



MIAMI UNIVERSITY'S
**CENTER FOR COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**
IN OVER-THE-RHINE

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“COLONY OVER-THE-RHINE”

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“It is by discursively constructing populations and their spaces as racialized that mainstream white institutions in the city legitimate the removal and colonizing of the inner city. In many ways, the equating of the urban with ‘race’ has allowed white mainstream institutions to define ‘urban problems’—single-parent households, violence, poverty, joblessness, drugs—as the problem of race, and therefore the problem of blacks. In doing this, black spaces in the city are represented as ‘spaces of pathology,’ as ‘spaces of disorder,’ without any consideration of how the colonizing of space by mainstream white institutions in the city removed and destroyed the communal living spaces, the ‘homeplaces’ of urban blacks” (Stephen Nathan Haymes, *Race, Culture, and the City*).

Introduction

“NAACP picks Cincinnati for ’08 convention” read the lead headline of the Sunday edition of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* (October 22, 2006). Over at the Cincinnati USA Convention and Visitors Bureau the atmosphere was jubilant as the convention is expected to “attract 4,500 attendees” and “pump up to \$3.2 million into the local economy.” Freshman Democratic, African-American Mayor Mark Mallory said “winning the convention was a vote of confidence in Cincinnati’s race relations since the riots here five years ago. It shows how far we’ve come since 2001. It’s an acknowledgement of the progress we’ve made.”

Two days later the *Enquirer’s* lead editorial referred to the news as the “big get,” and instructed its readership: “Cincinnati’s race riots and subsequent boycott dominated the national news five years ago. With the oldest civil rights organization coming to town, it tells people that not only is the economic boycott finally over, but Cincinnati is a place where all people of good will are welcomed, not shunned.”

All this rejoicing seems to have brought on a bout of selective amnesia, in that now forgotten is the one poignant “fact” that reigns dominant in the media and public conversations throughout Cincinnati—“crime.” Tantamount to a moral panic, crime means something precise in Cincinnati—it is code for an urban underclass of blacks and other people of color who are thought to be so murderous and deviant that through their “black-on-black violence,” rampant criminality in “drug dealing and welfare dependency,” “aggressive panhandling,” their “teen pregnancy and prostitution,” and their “family breakdown and school dropout rate,” they are a menace to the citizens of Cincinnati (Macek).

This is progress?

Fast-forward to the March 9, 2007 front-page headline of the *New York Times* (this time, below the fold)—“Violent Crime in Cities Shows Sharp Surge, Reversing Trend”—and one finds that matters are not so rosy and perhaps overtures to progress are premature. Over 2004-06 “homicides increased 20 percent or more in cities including Boston, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Hartford, Memphis and Orlando, Fla. Robberies went up more than 30 percent” and “aggravated assaults with guns were up more than 30 percent” in other cities. Overall, “Seventy-one percent of the cities surveyed had an increase in homicides, 80 percent had an increase in robberies, and 67 percent reported an increase in aggravated assaults with guns.” According to the article, police chiefs and city officials are baffled by these trends, with mayor Robert Duffy of Rochester, New York saying specifically, “We’re doing all the right things consistently, but we have not seen relief...It takes much more than law enforcement.”

The 20% rise in homicides in Boston across 2004-06 didn’t seem to register with elected officials in Cincinnati, because on April 4, 2007 Cincinnati City Council “voted unanimously to spend \$353,000 on the first piece of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence” (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 5, 2007). The relation? Cincinnati’s Initiative is a carbon copy of “Operation Ceasefire,” also known more colloquially as the “Boston Miracle,” the plan that was wildly successful in the mid-to-late 90s in dropping youth homicides by 73% in a one-year period. Amounting to a full-court press, a coalition of Boston residents, police officers, parole and probation officers, street workers, juvenile corrections personnel, and clergy acted concertedly to impress upon gang members that “if they put a body on the ground, the whole crew pays, and fast” (Duane, 2006). The rub? Such a coalition is “very hard to hold together” (Duane). Apparently it didn’t hold for very long. By 2001 Boston experienced a 67% rise in homicides; (makes the mere 20% rise across 2004-06 seem like real progress!). How does the Boston Miracle stack up today? “As it existed in 1996 or 1997,” says founder David M. Kennedy, “Ceasefire is entirely gone” (Duane).

Apparently Cincinnati only wants short-term fixes, nothing sustainable over the long term. The Queen City is in such a tizzy about crime and safety that it will try anything, short-term or not. Sad that city officials think they are doing something new.

Again, progress seems to be in short supply.

Actually, I appreciate the humble sentiment expressed above by Mayor Duffy, a former police chief, about the extent to which current theory and practice of law enforcement can actually solve crime. In Cincinnati crime is instantly equated to a call for more police officers, more jail space, more weaponry and technological gadgetry, more surveillance cameras, more police sweeps (“Operation Vortex”), and more legislation regulating behavior in public spaces. These are punitive measures. They arise from a militaristic consciousness, from what sociologist C. Wright Mills cautioned long ago as “military metaphysics.” And they all illustrate a marked shift, in the making now over the last 20-30 years, in “urban policy” from a focus on urban revitalization to social control.

