NOT YOUR PROMISED LAND: CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE CITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Steven R. Holloway)

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on a faith-based community development network to examine the intersections between geographies of race and religion in contemporary processes of neighborhood change. Its theoretical context lies at the intersection of critical urban and housing studies, Black geographies, and the geographies of religion. I argue for conceptualizing *transcendent geographies of race* in which ideas and praxis around race in the city, informed by particular understandings of higher power(s), shape neighborhood dynamics and urban landscapes.

Participants' transcendent geographies of race took on different tenors, but shared the common thread that some injustice has afflicted Black neighborhoods in cities, and some transcendent action(s) can and must redress it. Participants also identified certain 'secular' tools or logics as capable of changing profane geographies of race into transcendent ones, associating these with their understandings of the transcendent. **The central argument based on these findings is that by sanctifying market logics as capable of turning profane geographies of race into transcendent ones, research participants articulate a spatialization of Blackness**

in which inclusion for some Black people in livable urban spaces comes at the exclusion of others.

Taken together, these research findings highlight the need to challenge and rework the ‘common sense’ logics understood as capable of transforming profane geographies into transcendent ones, if we are interested in geographies that center the ‘right to stay put’ rather than the racialized ‘privilege to stay put’. The research has implications that extend beyond the study of religious groups, as grounded theologies are not exclusive to explicit religious belief or faith. If we can understand the transcendent geographies of people and institutions with capital and power, there is some possibility moving faithful intentions in directions that could better bring about racially just cities.

INDEX WORDS: race, urban geography, urban studies, Black geographies, geography of religion, Atlanta, US South, Christianity, evangelical, faith-based, community development, neighborhoods, housing, gentrification

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

i. Introduction and Research Questions

Racism undergirds urbanization processes in the United States. Specifically, unrelenting anti-Black housing segregation and dispossession perpetuate inequities that ripple into school districts, job markets, physical and mental health spheres, and mass incarceration systems. Within this context that devalues Black life, there is also a long history of people searching for explanatory, actionable frameworks that make sense of race on the urban landscape, ranging from sociologists justifying segregation as a natural social ecology to Black Panthers organizing their neighborhoods for survival (Heynen 2009) and self-defense. Faith-based organizations (FBOs) trying to 'do good' in the city as social service providers, community developers, and grassroots actors, are among the sources of such frameworks, as they draw on transcendent concepts to articulate ethical compasses for urban life. As FBOs have become more prominent in the U.S. social welfare context since the early 2000s, it is critical to understand the roles that they play in shaping contemporary urban processes, and how they interact with processes of racialization. Further, as formerly devalued, segregated urban core neighborhoods become sites of real estate speculation, it is also critical to understand how these transformations impact communities of color.

This research focuses on a faith-based community development network to examine the intersections between geographies of race and religion in contemporary processes of neighborhood change. Its theoretical context lies at the intersection of critical urban and housing studies, Black geographies, and the geographies of religion. I consider the ways that racialized patterns of dispossession, historical and contemporary, perpetuate racial injustice in the urban context. Then, I engage scholarship on geographies of race and religion to understand how these cultural currents intersect in cities, and how they might also bring us closer to living in just cities. The Black geographies literature allows us to delve further into the ways that Blackness shapes and is shaped by urban landscapes, and the oppressive spatial processes and emergent possibilities that pattern Black lives in the city. I put Black geographies into conversation with the geographic literature on the role of religious subjectivities, including grounded theologies (Tse 2013), in shaping urban landscapes in a context in which faith-based nonprofit organizations (or FBOs) play an increasingly central role in urban social welfare, community development, and policymaking spheres. In order to move towards racially just cities, we should better understand the role of FBOs in shaping racialized urban landscapes.

From these intersecting literatures, a primary research question emerges: **how do religious social welfare practices and geographies of race interact to shape urbanization processes in the racialized city?** With more specificity to my research sites, this question becomes threefold:

1. How do Christian community development practitioners and residents of the communities in which they practice articulate racialized understandings of space?

2. How do Christian community development practitioners and residents of the communities in which they practice articulate faith-based or theologically inflected understandings of space?

3. How do these racialized and faith-based understandings of space shape processes of neighborhood change in U.S. cities?

The theoretical advancements of this research include its contribution to critical urban scholarship that addresses spatial injustices unfolding through contemporary urbanization processes—here, processes of capital reinvestment in long-segregated, low-income Black urban neighborhoods—and its contribution to understanding the spatialization of Blackness within such processes. However, the overarching contribution of this research lies in how our understandings of the transcendent—here, examined through evangelical Christianity—profoundly shape human geographies. Starting from Tse's (2013) grounded theologies argument, this dissertation makes new arguments about how transcendence works its way into 'secular' geographies. I argue for conceptualizing *transcendent geographies of race* in which faith-inspired ideas and praxis around race at once

intermingle with, exist alongside, and/or are restricted by racially oppressive practices and structures.

ii. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2, the theoretical framework, first outlines carefully chosen contributions from a broad range of critical urban scholarship, with a focus on the making of racially unjust cities, political economies of urban space, and the possibilities for just cities. I show how racialized patterns of segregation and displacement, focused on but not strictly limited to gentrification, significantly impede the possibility of racially just cities. Then, I argue that it is necessary to engage the Black geographies literature to better conceptualize the oppressive spatial practices and emergent possibilities that characterize racially unjust urbanization processes. I put this scholarship into conversation with the geographies of religion, where it is argued that our understandings of the transcendent shape human geographies; I ask how such understandings shape urban geographies of race. I suggest that studying faith-based organizations is essential to understanding the racialized urban process because their interest in such transcendence is laid bare, whereas in ostensibly secular spaces it is more likely to be unstated or unseen.

A faith-based community development network called the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), is the site of inquiry into these research questions. Community development organizations play critical roles in cities because, typically based in neighborhoods, they have ties both to people

‘on the ground’—neighborhood residents who use their services—and municipal actors with whom they partner on efforts such as developing affordable housing or strengthening essential city services in the neighborhood. The localized CCDA organization that I studied in Atlanta, called Focused Community Strategies (FCS), was no exception to this characterization. Further, the history of community development organizations in the United States shows that neighborhood-based groups that coalesced in the 1960s around agonistic, redistributive strategies largely became professionalized institutions that would drop community organizing tactics in favor of market-based practices (DeFilippis 2004, Newman and Lake 2006, DeFilippis 2008, McLeod and Emejulu 2014). This history shows that community development organizations can and have played very different roles in cities; they can and have acted as sites of social democratic transformation and neoliberal governance, as well as all the complexities of this broad characterization. This role of community development, paired with the rise of faith-based organizations as social welfare providers that was most formally institutionalized in the George W. Bush presidency, makes faith-based community development a compelling site of empirical focus for the research questions.

I conducted this research at multiple sub-sites, as Chapter 3 details: in an Atlanta neighborhood in which FCS, a CCDA member organization, operates; at CCDA annual conferences in Raleigh, North Carolina and Memphis, Tennessee; and by telecommunications, where I analyzed email communications, social media, and other material published by FCS and CCDA, and participated in

phone and conference calls. The research relationships at these sites owe much to Drs. Katherine Hankins and Andy Walter, who conducted earlier research on CCDA and FCS (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins and Martin 2014, Hankins et al. 2015, Hankins 2017, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011). I triangulated qualitative methods to get at the depth of the research questions rather than seek generalizable results (Prasad 2017). For example, the goal of Bonilla-Silva (2003) is to reveal the logics driving color-blind racism, rather than to generalize about the quantifiable presence of them. In the academic and popular spheres, there remains a lack of understanding of the social-cultural dynamics that play out in processes of neighborhood change such as gentrification, and the ways that these dynamics impact low-income people of color, who have occupied such a historically and spatially marginalized position in the way cities are structured. The goal of this research is to understand the logics that differently positioned people use to explain urban life and neighborhood change; qualitative methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews are necessary to get to the thick description that can unfold these logics. Furthermore, understanding these logics is essential to imagining any futures in which racial justice is possible in urban landscapes.

Chapters 4-6 discuss the findings of this research with FCS in Atlanta and the CCDA conference network. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss interviews and participant observation with residents of the South Atlanta neighborhood in which FCS is based. I interviewed and observed neighborhood meetings between a wide range of residents, from long-time Black residents to white ‘intentional

neighbors'. I draw out the nuances of multiple people's lived experiences in a neighborhood that is vulnerable to gentrification, but also remains disinvested relative to more rapidly gentrifying parts of Atlanta's south side. In Chapter 4, I identify neighbors' narratives that explicitly draw on religiosity to describe the transcendent possibilities of life in an interracial, mixed-income neighborhood. A group of long-time, elder Black residents, many of whom have relatively stable housing, show cautious optimism about their new middle-class neighbors, while a group of newer, middle-income residents is excited to build 'beloved community' with residents of the historically Black neighborhood. While these predominantly white intentional neighbors are welcomed by predominantly Black long-time residents, power inequalities between the two groups and the risk of the latter group's displacement from South Atlanta are both under-emphasized.

In Chapter 5, I show that the transcendent geographies around race from Chapter 4 are accompanied by modes of exclusion, as South Atlanta residents and FCS staff articulate a type of person whose displacement from South Atlanta in the context of gentrification would be acceptable, or even good for the neighborhood. Both FCS and a wide range of individual neighbors suggest that the idealized neighborhood of their faith narratives can only be realized if certain problematic residents no longer live in South Atlanta. I call these residents, who are almost exclusively young, Black, male, low-income, and perceived to be connected to criminality, displaceable subjects. Participants talk about these displaceable subjects moving into an ambiguous space that I call 'somewhere else'. Transcendent concepts such as the Kingdom of God, and the question of

who belongs in it, are used to create a binary between 'good' and 'bad' Black residents and to justify this movement 'somewhere else.' Chapters 4 and 5 simultaneously touch on transcendent, if elusive, possibilities of interracial neighborhoods and the racialized violence of displaceable subjectivities and the gentrification process more broadly. I demonstrate theological geographies that attempt to transcend racism embedded into the urban landscape *and* geographies of containment via displacement and dispersal.

Chapter 6 shifts focus to CCDA, the national organization of which Atlanta's FCS is a member. Drawing on conference and social media materials, I show that CCDA leaders outline transcendent geographies of race that pose a powerful challenge to normative ways of understanding space that uphold white supremacy. Their agenda includes ending police shootings of unarmed Black men, drawing attention to the unfinished projects of settler colonialism in the United States and Palestine, and advocating the rights of poor migrants to remain in the United States after unlawful entry. From the President of CCDA to first-time workshop facilitators, I show that CCDA leaders promote an ambitious racial justice project that pushes past the individualism typically associated with American evangelicalism. The leaders who discuss this project are majority-minority, with a number of prominent Black voices. Yet I argue that CCDA's 'best practices' have not yet caught up to this way of seeing, because they revolve around market-based strategies that cannot tackle the scope of the racialized problems posed by CCDA leaders. Conference workshops meant to directly address material inequalities at the neighborhood level primarily focus on

entrepreneurship, impact investment, job training, and other ‘market solutions’. In fact, this focus on ‘market solutions’, specifically the mixed-income housing paradigm, also contributes to the spatialization of Blackness that emerges in Chapters 4 and 5 in which inclusion for some Black people comes at the exclusion of others.

In Chapter 7, I recapitulate the findings of the research, connecting them to the research questions and theoretical framework. Taken together, these chapters draw out geographies of containment and dispossession in the US city, in the context of the risks and realities of gentrification in long-disinvested Black neighborhoods. In examining the interface between faith-based organizations and neighborhood community development, I point to the possibilities and limitations of approaches to space that use transcendent ideals to make sense of entrenched racial inequalities in cities. Ultimately, I argue that these transcendent geographies around race can be directed into a critical material politics with transformative potential for the racially just city. Critical community development, as multiple scholars argue, can be “counter-hegemonic” (Fursova 2016) and “means addressing immediate needs within communities as well as reaching beyond neighborhood boundaries to affect change” (Newman and Goetz 2016, 696). I argue that examining the nexus of transcendence and geographies of race provides useful frameworks that could inform a critical community development agenda.

iii. Overview of the Argument

This dissertation argues that by relying on and sanctifying market logics framed as 'common sense' understandings of urbanization processes, research participants divide Black residents of low-income urban neighborhoods into binary geographical subjects: those who succeed within the bounds of these logics and stay, and those who leave or are displaceable in the making of transcendent geographies. The research highlights the need to challenge and rework the 'common sense' logics understood as capable of transforming profane geographies into transcendent ones, if we are interested in geographies that center the 'right to stay put' rather than a racialized 'privilege to stay put'. In other words, to strengthen the 'right to stay put' of racially othered urban residents, it is critical to lose faith in the market.

In this research, participants articulate frameworks of *how the 'secular' world is; how it ought to be* according to a particular view of transcendence; and *how it could be* with the right course of action. First, they demonstrate a process in which they identify aspects of human geographies that clash with their understandings of the transcendent; we might call these profane geographies. Specifically, in this research, they are geographies of racial inequality in urban spaces. Participants see these geographies as in need of transformation so as to better reflect their understandings of the transcendent, and I call these imaginaries transcendent geographies of race. Finally, in this process, participants identify certain 'secular' tools or logics as capable of changing profane geographies of race into transcendent ones, and they associate these

with their understandings of the transcendent. Specifically, they undergird a set of 'common sense' market logics with Christian values, in a sense sanctifying them.

For nearly all participants in this research, racialized poverty and segregation in urban spaces are the profane geographies in need of transcendent action. Participants thus share a common interest in changing the urban geographies of race. In Chapters 4 and 5, participants express South Atlanta's high rate of racialized poverty and spatial isolation as unjust or untenable in some way. In Chapter 6, all of the above are also intertwined with the multifaceted violence of police brutality and murder of unarmed Black people; settler colonial projects; fractures between differently oppressed communities; and the suffering of migrant children. In all three chapters, participants argue that these profane geographies do not reflect their understandings of the transcendent—here, Christian understandings of God's will or intention for humans—and must be changed in order to do so. While participants do not identify exactly the same profane geographies or interpret transcendent values in uniform ways, this pattern nonetheless emerges. We might think of the common schema as one that strives to change geographies of race that we more commonly think of as profane into *transcendent geographies of race*. Participants articulate transcendent geographies of race as their visions of how geographies of race ought to be within particular faith frameworks.

Participants identify a set of tools centered in market logics that they frame as 'common sense' understandings of urbanization processes, and they see

these as capable of transforming profane geographies of race into transcendent ones. At the heart of FCS's strategy in Atlanta is the idea that poor neighborhoods benefit from becoming mixed-income neighborhoods, and that 'gentrification with justice' can be achieved if this process is carried out carefully and faithfully. The mixed-income housing paradigm is undergirded by ideological shifts away from social housing towards market logics in which an influx of wealthier residents 'revitalizes' disinvested urban neighborhoods. These market logics rooted in the mixed-income housing paradigm emerge in Chapters 4 and 5 in differently textured ways. In Chapter 4, intersecting groups of residents of South Atlanta note that the movement of white people into the neighborhood seems to make it a more livable place. In Chapter 5, South Atlanta residents from diverse social positions argue that displacing bad residents 'somewhere else' would also make the neighborhood more livable. Both of these arguments also fit within the market-based framework that informs mixed-income housing, wherein good neighborhoods are characterized by the presence of people with capital—here, read frequently as white—and by a limit to the number of people associated with poverty who are gathered in one place. Finally, in Chapter 6, CCDA leaders at the national level explicitly detail and condemn the geographies of white supremacy, and then advocate market-based strategies for making more just cities such as impact investment, entrepreneurial programs, and capital-intensive private housing developments.

In Chapters 4 and 5, in-depth engagement revealed that participants closely tie market logics to interpersonal affects shaped by their Christian values,

which brings to mind Moreton (2009). In Chapter 4, intentional neighbors and long-time residents agree that neighborliness is an important affect for the project of transforming space in South Atlanta. In the same chapter, intentional neighbors, most of whom are white, suggest that valuing and learning from diversity is a similarly meaningful affect. The project of turning South Atlanta into a mixed-income neighborhood is insufficient, they suggest, without these vital affects that characterize intentional neighbors. In Chapter 5, criminality or the perception of it is identified by a wide range of South Atlanta residents as a negative affect that 'brings down' the neighborhood and that must be eradicated if South Atlanta is to escape its abject status. If displacement is going to happen in the face of gentrification, the criminality of some residents helps to justify this process. In both chapters, I show how Christian morality undergirds these logics.

