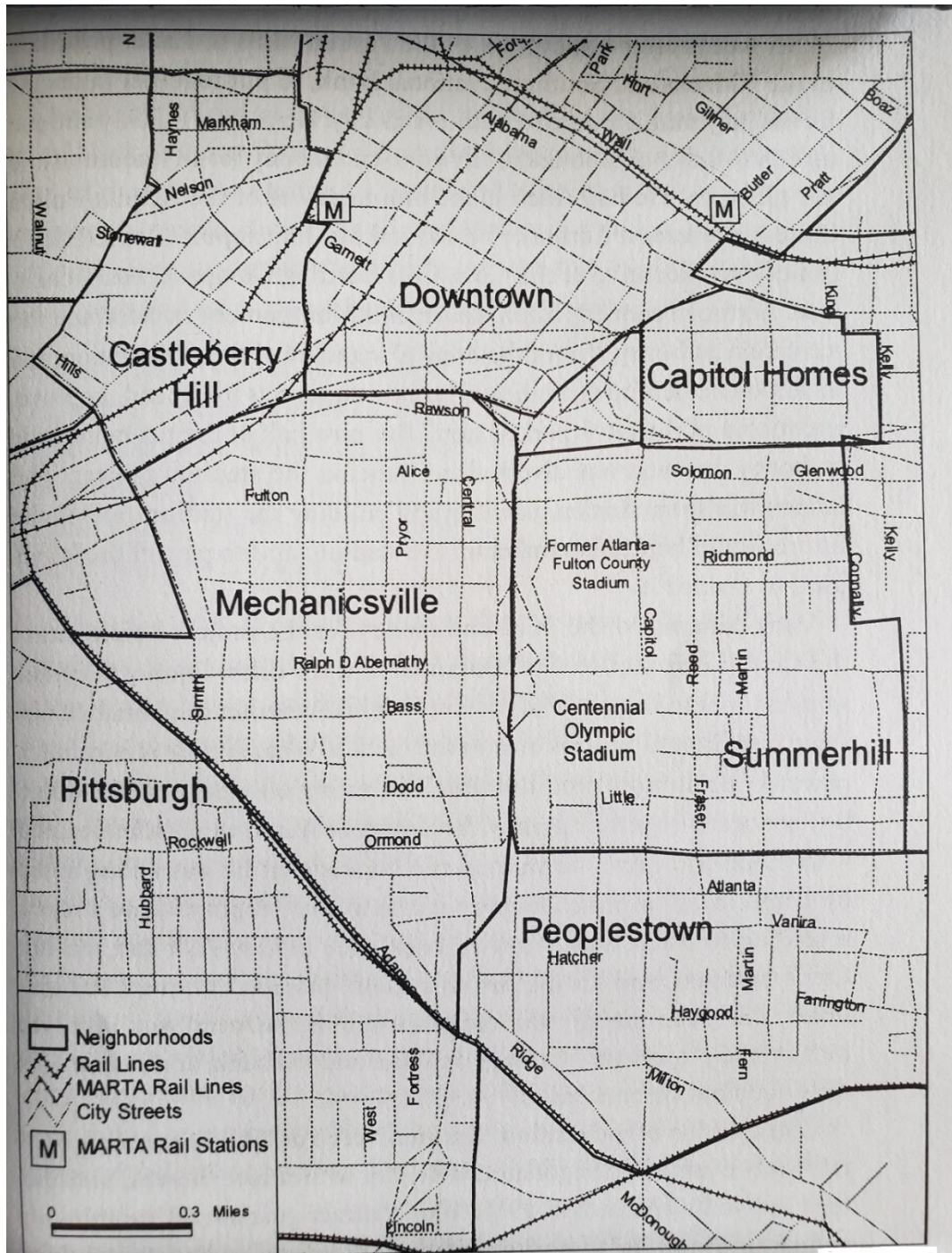
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APPENDIX A: MAPS