Cincinnati is no different than other cities whose downtowns are marked by corporate headquarters and office space, convention centers and hotels, sports stadia and financial institutions on the one hand, and on the other hand by impoverished communities of color that struggle to survive in the shadow of those skyscrapers where the world’s economic business is plotted and implemented. Such a geography, produced by and a reproducer of global forces, reflects a vast inequity along class and race lines that will likely continue. Indeed, as global forces play themselves out in the United States, “urban policy no longer aspires to guide or regulate the direction of economic growth so much as to fit itself to the grooves already established by the market in search of the highest returns, either directly or in terms of tax receipts” (Smith, 441). In essence, public funds now become the resources for private market expansion. There can be no social welfare because the market requires corporate welfare. This gives new meaning to gentrification, where “real-estate development becomes a centerpiece of the city’s *productive* economy” (Smith, 443), facilitated by a new integration of state and corporate powers. Gentrification becomes straight-up urban policy, a new form of “urban colonialism” where private entrepreneurialism and urban governance become indistinguishable. Poor people, especially those of color, are not so much the victims of the new urban colonialism as they are targets for removal.

This is certainly the case in Cincinnati wherein the closest-in community to the downtown core, Over-the-Rhine—a neighborhood listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1984—after some fits and starts is now reeling from the full brunt of gentrification by a coordinated corporate sector in alliance with business interests and the city. Of course, this is not how the allies put it, referring instead to the virtues of the private market to increase

home ownership and economic development in order to achieve an “economic mix.” But their claims are belied by their action to militarize community space, which effectively criminalizes homeless folks and racially cleanses the neighborhood as the first beachfront operation in the full-scale occupation to follow. This is nothing close to economic mix. It smacks more of a domestic imperialist or colonialist venture to dispossess community residents of their land and to herd the “losers” onto the contemporary reservation—the prison (Dutton, 2007).

Given these circumstances in Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati, and other cities across the nation, you have to wonder why the country chooses to enact its military consciousness against its own citizens over other alternatives. My concern is that this is precisely what passes for urban policy today. As global shifts occur in the economy and impact everyday life in urban neighborhoods, there are better theoretical lenses that can help to understand these overall conditions and especially social inequity and crime more deeply. What happens if, instead of linking crime automatically to punitive, militaristic measures, it was understood as the local fallout of global political-economic patterns producing joblessness and underemployment, increased geographic racial segregation, increased family debt, decreased real wages for the working class, a stepped-up imperialist campaign to control land internationally and domestically, the exploitation of “cheap” labor and oppressed nationalities, and the dismantling of the welfare state and the public sphere more generally?

Walk into a bookstore today and it will not take long to find titles pertaining to empire, imperialism, neocolonialism, militarism. Typically these terms denote actions playing out on a global scale, of relations between nations as well as America’s unilateral jaunts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and next possibly Iran. Perhaps with a certain perverseness you can thank the Bush administration for the return of these terms into popular use, because, for the most part, these terms first re-emerged not from the political left but from mainstream journalists trying to get a handle on the neoconservative-inspired world crusades in the wake of 9/11.

I am interested in how these terms might apply to the local scale and especially to an explanation of urban policy. What are the ways in which imperialism, militarism, and neocolonialism, typically buffed up for global play, reveal themselves at the level of municipalities and communities? What’s gained by understanding gentrification as one form of domestic neocolonialism (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005)? How about understanding a black space such as Over-the-Rhine as a neocolonial landscape? Reinventing the language of domestic neocolonialism from the 1960/70s for today’s urban conditions may be what’s needed most right now.

Domestic Neocolonialism: The 1960s and 70s

In the 1960s terms such as black colony, internal colonialism, internal imperialism, domestic neocolonialism, and community imperialism were employed as serious descriptors to explain the black ghetto. These terms were used rather extensively and had purchase across groups such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers to activists like Malcolm X, James Boggs, and Stokely Carmichael to scholars like Harold Cruse, Kenneth B. Clark, and Robert L. Allen.

Consider these samplings:

- “The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and—above all—economic colonies.” Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 1965.

- “Black people are legal citizens of the United States with, for the most part, the same *legal* rights as other citizens. Yet they stand as colonial subjects in relation to the white society. Thus institutional racism has another name: colonialism.” Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power*, 1967.

- “In the age of decolonization, it may be fruitful to regard the problem of the American Negro as a unique case of colonialism, an instance of internal imperialism, an underdeveloped people in our midst.” I. F. Stone, *The New York Review of Books*, 1966.

- “The fact of black America as a semicolony, or what has been termed *domestic colonialism*... is the most profound conclusion to be drawn from a survey of the black experience in America.” Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, 1969.

- “Community imperialism is manifested or is readily seen with respect to the domestic colonization of Black, Chicano, Indian, and other non-White peoples being cooped up in wretched ghettos and/or on Southern plantations and reservations...” Bobby Seale, “The Ten-Point Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party,” 1969.

“Applied to America, the colonial model was straightforward,” summarizes Michael Katz (1989) in his *The Undeserving Poor*, published a full two decades after the terms were enlivened by the Black Power Movement. Katz goes on: “Ghettos export their unskilled labor and import consumer good. Most capital within them remains in the hands of outsiders who control local businesses and export their profits. Unable to import capital, ghettos neither produce the materials needed for their own subsistence nor accumulate the capital essential to development. Blacks who work

outside the ghetto bring back wages too low to offset the drain of their energy and resources. The result is exploitation and dependency, or what some called ‘domestic colonialism’” (58).