As I argue throughout this dissertation, these unexamined assumptions about the goodness of market logics are problematic to any project of undoing racism in built environments. In Chapters 4 and 5, a duality emerges from these logics that separates Black residents of low-income urban neighborhoods into two categories—good neighbors, who are seen as worthy of staying in developing neighborhoods, and displaceable subjects, who are not. In Chapter 6, I argue that market-based frameworks are too limited in scope to match the transcendent geographies around police brutality, border struggles, and settler colonialism expressed by CCDA leaders at the national level. In all three chapters, these practices divide Black urban residents into two geographical subjects: those who succeed within the bounds of market logics and stay, and

those who leave. In some sense, they echo Christian missionary practices by crossing socio-geographical lines of difference to enroll racially 'othered' people into normative logics and setting up a dualism, whether intentionally or not, between converted and unconverted racialized subjects. Yet instead of bringing Christianity into reach in colonized countries, CCD practitioners seek to bring better access to the economic mainstream into segregated urban neighborhoods.

This research offers useful conclusions for understanding how perceptions of the transcendent pattern space and impact urbanization processes. It shows a process of sorting different aspects of the so-called secular world according to understandings of the transcendent and sanctifying certain logics, counting on the latter to effectively transform space. This research shows that it very much matters *what* we identify as in need of transcendence and *how* we believe transcendence can be realized. When market logics are the tools of transcendence, as I argue, then any outcomes will also fall into a circumscribed market-based framework that falls short of racial justice. This has implications that extend far beyond the study of religious groups. As Tse (2013) argues, grounded theologies are not exclusive to explicit religious belief or faith. If we can understand the transcendent geographies of people and institutions with capital and power, there is some possibility of nudging faithful intentions in directions that could better bring about racially just cities.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

i. Introduction

This research is concerned with patterns of development and dispossession that trouble aims of social justice in the contemporary U.S. city, and I engage the geographies of both race and religion to get at questions of how cultural understandings might intersect to bring us closer to living in cities in which these spatial injustices are less able to thrive. In this chapter, I build the theoretical argument for understanding transcendent geographies of race, and I conceptualize the process of sanctifying 'secular' frameworks to transform profane geographies that Chapters 4-6 demonstrate through the research findings. This chapter first discusses the ways that displacing patterns, focused on but not strictly limited to gentrification, significantly impede the possibility of racially just cities. Here, I engage extensive work on how cities have been shaped by anti-Black racism to argue for putting race and Black issues at the center of urban justice struggles. I then focus on the Black geographies literature to delve deeper into the ways that Blackness shapes and is shaped by urbanization processes. This engagement with Black geographies is necessary to better understand the oppressive spatial processes and emergent possibilities that pattern Black lives in the city.

Later in this chapter, I put Black geographies into conversation with a compelling geographic literature on the role of grounded theologies (Tse 2013) in shaping urban landscapes. This lattermost topic is compellingly relevant to urban geography because faith-based nonprofit organizations (or FBOs) play an increasingly central role in the urban social welfare, community development, and even policymaking spheres. Due to the rollback of state-provided social funding and services beginning in the 1970s and George W. Bush's eager promotion of FBOs in the mid-2000s that gave them greater flexibility to receive federal funds (Gibelman and Gelman 2002), FBOs now increasingly perform meaningful socio-spatial functions in urban neighborhoods as social welfare providers, community developers, and other types of community workers. This change in paradigm has important implications for scholarly understanding of urban processes, and in order to move towards racially just cities, we must better understand the role of FBOs in shaping racialized urban landscapes. Understanding faith-based groups is also important to the study of secular institutions because the former's interest in *transcendence* is laid bare in ways that it may not be in ostensibly secular spaces. I argue that one's orientation around transcendence matters; I conceptualize *transcendent geographies of race* in which ideas and praxis around race in the city, informed by particular understandings of higher power(s), shape neighborhood dynamics and urban landscapes.

The central research question that emerges from this theoretical engagement is **how do religious social welfare practices and geographies of**

race interact to shape urbanization processes in the racialized city? I ground this question in multiple sites in which participants practice under the umbrella of Christian community development. With more specificity to my research sites, this question becomes threefold:

1. How do Christian community development practitioners, and residents of the communities in which they practice, articulate racialized understandings of space?

2. How do Christian community development practitioners, and residents of the communities in which they practice, articulate faith-based or theologically inflected understandings of space?

3. How do these racialized and faith-based understandings of space shape processes of neighborhood change in U.S. cities?

Based on these research questions and this theoretical framework, I argue that beliefs and ideas about the transcendent can be used to identify both problematic geographies of the secular world, as well as secular tools perceived as capable of remaking such geographies to better reflect transcendent frameworks. This is a process of de-sanctifying some elements of the profane world by posing them in opposition to one's understanding of the transcendent, while sanctifying others by associating them with transcendence. In the context of race and the city, urban geographies of race are assigned these profane and sanctified meanings. In the following chapters, research participants sanctify market logics in the project of remaking racialized geographies according to their own understandings of the transcendent. In doing so, they construct a dualism in which 'good' Black

urban residents earn the right to stay in place, while displaceable others are pushed out ‘somewhere else’.

The concept of transcendence, a common theme in the geographies of race literature, is helpful for the study of religious social welfare organizations, in that by definition they deploy some interpretation of the transcendent to explain the work that they do. Yet as I suggest several times throughout this dissertation, we can use insights from religious groups to also consider how transcendence might operate in ostensibly secular institutions. Tse (2013) argues that our understandings of the transcendent, whether explicitly laid out or not, are an integral part of place-making processes. I take his grounded theologies argument further to argue that understandings of the transcendent intermingle with particular understandings of human geographies—here, racialized urban space—and in doing so, set boundaries for what we think is possible in ‘secular’ geographies.

ii. Segregation, Displacement, and the Racially Just City

The segregated city

Residential segregation by race has long been the status quo in the United States’ urban areas. Accounts of institutionalized redlining practices and white flight, economic and political dislocation, and the unforgiving movements of capital demonstrate that today’s segregation has not resulted merely from individual preferences, but that structural forces have strongly shaped the contemporary spatialities of U.S. cities. As some city neighborhoods flourish,

playing lucrative roles in globalized capital markets, others remain impoverished and disempowered. At the same time, the boundaries between urban spaces of wealth and poverty are not impermeable, as some disinvested neighborhoods have come to experience the forces of gentrification, and with it the risk of displacement.

Urban racial segregation is persistent and well-documented (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008, Hirsch 1983, Wilson 1987, Massey and Denton 1993, Yinger 1995, Sampson 2012, Sharkey 2013, Wacquant 2007, Wilson 2007). Between about 1915 and 1920, a first wave of Black migrants moved from the rural South to the urban North to escape dire conditions in Southern agriculture and fill Northern cities' wartime labor shortages (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008, 266). Facing tight housing markets and racial hostility, these new migrants were enclosed into what some have called "The 'First' North American Ghetto" in the years following World War I (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008, 266). While other groups not considered white experienced hostility and race-based discrimination, African American migrants were the most marginalized and segregated urban residents.

In the period following World War II, Arnold Hirsch argues that a "'second' racial ghetto" formed in many U.S. cities that "occupied a larger area, housed a much larger population, and imposed increasing levels of social and spatial isolation on their residents" as Blacks continued to migrate from the rural South in large numbers (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008, 268; Hirsch 1983). Earlier patterns of ghettoization were reinforced and expanded in part by

exclusionary housing practices which ensured that only whites would have access to newly available home loans from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA); Black households faced both exclusion from mortgages and predatory contract housing programs (Coates 2014, Nagel et al. 2015). Mortgage lenders in urban areas adhered to practices codified in FHA manuals that explicitly discouraged making home loans to residents of Black neighborhoods, which were considered too 'risky' for investment. While Blacks (and other ethnic groups to a lesser degree) were stuck in place because of these redlining practices, many whites took advantage of the opportunity to escape the increasingly Black inner cities for homeownership in the emerging suburbs. This process of white flight left urban Black neighborhoods even more economically and socially abandoned. In the same period, public housing--buttressed by slum clearance or so-called urban renewal projects--also "spatially concentrat[ed] and anchor[ed] the poor in ghettos" (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008, 268). Through these twentieth century processes, the segregation of Black households in U.S. cities was created and continually reinforced, and such segregated neighborhoods were extensively surveilled and criminalized (Shabazz 2015, Muhammad 2010).

In the 1980s, debates about a racialized urban 'underclass' emerged in scholarly as well as popular discourse. Within urban sociology, two distinct structural arguments discussed a trend in that period towards even more racially segregated, 'concentrated' poverty in U.S. inner cities. W. J. Wilson (1987) argued that processes of deindustrialization and population severely restricted employment opportunities for workers without higher education or specialized

skill sets and created an ‘underclass’ in Black neighborhoods, where “increasing joblessness [had] its most devastating effect” (Wilson 1987, 55). He also suggested that Civil Rights victories allowed an exodus of working- and middle-class Blacks from such neighborhoods, leaving to high levels of “social isolation” (Wilson 1987, 56). Massey and Denton (1993) explained the existence of ‘underclass’ neighborhoods by highlighting the contemporary, not just historical, persistence of residential segregation and the inadequacy of Civil Rights-era legislation meant to combat segregationist practices. “Segregation has remained high,” they argued, “because fair housing enforcement relies too heavily on the private efforts of individual victims of discrimination. Whereas the processes that perpetuate segregation are entrenched and institutionalized, fair housing enforcement is individual, sporadic, and confined to a small number of isolated cases” (Massey and Denton 1993, 15).

In more contemporary critical responses to W. J. Wilson, Massey, and Denton, Wacquant (2007) argues that this ‘underclass’ scholarship “dramatically downplay[s] the responsibility of . . . state abandonment and punitive containment of the marginalized fractions of the black working class”, including the phase of strategic fiscal abandonment of minority neighborhoods by municipalities that began in the 1970s. Similarly, David Wilson (2007) argues that “ghettos currently stash and segregate the people and land-uses deemed contaminants to real-estate markets” (Wacquant 2007, 91; Wilson 2007, ix). While we could accuse both Wacquant and D. Wilson of participating in objectifying urban spaces as what Anderson called ‘iconic ghetto[s]’ (2012) just

as much as Massey, Denton, and W. J. Wilson, their focus on the role of the state and capital in abandonment of such spaces lends much-needed conceptual depth to the literature. They argue that neither the creation nor maintenance of segregated, suffering urban neighborhoods are accidents; rather, it is advantageous to the spatial dynamics of capital to have heavily disinvested neighborhoods with ‘warehoused’ (Wacquant 2007) residents.

Displacement in policy and practice

Segregation should also be understood as tied up with displacement in urban policy and practice. As mentioned above, urban renewal projects in the 1960s displaced communities of color from their neighborhoods and re-segregated them elsewhere, leading some critical observers to call the process ‘Negro removal’ (Kaplan, Wheeler and Holloway 2008). In the 1990s and onward, housing policy has been further built around the displacement of communities of color through the demolition of public housing projects and state-aided gentrification. First, the HOPE VI program, which started in 1992, provided and still provides federal funds to municipalities to demolish public housing projects, replace them with mixed-income developments instead of one-to-one replacement units, and provide Section 8 housing vouchers to displaced residents. While much smaller and preceded by the 1970s Gautreaux program in Chicago, the Moving to Opportunity experiment provided low-income people with housing vouchers; some participants were required to only use the vouchers to find housing in 'low poverty' neighborhoods (Briggs et al. 2010). These programs,

particularly the large-scale HOPE VI, ushered in a paradigm of displacement as a policy solution. While mid-century urban renewal, segregation, and fiscal abandonment of inner cities is well understood in the literature as an aggressive, discriminatory racial project that had devastating consequences for communities of color (Hirsch 1983, Wilson 1987, Massey 1990, Massey and Denton 1993, Yinger 1995, Holloway and Wyly 2001, Kruse 2005, Wacquant 2007), academic discussions have been slower to characterize contemporary displacement-based policy along similar lines.

The HOPE VI program dismantled a wide range of public housing complexes across U.S. cities and replaced them with mixed-income developments; large numbers of displaced residents were dispersed into cities with market-based Section 8 vouchers. In his New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy (2013), Goetz calls the HOPE VI shift a "transformation taking place in cities across the country [that] represents a new, neoliberal, post–New Deal policy strategy aimed at ending the welfare state approach to housing assistance embodied by public housing" (Goetz 2013, 5). It is important to note that the idea that public housing simply did not and cannot work in United States cities has been challenged from several compelling angles. Venkatesh (2002), for example, documented the stunning neglect on the part of the Chicago Housing Authority of the city's Robert Taylor Homes from its opening in 1962 to its eventual demolition in 2007. Venkatesh meticulously outlines tenants' organizing efforts that attempted to address a number of problems that afflicted the Robert Taylor Homes in the context of its public abandonment, from

broken sinks to growing signs of gang activity. He shows what could have been possible at Robert Taylor Homes with adequate funding, as energetic tenants' groups consistently pressed for adequate maintenance and municipal attention. Further, Goetz (2013) and Holloway and McNulty (2003) demonstrate examples of public housing in U.S. cities functioning relatively well even in its stressed context.

Displacement-based policies, most significantly HOPE VI for its wide-reaching impacts, first rest on the idea that racialized poverty must be de-concentrated. Implicit within this concept is a second assumption that greater residential proximity to middle-income neighbors may enable some low-income people to emerge from poverty. The influential work of urban sociologists Wilson (1987) and Massey and Denton (1993) has been used to justify these policy shifts, although this scholarship at no point recommends the large-scale forced displacement of public housing residents through HOPE VI programs. HOPE VI and MTO are also grounded in the hallmarks of neoliberal urbanism (Larner 2000, Brenner and Theodore 2002, Peck and Tickell 2002, Harvey 2005, Hackworth 2007), as they favor market-friendly voucher and mixed-income approaches to housing policy in place of public housing developments. A broad set of interdisciplinary scholarship destabilizes the assumptions of these policies by questioning the notion that public housing is doomed to fail (Venkatesh 2002, Holloway and McNulty 2003, Wacquant 2007); analyzing the at best lackluster outcomes of HOPE VI and MTO for the urban poor (Goetz 2013, Fraser et al. 2012, Briggs et al. 2010; Lens 2013); suggesting that displacement policy

mechanisms only move social problems around without properly interrogating the structures that create them (Harvey 1973, Harvey 1982, Smith 1984, Wilson 2007); and posing alternative frameworks of justice (Purcell 2008, Harvey 2012).

Gentrification, which intersects with multiple vectors of urban policy, is a key part of this contemporary landscape of displacement. In the process of "the class remake of the central urban landscape," the "devalorization [of capital] produces the objective economic conditions that make capital revaluation a rational market response"; once a ‘rent gap’ between actual and potential ground rent levels is large enough, gentrification can take place (Smith 1996, 39, 68). Even though "suburbanization still represents a more powerful force than gentrification in the geographical fashioning of the metropolis," gentrification is a process that deserves much attention because of its impacts on the housing stability, which affects multiple other axes of economic wellbeing, of marginalized, low-income households (Smith 1996, 40). While some scholars have characterized gentrification as a net social good (Freeman 2006) and sought to decouple gentrification from displacement (Freeman and Braconi 2002), critical scholarship on gentrification rejects it as a process that exploits and displaces low-income communities (Smith 1996, Newman and Ashton 2004, Newman and Wyly 2006, Slater 2006, Slater 2008, Slater 2009, Lees et al. 2008, Wyly et al. 2010).

Critical analyses of gentrification give voice to the realities of displacement (Slater 2006, Lees et al. 2008, Slater 2008, Smith 2008, Slater 2009, Lees et al. 2010, Lees 2012). Slater argues that displacement research encounters a

methodological problem wherein “it is difficult to find people who have been displaced, particularly if those people are poor . . . By definition, displaced residents have disappeared from the very places where researchers and census-takers go to look for them” (Slater 2006, 748). Slater and others argue, therefore, that displacement should not just be measured in forced evictions from specific gentrifying neighborhoods, which is difficult to measure, but in terms of the changing affordability and demographics of metropolitan areas. For example, Lees et al. (2008) consider "new-build" development as potentially aggravating displacement indirectly, by setting gentrifying processes in motion in adjacent neighborhoods (Lees et al. 2008, 140). Such "indirect displacement can avoid legislation" that would protect nearby residents (Lees et al. 2008, 140). Another compelling suggestion from Slater, based on a reading of Marcuse, is that the threat of displacement alone ought to be considered an element of gentrification that disenfranchises the urban poor. If displacement is seen as a real problem, even if it is difficult to quantify, it then becomes clear that any "improvements in the quality of life for a community's residents [brought by gentrifying processes] simply cannot be enjoyed by those who lose out on the right to be community residents," and thus gentrification cannot be “managed, harnessed, or twisted into a positive form of urban development” (Lees et al. 2008, 84, 274; Newman and Ashton 2004).