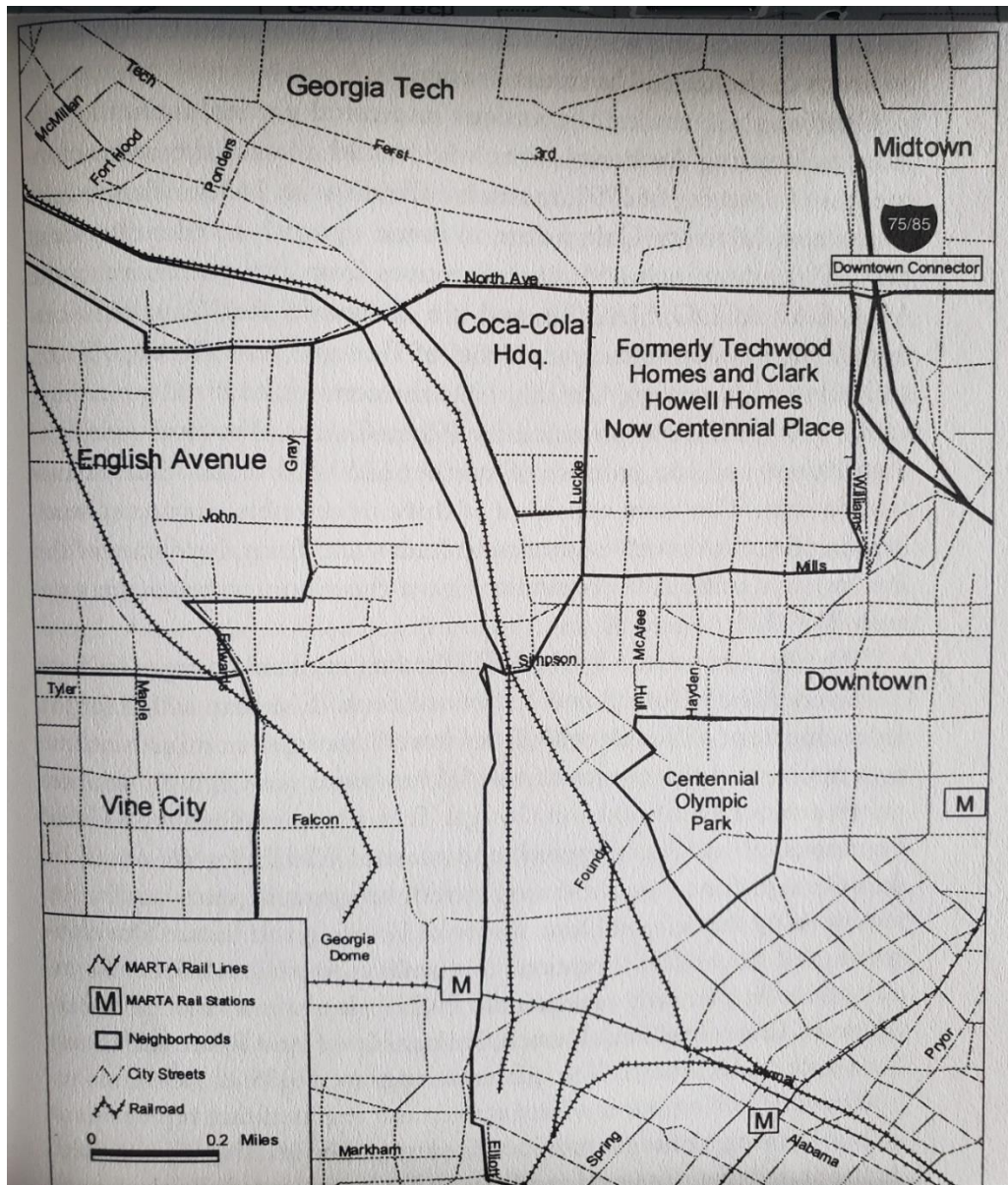
A.1 Overview Map of the Atlanta Metropolitan Region