I think Katz’s account is largely correct, but it is a bit simplistic in that it privileges mainly economic issues and minimalizes other issues and realms of social life that many who used terms such as domestic colonialism sought to highlight. These include issues and realms such as ideology, tokenism, institutional racism, the promotion of black capitalism as a strategy of containment, the relation of internal imperialism to world imperialism, national oppression, etc.

For example, in his article “Economic Aspects of the Black Internal Colony,” economist Ron Bailey makes clear his intent in the first sentence: “The purpose of this paper is to investigate the concrete historical reality to which the ‘colonial analogy’ is now being applied in the United States” (Bailey, 1973, 43). What follows does not disappoint. Though at times technical and dry, Bailey convincingly conveys how internal colonialism is an apt frame for understanding the dynamics of the black ghetto, a frame that highlights “internal colonialism as the domestic face of world imperialism and the racist conquest and exploitation of people of color by Europeans” (44).

Bailey divides his study into three parts. His first, titled “Relations of Production,” examines the various forms of work relations that blacks have been subjected to through history. Bailey details three such work forms—slavery, semi-feudalism (sharecropping), and industrial feudalism (Jim Crow era of legal segregation). According to Bailey, while all three structures of work relations are different in how black labor is exploited and value extracted, what remains is that “the function of the black colony has not been allowed to change despite revolutionary alterations in the economic structure and in the social and political fabric of the United States as a whole” (58).

In Bailey’s second section “Relations of Monopoly and Dependence” he analyzes the different economic sectors of the ghetto, from small businesses owned and operated by blacks to those “enclave sectors” controlled by white-owned businesses with connections primarily to other white-owned establishments outside of the ghetto. In ways that prefigure Massey and Denton’s *American Apartheid* (1994) with its message that the black ghetto is principally a white construction and benefits whites economically, Bailey’s analysis of the ghetto economy predicts that economic “inequalities will intensify and will continue to do so unless new theoretical perspectives are employed and revolutionary practices are instituted...Simply put, it is that there have developed historical forces and structures that presently consign the black colony to underdevelopment and dependence. Any economic growth (as opposed to development) which does take place within the black

colony is tied to decisions in the white community and reflects the pattern of white development” (63).

Bailey’s last section, “Relations of Maintenance,” powerfully examines how white society goes to great lengths to win over the black middle class and to prevent underclass blacks from developing a critical consciousness about their plight. At the time of Bailey’s article (1973) the black middle class was just coming into its own, which was one positive outcome of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s. But this was a class that had to be won over to ensure its allegiance to the corporate capitalism then emerging on the global scale. Primary here were the practices of “tokenism,” where black leaders were appointed to corporate and civic boards to neutralize them and disconnect them from their base in activist communities, and where “black capitalism” was promulgated as a “panacea” to all ills troubling the ghetto, especially the idea that it could constitute a neocolonialist administration that would appease the black middle class and discipline the uneasy underclass by “proving” that assimilation works.

According to Robert L. Allen in his *Black Awakening in Capitalist America*, President Nixon “was the first major public figure to thrust the concept of black capitalism into the public spotlight” (Allen, 1969, 191). President Nixon pushed a program of black capitalism, suggesting that the development of such was the truest expression of “black power.” That Nixon would embark upon such a strategy illustrates just how keen corporate and political leaders of white America were about the success of assimilating black America.

Allen’s treatise, which predates Bailey’s, is a masterful analysis of black America from the vantage point from what he called “domestic neocolonialism” (Allen, 1969). His intention is clear:

In the United States today a program of *domestic neocolonialism* is rapidly advancing. It was designed to counter the potentially revolutionary thrust of the recent black rebellions in major cities across the country. This program was formulated by America’s corporate elite—the major owners, managers, and directors of the giant corporations, banks, and foundations which increasingly dominate the economy and society as a whole—because they believe that the urban revolts pose a serious threat to economic and social stability. Led by such organizations as the Ford Foundation, the Urban Coalition, and National Alliance of Businessmen, the corporatists are attempting with considerable success to co-opt the black power movement. Their strategy is to equate black power with black capitalism (14-15).

The fear on the part of America’s economic and political elite in the wake of widespread urban revolt cannot be overstated. President Nixon worried that if the U. S. did not give black people a “better

share of economic and political power,” it would risk “permanent social disturbance” (Allen, 1969, 191). Allen traces this line of thinking to great effect. There was a choice before the nation: “Either the country can make a heavy investment aimed at eliminating ghettos or it can suppress blacks (173). Allen cites population expert Philip M. Hauser, who put the matter bluntly: “If we are not prepared to make the investment into human resources that is required, we will be forced to increase our investment in the police, the National Guard, and the Army. And possibly—it can happen here—we may be forced to resort to concentration camps and even genocide” (Allen, 173).

Actually for Allen, there was a third choice, which he spends considerable time deconstructing—the corporate-capitalist strategy to effect the domestic neocolonialist agenda. Allen says: “It is now necessary to...investigate the manner in which the white corporate elite also has used the rhetoric of black nationalism in helping itself establish neocolonial control of the black communities” (Allen, 1969, 178).