Newer interventions characterize gentrification as a ‘planetary’ (Lees et al. 2016) process of racialized dispossession (Doshi 2013, Maher 2015, de Koning 2015; Blomley 2004, Safransky 2014, Toews 2015, Peyton and Dyce 2017).

Lees et al. (2016) ask readers to consider gentrification as the leading edge of urbanization and, more specifically,

> "a mutating process of urbanization . . . less about predefined loci, morphological attributes and scales, but much more about a process that depends on the contextual reconfiguration of state policies and embedded class and power relations". (33)

In other words, gentrification should be conceived outside the typical bounded idea of the class remake of inner city neighborhoods in the United States, with all the U.S.-specific historical processes that feed into that conceptualization (e.g., post-Depression mortgage access and exclusion, white flight from urban cores to suburbs, and contemporary 'back to the city' movements). Lees et al. suggest that we might think of plural gentrifications to encompass the multiple forms that displacement of poor people by wealthier residents takes, including 'mega-gentrification' in Global South cities and even rural gentrification (51). Doshi (2013) gives a compelling example of how these processes of dispossession in India take place along fault lines of racial and ethnic difference; Maher (2015) and de Koning (2015) draw out such racialized dynamics in United States and European contexts. Taken together, this scholarship draws a compelling picture of a far-reaching urbanization process that intersects with white supremacy to both rework and reinforce spatialized race- and class-based subjugation.

It is also important to note a much wider context of displacement geographies in low-income neighborhoods, not solely limited to gentrification. For example, the geographies of eviction have been emphasized in recent years

(Purser 2016, Raymond et al. 2016, Desmond 2017, Zuk et al. 2018). Here, it is demonstrated that displacement by eviction is widespread among low-income urban residents. As Badger and Bui (2018) note, “the most pervasive problems aren’t necessarily in the most expensive regions,” which distinguishes the broader geographies of eviction from evictions that can be attributed to rising property values and other impacts of gentrification. Zuk et al. 2017 also note what Grier and Grier (1978) called ‘disinvestment displacement,’ when landlords abandon housing such that it becomes unlivable and residents are forced to leave. Grier and Grier related this form of displacement to ‘reinvestment displacement’ and suggested that the two are linked, which echoes Marcuse’s (1985, 1986) concept of ‘chains’ of displacement. It is important to keep in mind these multiple forms of displacement, all of which center around low-income tenants, homeowners, and neighborhoods, and to think of displacement geographies as multiple forms of dispossession that must be addressed from multiple angles. Displacement related to gentrification remains critical, especially as most municipal governments are still doing far too little to address the threat that gentrifying patterns pose to housing stability.

Settler cities

Some work connects contemporary displacement to settler colonial patterns of subjugation and erasure that still actively unfold in North American cities, examining First Nations people in Canadian cities (Blomley 2004, Toews 2015, Peyton and Dyce 2017), as well as Black communities in U.S. cities. On

the latter, Safransky (2014) describes “settler colonial tropes [that] circulate widely in representations of the city,” in post-bankruptcy Detroit, intertwined with ‘green’ redevelopment practices, that serve to “prepare a postindustrial urban frontier for resettlement and reinvestment” (237). While the treatment and experiences of Native and Black communities in North America cannot be treated as equivalent to one another, Safransky shows that echoes of settler colonial place-making emerge in the context of reinvesting in a city well-known for its Blackness.

More generally, understanding settler colonialism as undergirding the structure of U.S. cities can help us to situate the displacement of Black households in a broader historical-geographical context. There is plenty of agreement in critical scholarship on settler colonialism that anti-Blackness is tied up with colonial projects. For Smith (2012), the exploitation of Black labor helps to fuel white supremacy from one angle, while the genocide of Natives does so from another angle or ‘pillar’. Wolfe (2001, 2006) makes compatible arguments about Natives as subject to removal (both physical and cultural) and Blacks as subject to labor exploitation. In a somewhat different register, Dei (2017) suggests that we conceptualize present-day Black African immigrants as themselves indigenous peoples for whom “neo-liberalism compels migration from the Global South under increasingly vulnerable conditions” (89). Using this line of argument, we might also think of Black Americans as descendants of indigenous Africans forcibly removed from homelands; in the contemporary urban context, we might also incorporate the economic and social pressure to

move from the repressive south to the north in the Great Migration period. This framework is compatible with Byrd's (2011) separation of settlers from *arrivants*, or "those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe" (xix).

Settler cities can be understood as those "immigrant cities of North America [that] were formed through the distinct process of settler colonialism and its central dynamic of supersession, that is, the displacement of Indigenous peoples and their replacement with settler" (Edmonds 2010, 5). The arguments above suggest that within settler cities, one might think of Black residents as *arrivants* rather than non-white settlers, and thus as people on whom colonial forms of violence are still enacted as part of urbanization processes. Is it important to pay attention when the more obvious echoes of the settler colonial narrative, of whiteness ordering 'empty' space—as in Safransky's frontier example—are used to drive reinvestment in the inner city, even while Native and Black people have been differently racialized in settler colonial projects. However, it is perhaps more important to recognize the myriad ways in which displacement-based policymaking and practice exploits Black bodies, such as that which profits from reinvestment in 'ghetto' neighborhoods, and the long histories of exploiting Blackness in North American settler colonial projects.

Just cities

What does the just city look like? For Taylor (2016) and Perry (2013), it looks like Black people, with emphasis on the grounded leadership of Black

women, fighting for their lives. Taylor shows how the movement for Black lives, in which “Black people from coast to coast have led a struggle to expose the existence of an urban police state with suburban outposts,” has implications for all institutions that shape urbanization processes, from public schools to land rights (Taylor 2016, 289). Created by a coalition of over 50 Black-led groups organizing in the wake of anti-police violence uprisings, the Movement for Black Lives platform ties together such wide-ranging issues to articulate municipal policy changes that would undo the racist (including ‘colorblind’ racist) assumptions at the core of urban governance processes[1]. For Perry, whose empirical work focuses on attempts at ‘slum clearance’ in Salvador, Brazil, the role of Black women in the just city is paramount. Black women, she argues, “lead neighborhood movements and constitute the foot soldiers of Brazil’s black movement” (Perry 2013, xv). This role is critical because neighborhood movements “are vital to the black movement . . . [and] the collective ability to challenge and redefine urbanization policies” (xv). In other words, though often unacknowledged, Black women’s leadership is essential to transforming urban policy so that it affirms the right of Black communities to “material resources such as housing and land rights” in the face of frequent dispossession threats (xv).

The right to the city framework resonates with both Taylor’s and Perry’s work, even though it does not adequately address race (Mitchell 2003, Purcell 2008, Harvey 2012). Harvey's right to the city is a vision of democratic control of production and consumption of the surplus, but it is also "a right to change and

[1] The platform, released in 2016, also prescribes state and federal policy reforms: https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/.

reinvent the city more after our hearts' desire. It is, moreover, a collective rather than an individual right" (Harvey 2012, 4). This interpretation privileges the use value of city spaces over the further accumulation of capital through the built environment. Purcell (2008) characterizes the right to the city in different but resonant terms. For Purcell, "Claiming a right to the city is claiming a right to inhabit *well*, to have reasonable access to the things one needs to live a dignified life," such as "child care, transportation, water, sewerage, education, open space . . . the right to use public space for survival," and the right to participate in decision-making (Purcell 2008, 94). Here, the right to the city also means prioritizing cities as livable human spaces, and rejecting a model of urban space that dispossesses or abandons low-income residents. By insisting on and spatializing the idea that all people deserve to have such basic needs met, this discourse rejects the concept that survival must be earned through successful participation in market economies. However, given the extent to which racist policies and practices have molded U.S. cities, it is essential to frame the just city in terms of racial justice, and more specifically justice for Black residents. As the Movement for Black Lives platform shows, justice for Black people can be justice for all. Rather than offering colorblind prescriptions for ‘all’ or ‘everyone’, the platform suggests that to remedy the injustices of urbanization processes faced by the most disenfranchised members of society—who are disproportionately Black—is to raise the ‘floor’ of treatment for others.

In addition to her focus on Black women, Perry’s (2013) emphasis on neighborhood organizing deserves further analysis. While we cannot accurately

make essentialist claims about the ideal 'scale' from which to operate for racially just cities, Perry shows how the embedded relationships and shared experiences of segregation and precarity are critical to mobilizing victories at the municipal level. Far from being too small to matter, she shows that organized neighborhoods can generate power, and that the neighborhood thus matters in the process of claiming the 'right to the city'.

Contributions

This research contributes to the literature on race, justice, and the city by sketching the contours of alliances and points of disconnect between differently racialized people living in a neighborhood on the edge of gentrification. It inquires into the racialized social dynamics unfolding in such neighborhoods, specifically around community development projects, through qualitative engagement. While Freeman (2006) is problematic, his in-depth qualitative focus on people living through gentrification processes remains an under-emphasized lens in this scholarship. Through this lens, I show how diverse residents draw new boundaries in the context of changing neighborhoods to both include (Chapters 4 and 6) and exclude (Chapter 5) racialized subjects in and from urban space. These acts of inclusion and exclusion suggest both significant limitations and possibilities for 'just cities'.

The research also contributes to this literature by intersecting it with the lenses of Black geographies and geographies of religion. I ultimately argue that through a process of identifying profane geographies and tools that they believe

will transform profane spaces, the participants in this research frequently sanctify market logics. This perpetuates a dualism between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Black residents that has long undergirded the spatialization of racism in U.S. cities. This argument has implications for the possibility of racially just cities, as it helps us to better understand not only how faith-based groups shape the social dynamics of urban processes, but also how transcendence might be mobilized outside explicitly religious contexts; these insights open up space for intervention in institutions that are crucial to the making of urban spaces.

iii. Black Geographies in the Neighborhood

Black geographies

The Black geographies literature provides vital tools with which to approach the nuances of race in the context of rapidly developing urban neighborhoods. While the scholarship discussed above helps us to understand the racially unjust formation of U.S. cities, the theoretical depth of Black geographies work helps us to grasp the sociocultural complexity of how race is embedded in the landscape. Gilroy outlines a diasporic conception of Black geographies organized around Black peoples’ historic journeys between "Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean," and argues that we should see this Black Atlantic as "one single, complex unit of analysis . . . and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective" (Gilroy 1993, 4, 15). McKittrick and Woods (2007) argue that “black geographies and the oceanic history of diaspora [are] integral to and entwining with - rather than outside - what

has been called 'coloniality's persistence'" (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 5). They also emphasize the constructed invisibility and "unknown" qualities of Black geographies:

> "Often hidden from view, socially distanced from what Audre Lorde calls 'a mythical norm', seemingly lacking enlightenment and positivist modes of knowledge while also being rendered conspicuous 'objects-in-place', black histories, bodies, and experiences disrupt and underwrite human geographies." (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4)

Here, Black subjects are at once acted upon—positioned as invisible, ignorant, and objectifiable—and act*ing* upon as "the invisible/forgettable is producing space, always, and in all sorts of ways" (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4).

As the Black geographies literature frequently notes (McKittrick 2006, Woods 1998, Shabazz 2015), writers, artists, and musicians have spatialized blackness in their work for a long time. A salient example in addition to Woods' Delta blues musicians, McKittrick on Sylvia Wynter, and Shabazz on Richard Wright is James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962), which speaks to themes of both containment and escape. A main character in the novel, a young Black man named Rufus, habitually transgresses norms of racial segregation and heterosexuality in his friendships, romantic relationships, and sexual encounters. Although segregation operates to contain him spatially in Harlem, he frequently crosses geographical boundaries too as a well-known jazz musician. After a long period of personal turmoil, Rufus dies by suicide as he jumps off the George Washington Bridge in upper Manhattan. We might think of Rufus's life trajectory

as Baldwin's commentary on the pressures of attempting to live outside socio-spatial restrictions in 1950s New York. Rufus's constant transgression of these socio-spatial boundaries speaks to themes in the Black geographies literature of containment and remaking geographical knowledge.

Indeed, a key theme in Black geographies is confinement or containment, which overlaps with carceral geographies but extends beyond prison spaces. This literature connects to former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver's assertion that even outside the typical space of incarceration that is the prison, Black people are disproportionately "locked up . . . in Urban Dungeons**"** controlled by whites (in Heynen 2009). Since Gilmore's (2007) analysis of how highly profitable prison expansion in California resulted in the forced movement of people of color, especially Black men, into prison cells, carceral geographical scholarship has proliferated (Moran 2016). Alexander (2010) draws a clear link between disproportionately policed Black neighborhoods and unprecedented numbers of Black men in prison, citing policy and discourse that aimed to 'clean up' inner-city neighborhoods with draconian enforcement for drug crimes. Drawing further links between the segregated neighborhood and the site of the prison, Shabazz (2015) theorizes racialized, non-prison spaces in 20th century Chicago as sites of Black confinement. His analysis of heavily surveilled entertainment or vice districts, overcrowded kitchenette housing, and highly policed public housing towers demonstrates intimate ties between these carceral spaces and the prison system, including heavy policing and use of prison technologies in non-prison spaces. He highlights the role of both white people

and a Black respectability politics in maintaining some of these spaces of confinement, arguing that some vocal Black residents supported efforts to police Chicago's vice districts and punish unseemly activities in which other Black people participated.

This work on containment also examines sexual and gender subjectivities. Bailey and Shabazz (2014) extend the non-prison containment analysis to Black gender and sexual minorities, arguing that "if anti-black racism forces black people to live within contained landscapes that exist on the margins of whiteness, then black gender and sexual minorities, who are subject to violence and public ridicule, live in a placeless space, a location with no coordinates" (316). They theorize "anti-black heterotopias" as "the spaces around the corner," or locations just hidden from view in which Black queer people, along with their sexual desires and labor, are spatially restricted (318). For Domosh, carceral techniques emerged in a USDA project in Alabama in the mid-20th century. Domosh argues that a program to 'improve' Black agricultural practices served not only to contain Black families on farms, which was seen as critical to maintaining agricultural productivity at the time, but also to train a disciplinary eye on family and gender roles. Ultimately, Domosh asserts that "state projects of improvement that target particular racial groups and control them through prescribed spatial arrangements perform similar functions" to institutions that make up the penal system, and thus "trac[e] lines of continuity between plantations and prisons" (767). Like Shabazz (2015), she shows how Black-led groups concerned with the advancement of Black households helped to legitimize the USDA project, and

how there was material benefit to households who were able to purchase their own land. Both Domosh and Shabazz show how the work of gaining respect and civil rights for Black communities can be intertwined with processes of containment.

Further addressing the topic of containment and subjectivity, Shabazz (2015) asks, “What happens when people are raised in environments built to contain them? How does it affect their sense of mobility and inform their conditions of possibility? What role does this play in how they perform gender?” (Shabazz 2015, 163) Using the literary example of Bigger Thomas in Wright’s *Native Son,* he suggests that violent acts committed by Black men contained in urban space are both borne from and used to justify further extending the prison’s techniques to the street and to Black people’s homes (Foucault 1995). Here, Shabazz’s analysis dovetails with Collins’ earlier (1990) concept of controlling images. As Collins argues, the use of controlling images of Black women such as the ‘mammy,’ the ‘breeder,’ the ‘welfare queen,’ or the angry Black woman "shifts the angle of vision away from structural source of poverty and blames the victims themselves . . . [and] thus provides ideological justification for the dominant group's interest[s]" (Collins 2002, 80). Shabazz’s analysis has echoes of controlling images of Black masculinity such as that of the young, poor, urban Black man who is assumed to be dangerous and engaged in criminal activity. Furthermore, Shabazz’s focus on Black male subjectivity as both shaping and shaped by containment practices also reflects Omi and Winant’s earlier (1986) concept of the racial project, which is “*simultaneously an*

interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines" (Omi and Winant 2014, 125, emphasis theirs). A key contribution of the Black geographies literature is that it spatializes these concepts without losing the nuanced discussion of race-making processes.

The Black geographies literature also makes the case that Black geographies disrupt human geographies and produce knowledge outside normative frameworks. Through the lens of the Black Atlantic, Gilroy proposes that Black music articulates a "counterculture of modernity . . . [in] posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated would like it to be" (Gilroy 1993, 36). This counterculture both challenges and deconstructs modernity; it at times "demands . . . that bourgeois civil society live up to the promises of its own rhetoric," and at other times "reveals the hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity" (Gilroy 1993, 37, 38). Here, Gilroy argues that the often forced movements of Blacks across the space of the Atlantic has produced forms of thought that fundamentally question the Enlightenment values that so deeply shape the former slave-trading, still dominant countries. For McKittrick and Woods (2007), too, Black people are not "free from espousing dominant modes of geographic thought," but Black geographies "can also trouble those modes of thought and allow us to consider alternative ways of imagining the world" (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 5). In other words, McKittrick and Woods propose an epistemology in which the "histories, bodies, and experiences" of Black communities produce important forms of knowledge (McKittrick and Woods

2007, 4). In McKittrick (2006), such analysis centers on Black women's "cartographies of struggle". Like Gilroy, these scholars suggest that this Black knowledge carries emancipatory potential - in McKittrick and Woods' words, the potential for "co-operation, stewardship, and social justice" - against worldviews based on the domination and exploitation of white supremacy lack (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 6).