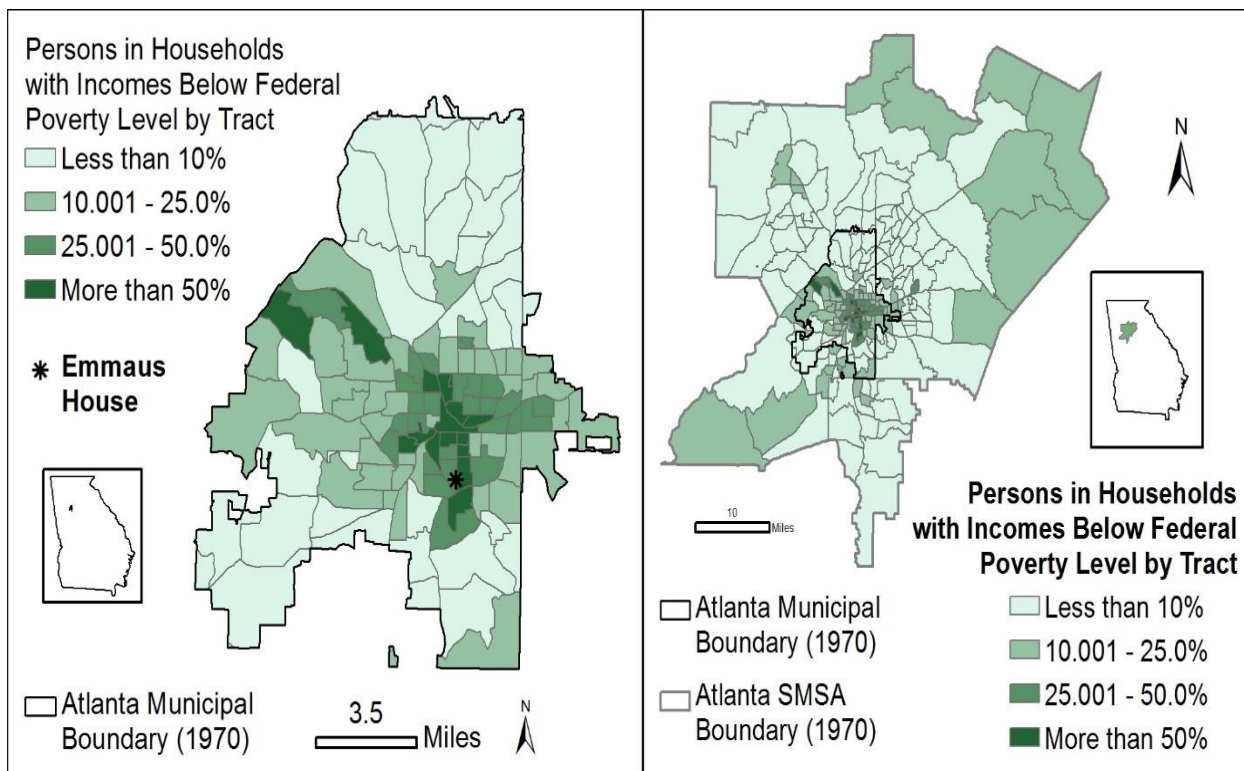
A.2 Summerhill, Peoplestown, Mechanicsville, and surround Black Neighborhoods
 (Printed in Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race Class and Urban Expansion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001. Courtesy of Brad Calvert.)



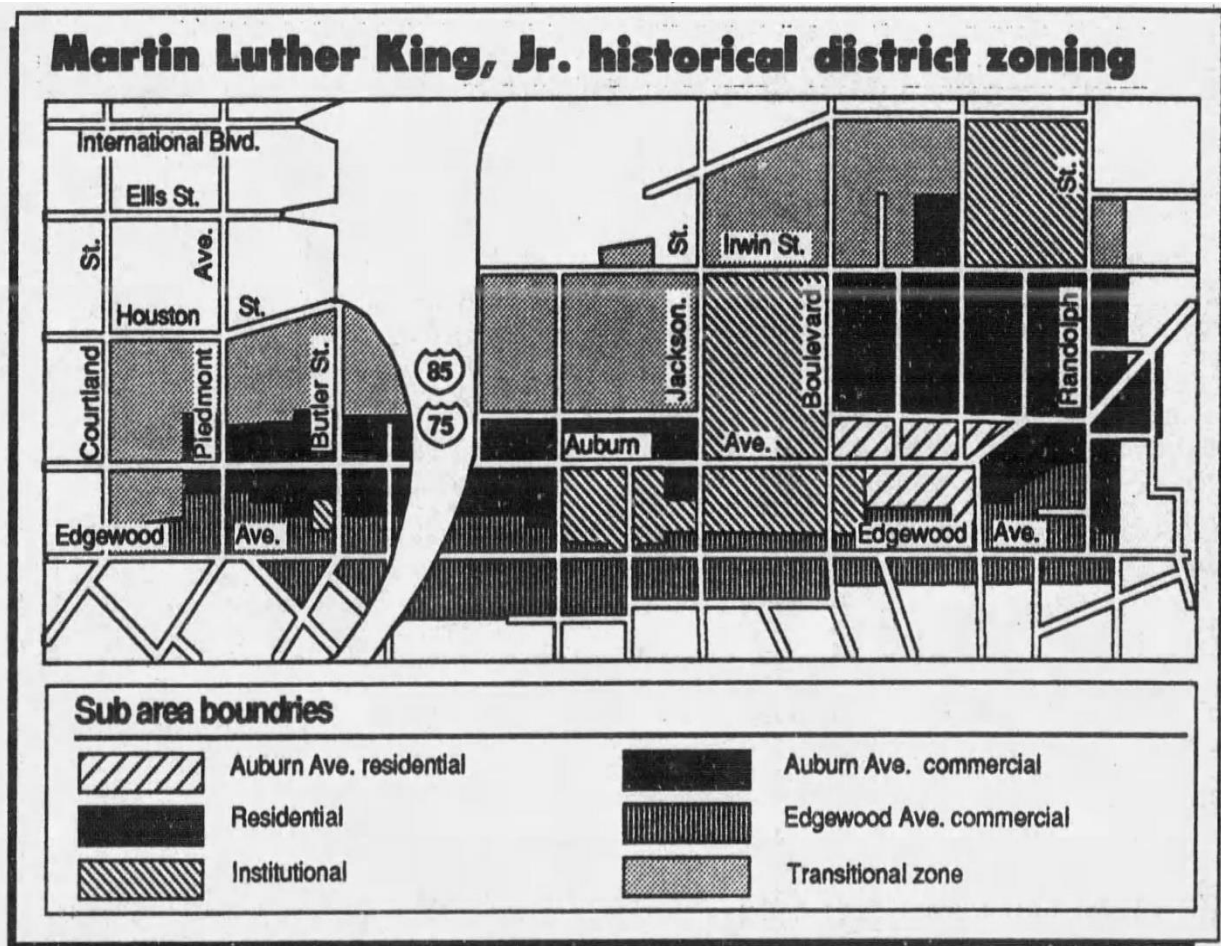
A.3 Techwood/Clark-Howell Homes (Centennial Place) and Surrounding Neighborhoods (Printed in Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race Class and Urban Expansion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001. Courtesy of Brad Calvert.)