Here is where Allen and Bailey intersect: through establishing a black middle class and black capitalism, and enacting the practices of tokenism, corporations sought to create a “stabilizing black buffer which will make possible indirect white control (or neocolonial administration) of the ghettos” in order to “ease corporate penetration of the black communities and facilitate corporate planning and programming of the markets and the human resources in those communities” (Allen, 1969, 186, 187-88).

Domestic Neocolonialism Today: The Corporate-Capitalist Strategy

How has America fared in light of the three choices that Allen described? If the choices America faced in the late 60s were between solving the situation of the black ghetto versus a greater militarization to keep blacks “on the reservation” versus the corporate-capitalist strategy of domestic neocolonialism, what happened to those options and are there any new choices in the offing today?

Did the corporate-capitalist strategy work?

In a word, no, but it was not for lack of trying. This part of Allen’s book becomes fascinating, riveting even, in that he accounts in rich detail how the business community gradually awoke to the urban revolts startling the nation. Starting in 1967 and ‘68 numerous “government-business partnerships” such as the National Urban Coalition and the National Alliance of Businessmen formed to “resolve the urban crisis” (181, 180). This was a concerted effort involving some very high up corporate leaders. For example, key figures in the Urban Coalition included “Roy Ash, president of

Litton Industries, a major aerospace company; Henry Ford II, chairman of the Ford Motor Company; David Rockefeller, president of the Chase Manhattan Bank; Frederick J. Close, chairman of the Aluminum Company of America, and Andrew Heiskell, chairman of Time, Inc.” (180). These businesspersons, their companies, and the partnerships they created articulated high goals: “five hundred thousand jobs for hard-core unemployed by 1971—one hundred thousand of them by June 1969—and some two hundred thousand jobs in the summer of 1968 for youth out of school” (181). According to Allen, Henry Ford spent considerable time visiting the heads of other businesses across the nation, getting them to pledge support to hire some of the “hard-core cases” (181). President Johnson pledged governmental money to cover “training and support services” (181). Corporations began to act. Xerox “helped blacks (including militants) in Rochester, New York set up a one-million-dollar-a-year business;” Aerojet-General set up Watt Manufacturing in 1966, a company that employed several hundred workers; Chrysler “announced that it planned to deposit 1.2 million dollars annually in the black-owned Citizens Trust Bank” in Atlanta; and the Ford Foundation, in Oakland, home of the Black Panthers, “granted three hundred thousand dollars to a minority contractors’ group called the General and Special Contractors’ Association of Oakland” to enable association members to bid on construction projects (188-89).

What happened? Here Allen references a “preliminary assessment” by the *Wall Street Journal*, which “surveyed fifty major corporations in June 1968, among them the top twenty-five industrial giants, and each of the five biggest banks, insurance companies, merchandisers, utilities, and transportation companies. The survey found these companies ‘playing a significantly larger role in the civil rights arena than they did five, or even two, years ago,’ but the results were hardly anything to brag about” (Allen, 1969, 190).

Allen gives three reasons why the government-business mobilization produced such a tepid success. First, it must be noted, Allen did not attribute sinister motives to the corporate elite, indeed, he felt many of them were “sincere reformers” (186). But as I outlined above, the mobilization, in the end, was less about actually forging connections to disenfranchised, racial communities to deeply understand them and then to develop appropriate grassroots organs to effect change, than it was about proving that business could be a “beneficial force” and developing a “black bourgeoisie” that could usher in a black capitalism under white tutelage and control (184). The strings were too attached.

Second, heading into the 1970s, the economy was changing, and by the end of the decade, it would be drastically different. But by the start of the decade business leaders were already worrying about “mechanization” and “computerization” and the impacts that these business trends would have on black employment. “Part of the

reason that black unemployment is so high,” Allen warned, “is that black workers have traditionally held the jobs which are now being eliminated by mechanization and computerization. At least one company in the survey reported that the percentage of blacks on its payroll had actually declined for this reason” (190).

The third reason, closely related to the second, was the recognition that corporate profit levels were falling, a condition that only worsened over the 1970s. Allen makes the point that the government-business coalitions and their interventions into America’s inner cities were predicated on the prosperous growth patterns of the 1960s. And if there were to be a recession and/or if the economy were to change, blacks would be the first to go as corporations figured out new strategies to streamline their operations to be competitive under the new economic conditions.

In words that are prophetic, Allen summed up his concerns about the ability of corporations to continue their efforts in the black ghetto:

the pace of mechanization and automation, uneven though it is, cannot be halted because of the competitive need of individual corporations to increase efficiency and reduce costs in order to maintain profits and growth, and improve their relative standing vis-à-vis other companies. On the contrary, it can be expected that the pace of automation will only accelerate, putting more minority groups and other workers without special skills out of work...[C]ontinued prosperity in the United States is heavily dependent upon the status of the international capitalist system, and this is something over which American corporations and banks do not yet have complete hegemony. Any depleted corporate surpluses now available would sweep away black capitalism and reveal its insubstantial nature (190-91).