One key way that Black geographies remake knowledge is by re-framing place; this might occur through claims to a diasporic sense of place, or through narratives of stigmatized places that tell unexpected stories. Ruffin's (2007) claim that "African Diaspora artists, activists, and thinkers . . . articulated a transnational sense of placement in the world long before the mainstream currency of 'globalization' developed" resonates with Gilroy's arguments that African diasporic movements have long produced ways of seeing the world that challenge normative understandings of space and place (Ruffin 2007, 140). Similarly, Heynen (2009) shows how the Black Panthers situated Black urban neighborhoods within a scaled model of worldwide anti-Black oppression, while Inwood (2009) connects Black diasporic thought to the concept of King's Beloved Community as "part of a larger anti-colonial struggle" inside and outside the United States (Inwood 2009, 487). For Woods (1998), the blues do the work of re-framing place in the Mississippi Delta. He argues that the musical form and subculture articulate alternative modes of understanding cartography, space-time, "place, territory, region, or locality," human-environment relationships, and analogic reasoning (Woods 1998, 70). For example, Woods shows that some

blues songs re-frame stigmatized regions in celebratory ways, and that others challenge environmental destruction by "making communities sacred and significant beyond their value as commodities" (Woods 1998, 71, 72).

Other forms of Black geographical knowledge speak to underground, even placeless geographies. McKittrick (2007) challenges "seductive and comfortable geographies of domination and ownership" by suggesting an *underground* approach to knowing space that infuses Black geographies (102). Using the Underground Railroad and Ellison's *Invisible Man* as reference points, McKittrick argues that the geographic ignorance often attributed to Blacks is not ignorance at all, but a "loss of direction" with liberating potential (McKittrick 2007, 103). By "subversively claiming and living unmapped routes" that defy the logic of dominant 'knowable' geographies and classificatory schemes, Black subjects may learn to inhabit space "on [their] own terms" (McKittrick 2007, 103). For Bailey and Shabazz, *placelessness* characterizes Black queer space. They argue,

> “Although black bodies are always read as outside the framework of whiteness (Ferguson 2004), black gender and sexual minorities are rendered as outside the spatial formation of black communities. If black spatiality is excluded from the white world, then black queer space, for example, is placeless, a space without geographical coordinates.” (Bailey and Shabazz 2014a, 318)

Yet in the context of this placelessness, Black gender and sexual minorities “reimagine and remap spaces, domains, and spheres that are livable under often

unlivable conditions . . . [enact] spatial practices of refusing to relinquish their rights to public space . . . [and] create spaces of social support, affirmation, and celebration" (Bailey and Shabazz 2014b, 450, Williams 2014, Bailey 2014, Livermon 2014, Eaves 2017). This consideration of underground and placeless Black geographies suggests that the denial of visible or sanctioned places, while harmful to Black survival, can also foster creative, potentially liberating ways of making and inhabiting space. This scholarship echoes Collins (1990) as its writes non-academic figures--Woods' blues singer, McKittrick's 'ignorant', 'lost' Black subject, and Bailey and Shabazz's Black gender and sexual minorities--as knowledge-makers and, here, makers of geographic knowledge. Once "hidden" (though the act of hiding them is no accident) in geographic thought, they are re-positioned as agents at the center of analysis.

How do we write about Black lives in ways that take oppression seriously while also pointing to the liberatory potential of Black geographies? McKittrick (2011) extends the previously discussed framework by asking scholars and writers to avoid analyses that deny a black sense of place. When writing about Black geographies, she suggests, many scholars unintentionally adhere to a biologically essentialist narrative "wherein particular communities and their geographies are condemned to death over and over again," and that due to these cycles of death and dispossession, "blackness is . . . placeless" and "without" (954). McKittrick encourages us to step outside this framework that, in an effort to shed light upon racial violence, continually poses the dying "racial Other" against the "white Western-liberated human norm" (954). Posing the

question, “What if our analytical questions did not demand answers that replicate racial violence?” she asks us not to ignore racial violence, but to write violence differently (950). “[L]egacies of normalized racial violence,” McKittrick argues, are part of a Black sense of place; they “calcify, but do not guarantee, the denigration of black geographies and their inhabitants” (950). By focusing on “human relationality, rather than bifurcated systems of dispossession and possession,” she suggests that we can get at the “useful anti-colonial practices and narratives” that exist in the same “plantation futures” as racial violence (959, 950). Such practices and narratives emerge as “fractured and multiple (black and non-black) perspectives on place and belonging” that do not promise a utopian future, but neither do they condemn Black bodies to inevitable death, loss, and dispossession (950). It is critical to weave these complex practices of human relationality into work that tries to write about Black geographies.

Black geographies in gentrifying neighborhoods

How does the Black geographies literature connect to processes of gentrification in urban neighborhoods? At first glance, displacement processes and their disproportionate racial impacts might seem to be at odds with the concepts of confinement and containment discussed by Shabazz (2015), Domosh (2017), and others. However, Black geographies scholars do not argue that containment is a static process. We might think of displacement based on rising house prices as part of a dynamic process of containment. We might also think of policymakers who boost gentrification, as well as new residents who

police and surveil their new neighbors, as just some of the institutional actors who steward the process. Maher (2015) provides an example of the latter in a historically Black DC neighborhood whose diversity is marketed as an amenity. The author asks, “what kind of diversity is valued and what kind of diversity is devalued and policed in the neighborhood”? (981) He finds that new, wealthier residents have a dual perception of diversity wherein certain people of color are “different and/or better” neighbors than others (989). Here, Maher highlights a process of racial subject-making that echoes Shabazz’s questions about the subjectivities of Black men in spaces of confinement. Following Shabazz and Maher, it is critical to further inquire into the ways that racial subjectivities are shaping and shaped by these processes of containment and dispersal.

Yet the Black geographies literature also asks us to consider the ways in which Black experiences of the gentrifying neighborhood might challenge conventional geographic thought. Freeman (2006) is dismissed by critical scholars of gentrification, but his research examining the nuances of gentrification in Harlem and Brooklyn’s Clinton Hill resonates with Black geographies scholarship in some key ways. Troublingly, Freeman discounts displacement as a concern, although he later concludes that gentrification in Harlem and Clinton Hill does not substantially contribute to important aspects of residents' wellbeing, such as the access to upward mobility that the urban sociological neighborhood effects thesis suggests. However, Freeman’s most relevant contribution here is that he documents a wide range of qualitative responses to gentrification from neighborhood residents. Most controversially, he

shows that some residents assessed it positively, even though they were the ones most likely to be pushed out:

> "Residents of the 'hood are sometimes more receptive because gentrification brings their neighborhoods into the mainstream of American commercial life with concomitant amenities and services that others might take for granted. It also represents the possibility of achieving upward mobility without having to escape to the suburbs or predominantly white neighborhoods" (Freeman 2006, 1).

This finding of Freeman's has proven controversial because of its implications for policy; if it can be argued that residents 'like' gentrification, development processes can continue unchecked. While these concerns are extremely valid, Freeman's important contribution is that he takes Black residents seriously as knowledge producers about the geographies of their neighborhoods; he does not ignore the black sense(s) of place that he identifies, nor does he condemn it to death (McKittrick 2011). He does not gloss over the nuance that he found in his interviews, and in doing so he makes space for the depth of their geographical knowledge, informed by living in neighborhoods typically isolated from the comforts of whiter, wealthier places, to emerge. In tandem with the Black geographies literature, this work urges us to ask how Black people living in gentrifying neighborhoods—whether they are gentrifiers (Pattillo 2007), the gentrified, or somewhere in between—produce geographic knowledge out of the place-making processes that are happening around them, and in which they are

also participating. These questions should be taken seriously and so should the implications for racially just policymaking of publishing such research material.

Contributions

This research contributes to the Black geographies literature by offering further insights into these themes of spatial confinement and containment, and the production of knowledge outside normative frameworks. I show that research participants identify long histories of urban segregation and disenfranchisement of Black neighborhoods as profane geographies in need of transcendence, and they sanctify certain market logics as tools that can change these geographies. These market logics speak to a longstanding dualism (Alexander 2010, Shabazz 2015, Domosh 2017) in which efforts to improve the lives of some Black people are accompanied by further containment of others. In Chapter 4, through transcendent frameworks, long-time residents welcome intentional neighbors to South Atlanta, seeing their presence as a reversal from decades of spatial containment, whereas in Chapter 5, it is hoped that market logics will contain unwanted people 'somewhere else' other than South Atlanta. South Atlanta residents' knowledge of the neighborhood's past, and sense of being exposed to danger in their present surroundings, shapes their approach to changes in the neighborhood, as well as their sense of who is welcome and who would be welcome to leave. In Chapter 6, CCDA participants call for an end to the containment, confinement, and isolation of Black people, and 'market solutions' are posed as practical tools to this end.

iv. The Transformative Geographies of Faith?

Religion plays a role in shaping oppressive social structures, ranging from individual acts of exclusion or violence to genocidal projects. Yet a number of examples indicate that "faithful dispositions" also have the potential to challenge and sometimes successfully destabilize systemic forms of injustice (Holloway 2013, 206). The civil rights movement in the United States perhaps most famously demonstrates the transformational possibilities of mass mobilization strongly informed by faith. More recently, faith-based groups have advocated for immigrant farmworkers' rights and fair wages in partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program. These are two of many examples in which religious or spiritual belief intertwines with attempts to change an unjust status quo. The literature on religion and geography, which encompasses cultural geographies as well as emerging scholarship on postsecular cities, increasingly examines the significance of faith-based action in "alleviating urban social problems, in enhancing urban social welfare, and in addressing urban social justice" (Kong 2010, 765). How can we conceptualize the role of religion, belief and "faithful dispositions" in shaping actions that are intended to overcome issues of urban welfare and justice (Holloway 2013, 206)? Furthermore, why is this role important to shaping the racially just city?

Cultural geographical accounts of religion have for a long time argued that the constructed dualism between sacred and secular, based on Enlightenment modes of knowledge that privatize and individualize the sacred, is conceptually unsatisfying; this work has sought to acknowledge and examine the ways in

which sacred and secular 'spheres' are in fact bound up with one another in complex formations. Gökarıksel and Secor (2013) examine how religious subject formations shape forms of cultural subversion in everyday spaces, and Holloway (2003, 2006, 2011, 2013) discusses how affective or performative qualities of faith have the potential to challenge cultural norms. What Holloway calls “performative presencing” of faith and belief has sociopolitical effects, as in the example of a faith group holding a prayer circle at a protest. Not confined to official spaces of religious or spiritual practice, Holloway’s

> “faithful dispositions order the salience of different geographies and temporalities. By according relevance and significance to space and time, the faithful might ask, is this space in need of faithful action?” (Holloway 2013, 206).

Along compatible lines, Tse (2013) argues for grounded theologies as

> "performative practices of place-making informed by understandings of the transcendent. They remain theologies because they involve some view of the transcendent, including some that take a negative view toward its very existence or relevance to spatial practices; they are grounded insofar as they inform immanent processes of cultural place-making, the negotiation of social identities, and the formations of political boundaries, including in geographies where theological analyses do not seem relevant." (Tse 2013, 2)

Tse's analysis diverges from Holloway's because while Holloway focuses on faithful subjects, which indicates some adherence to a belief system, Tse frames

even the absence of belief or outright rejection of religion as a form of grounded theology. Tse's concept of grounded theologies allows for a fluid interpretation of how multiple religious positionalities, including those that reject belief altogether, might shape geographies. Tse may be inferring that faithful acts or grounded theologies can challenge oppressive social structures, but nothing in his 2013 work suggests grounded theologies accomplish such actions by default. As a group, these scholars argue for the ability, but not the inevitability, of faith-based actors to enact transformative geographies.

Discussions of faith-based groups are also present in geographic scholarship centered around urban political economy; so far, this work engages very little with the cultural geographic contributions discussed above. Some contemporary critical urban studies scholarship is deeply skeptical of faith groups that carry out social welfare and other community programs and suggests that they do more harm than help, in many ways following the logic of the ‘nonprofit industrial complex’ critique (Gowan 2010, Hackworth 2012, Incite 2007). For Hackworth (2012), the majority of FBOs reflect a disturbing turn towards religious neoliberalism, or faith-based engagement in social welfare and other community work that bolsters neoliberal policy agendas. The religious right's willingness to replace state-funded welfare programs with FBOs, Hackworth argues, helps "soften the edges" because "you can point to an alternative" in Christian charity (Hackworth 2012, ix). The alternative is inadequate, though, as "few if any faith-based organizations have successfully replaced a meaningful segment of the welfare state even in symbolic form" (Hackworth 2012, 3). For both Hackworth

and Gowan (2010), FBOs across the political spectrum are simply ineffective (Gowan 2010, 47-48). While FBOs' "built-in legitimacy . . . can be mobilized for progressive or regressive ends," even "liberal food programs and hospitality houses" with "vague good intentions" are insufficient in number and funding to meet the needs of the populations they serve (Hackworth 2012, 16, Gowan 2010, 47-48). To the extent that FBOs stand in for more comprehensive forms of social welfare and community institutions, in these analyses they arguably participate in a mode of governance that harms the poor, whether willingly or not.

Postsecular cities scholarship, which comes out of a broader set of arguments about postsecularism, or the resurgence of religion in public life, examines the extent to which faith-based nonprofit or social welfare organizations might enact progressive social change. In contrast to Hackworth or Gowan, postsecular cities scholarship has more often argued that such FBOs subvert state agendas by enacting government contracts on their own terms, or by acting according to perhaps kinder, gentler logics that those of the state (Williams et al. 2012, Cloke et al. 2013, Bompani 2013, May and Cloke 2014). More broadly, it is suggested that FBOs perform faith in ways that challenge revanchist, punitive attitudes towards marginalized people in cities (Beaumont and Dias 2008, Bretherton 2010, Dias and Beaumont 2010, Cloke 2011, Cloke and Beaumont 2013, Lancione 2014). Postsecular rapprochements, or partnerships across the sacred-secular divide, also challenge revanchism and suggest new 'hopeful' possibilities (Cloke et al. 2010, Cloke and Beaumont 2013, May and Cloke 2014).

This scholarship on FBOs generally leaves out the role of Black churches providing for congregations' and communities' social welfare needs in the same deprived urban neighborhoods in which numerous FBOs operate. While Barnes (2017) cautions that "the Black Church is not a monolithic institution, but rather, reflects great heterogeneity" (153), Owens (2007) notes that Black churches have long been involved in providing social welfare services, and "activist churches have partnered with public agencies to initiate neighborhood redevelopment projects and administer and implement public policy" at least since the War on Poverty era (Owens 2007, 2). Although the history of poverty and neglect in Black communities is long, Black activist churches "are unwilling to discard any hope that may improve the lives of the urban poor and working class" (Owens 2007, 203). Arguing that the (then) contemporary Black church is in fact more dedicated to social welfare than reform, Billingsley (1999) writes,

> "the nature of [black church] outreach activity is different from the community activity of the civil rights era. During the 1950s and 1960s, black church outreach was more likely to be social action and protests against the oppression from forces external to the black community. Contemporary black church community outreach, on the other hand, is more likely to be social service or community development, addressing problems within the black community." (89)

While this dissertation research focuses on FBOs rather than traditional church structures, understanding this role of Black churches in the urban social welfare realm is critical to grasping the nuances of this research.

An important contribution of the scholarship on FBOs is that it strives to ground urban faith actors in political economy (Beaumont and Baker 2011). The state's movement away from the social welfare realm in the United States and Europe constitutes a major societal shift that has impacted millions of people's lives. It is critical not to detach the work of religious groups from this 'secular' reality, but to understand the complex ways that they are implicated in and benefit from eroding social safety nets, as well as they ways they may challenge and even resist this situation. Scholarship on faith-based organizations should actually engage even further with questions central to political economy. Housing and neighborhood change are key topics to address, particularly in cities where little has been done to stem the tide of gentrification in racialized, disinvested neighborhoods---and most large U.S. cities fall into this category (Smith 1984, Smith 1996, Lees, Slater and Wyly 2008). Extensive, planned projects like Atlanta's BeltLine bring the possibility of gentrification and displacement into neighborhoods that even five years ago might have seemed unlikely targets, such as South Atlanta, the location of this research. In this context, examining the interaction of religious groups engaged with 'secular' concerns such as community development is vital to understanding social and cultural processes in ever-changing urban landscapes.