A.4 Persons in Houses with Incomes Below Federal Poverty Level by Tract: Atlanta Municipal Boundary and Atlanta SMSA Boundary, 1970 (Source: Cartographer/Boundary Data is Courtesy of the Minnesota Population Center National Historical Geographic Information System Version 2.0: Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011. Census Data is Courtesy of Terry K. Adams, Census of Population and Housing, 1970, Extract Data [computer file]. 2nd release. Ann Arbor, MI: Economic Behavior Program, Survey Research Center [producer], 1991, Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [Distributor], 1992. Map produced by Matthew L. Mitchelson, Kennesaw State University.)



A.5 Auburn Avenue Neighborhood After Urban Renewal Displacement



APPENDIX B: CHARTS & GRAPHS

B.1 LARGEST EMPLOYERS, ATLANTA METRO AREA, 2015

Source: Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce 2015

<u>Largest Employers, Atlanta Metro Area</u>	
Company	Number of Employees
Delta Air Lines	31,237
Emory University	29,937
Wal-Mart Stores	20,532
Home Depot Inc.	20,000
AT&T	17,882
Kroger Co.	14,753
WelStar Health System	13,500
Publix Super Markets	9,494
United States Postal Service	9,385
Northside Hospital	9,016
Coca-Cola Company	8,761
United Parcel Service (UPS)	8,727
Piedmont Healthcare	8,707
Centers for Disease Control	8,539

B.2 TAX EXEMPT PROPERTY IN GEORGIA, 1972

Source: Georgia Department of Revenue 1972

Homestead Exemption	\$1,504, 000, 000
Religious Exemption	\$1,457, 000, 000
City Property	\$1,205, 000, 000
Federal Property	\$506, 000, 000
County Property	\$475, 000, 000
Private Schools	\$166, 000, 000
Public Housing	\$128, 000, 000
Hospitals	\$112, 000, 000
Charitable Groups	\$52, 000, 000
Industry and Misc.	\$50, 000, 000
TOTAL	\$6,034, 000, 000

B.3 Variables that Affect the Use Value of African American Neighborhoods

Resource	Example
<i>Daily Round</i>	Labor within proximity to home and school
<i>Informal Support Networks</i>	Loaning food in exchange for childcare service
<i>Community</i>	Bonds based labor, social, or residential relationships
<i>Security & Trust</i>	Skin color, Clothing, Diction between residents
<i>Identity</i>	Class Interests
<i>Ethnicity</i>	A neighborhood that is fully black
<i>Agglomeration</i>	All residents work at the same factory near the neighborhood

B.4 The Mathematical Equation for Property Tax Assessment in Atlanta.