Allen’s concerns came to pass. Beginning in the late 1970s and consolidated through the 1980s (Thatcherism and Reaganomics), the economy underwent a profound restructuring and is now globalized and neoliberalist. Generally called globalization the features of this new political-economic reorganization of global capitalism are an unfettered market; a restructured state—what some call the “neoliberal authoritarian state”—with the mission to vacate all the gains of the welfare state while increasing budgets for the police, military, and prisons; and the commodification, financialization, privatization, and deregulation of just about everything. To many scholars critical of these trends the main “achievements” of worldwide neoliberalism include massive misery and inequality among nations (and within nations too); massive redistribution of wealth upward; the feminization of poverty; environmental degradation; the death of the concept of a public good or a public realm; permanent war; and all of this buttressed by the ideology that some populations are expendable and can be written off. It is not simply that the welfare state is coming to an end, it is more that the

state need not provide for those left behind in low-wage and no-wage futures. In the United States deindustrialization became the reality that Allen feared in “computerization” and “automation,” a devastating transition that gutted the black working class. “By the 1980s more than 1.1 million manufacturing jobs vanished from the economy, mostly in large cities,” (Vargas, 2006, 36). William Julius Wilson, respected sociologist of black inner-city life, says something similar in his *When Work Disappears*, “Fundamental structural changes in the new global economy, including changes in the distribution of jobs and in the level of education required to obtain employment, resulted in the simultaneous occurrence of increasing joblessness and declining real wages for low-skilled workers” (Wilson, 1996). According to Vargas in his *Catching Hell in the City of Angels*, 1968 was the year that “marked the greatest equality the United States had ever experienced” (Vargas, 36).

In this new global, neoliberalist economy, corporate involvement in depressed communities of color as a “beneficial force” for those community citizens has all but disappeared. Allen’s “governmental-business partnerships” have morphed into public-private partnerships, but with far more devastating consequences for ghettoized poverty. This lingo of public-private partnerships, which sounds all rosy and win-win, is all about subsidizing private sector risk by the commonwealth of the public. Through enterprise and empowerment zones, tax abatements, tax incentives, and deregulatory legislation, the strategy is to advance privatization, to reduce environmental standards, and generally to subordinate social movements to the interests of profits and the market system (Dutton, 1999). The only developmental rationality put forth is the one based upon an unfettered market. Hardly any version of community development today is theorized outside of this ideology of corporatism. In the provocative *Reconstructing Los Angeles From the Bottom Up*, Eric Mann, director of the Los Angeles Labor/Community Strategy Center, makes this very point in light of the Peter Ueberroth’s leading effort to ReBuild LA after the 1992 uprisings in LA:

Ueberroth, far more socially concerned than most corporatists, has come up against the limits of his own market-driven strategy. He was confident, no doubt, owing to his success in the travel and public relations business, that he could convince corporations of the long-term political importance of investing in the inner city even if it meant a short-term reduction in their profits. A nation with cities going up in flames, he argued, is bad for business as a class. What’s more, a business-led rebuilding can preempt the prospect of more radical efforts. But Ueberroth’s approach is failing precisely because of the ruthlessness of the market forces he is trying to cajole. With growing competition and a decline in their own fortunes, U.S. corporations are unwilling to invest much [in inner-city Los Angeles], whether for socially responsible or politically strategic

reasons. (Mann, 1992, 3)

Domestic Neocolonialism Today: Dismantling the Welfare State

If the corporate-capitalist push to address ghetto poverty fizzled as a beneficial force, how did Allen's second choice on the part of the nation fare with regards to addressing poverty? Did America adequately invest in eliminating ghettoized poverty, did it do whatever was necessary to address the conditions of the black inner city?

Again, the answer is ultimately no, but the United States government did step up to do something. The gains of the Civil Rights Movement in the form of Great Society programs were not insignificant. Tantamount to what some call the nation's "Second Reconstruction," important social policies were passed in the 1960s in the areas of income support, comprehensive training programs, social welfare, voting rights, anti-discrimination policies, housing affordability, affirmative action, and more to meet the needs of blacks and other minority poor as the "cornerstone of federal urban policy" (Mann, 2006). Medicare, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, Food Stamps, and Head Start all got started then. "So hegemonic was this programme in the early 70s," writes Robert Brenner, "that for Nixon—in the context of the Black Power and anti-war movements—it was electoral commonsense to step it up. A substantial increase in social security benefits, expanding unionization for federal government workers, a proposed Guaranteed Annual Wage (rejected by the Democrats), creation of the Legal Services Corporation (Legal Aid), the Environmental Protection Agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and (under Gerald Ford) initiation of the Earned Income Tax Credit scheme, were the results" (Brenner, 2007, 41)

These gains were short-lived.

The extent and success of the civil rights-inspired social programs may be debated ad infinitum, but what is not difficult to argue is the almost immediate counteraction to roll back these gains. Begun under Nixon and Carter and fully developed under Reagan and Bush I, the goal, writes Eric Mann in another Labor/Community Strategy Center primer, *A Call to Reject the Federal Weed and Seed Program in Los Angeles*, was a "conscious counterrevolution—an explicit plan to undo virtually the entire combined social agenda of the New Deal and the Great Society" (Mann, 1993, 3). Vargas says something similar: "The welfare programs of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty—which for all their ideological contradictions and practical dilemmas eliminated hunger in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s—gave way to Reagan's 'war on welfare'" (Vargas, 37).