Hankins and Walter (2012) have already studied the work of Christian community development organizations in South Atlanta, and demonstrated how they play pivotal, overlooked roles in urban place-making processes. Most recently, they characterize intentional neighboring, a Christian community

development practice discussed more in Chapters 2 and 3, as a form of "spatial solidarity" based on residential closeness to low-income people of color (Walter et al. 2017). This dissertation builds on their scholarship (e.g. Hankins and Walter 2012, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011) to further unpack the ways that faith-based actors (specifically, those associated with Christian community development in Atlanta) participate in the political economy of housing and neighborhoods, and how understandings of faith converge or diverge with understandings of faith.

I also follow Hankins and Walter's approach in the sense that their work attempts to address the multiplicity of effects that intentional neighbors have on the South Atlanta neighborhood, and on Atlanta's south side more broadly. Discussions of faith in the urban context are limited when they depict faith-based organizations as one-dimensional – as pawns of neoliberalism (e.g., Hackworth) or as exciting openings for transforming otherwise punitive regimes (e.g., Cloke). The following chapters aim to show how faith-based actors may simultaneously participate in what appears as 'good development' *and* in processes that may put people at risk of displacement. This approach also has commonalities with Tse's work on grounded theologies, which does not presuppose liberatory or oppressive outcomes of geographies threaded with theological understandings of space and place. I aim for a fine-grained focus on process before evaluation, but I still draw strong conclusions about the implications of this research for housing justice. An analysis dedicated to nuance does not have to mean side-stepping issues that impact oppressed people's lives, such as the rising tide of gentrification and accompanying displacement in Atlanta and major U.S. cities.

Contributions

This research contributes to our understanding of geographies of religion in that it speaks to the cultural geographies and postsecular cities literatures, both of which ask how religious sensibilities—and institutions that form around them—are involved in struggles for urban justice. The key contribution from this research is the linking of transcendence to the racialized landscapes of disinvested urban neighborhoods. In this conceptual framework, I suggest that one's understandings of the transcendent intermingle with particular understandings of race and urban space. This research shows a process in which faith-based organizational representatives and other Christian-identified research participants tack back and forth between attaching profane and sacred meanings to racialized urban space. They sanctify 'secular' tools to transform profane geographies into ones that better reflect their understandings of the transcendent. Based on in-depth qualitative engagement, I argue that the particular boundaries of these sanctified secular frameworks can contract or expand the limits of what one considers possible or desirable in the urban process and its legacies of racism.

v. Geographies of Religion, Black Geographies, and the Racially Just City

How can we conceptualize impacts of faith-based organizations in the racially unjust city, and how does the above literature intersect with Black geographies? We can think about *transcendence,* a common theme in the

geographies of religion, and how it might intersect with Black geographies themes as well as material urban practices. Even though Tse (2013) argues that transcendence characterizes all grounded theologies, whether explicitly religious or not, the marker of *faith-based* lends FBOs a certain freedom or permission to imagine a better world that may be harder to access in spaces that are supposed to be restricted by secular values. Like Black geographies, transcendent geographies might also reveal ways of knowing space and place that fall outside of mainstream geographic thought, and that challenge dominant spatial paradigms. The question is, what do transcendent geographies look like, and how do they intersect with understandings of race? How might they look different for people from dissimilar race subject positions?

We can think of transcendent geographies most basically as existing or imagined geographies to which some sacred meaning is attached. Such geographies might include spaces of churches or other obviously sacred sites, but they do not have to be explicitly connected to organized religious practice. In this research, participants attach sacred meanings to geographies that would normally be understood as secular or profane. As geographers of religion have argued, it is possible to make sacred space out of what we typically think of as spaces built on profane logics, such as the commuter train that a meditator turns into a sacred space in Holloway (2003). The spatialization of one's understanding of the transcendent can thus take many forms.

In fact, transcendent geographies are thoroughly tied to ostensibly secular logics to the point that it is nearly impossible to tease them apart. Logics that we

think of as mostly secular are deeply informed by theologies, and vice versa. For example, sacred meanings attached to pilgrimage sites in Israel are hopelessly bound up with an interplay of transcendent concepts and profane logics; the biblical narrative of a Jewish homeland mingles with the logics of settler colonialism and the survival of genocide. To the extent that we *can* tease apart the logics that inform the making of transcendent geographies, we can see how some 'secular' logics become themselves sanctified in the process of assigning sacred meanings to profane geographies. In this research, for example, I show how mixed-income housing paradigm, which is very much based in market logics, becomes sanctified as part of FCS's and other participants' hoped-for process of transforming South Atlanta's profane geographies into transcendent ones.

What could transcendent geographies of race look like? One's sense of transcendence could be restricted by normative racialized geographical understandings. Specifically, confinement and containment stem from a spatial logic of domination that protects and upholds white supremacy (Warren 1990). Since this logic has such power, people acting out of faith could easily subscribe to it uncritically and unconsciously. Faith-based actors operating according to this logic could be white themselves, although they do not have to be; logics of domination that primarily benefit and uphold whiteness can still be espoused (whether consciously or not) by people of color. Further, because of the depth of racial segregation in U.S. cities, many white residents (including faith-based actors) likely remain quite ignorant of geographical knowledge forms produced by

Blackness. In fact, faith-based actors' ideas about transcendence might align very well with dominant spatial knowledge forms; an FBO that helps people transition to life after prison might uncritically consider the current state of mass incarceration as an appropriate vehicle for divine justice. Therefore, the desire for some form of transcendence, or some recognition that a world more closely aligned with high spiritual ideals is possible, likely does not prevent faith-based actors and organizations with a bent towards whiteness (though they need not be exclusively white) from reproducing patterns of containment and dispossession, as well as the racial subject formation processes that accompany them. To essentialize race is problematic--e.g., assuming that white people of faith will follow white containment logics--but it is important to acknowledge the hegemony of those logics and the likelihood that they play a substantial role in shaping the actions of white faith-based actors and people of color.

Following McKittrick's call to interrupt the narrative of inevitable Black death and dispossession, we should also consider that faith actors might actively work against the dynamics of confinement and containment that shape Black geographies and take Black geographical knowledge seriously. Similarly, it may also possible for faith-based actors to articulate and embody understandings of transcendence that open up anti-colonial possibilities. Even further, it may be possible that collective understandings can emerge that see the work of undoing racism embedded in the urban landscape *as a precondition for* transcendence. The geographies of religion literature suggests that these intersections of faith and racial justice will emerge unevenly, with transformative ideas and praxis

intermingling with, existing alongside, or restricted by oppressive practices and structures.

Yet how do we make sense of this unevenness, without only saying that "it's complicated"? The task is to analyze how people assign transcendence to certain geographies and not to others, examine this interplay of profane and sacred meanings, and consider its implications for geographies of race in the urban process. Then, we can better understand how seemingly arbitrary or inconsistent appeals to transcendence hang together in materially meaningful configurations. In this dissertation, I show that research participants seek to remake racialized geographies according to their own understandings of the transcendent. They sanctify market logics in this project, which limits the scope of transcendent possibility to the confines of a market framework. By asking, "it's complicated, but so what?", I show how this interplay between the transcendent and the profane shapes geographies of racial exclusion.

CHAPTER 3: Research Site, Methodology, and Analysis

i. Introduction

To address the research questions posed in Chapter 2, I carried out a multi-site case study of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), a national-level organization that loosely groups together over 900 member sites across the country. As this chapter illustrates, CCDA's philosophy intertwines three loci relevant to the theoretical framework that I just outlined: race in the gentrifying city, and the role of religious welfare organizations in that milieu. CCDA leaders challenge practitioners to spend years living or working in segregated, disinvested urban neighborhoods, drawing on their Christian faith to bring about 'God's shalom' through community development activities. I spent two years on the CCDA national conference circuit from 2014-2015, attending annual conferences in person and keeping track of email lists and virtual meetups related to annual conferences. During this time, I also documented and analyzed CCDA blog posts and other public messaging. Then, I spent one focused year in 2015, with at least one year each of preparation and follow-up on either side of it, in an Atlanta neighborhood where a particularly active CCDA site is located. I did participant observation and thorough document analysis, and conducted 40 interviews with stakeholders in South Atlanta, where CCDA member organization Focused Community Strategies (FCS) operates.

ii. The Christian Community Development Association

Christian community development traces its origins to its founder John Perkins, who was born and raised in Jim Crow Mississippi as the son of "bootleggers and gamblers," in his oft-repeated own words (Perkins 2006, 23). Although he once fled from both faith and the misery of the segregated South, where his brother was fatally shot by a police officer, he returned to Mississippi in the 1960s to start a bible literacy institute for Black Christians. Over time, Perkins' desire to evangelize turned into an urgent need to address "the desperate physical needs of many of our people" and to liberate Black communities from the tenant farming system that kept them in a state of permanent indebtedness to white landowners. He developed the concept of three 'Rs' necessary for this community transformation: relocation (people of material privilege, including white people, moving into poor, usually Black neighborhoods), redistribution (both economic and non-material), and reconciliation (across racial boundaries). These concepts were grounded in his evangelical Christian faith, and he believed that people of faith were most equipped to do this work. He was also convinced that the Black cooperative movement was an important part of the redistribution principle and the path towards Black economic liberation. In these early days of his program, Perkins supported "national reparations for slavery" (Marsh 2004, 175). Further, in an odd choice of language that still occasionally resurfaces in CCDA, Perkins used the term "indigenous" to refer to Black "organizations and communities" in need of economic liberation and transformation (Perkins 2006, 121-122).

In his 1976 memoir, *Let Justice Roll Down*, Perkins discusses the experiences that set the groundwork for the three 'R' principles. After an episode of brutal police violence in retaliation for his civil rights leadership in Mississippi, Perkins moved towards Black separatism, skeptical that white society could ever accommodate justice for Black communities. He looked towards examples of Black economic self-determination such as the Mound Bayou community, and played a key role in organizing Black cooperatives in Mississippi. He reports in his memoir that he became more open to integration as opposed to Black separatism over the course of several experiences at Voice of Calvary, his neighborhood-based ministry. Specifically, Perkins writes that God showed him the powerful possibilities of integration as he encountered "whites who believed in justice" (Perkins 2006, 192-194); Perkins compares this renewed openness to white people with Jesus forgiving his enemies as he died on the cross. The structure of his three 'R's framework, with its emphasis on reconciliation, makes it clear that white people can and should be involved in the work of community development in marginalized neighborhoods.

While Perkins' politics changed over time--he appeared to take a rightward turn in the 1980s when he publicly denounced federal welfare programs--"[a]n evangelical emphasis on personal relationship with Jesus remained at the center of his community development vision" (181). Perkins formally founded the Christian Community Development Association in 1989, and it now has over 900 member organizations across the United States. Perkins is no longer at the helm of CCDA, but he still attends the CCDA national conference every year and leads

early morning bible study sessions with a lively preaching style that belies his 87 years.

Today, the organization still draws on an expanded version of his original three ‘Rs’. With the leadership of current President Noel Castellanos, CCDA now advocates eight practices to effectively “respond to the troubles of the poor and under-resourced communities today” from a Christian perspective (CCDA 2018). Relocation into low-income neighborhoods is presented as the central practice. CCDA’s website notes,

> By relocating, a person will understand most clearly the real problems facing the poor; and then he or she may begin to look for real solutions. For example, if a person ministering in a poor community has children, one can be sure that person will do whatever possible to ensure that the children of the community get a good education. Relocation transforms "you, them, and theirs" to "we, us, and ours." Effective ministries plant and build communities of believers that have a personal stake in the development of their neighborhoods. (CCDA 2018)

Relocation is presented here as a way for relatively privileged people to live in “spatial solidarity” with segregated, disinvested communities (Walter, Hankins and Nowak 2017). The website also notes that some relocators are “returners,” or people who grew up in poor neighborhoods, moved out, and now return as more affluent residents. CCDA also still emphasizes reconciliation (“A person’s love for Christ should break down every racial, ethnic and economic barrier” and redistribution (“a just redistribution of resources”). People who practice CCDA’s

principles are called “CCD practitioners,” and “often commit to living in an under-resourced neighborhood for a minimum of 10 years” (CCDA 2018). With about a dozen staff members at the national level, CCDA does not oversee all its member organizations, but provides them with training and support. While CCDA is informed by evangelical principles, its practitioners engage in very little direct evangelizing. An Atlanta CCD practitioner, for example, noted that would-be evangelizers may become frustrated working in Christian community development because the guiding idea is to enact the gospel through community-building programs and relationships, not through attempts at individual religious conversion.

While CCDA has this unique foundation in evangelical Christianity, member organizations still have many elements in common with secular community developers. Since faith-based organizations are eligible for federal funds including HUD, CCDA member groups can and do work with the state. For example, Lawndale Christian Development Corporation in Chicago, a member organization well-known within CCDA, has received Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding (Lawndale Christian Development Corporation 2017). Similarly, Charis Community Housing, once a “ministry” of FCS and now rolled into its mixed-income program, at times rehabilitated housing using Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds. Further, CCD practitioners carry out comparable activities to secular community development organizations such as housing rehabilitation, job and entrepreneurship skills training, and interpersonal aspects of community development such as arts programs or

afterschool tutoring for youth. While this dissertation ultimately argues that the faith-based motivations of CCDA make them distinct from secular community development programs, it is important to note some key similarities.

iii. Focused Community Strategies: CCDA in Atlanta

Family Consultation Services was founded in the 1970s by Robert Lupton, a PhD in psychology turned community developer (FCS 2018). The organization is now called Focused Community Strategies and most commonly referred to among staff and South Atlanta residents as FCS. When I started my research, it was called FCS Urban Ministries or sometimes FCS Ministries; a later re-branding strategy dropped both 'urban' and 'ministries' from its name. Initially, Lupton and FCS became involved in Atlanta's East Lake neighborhood's transition into a mixed-income development, following the demolition of the East Lake Meadows public housing project that displaced 75% of its tenants (Stephens 2015). The latter initiative was led by real estate developer Tom Cousins, but FCS contributed by building a number of houses and placing 'strategic [Christian] neighbors' in some of them with the goal of bringing socially engaged, middle-class residents into the neighborhood (FCS 2015). After several years doing similar work in and near the Grant Park neighborhood, including a HUD-funded, controversial redevelopment of the Martin Street Plaza public housing apartments in the Summerhill neighborhood (Ball and Greene 1997), FCS has focused on South Atlanta since 2000. Their strategy currently rests on doing community development in one neighborhood at a time. According to

FCS's organizational story, FCS was invited to do community development in South Atlanta by a group of long-term residents with whom Lupton had been in contact. According to a long-time South Atlanta resident, this dynamic occurred in reverse. The resident said, "they came to the Civic League and told us they wanted to do some work in the community" (interview, July 2015). Over the course of FCS's existence, Lupton developed a strategy "gentrification with justice" that he outlines in his 2007 book *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*. Gentrification with justice, he argues, can simultaneously introduce the much-debated benefits of mixed-income communities and also mitigate displacement of "indigenous" residents, a term that he borrows from Perkins (2006) and uses six times in his 2007 book[2].

Figure 1: FCS promotional materials, May 2017. FCS founder Bob Lupton is in the center of the photograph. (FCS 2017)

[2] Chapter 5 of this dissertation provides more detail on the gentrification with justice strategy.

In South Atlanta, FCS today pursues a mixed-income housing agenda that "creates home buying and rental opportunities for all residents across the income spectrum" (Focused Community Strategies 2018b). This program includes mortgages and rentals accessible to low-income households, as well as market rate homes. Charis Community Housing, a separate nonprofit organization that was a "ministry" or "division" of FCS, previously coordinated the mixed-income housing program (Delp 2014, Duncan 2015). Even though Charis was a separate nonprofit organization, it could effectively be seen as part of FCS with FCS as the umbrella organization. For example, Charis and FCS shared offices, some staff members, and the same guiding faith-based strategy. After a period of re-organization in 2017, FCS now does the housing work that Charis once managed. According to current FCS President Jim Wehner, the goal driving this house rehabilitation and construction is to have 75% homeownership in the neighborhood, one third of which would be occupied by low-income homeowners (interview, July 2015). In 2018, the Mixed-Income Housing section of FCS's website noted,

> "Since 2000, home ownership in our target neighborhood has increased from 10% to over 50%. Almost a quarter of homes owned in the community are owned by low income families." (Focused Community Strategies 2018b)

Further detailing these figures, a March 2018 blog post by FCS's Director of Mixed-Income Housing Cynthia McNeal, said that

"Our Housing Program has completed well over 70 affordable homes and has renovated 48 Workforce houses since 2008, and in 2017, FCS led 70% of the development in South Atlanta." (McNeal 2018)

Figure 2: FCS promotional materials, February 2018, depicting signage for several of FCS's small business ventures. (FCS 2018).