(Source: Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax Position Paper, undated, Box 65, Folder 8, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Assessed Value of home: } \$50,000 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \times \quad .40 \text{ County-wide school tax} \\
 \quad \quad \quad \hline
 \quad \quad \quad \$20,000 \\
 \quad \quad \quad -5,000 \text{ homestead exemption} \\
 \quad \quad \quad \hline
 \quad \quad \quad \$15,000 \\
 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \$43.15 \text{ City mill rate} \\
 \quad \quad \quad \times \quad 15 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \hline
 \quad \quad \quad \$647.25 \text{ City Tax} \\
 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \$15.15 \text{ County mill rate} \\
 \quad \quad \quad \times \quad 15 \\
 \quad \quad \quad \hline
 \quad \quad \quad \$227.00 \text{ County tax}
 \end{array}$$

The \$647.25 city tax bill would be broken up as follows:

City Bonds: \$36.00
 School Bonds: \$45.00
 City Schools: \$363.75
 City Parks: \$7.50

Therefore, the individual who owns the home valued at \$50,000 pays less than —\$200 a year to support the city's general operations budget (fire, police, sanitation, etc.) and \$364 a year to operate the city schools.

B.5 Georgia Tax Revenue Distribution, 1978

(Source: Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax Position Paper, undated, Box 65, Folder 8, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

<u>Goods</u>	<u>Sales Tax Revenue Percentage</u>
Food	21%
Automotive	18%
General Merchandise	14%
Utilities	13%
Manufactures	7%
Services	6%
Lumber	6%
Miscellaneous	5%
Furniture	4%
Apparel	2%

B.6 Effects of a Local Option Sales Tax in Atlanta, 1978-1979

(Source: Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax Position Paper, undated, Box 65, Folder 8, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

<u>Gross Income</u>	<u>Income Subject to Sales Tax</u>	<u>% income subject to sales tax</u>
\$9,594	\$6,546	\$68.2%
\$15,483	\$9,447	\$61.0%
\$22,584	\$13,258	\$58.7%

B.7 Total Amount of Tax Rollbacks for Largest Atlanta Businesses

(Source: Coalition Against the Local Option Sales Tax Position Paper, undated, Box 65, Folder 8, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

<u>FIRM</u>	<u>Rollback</u>
Southern Bell	\$2,190,000
Georgia Power	\$ 960,000
IBM	\$ 511,000
Coca-Cola	\$ 498,000
Delta Airlines	\$ 469,000
Ford Motor Co.	\$ 448,000
Hilton Hotel Co.	\$ 434,000
Sears	\$ 405,000
General Motors	\$ 405,000
Prudential	\$ 347,000
Peachtree Plaza	\$ 306,000

B.8 Public Housing Projects Demolished by the City of Atlanta, 2015

Source: The Atlanta Housing Authority 2015

Public Housing Projects Demolished by the City of Atlanta

Public Housing Project	Replaced By
Capitol Homes	Capitol Gateway
Carver Homes	Villages at Carver
East Lake Meadows	Villages of East Lake
Eagan Homes	Magnolia Park
Grady Homes	Ashley Auburn Pointe
Harris Homes	Ashley College Town
John Hope Homes	Villages at Castleberry Hill
McDaniel-Glenn Homes	Columbia at Mechanicsville
Perry Homes	West Highlands
Techwood Homes	Centennial Place
Antoine Graves	Nothing
Bankhead Courts	Nothing
Bowen Homes	Nothing
Englewood Manor	Nothing
Herndon Homes	Nothing
Hollywood Courts	Nothing
Jonesboro North	Nothing
Jonesboro South	Nothing
Leila Valley	Nothing
Palmer House	Nothing
Roosevelt House	Nothing
Thomasville Heights	Nothing
University Homes	Nothing
U-rescue Villa	Nothing

APPENDIX C: PICTURES

C.1 Ethel Mae Mathews (front) Leads Atlanta Neighborhoods United for Fairness (A'NUFF) in Protest Against the Olympic Stadium Groundbreaking (Source: "The Olympic Stadium: Breaking Ground," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 11, 1993, pg. 25)



C.2 Mead Workers' Manifesto to Management (Source: "STRIKE! MEAD!" *The Great Speckled Bird*, September 4, 1972, pg. 4.