Vargas continues with the devastation wrought by the rollback agenda of Reaganomics: “As a result, an estimated one-third of all poor families...did not receive food stamps in the 1990s, reflecting a cut of 14.3 percent in funds. Moreover, the basic welfare program, Aid to Families with Dependent children (AFDC), was cut by 17.4 percent, leading to an additional 400,000 families losing their eligibility for government assistance. The Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), a public-service employment program, was eliminated altogether, while other community-based programs had their funding drastically reduced. In the wake of these government funding cuts, families were not eligible for any type of housing assistance” (Vargas, 37). Reagan wasted no time in implementing his agenda. By the first summer of his administration, writes eminent sociologist Frances Fox Piven, “Congress had approved cuts of \$140 billion in federal social programs covering the years 1982-84, more than half from income maintenance programs for the poor. New investment and depreciation tax write-offs were introduced that favored the largest corporations, and personal income and estate taxes were slashed with most of the benefits going to the more affluent. And new administration directives reduced environmental and workplace regulations, while budget cuts weakened their enforcement” (Piven, 2004, 39-40).

The Reagan agenda was ushered along by Bush I and by Clinton, with the noose tightening even further for less well-off Americans in 1994 with the Republican Party landslide of both houses of Congress. The Republicans came prepared to finish the job to rollback “key aspects of the New Deal-Great Society settlement that no administration, Democrat or Republican, had so far dared to touch: Social Security, progressive taxation and (a good part of) the business regulatory regime, including EPA and OSHA” (Brenner, 48-9). According to Robert Brenner: “Between 1995-2005, beneath the glitzy surface of the ‘new economy’ and the later distractions of the ‘war on terror,’ the manufacturing labour force was reduced by a fifth, while the financial sector expanded from about 25 per cent to 40 per cent of total corporate profits. American workers were left to sink or swim, with neither party offering a political solution” (53).

Today the rollback of the New Deal-Great Society programs as well as the gains of the Civil Rights Movement are near complete. The business agenda is mainstream and advocated by both political parties. The main planks crushingly advanced by the Reagan regime have changed little over the past thirty years. Piven sums it up nicely: “lower and less progressive taxation, reduced government regulation, reduced government spending on social programs, and the privatization of public programs wherever possible. The Clinton administration moderated the program, but they were not exceptions to its basic thrusts, and especially not exceptions to the neo-liberal principle of ‘deregulation of all markets’ as the impetus to more economic activity” (Piven, 40). According to Piven, not only have things gotten worse under the present Bush administration, they have

done so under the cover of war. It is not unreasonable to expect that some social spending will be cut in a time of war, as if such spending is an unavoidable byproduct of wartime initiatives. But this is not what Piven means. For Piven—and she is not alone as figures such as David Harvey (2005), Noam Chomsky (2003), and Wendy Brown (2003) agree—imperial war is precisely the “strategy for domestic predation, a strategy for enacting the policies that dispossess resources and rights from ordinary Americans on an unprecedented scale” (Piven, 38).

The abandonment of the inner city by corporate America and the rollback of social services in a time of worsening social need do not bode well for a world that is rapidly becoming massively inequitable among and within countries, marked by environmental degradation in the forms of global warming and lost standards for health, a declining significance of labor-union power, and an unbridled trans-global corporatism that is matched only by the uprooting and mobility of labor (Dutton and Bell, 2006).

As social need worsens greatly, the state divests itself of meeting that need. No wonder poverty in the U.S. is becoming more and more intractable. A new type of poverty emerges in the inner cities “in which poor people find themselves cut off from entry-level jobs, stripped of government social services like health care and housing subsidies, and forced to endure horrific conditions in crumbling public schools, all under the mounting presence of police and prisons” (Barlow, 66-67). In this context the increased “reliance on the use of repressive force—the military, the police, and prisons—is necessary to maintain social order and to manage those without a stake in the global economy” (Barlow, 74). It is not overstating to say that mass incarceration of the working-class and especially the working-class of color is not just a byproduct of world neoliberal trends, but a strategy for social containment (Wacquant; Dutton and Bell).

Domestic Neocolonialism Today: Full Spectrum Dominance and Econocide

Such are the draconian conditions today. And it is in this frightening Orwellian context that the last option Robert Allen in *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* identified as one of the choices facing the United States after the urban revolts of the 1960s—essentially the option to militarize the state—needs to be examined. In other words, with the failure of the corporate-capitalist mission to rescue the black inner city, plus the governmental assault on the Great Society programs in order to roll them back and institute a pro-corporate business agenda, is it too rhetorical to ask what has become of the option to suppress black inner city populations through military and other punitive means? Has this not come to pass?

The phrase today is “full spectrum dominance.” It is a military phrase, the key term in the “Joint Vision 2020” report of the Department of Defense, released May 30, 2000. “Full-spectrum dominance means the ability of the U. S. forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations.” The Report continues:

“Joint Vision 2020 addresses full-spectrum dominance across the range of conflicts from nuclear war to major theater wars to smaller-scale contingencies. It also addresses amorphous situations like peacekeeping and non-combat humanitarian relief. Key to U.S. dominance in any conflict will be what the chairman calls “decision superiority”—translating information superiority into better decisions arrived at and implemented faster than an enemy can react. The development of a global information grid will provide the environment for decision superiority.” (Department of Defense)

Full spectrum dominance is where warfare meets information technology. And it is here that it can be readily seen how military consciousness spills over into other registers of social life. This worries Andrew Bacevich, a West Point graduate and former career military officer who is now professor of History and International Relations at Boston University. In his *The New American Militarism* (2005), he lays out how Americans today, more than ever before, “are enthralled with military power. The global military supremacy that the United States presently enjoys—and is bent on perpetuating—has become central to our national identity” (Bacevich, 1). The American consciousness is militaristic to its core. Military might and supremacy are absolutely good. There is the “propensity to use force, leading...to the normalization of war” (18). The endgame is endless war (War on Terror).