FCS also coordinates community economic development projects such as a nonprofit grocery store and a bike repair program from youth, and a training and development institute named after Lupton, who has now retired. For example, FCS opened a low-cost, nonprofit grocery store and coffee shop near a central intersection in the neighborhood (see Figure 2). Afterschool programs,

youth ministries, and a dance school have also fallen under FCS's community development umbrella at different points in time. As Hankins and Walter (2012) note, this work is a comprehensive place-making strategy to "reshape the socio-spatial dialectic of poverty". In poverty research, policy, and practice, there has been much debate over the merits of *people*- and *place*-based anti-poverty strategies (1510).

Intentional neighbors

In line with CCDA's emphasis on relocation, FCS has long encouraged what they now call intentional neighbors to live in the neighborhoods in which FCS works. Every intentional neighbor whom I interviewed for this research had some personal connection to FCS, however informal; they tended to be part of the same Christian community development networks as FCS staff. Bob Lupton started pursuing this strategy when he became involved with the East Lake neighborhood in the 1990s. According to a 2015 entry on FCS's blog, FCS's Strategic Neighbor Program in East Lake "established an official structure for individuals who desired to move to a low-income neighborhood, motivated by their Christian faith and their commitment to reconciliation, restoration, and redistribution" (FCS Ministries 2015). By the time FCS moved to South Atlanta, organizational leaders

> "began to question the term 'Strategic Neighbor' and why it would apply to new neighbors any more than these long-time residents. . . . A great deal of thought and debating resulted in the phrase "intentional neighboring" to

> describe the on-the-ground community work happening in South Atlanta. This wording is more of a verb than a noun. It's not a job description, nor a checklist of what to do or not to do. Rather, it describes purposeful living in whatever place God has called you.
>
> We encourage others who are moving into distressed communities to partner with the residents already working for good. We emphasize neighborhood leadership and a commitment to mixed-income housing development. We believe this partnership strategy builds into the neighborhood's social, spiritual, and economic vitality. Together, intentional neighbors can and do have a big impact on their community." (FCS Ministries 2015)

These blog excerpts make it clear that the change of word choice from 'strategic' to 'intentional' carried with it a recognition that "historical residents" already lived in South Atlanta and were organized. Although this blog post uses the term "historical residents," other FCS material (and some material at the national level of CCDA) has used the term "indigenous residents", suggesting a willingness on intentional neighbors' part to see themselves as settlers. However, the intentional neighbors whom I interviewed did not use the term 'indigenous' at all.

Katherine Hankins, Andy Walter, and others discuss intentional neighboring and its implications for urban and political geographies at length, and this dissertation owes much to their body of work (Walter et al. 2017, Hankins and Martin forthcoming, Case 2011). The term is generally used in this

dissertation to describe people who move to South Atlanta with some connection to FCS and with faith-based motivations. Intentional neighbors usually are race- and/or class privileged in relation to their neighbors; in other words, they are likely to have the option of living elsewhere. As chapter 3 shows in much more detail, they see themselves as building a sense of community across lines of race and class, and redirecting their own social and material resources into neighborhood relationships and institutions. In light of Hankins' and Walter's existing work, the unique contribution of this dissertation is its consideration of intentional neighboring in a theoretical framework that draws on the Black geographies and geographies of religion literatures.

iv. The Atlanta Context

South Atlanta

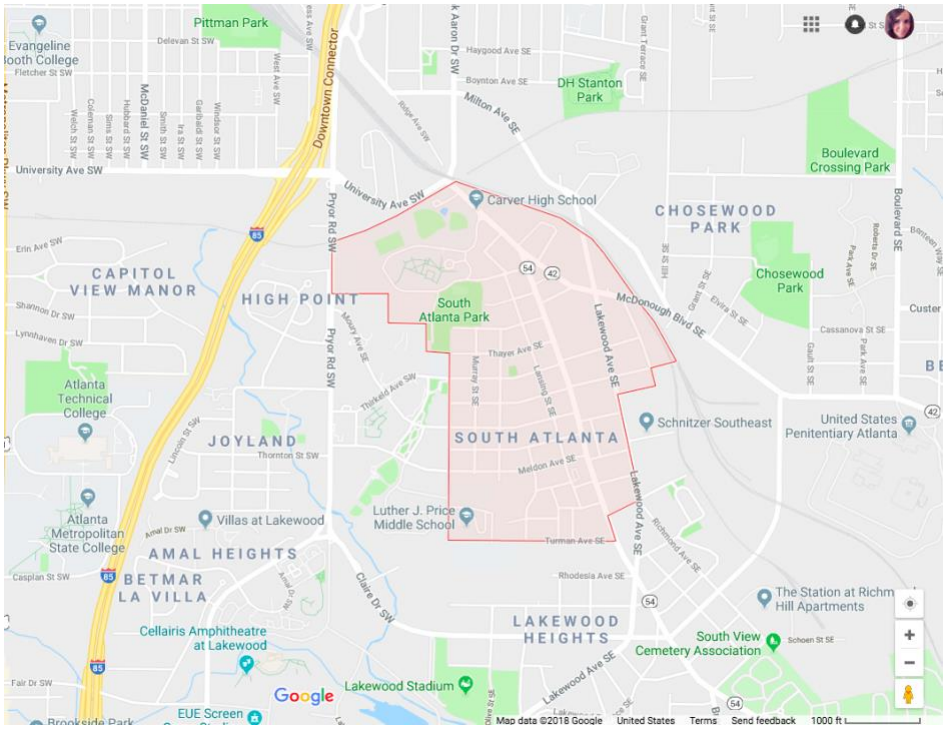
South Atlanta is in the southwest quadrant of Atlanta, nestled between Lakewood Heights, Chosewood Park, and a cluster of smaller neighborhoods. When the city of Atlanta instituted a neighborhood planning unit (NPU) system, it became part of NPU-Y alongside eight other neighborhoods grouped together in the southwest corner of the city. South Atlanta has just over 500 homes, many of which are single family. Exceptions include Columbia Blackshear, an apartment complex for seniors named after a well-known local reverend and an apartment complex owned by FCS. When I interned at FCS as a participant observer, I read internal materials indicating that the neighborhood's vacancy rate had decreased from approximately one out of every four houses to approximately one out of five

houses during FCS's tenure in South Atlanta. During that internship, I was also asked to do census research on the two census tract block groups within which South Atlanta lies, although the boundaries of both block groups extend beyond those most commonly used to outline South Atlanta. Both block groups had high poverty rates and high percentages of Black residents, among other figures (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Census Tracts Encompassing South Atlanta (U.S. Census Bureau 2013a, b, 2016a, b)

Census tract/block group	*Source*	**Median household income in the past 12 months (in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars)**	**Poverty status in the past 12 months, by household**	**Race**
Census tract 55.02, block group 1 (encompasses, but not limited to north portion of South Atlanta)	2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	$16,321	43.1%	Black or African American Alone: 94% American Indian or Alaska Native Alone: 0.5% White Alone: 5.5%
	2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates	$16,675	45.3%	Black or African American Alone: 92.9% American Indian or Alaska Native Alone: 0.4% White Alone: 6.7%

Census tract 67, block group 1 (encompasses, but not limited to south portion of South Atlanta)	2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	$23,482	34.4%	Black or African American Alone: 75% White Alone: 25%
	2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year estimates	$18,862	62.4%	Black or African American Alone: 87.6% White Alone: 12.4%



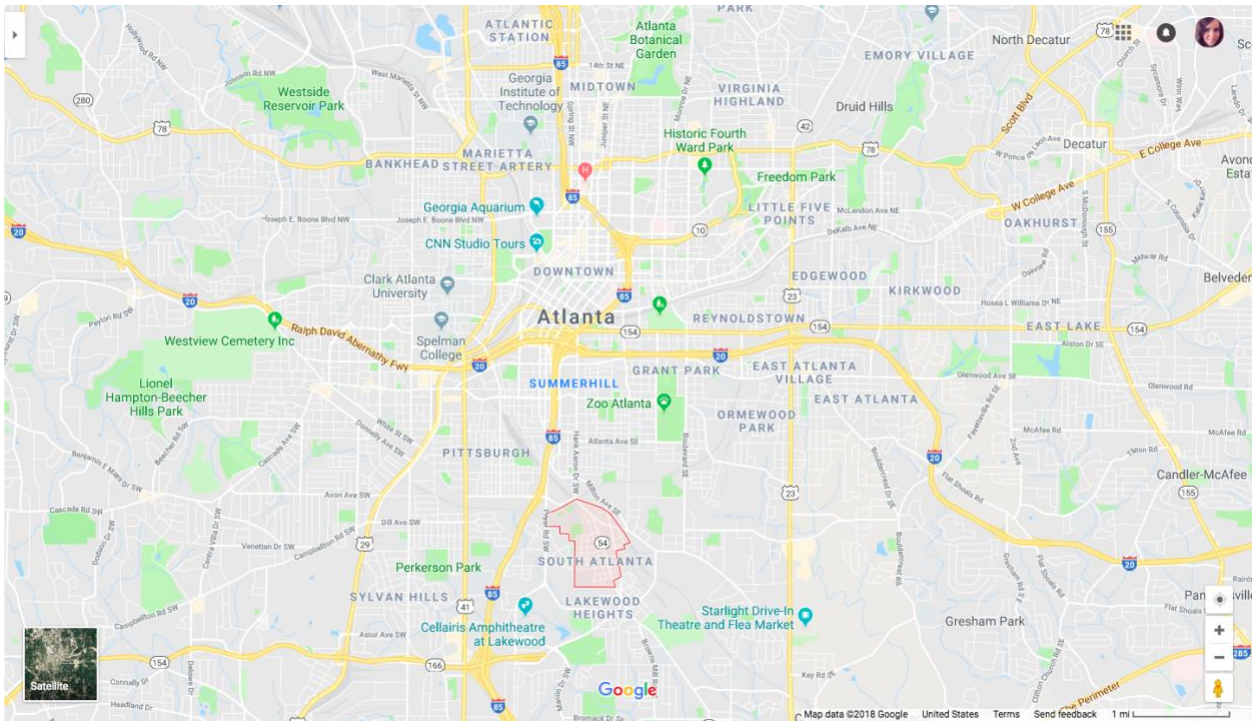


Figure 3, Figure 4: Neighborhood of South Atlanta as defined by Google maps as of 2018 (2018a). Demonstrating that maps are socially constructed, South Atlanta residents sometimes suggested neighborhood boundaries that differed from these maps.

As elderly, lifelong residents told me (and detailed further in chapter 4), South Atlanta was a segregated Black neighborhood during the Jim Crow period. Formerly known as Brownsville, it was a center of Black intellectual life as home to Clark College, which merged into Clark Atlanta University at the Atlanta University Center (AUC) in 1941, and Gammon School of Theology, which became part of the Interdenominational Theological Seminary (ITC) at the AUC, also in 1941 (Clowney 2004, South Atlanta Civic League 2018, see Figure 3). Brownsville was also a key site in the Atlanta race riot of 1906, in which “white mobs killed dozens of blacks, wounded scores of others, and inflicted considerable property damage. Local newspaper reports of alleged assaults by

black males on white females were the catalyst for the riot" (Mixon and Kuhn 2005). A group of Black people held a meeting in Brownsville; "police learned of the gathering, they feared a counterattack and launched a raid on Brownsville" (Mixon and Kuhn 2005). In a book about the Atlanta race riot, author Ray Stannard Baker wrote that Brownsville's postmaster "was one of those arrested and charged with supplying the Negro people with arms"; one of the Black men killed was "a decent, industrious . . . citizen named Fambro, who kept a small grocery store and owned two houses besides, which he rented" (Baker 1907). Baker also described a visit to Brownsville where he looked for "squalor, ignorance, [and] vice" and found owner-occupied homes "as attractive without and as well furnished within as the ordinary homes of middleclass white people" (Baker 1907). Brownsville was thus an early site for Atlanta's Black middle class.

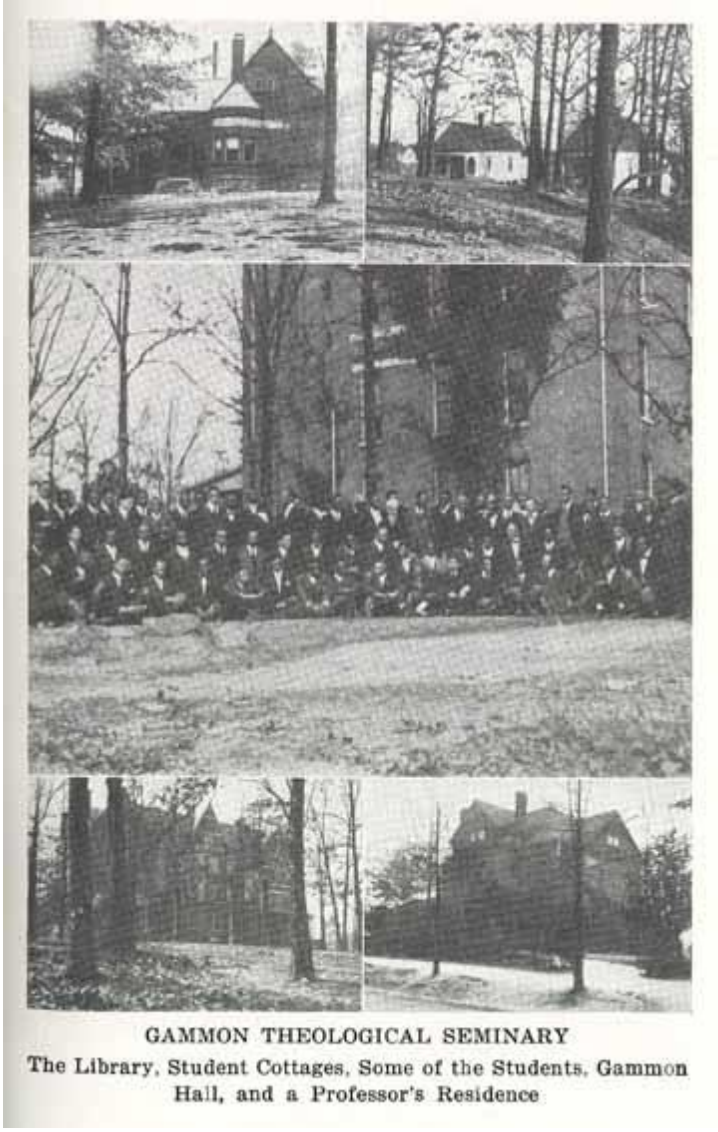


Figure 5: Historical photographs of Gammon Theological Seminary. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library (Stowell 1922).

Long-term South Atlanta residents told a story of a bustling community life with many Black-owned businesses in the segregated mid-century, followed by dispersal and disinvestment from South Atlanta during the white flight period as whites left the city and remaining residents of color could move to the

neighborhoods from which they ‘fled’. The 1980s and 1990s, in these stories, were particularly challenging times for the neighborhood. These stories are drawn out further in Chapter 4. Today, FCS owns the large, multi-storefront Gateway building that once comprised Black residents’ commercial and entertainment center in South Atlanta. One of these adjoining buildings was home to a movie theater, followed by a liquor store as the neighborhood became increasingly disinvested. These buildings are now home to FCS’s nonprofit grocery Carver Market, its Community Grounds coffee shop (soon to close), and the bike repair program. Goolsby Mortuary is one of the Black-owned businesses that remains, while the old storefronts of some former businesses are still visible, such as a beauty shop. A public housing project, Carver Homes, was built in 1953 (Bayor 2000); the city began demolition of it and construction of a mixed-income development called The Villages at Carver in 2001 (Shalhoup 2001). The Villages at Carver is considered a separate neighborhood from South Atlanta by official measures including the Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) system, and most residents did not consider the development to be part of South Atlanta.

Figure 6: Google street view (2018b) of a long-closed business in South Atlanta.

The neighborhood has a number of churches and schools that often served as key reference points during this research. One unnamed church played a particularly central role in this project, as an enthusiastic research participant recruited several of her fellow congregants to do research interviews. Another church, Mount Pleasant Baptist Church typifies a common role played by Black churches in disinvested inner city neighborhoods today in two ways. First, the church provides significant social welfare services to residents of the 30315 zip code, including a food pantry and SNAP/Medicaid enrollment assistance; several key texts (Billingsley 1999, Owens 2007) speak to this contemporary role of Black churches. Secondly, according to an interview with a church administrator, many parishioners do not live in the neighborhood anymore but have lasting family ties to the church. As such, they drive into Atlanta from the suburbs to attend church services, and the church has faced conflict with residents over attempts to expand parking for these car-bound attendees.