MEAD WORKERS' MANIFESTO

The Mead Corporation, historically and presently, has been guilty of blatant acts of discrimination against Black people and against women in particular. This discrimination is apparent in the present policies concerning hiring, advancement, and training of employees.

Further, the working conditions are intolerable. Excessive dust, lack of proper ventilation, lack of adequate medical facilities, and general hazardous safety conditions are but a few of the problems that Mead workers encounter daily. These conditions are made more intolerable by constant intimidation and harassment by supervision.

While this document speaks to particular discriminatory practices against Black people and women, it is also in the interest of the entire work force. This dispute is not between Black and white workers, but rather one between workers and management.

Despite numerous grievances and other forms of protest, Mead continues to pursue a discriminatory and racist policy and has continued to maintain intolerable working conditions.

Having repeatedly attempted to use existing channels of protest without success, it has become necessary for rank-and-file employees to organize to protect our common interests.

—mead caucus of rank & file workers

C.3 AFSCME Local 1644 Strike Flyer (Source: Strike Flyer for Sanitation Strike 1977, Undated, Box 108, Folder 2, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

**Will City Workers
Strike?
Yes!**

Why?

SINCE SEPTEMBER 1975 AFSCME LOCAL 1644 HAS MET WITH CITY OFFICIALS THINKING THEY WERE REASONABLE PEOPLE, AND ATTEMPTED TO SOLVE OUR DIFFERENCES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE WITHOUT CONFRONTATION.

THE MORE WE MEET, THE MORE WE UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF "A CITY TOO BUSY TO HATE" . . .

Our City Is:

- **BUSY PROVOKING CITY WORKERS -**
TO STRIKE IN ORDER TO HAVE AN EXCUSE TO RAISE TAXES, BUT THEY FAIL TO COLLECT \$18,000,000.00 IN TAXES THAT BUSINESSES OWE FROM 1974,
- **BUSY HOLDING DOWN CITY WORKERS -**
WAGES WHILE THE COST OF LIVING ROSE 16 PERCENT SINCE WE GOT OUR LAST PAY INCREASE.
- **BUSY PUTTING MONEY IN CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS -**
AND OTHER PROJECTS TO MAKE THE COUNCIL LOOK GOOD.
- **BUSY CUTTING OUR CITY JOBS -**
AND PUTTING MONEY ELSEWHERE LIKE THE 571 POSITIONS THEY HAD MONEY FOR, BUT NEVER FILLED BECAUSE THEY GOT FEDERAL MONEY FOR CETA WORKERS AND THEY WORK HARD FOR LESS BENEFITS.

WORKERS FOR THE STATE, FULTON AND DEKALB COUNTY ALL GOT PAY INCREASES ALONE WITH WORKERS FOR MOST OF THE OTHER MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN ATLANTA.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

C.4 Community Strike Rally Flyer (Source: Strike Support Flyer, 19 March 1977, Box 114, Folder 14, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Records, Series B: First and Second Term Mayoral Records, General Files, Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia.)

STRIKE SUPPORT RALLY


Show support for the striking city workers at community-wide rally and march.
SATURDAY, APRIL 23.

MEET at Central City Park (Peachtree and Luckie) at 10 a.m.
MARCH together to City Hall, where we will
HEAR brief remarks from

Mrs. Ethel Mae Matthews, National Welfare Rights Organization
Dr. Mack Jones, Chairman of the Dept. of Political Science,
Atlanta Univ.
Dr. Ralph Jackson, community leader from Memphis, Tenn.
Ms. Mandy Griggs, Herndon Homes
Ms. Marian Green, Techwood Homes
Ms. Eva Davis, East Lake Meadows
Jessie Moore, Executive Director, Atlanta Assoc. of Educators
Gene Guerrerro, Executive Director, Georgia ACLU
Charlie Hayes, Vice President of the Meat Cutters Union and
Executive Vice President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
Cleveland Robinson, President, Distributive Workers of America
1st Vice President of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

Community support for the striking city workers is growing every day that Maynard Jackson continues to refuse to negotiate with the union. Maynard refuses to even discuss a pay raise for the City's lowest paid employees. Maynard's trying to break the strike and destroy the union.

STAND UP, AND MARCH WITH US AND WE SHALL OVERCOME!

 AFSCME Local 1644 Organizing Committee

4/19/77

C.5 The Brushworks Factory in the Old Fourth Ward