For Bacevich, while today’s social reality is run-through with militaristic practices that bear on all matters of social issues, this way of thinking is not really new. Bacevich cites sociologist C. Wright Mills and his concern about “military metaphysics,” a term he coined over 50 years ago (2). Writing in 1958 Mills cautioned about the congruence of the “permanent-war economy” and the “private corporation economy” (Mills, 28). “The most important relations of the corporation to the state now rest on the coincidence between military and corporate interests, as defined by the military and the corporate rich, and accepted by the politicians and the public” (28).

While citizens of the U.S. may look to present-day Iraq and the so-called War of Terror as penultimate examples of what worried Mills, one should not forget how this corporate-military-state congruence was (and is) directed internally against the country’s own citizenry, especially people of color, for example, in the effort to criminalize black men and even to assassinate black leadership. Just three examples follow.

- Consider the role of the FBI. In a recent article (2006), written expressly to reassess the internal colonialism theory he developed in his book of 1969, Robert Allen holds little back in relating how state repression, incarceration, and especially the “FBI’s COINTELPRO operation instigated and coordinated attacks on Black Panther offices that resulted in many deaths, not only of Panthers but also activists in other organizations. Most of the victims were guilty only of exercising their constitutional right of freedom of expression and association” (Allen, 2006, 6). FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover left nothing to chance in his intentions of COINTELPRO towards the Black Liberation Movement: “The purpose of this new counterintelligence endeavor is to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder” (Memo dated April 25, 1967 printed in Churchill and Wall, 1990, 92). COINTELPRO was effective. As historian Philip S. Foner states in *The Black Panthers Speak*, “On December 5, 1969, Charles R. Garry [legal counsel of the Panthers] told newsmen that since January 1, 1969, twenty-eight members of the Black Panther Party had been killed by the police” (Foner, 1995, 40).

- Consider as well, in 1967, how Huey Newton of the Black Panthers worried about forced internment of black people. He wrote: “At the same time that the American government is waging a racist war of genocide in Vietnam, the concentration camps in which Japanese Americans were interned during World War II are being renovated and expanded. Since America has historically reserved the most barbaric treatment for nonwhite people, we are forced to conclude these concentrations camps are being prepared for Black people” (Foner, 40).

- Consider how Reagan’s war on welfare became Clinton and Bush II’s War on Drugs, which may sound well and good, but in point of fact, as Leith Mullings observes, “forseeably and unnecessarily blighted the lives of hundreds of thousands of young disadvantaged black Americans and undermined decades of effort to improve the life changes of members of the urban, black underclass” (Mullings, 85). “The war on drugs has been the single most important factor in the increase of the prison population” (Mullings, 86), creating what former Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey calls an “American gulag” (McCaffrey 1996). As anthropologist Christopher Kolb summarizes, “With nearly 2.3 million Americans incarcerated, the prison population is now over five times what it was only twenty years ago and, in total, over 7 million people are currently under correctional supervision” (Kolb, 2007, 3). But these statistics alone do not account for the racial disparity in incarceration rates. Kolb continues: “While 72% of all drug users are white, five times as many whites as African-Americans use drugs, and whites comprise

the overwhelming majority of drug dealers, African-Americans account for almost two-thirds of drug offenders in state prisons, are incarcerated on drug charges at thirteen times the rate of whites, and receive 49% longer federal drug sentences than whites...Even crack-cocaine, the archetypal African-American “ghetto” drug, claims three times as many white users, yet nearly 90% of federal crack-cocaine defendants are African-American” (3).

Today, full spectrum dominance colonizes the political unconscious, disproportionately impacting people of color. The war on welfare morphs into the War on Drugs which then morphs into a straight-up war on the poor, especially poor people of color. The military-industrial complex morphs into the prison-industrial complex. After slavery, Jim Crow, and the ghetto of the 1950s and ‘60s, the prison becomes the next racially enclosing device (Wacquant) to define blackness to an ignorant nation. The fallout is catastrophic. For African Americans, as Manning Marable characterizes it, the contemporary situation is a time of “mass unemployment, mass incarceration, and mass disenfranchisement” (Marable). In Cincinnati and Over-the-Rhine, aggressive legislation targets panhandlers and the homeless, essentially criminalizing them. Street vendors who sell *StreetVibes* for a living, the locally produced newspaper of the Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, are tarnished as “beggars with newspapers” to be removed from the streets. In Over-the-Rhine specifically, the police began Operation Vortex last year, a crucial frontline operation for gentrification that sweeps up anyone littering, jaywalking, spitting, loitering, drinking for an open container, crossing against the light, dealing drugs, and appearing to deal drugs.