On the northern edge of the neighborhood, George Washington Carver High School and Slater Elementary School sit on a self-contained campus, separated from much of South Atlanta's main streets by park land and trees. This school site is the former campus of both Clark College and Gammon School of Theology. The campus is also home to Project South, a grassroots nonprofit organization. In a more central part of the neighborhood is the Ron Clark Academy charter middle school, which is known by some residents for the eccentric murals painted around its exterior. Residents who mentioned the school perceived it as insular and not connected to neighborhood life.

While South Atlanta was historically Black, its adjacent neighborhood Lakewood Heights was reserved for whites during Jim Crow years, according to long-time residents. This disparity can still be sensed in the landscape, as many South Atlanta residential streets still lack sidewalks, whereas the main commercial intersection of Lakewood Heights has more of a main street, walkable feeling. However, Lakewood Heights is now disinvested in comparable ways to South Atlanta; what was once the neighborhood's main commercial intersection is now known as a site for the drug trade and street sex work. I was repeatedly warned not to walk in open air at that intersection, although I did so several times to meet and recruit research participants. For example, I interviewed a florist near the intersection whose shop is almost permanently locked down to prevent people walking in from the street; her business relies on deliveries outside of the neighborhood. The neighborhoods immediately surrounding South Atlanta, such as Lakewood Heights, are thus not dissimilar

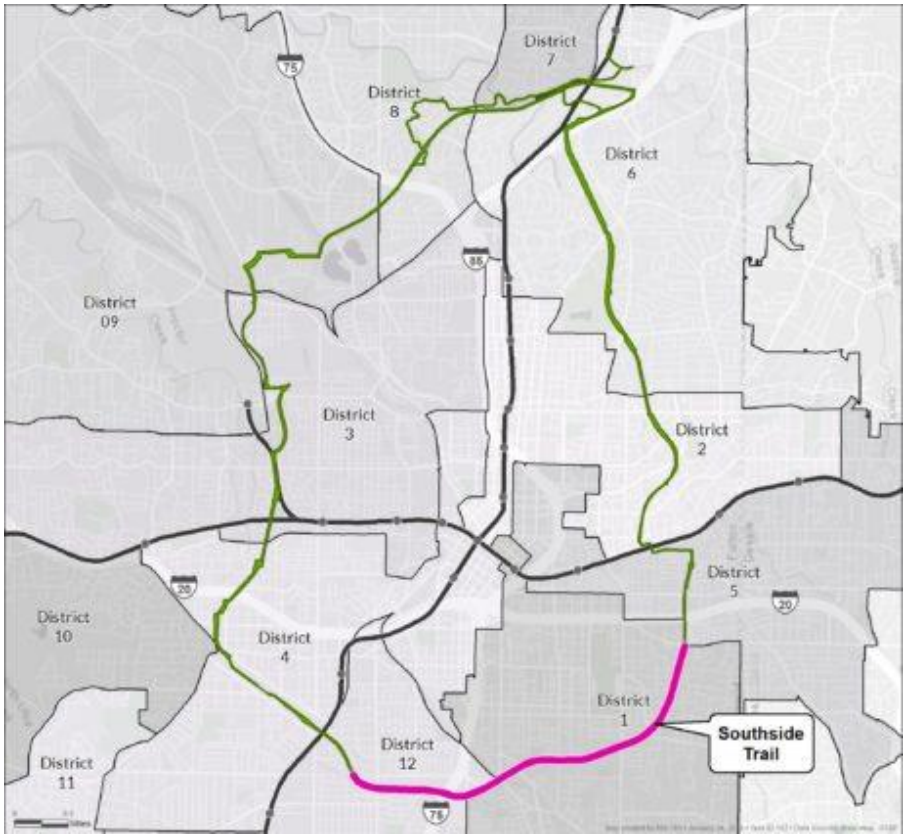
from South Atlanta in terms of the landscape—empty storefronts and houses, and quantitative indicators—for instance, high rates of Black poverty (Neighborhood Nexus 2016).

Gentrifying Atlanta?

South Atlanta has much in common with many other disinvested, historically segregated inner city neighborhoods that are now experiencing reinvestment that threatens to displace low-income residents. Perhaps a few years ago, South Atlanta may not have looked like a neighborhood on the verge of gentrification, and the census data above (Table 1) makes it difficult to draw concrete conclusions about changes to the neighborhood (in part because the data encompasses areas outside its boundaries). However, housing values for a 3-bedroom home[3] in 30315, a zip code that covers an area primarily made up of South Atlanta and Lakewood Heights, increased from $43,500 in July 2015 to $103,000 in July 2018. From July 2017 to July 2018, 3-bedroom house values increased by 46.9%, compared to a 29.6% increase in Atlanta (Zillow 2018a, b). While it is imprecise to label these housing value figures alone as gentrification, since they do not say anything about the demographics of new residents, there are clearly rapid changes to housing affordability that outpace a city that is already 'hot' in real estate terms (Zillow 2018).

[3] Values for all homes were not available for this zip code. Home values for all homes in all of Atlanta increased by 14.8% from July 2018 to July 2018.

Further, South Atlanta today is arguably vulnerable to considerable future gentrification for two key reasons. First, a number of neighborhoods on Atlanta's south side have experienced rapid gentrification in the past sixteen years (Blau 2015), remaking the race and class demographics of parts of the city that were once much more disinvested. Second, South Atlanta is close (about 1.5 miles, depending on one's exact point of departure) to the site that the Atlanta Braves will soon leave as they migrate to suburban Cobb County, leaving a void that development will soon fill. It is even closer to sections of the Atlanta Beltline, an urban greening project that turns disused railroad tracks into green space and bike paths; neighborhoods close to the Beltline also present future prospects for developers.



Figures 7-8: Promotional materials for Atlanta BeltLine's planned Southside Trail (Atlanta BeltLine 2018a, b).

More broadly, the city of Atlanta is an important point of study for this project's research questions for several key reasons. While its self-characterization as the 'city too busy to hate' has been thoroughly debunked (Keating 2001), Atlanta is well-known as a 'Black mecca' and as home to a significant Black middle class. Yet even as the Black middle class is strong in Atlanta, making it more possible than in most U.S. cities for Black households to play roles in documented patterns of gentrification (Blau 2015), the city is becoming more white and less Black overall (Galloway 2011). In addition to a Black middle class, Atlanta also has a high number of Black households in

poverty, who are at risk of displacement in the context of rising home values. Atlanta is also notable for its complete lack of public housing; unlike other cities that demolished some public housing projects and kept others, Atlanta "became the first city in the nation to eliminate all of its public housing" by 2011 (Oakley et al. 2011, Hankins et al. 2014). According to Oakley et al. (2011), "voucher relocatees end[ed] up in neighborhoods with modestly less poverty than the public housing neighborhoods they left". All of these intersecting, racialized urban dynamics make Atlanta a critical locus of study for the research questions posed around race. Finally, out of major metropolitan areas in the U.S., Atlanta is exceeded only by Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston in the percentage of adults who say religion is "very important" (Pew Research Center 2014). While there is little data on the geographic distribution or concentration of faith-based nonprofit organizations in the U.S., this high level of religiosity lends particular relevance to the research questions around faith and the urban landscape.

Zooming out further from Atlanta, the southern U.S. (broadly defined by Pew to include Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North and South Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) is still a deeply religious region, with 11% more adults who say religion is "very important" than the other U.S. regions (Pew Research Center 2014). A more bounded definition of the south*eastern* region—to include Tennessee, North and South Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas—has even higher rates of religiosity. Low public welfare spending across southeastern

states also leaves room for FBOs to play significant roles, although there is little data on the geographic distribution or concentration of faith-based nonprofit organizations in the U.S.

Finally, the broader history of Black land dispossession in the former slave states since the end of the Civil War also make the southeast region an essential point of study for this project's research questions. DuBois (2001) and Woods (1998), as two of multiple examples, discuss Black households' and communities' struggles to gain and keep land during the Reconstruction period and the violent backlash that initiated the Jim Crow era. As noted earlier, CCDA founder John Perkins enthusiastically participated in the Southern cooperative movement in the mid-20th century. In Atlanta, FCS makes home and land ownership accessible to some low-income, predominantly Black residents who might not qualify for conventional, prime mortgages. At the same time, as this research shows, the 'gentrification with justice' framework to an extent rationalizes the displacement of other Black households from South Atlanta. In the larger historical-geographical context of the U.S. southeast, these dynamics are particularly prescient to examine.

v. Methodology

The research was divided into two main loci of study. First, I conducted research in South Atlanta with residents and FCS staff. Secondly, I participated in the Christian Community Development Association conference circuit, attending conferences in Raleigh, North Carolina and Memphis, Tennessee, and

keeping in touch with key conference networks through phone and virtual communication.

Part 1: FCS and South Atlanta

My objectives for this part of the research were to 1) Examine how FCS staff and intentional neighbors in South Atlanta, a substantial number of whom are white and class-privileged, imagine mostly Black, low-income neighborhood residents as participants in the making of 'God's shalom' (Focused Community Strategies 2018) in urban places, including how they conceptualize South Atlanta residents as racialized and faithful subjects in this process; and 2) Examine the extent to which Black and low-income residents of South Atlanta, including both those who are involved with FCS and those who are not connected to the organization, imagine the presence of race-privileged FCS staff and intentional neighbors fitting into, overlapping with, or conflicting with their own grounded theologies (Tse 2013) of their neighborhood's possibilities and challenges.

For this FCS/South Atlanta case study, I addressed the research questions by meeting and engaging with a wide range of South Atlanta residents, as well as a number of staff from the faith-based community development program. First, I met and interviewed with some residents who became key contacts through South Atlanta Civic League meetings, held on the first Monday of each month. I took notes at these public meetings as a participant observer; after each meeting, I networked with residents. Using snowball sampling methods, those who became key contacts introduced me to further residents willing to participate in semi-structured interviews. I also posted and passed out

fliers to solicit participants at multiple stages of the research process. This latter practice helped me to meet people who were not connected with or even aware of prominent neighborhood institutions like FCS and the Civic League; their perspectives were essential for conducting research not solely shaped by the agendas of two community-based organizations. Participants were offered a $20 incentive for a research interview.

I met, interviewed, and in some cases maintained a research relationship with over 40 residents and other key stakeholders across the spectrum of age, race, and homeownership and socioeconomic status (see Table 2). Eight residents whom I interviewed were homeowners or renters through FCS's Charis Community Housing program. Five residents interviewed were at the time serving in South Atlanta Civic League leadership positions (such as President, Secretary, etc.). Most of the 14 white residents I interviewed were 'intentional neighbors' who wanted to move to a low-income urban neighborhood to live out communitarian, often faith-based values. One of the 25 Black residents whom I interviewed identified as a strategic neighbor. Although many Black residents interviewed considered themselves engaged neighbors, regularly attending Civic League meetings, only one person used the strategic/intentional neighbor paradigm as a personal identifier. Some intentional neighbors purchased market-rate homes through Charis (now FCS), whereas some purchased other housing in the neighborhood. An almost completely unifying characteristic of interviewees was religion---nearly all participants identified as Christians and willingly discussed their faith at length. The questions I asked in interviews

included participants' evaluations of the neighborhood, what their ideal neighborhood would look like, what they thought of various development projects (or if they had noticed them – some residents had not due to living in parts of the neighborhood where development is far less visible, if at all), to what extent they understood race as important when evaluating the neighborhood's wellbeing, and how their religious standpoints shape their perspective on the neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses.

Secondly, I participated in activities surrounding FCS's work in the neighborhood. I was a volunteer intern for five months at FCS programs, first working on South Atlanta census and other quantitative neighborhood-level data in the organization's main office, which was at that time not located in South Atlanta but in Grant Park, the site of previous FCS community development work. In the summer of 2015 I migrated from this office to the site shared by Community Grounds and Carver Market, the nonprofit coffee shop and small grocery store run by FCS. There, I participated in day-to-day operations during the grocery store's first few months of existence. Both of these activities allowed me to examine the research questions through an institutional ethnographical approach. Prior to this formal period of research, I spent multiple days starting in 2013 'hanging out' in the coffee shop, tracing its trajectory from a relatively low-traffic café to a bustling community space. I was surprised to hear that the coffee shop is closing due to this seeming upward trajectory; the shop still seemed busy when I revisited South Atlanta as recently as late 2017. Outside these activities I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eight FCS Urban Ministries

staff members and three board members. Some of them were staff members in significant leadership positions with a long tenure at the organization, while others were relatively new hires. I also conducted thorough, ongoing analyses of FCS Urban Ministries' websites, social media accounts, fliers, and published pamphlets and books, which was essential to gauge FCS' written representation of itself to the public. A further section of this research, which I touch upon only briefly here, involved in-depth examination of the Christian Community Development Association, a national umbrella organization of Christian community development groups, of which FCS is a prominent member.

Part 2: Knowledge-making in CCDA

My objectives for this part of the research were to examine how CCD practitioners at national CCDA conferences, and on websites, blogs, and other online communications, construct organizational discourses that explicitly or implicitly connect race to the Christian community development framework and the grounded practices of Christian community development.

This first part fostered understanding of the project's intersecting conceptual themes across national networks of CCD practitioners. This segment does the crucial work of connecting the research in Atlanta to geographies of Christian community development taking place at other sites in the United States. Racial reconciliation is a central CCDA principle that the organization's founder, former Civil Rights activist John Perkins, has long emphasized. CCDA conferences frequently include multiple sessions on racial reconciliation that explore the

theological and day-to-day implications of the theme. Unpacking the discourse of racial reconciliation and its grounded meanings for CCD practitioners allowed for conceptual insight into the ways that faith-based organizational participants evaluate how race matters in their faith-motivated work, and into the ways that these understandings shape their organizational practices in urban places.

This section of the research project relied on direct observation and document review of national conferences, as well as year-round follow-up activities. I attended CCDA's annual National Conferences in 2014 (Raleigh, NC) and 2015 (Memphis, TN). At each conference, I engaged in extended direct observation of speakers and panels. In group discussions, I participated to a modest degree after identifying myself as a researcher. I shared personal opinions or stories where appropriate, and at times mentioned my particular research interests relating to CCDA. This method of data collection substantially helped me to understand how CCD practitioners talk about race in interpersonally engaged settings, ranging from semi-formal lectures to conversational discussion sessions. I also collected documents at these events, including programs, handouts provided to session participants, fliers, newsletters, and publications. This document review complemented my direct observation of interpersonal settings at CCDA conferences.

Materials from CCDA’s conference circuit were a particularly rich source of information for this paper’s research questions. Conferences feature a series of keynote talks in morning and evening ‘bookend’ sessions, and are attended by the largest number of participants at once; in 2015, keynote speeches were held

in the conference ballroom, which held up to 2,900 people. In between keynotes, participants attend smaller breakout workshops in four time slots; in 2014, participants could choose from up to 20 workshops per time slot. The popularity of keynote sessions allowed me to contextualize the speakers featured in them. It seems clear that conference organizers invite people to be keynote speakers because they want to elevate their voices and outline an agenda for CCDA practitioners, although it is never explicitly claimed that keynote speakers fully represent the views of CCDA at large. In these sessions, I also paid attention to audience response. For example, I note in Chapter 4 that a speaker in Memphis who opened his talk by welcoming the audience to the Choctaw lands received a standing ovation, which did not happen at every session. Workshops are attended by far fewer people than keynote speeches, and I was not personally able to attend the vast majority of workshops. I focused on attending workshops related to housing and housing-adjacent themes. For comparison and to better understand the larger context of conference spaces, I also attended at least two workshops per year on topics seemingly unrelated to these themes. Finally, the abundance of promotional and advertising materials for the conference provided a wealth of information about the topical themes and discourses central to CCDA.

Between CCDA national conferences, I closely followed CCDA website, blog, and email updates. I found this form of document review to be essential in helping me understand how knowledge-making and dissemination within CCDA occurs year-round, when member organizations are not sharing space at the

national conference. I also reviewed and analyzed books that are popular among CCDA leaders and members, such as John Perkins' foundational *Let Justice Roll Down* (1976), Noel Castellanos' *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood When God Is at the Center* (2015), and Bob Lupton's *Toxic Charity* (2011). After the main research period ended (2014-2015) and I began analyzing the research material, I reviewed programs and promotional materials from conferences prior to 2014 and after 2015. Finally, and significantly, I kept in touch with the CCDA Housing Advocacy Network through telecommunications and email contact until 2016 and documented their activities. This network hosted a monthly conference call; I presented on urban geography issues at one of these calls. My status as a doctoral researcher was always made clear.