I find it interesting how very different scholars from across the political spectrum are trying to get a handle in describing this new emerging inner city poverty. William Julius Wilson calls it “jobless poverty.” Mike Davis calls it “surplus humanity.” Andrew Barlow calls it “intractable poverty.” Charles Murray calls it “custodial democracy.” Louis Uchitelle calls it “the Disposable American.” Henry Giroux calls it the “politics of disposability.” Though these descriptors are different, the sentiment is similar—all are referring to the new world, historical situation where whole peoples are ignored, written off, left to their own devices, expendable. Referring to trends within her own country of India Arundhati Roy recently spoke of the “secessionist struggle” gripping her homeland:

You don’t have to be a genius to read the signs. We have a growing middle class, reared on a diet of radical consumerism and aggressive greed...The greed that is being generated (and marketed as a value interchangeable with nationalism) can only be sated by grabbing land, water and resources from the vulnerable. What we’re witnessing is the most successful secessionist struggle ever waged in independent India—the secession of the middle and upper classes from the rest of the country. (Roy, 2007, 1).

Another Indian theorist, Arjun Appadurai, uses the term “econocide.” For him, econocide refers to new modes of violence that are playing out across the world in light of massive inequalities and the rapidity of change produced by world capitalism. Econocide does not just mean that whole sections of the world are undergoing death by economic means. He says something else: “Econocide is a worldwide tendency to arrange the disappearance of the losers in the great drama of globalization” (Appadurai, 2006, 41). This “arranging the disappearance of the losers” goes a long way in my context of Over-the-Rhine and Cincinnati in explaining “crime prevention” by police sweeps and mass incarceration, displacement by gentrification, social cleansing by criminalizing the homeless and relocating the Drop Inn Center (the second largest homeless shelter in the state)—just to name a few occurrences.

Domestic Neocolonialism: Reprising for Today

If econocide can be understood as a kind of social practice, what is the theory that motivates that practice? Things get scarier indeed when econocide is coupled to how professor of government Norman Geras characterizes the “dominant moral culture” of our times as a “contract of mutual indifference” (Geras 2002, 2). Geras’ analysis should concern everyone. According to Geras, as a society, we are unmoved by the calamity of others, there is no account for other peoples’ lives, that it is best if we harbor no obligations to our fellow human beings; “no one need disturb the continued pursuit of their own ends” (2). If Geras is right, and if massacre, genocide, and torture can’t seem to break through the “brutal internal logic” of the contract of mutual indifference, one wonders if something so everyday as socio-economic inequality can even make it to the table? What is the capacity for the present society to produce empathy?

Econocide + the contract of mutual indifference + the consciousness of full spectrum dominance applied to domestic conditions = what passes for urban policy these days—social cleansing, sweeping poor folks from sight and leaving them to fend for themselves, transforming the Indian reservation into the prison, and all facilitated by a social discourse emptied of compassion and empathy that could show how the structures and transformations of society produce such conditions in which families will come to falter. The game is rigged for inequality and failure; the econocidal populations will not succeed.

As egregious as this is, it shouldn’t be surprising—it results from 50 years of federally supported suburban, white flight, deindustrialization and the transition to a service- and financially-based global economy, the rise of neoliberal policies that in exaltation of an unfettered market have rolled back the New Deal-Great Society programs, built the military-industrial and prison-

industrial complex, and have created large pools of expendable people isolated in the nation's urban cores.

One solution is to re-find and reinvent the critical terms of domestic neocolonialism, colony, and internal imperialism from the 1960s-70s as a means to construct new analyses about poverty and about future possibilities for "community-based work." Which brings us back to an initial question of this essay: in light of terms such as empire, neocolonialism, and imperialism in common parlance today, why aren't these terms used anymore for the domestic scale? The answer seems simple, and within mainstream and even liberal accounts, the answer goes something like this: the terms faded, they didn't leave a "strong institutional legacy" or influence "mainstream American economic and political thought" (Katz, 64). The deeper answer is a bit more deadly. Terms such as domestic colonialism were killed as swiftly and as terrifyingly as the killings of Malcolm X, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and others of the Black Panthers. The insights of internal imperialism died with the extermination of the Black Power Movement. The concepts, therefore, did not die because they were useless or because they lost their explanatory power in new historical conditions. They died because the activist base within revolutionary black nationalism and social movements more generally were effectively neutralized.

So the terms are gone, but this should not lead anyone to assume that the dominant practices the terms signified are gone too. At the date of this writing, a group of entrepreneurs on Main Street in Over-the-Rhine are focusing their efforts to re-brand and market the area. One name came up for consideration: "Colony Over-the-Rhine." This pleases at least one entrepreneur as the acronym "COR" signifies "Let's head down to the COR tonight." "It is a great reference given this is exactly what we are trying to do in the Main Street area... The word 'colony' also conveys a sense of outpost with new settlers creating a new community... in effect, we [are] re-colonizing the eastern section of OTR."

At least they're honest.

How else can one appreciate the straight-up, naked neocolonialism at work here? You'd think that our government's jaunts in Afghanistan and Iraq might cause some pause, that no matter the scale, the effort to remake and colonize any geography in the image of the dominating force is always fraught with violence. It appears econocide is going to be around for awhile, and it is the duty of compassionate citizens to resist it. One good place to start is to recall the analysis that domestic neocolonialism put on the table, reconstruct it for contemporary conditions, and continue developing the social movements that can nurture that analysis and put it into practice.

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