Table 2. Research Materials			
Interviews	Formal, in-depth interview participants	39	
	Informal, off-record interview participants	5	**Total: 44 participants**
Participant Observation	FCS internship, Feb-July 2015	160 hours	
	Civic League meetings, 2015	15 hours	
	CCDA National Conferences, 2014-15	80 hours	
	CCDA Housing phone calls, 2015	10 hours	**Total: 260 hours**
Document Review	Books by FCS founder Bob Lupton, including *Toxic Charity* (213	144 pages	

	pages) and *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*		**Total: 1000+ pages**
	FCS promotional emails, blogs, and social media materials	100+ pages	
	South Atlanta Civic League promotional emails and social media materials	100+ pages	
	CCDA National Conference programs	est. 100 pages	
	CCDA National Conference promotional emails and social media materials	100+ pages	
	CCDA blog posts	50+ pages	
	Books by CCDA leaders, including *Let Justice Roll Down* (John Perkins) and *Where the Cross Meets the Street* (Noel Castellanos)	219, 185 pages	

vi. Privacy and Pseudonyms

The names of South Atlanta research participants have been changed, except for Katie Delp, Jim Wehner, and Jonathan Malmin (all FCS employees) and Josh Noblitt (President of the South Atlanta Civic League). I have kept these participants' names in tact because of their public association with FCS or the South Atlanta Civic League, *and* because I received their permission to do

so. Kristi Wood, discussed in chapter 5, did not participate in this research, but I used her name because it appeared in public record (*Atlanta Progressive News*) associated with the events around the Gammon Street gate. South Atlanta Civic League meetings are open to the public, and so I considered her comments in those meetings to also be public record.

Key identifying details, such as racial identity of family members or number of children, were changed for participants who did not grant permission to reveal their identities. Multiple participants' narratives were strongly intertwined with the part of South Atlanta in which they live, which made it difficult to fully de-identify them. Aside from the Gammon Street gate case in chapter 5, which is a matter of public record, I did not identify street names. The Gammon Street gate case was the most difficult instance in which to ensure privacy, since several people became key stakeholders in the debate precisely because they live(d) on or near Gammon Street, a small residential street. I tried to change identifying details other than place of residence for these participants.

I use the real, full names of all CCDA conference presenters because these conferences are open to the public and presenters' names are printed prominently on conference materials. Conference presenters and book authors are referred to by their last name after initial introduction. Research participants who gave permission for their full name to be used are referred to by first name after initial introduction. The discrepancy is intended to mark the difference between materials available to the public (conference presentations and books) and private research interviews.

vii. Researcher Subjectivity

Social researchers are, hopefully, often driven to consider our own subjectivities in the work that we do. These reflections incorporate race, class, gender, and additional markers of social difference that position us in relation to others. My subjectivity as a researcher fit differently into different components of the research context. At CCDA conferences, I was only one member of an age-, race-, and gender-diverse crowd; close to 3000 people attended the 2014 national conference. As a secular researcher rather than a self-identified CCD practitioner, I stood out somewhat whenever it was necessary for me to mention this identifier—for example, in small group settings in which participants were asked to introduce ourselves and our backgrounds. CCDA has been researched and written about by non-practitioners, and my presence as a researcher was generally received with warmth. When I did not identify myself, such as at keynote speeches attended by nearly all conference participants, I did not stand out at all as a millennial-aged white woman of normative appearance.

I first met FCS staff in 2013, when I visited their nonprofit coffee shop, Community Grounds, and attended an open house event at their office. Before I attended these events, key gatekeepers at FCS were already familiar with Katherine Hankins at Georgia State University (a committee member for this dissertation), and Andy Walter at the University of West Georgia, who did research with FCS for over five years (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins, Walter and Derickson 2015, Walter, Hankins and Nowak forthcoming). My connection to

these faculty members likely led FCS participants to regard me with a greater degree of familiarity than if I were an unconnected newcomer.

For participants who were not FCS staff, including intentional neighbors who are not actively involved in FCS's operations, I started as an outsider. I did not live in the neighborhood or even in Atlanta; I was a white woman entering a majority Black neighborhood to conduct research. It is hard to know how participants—from intentional neighbors to people completely unconnected from FCS whom I met through poster recruitment methods—perceived me, and whether their own racial subjectivity affected their trust level towards me. Based on interview discussions, however, it became clear that some long-time, Black residents were at once cautious and willing to engage with white outsiders, a sentiment that could feasibly extend to me. Others expressed that they wanted to talk with me primarily to have their experiences heard and documented. Some intentional neighbors expressed a degree of self-consciousness about others, including FCS and their fellow neighbors, interpreting their interview responses poorly. The snowball method was very helpful in the context of this mixed degree of trust because it relied on participants referring contacts only after building a certain level of rapport with me. I developed stronger ties—contact that went beyond an initial meeting and interview—with 5-6 participants, including 1-2 FCS staff members, in the first few weeks of research. These contacts arguably regarded me as somewhat less of an outsider over time, and then did the essential work of helping me to meet further participants based on their own social, civic, or professional networks.

viii. Analysis

Critical discourse analysis was the primary method of analysis for this interview data (Fairclough 2003). This method suggests that language should not be taken at face value, but should be analyzed within its social context. Critical discourse analysis enables a close reading of power relations that was appropriate for this project. Because of the uneven social positions among FCS staff and South Atlanta residents, critical discourse analysis's attention to power dynamics was appropriate. In order to analyze research material, I transcribe and coded most collected material using the Atlas.ti software. This process allowed me to sort and categorize findings and identify important themes. I constructed codes around broad themes (Glesne 1999). These themes and sub-themes included, but were not limited to the following:

- South Atlanta site:
    - Interpretations of South Atlanta's history, present, and future
    - Reflections on participants' own roles in neighborhood civic life, or at FCS
    - Explanations of how and why participants came to live in South Atlanta, including use of faith concepts
    - Explanations of racial dynamics in South Atlanta
- CCDA conference circuit:
    - Interpretations of CCDA's organizational history, present, and future
    - Positioning of race in CCDA framework

    - Use of faith concepts to explain CCDA framework and practices
- Both sites:
    - Interpretations of the past and contemporary significance of race (including color-conscious and colorblind thought)
    - Interpretations of racial subjectivities (e.g. urban people of color as deserving or undeserving poor subjects, a theme that emerges in Chapter 5; reflections on neighbors' roles and responsibilities based on racial subjectivity in a majority Black neighborhood)
    - Use of faith concepts in racialized conversations about community development practice (e.g. grounding systemic racial injustice in scripture; using scripture to construct deserving and undeserving subjects ["He who does not work shall not eat," 2 Thessalonians 3:10 TLB]; emphasizing shared religious belief as a foundation for racial reconciliation in a neighborhood)

The method of data interpretation stems from discussions in the urban geographical literature. Fuller, Jonas and Lee (2010) suggest that scholars should examine the "tensions and contradictions" of organizations with alternative political and economic visions such as CCDA (Fuller, Jonas and Lee 2010, 5). Fuller et al.'s approach is echoed by scholars of nonprofit organizations (Wolch 1999, Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002, Barnes and Prior 2009) as well as by contributions to the postsecularism literature (Williams et al., 2012; Cloke and Beaumont, 2013; May and Cloke, 2013). The literature on FBOs in the postsecular city strongly argues for a "messy middle ground" and avoids

overdetermining FBOs as regressive stand-ins for deeper systemic transformations (Williams et al., 2012, p. 1487). This scholarship connects to recent urban and political geographical contributions that compellingly argue that meaningful political acts need not fall into a binary of *either* co-option by the state *or* resistance (Leitner et al., 2007; Swyngedouw, 2011; Thompson, 2011; Zupan, 2011), and that conceptualizes neoliberal formations as partial, fragmented, and open to subversive action (Ferguson, 2010, p. 168; North, 2011; Hilgers, 2013; Springer, 2015). In critical development studies, too, Roy's concept of double agents conceptualizes "a 'folding together', of complicities that are also subversions, of dissent in the creases and folds of the composition that is poverty capital" (Roy 2010, 221). Hart (2004, 2010) suggests that the complexities of the present "hold open the possibility for something different to emerge," again precluding overdeterminism (Hart 2010, 136).

An approach that follows these insights and 'reads for difference' (Gibson-Graham 2006) is important for thorough analysis, but the challenge of such an approach is to be rigorously attentive to geographies of dispossession--in other words, to the uneven power relationships that shape human geographies. These research questions addressed intersections of social positions--race and faith—and that focus resulted in complex, contradictory material. It proved critical to interpret this material through an analysis method that fully took into account this empirical messiness. I found that the people I met, worked with, interviewed, and attended conferences with were not only diverse along race and class lines, but ideologically so. Some participants all across the spectrum of race and class

argued for conservative principles like personal responsibility with full force, while others argued for radical change, questioning the very foundations of American Christianity and society more broadly (see Chapter 6). As I found in my previous research (Bolton 2015), participants also contradicted themselves at times. Under the umbrella of CCDA, a dizzying range of worldviews intersected, conflicted, and co-existed tenuously with one another, as the following chapters show. Approaching the research questions and participants with a sense of openness, but a critical eye towards power relationships along lines of race, particularly, allowed space for an analysis tuned into the political possibilities that Hart (2010) suggests.

I also approached the research in solidarity with people most impacted by dispossession, displacement, racism, and politics of abandonment. Approaching research participants who face oppression with solidarity does not mean assuming that they carry an essential truth or wisdom about the questions this project asks. More simply, the fact that their lives are most impacted by interventions by organizations like CCDA and FCS means that their situated knowledge is central to this research.

CHAPTER 4: GOOD NEIGHBORS IN GOD'S SHALOM

i. Introduction

This chapter examines the research questions through a textured analysis of interviews and participant observation with South Atlanta residents and FCS staff. Here, I highlight intentional neighbors, or people who self-identified as having moved to South Atlanta for faith reasons, FCS staff who are also intentional neighbors, and residents with longstanding roots in the neighborhood. My aim is to show how these intentional neighbors (most of whom are white) and long-time residents (all of whom are Black in these examples) outlined transcendent geographies of race, or faith-based understandings of South Atlanta's racialized landscape, that converged in key ways. Both groups identify profane geographies in South Atlanta in need of transcendent action. Both also agree that the in-migration of wealthier, whiter residents, shaped by state-enabled market forces and FCS's market-based gentrification with justice strategy, is good for the neighborhood; this movement is sanctified by intentional neighbors and long-time residents alike.

I show that intentional neighbors and long-time residents draw on faith and race concepts to articulate a consensus that FCS and intentional neighbors are overall a welcome presence in South Atlanta. Using frameworks of Christian faith, intentional neighbors and long-time residents together depict a

neighborhood on the cusp of emerging from decades of institutionalized neglect, as old and new residents live together across lines of race and class. New residents were primarily perceived as white, and indeed, a senior staff member at FCS noted that the demographics of people who move into Charis's market-rate homes are whiter than South Atlanta overall, as white people make up considerably more than 10% of Charis homeowners in a neighborhood that was approximately 90% Black in the most recent census data (interview, July 2015, and 2010-13 census data). For their part, intentional neighbors explained their own presence in the neighborhood as a way to better understand and empathize with people living in poverty, and to live in interracial communities. They emphasized faith concepts such as 'being with' people in poverty as Jesus was, and the importance of loving one's neighbor. These findings are closely aligned with Hankins, Walter, and others' earlier work on CCDA, FCS, and intentional neighboring as a practice (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins and Martin 2014, Hankins et al. 2015, Hankins 2017, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011). For long-time residents, intentional neighbors are welcome because they can use their privilege to bring much-needed material and social-networking resources to South Atlanta. Long-time residents emphasized Christian faith as an essential way to withstand violence and deprivation, and spoke to Christian values of loving one's enemies and neighbors.

Before I started this research, I expected to hear more suspicion and skepticism from long-time residents about FCS and intentional neighbors as outsiders and gentrifiers. However, as this chapter shows, nearly all South

Atlanta residents whom I interviewed perceived intentional neighbors—and newer, middle-class, whiter neighbors more generally—with cautious optimism, as a welcome addition to their neighborhood. One group of residents, a cohort of elderly Black women who have lived most of their lives in South Atlanta, was particularly accepting of them. I place the most emphasis on this group of residents in this chapter because I found both the parallels and gaps between these long-time residents' and intentional neighbors' responses to be particularly illustrative of themes vital to understanding the research agenda posed earlier. Reading interviews in depth, I outline the contours of an agreement between these two groups about the presence of intentional neighbors and the ways they change the dynamics of the neighborhood. While intentional neighbors are welcomed by long-time residents, race and power inequalities between the two groups are under-emphasized. This is related to the limits of the framework used by FCS and intentional neighbors, which proposes that an influx of well-meaning, middle-income residents can address racial injustice on the urban landscape.

ii. Intentional Neighbors in South Atlanta

The last chapter detailed who intentional neighbors are in a broad sense. FCS promotes intentional neighboring, which parallels CCDA's principle of relocation, or "commit[ting] to living in an under-resourced neighborhood for a minimum of 10 years." Most of the intentional neighbors I interviewed moved to South Atlanta through personal relationships with FCS staff, or through first participating in adjacent programs like Mission Year, a CCDA member

organization that places young adults in neighborhoods similar to South Atlanta. In this section, I discuss the group of people in South Atlanta who have chosen to be intentional neighbors, including their faith-based motivations for living in South Atlanta. Four intentional neighbors discussed here are white, while one is Black; two of the white neighbors are in interracial marriages. Many have lived in South Atlanta for close to or longer than a decade. I focus on key themes that the intentional neighbors discussed in depth. First, they talked about Christian faith as a motivating factor for their move to South Atlanta, as they hoped to follow Christ's example of living among people in need, or simply follow the call to love one's neighbor. Secondly, they talked in depth about their desire to live in interracial neighborhoods and bridge social difference. In doing so, intentional neighbors draw South Atlanta as a space in the process of becoming transcendent, in part through their practices and presence in it.

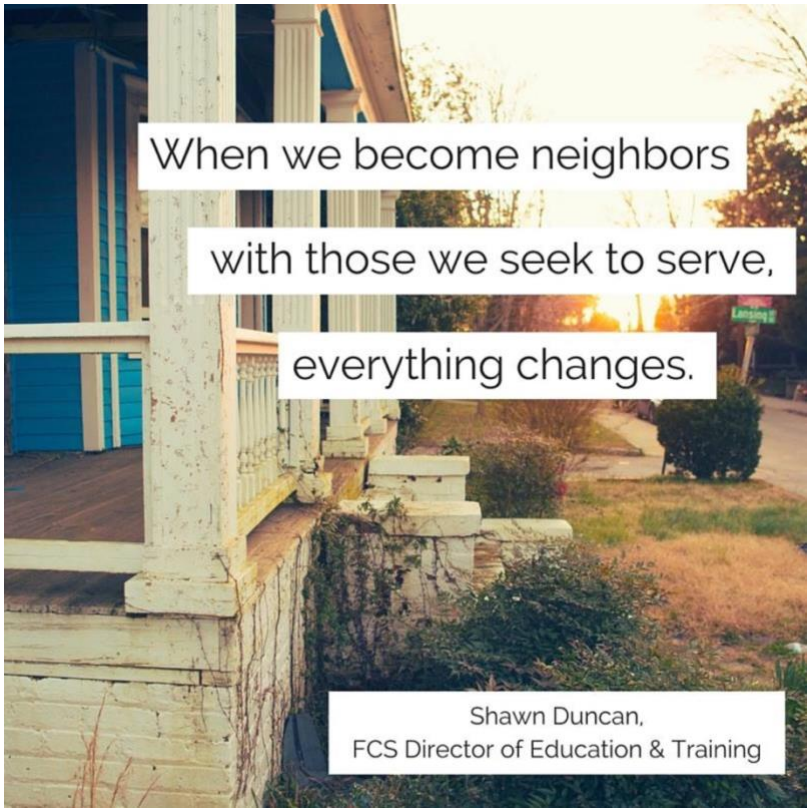


Figure 1: Promotional material for FCS Open House, July 2018, with South Atlanta background photo.

Faith and intentional neighboring

In interviews, FCS staff and intentional neighbors talked openly and in depth about their faith as a catalyst for living in South Atlanta. Some framed their lives in South Atlanta as understanding Christian teaching as a call to be in close proximity with poor, vulnerable people. Others put more emphasis on living close to people who are 'different' from themselves and following the teaching to love one's neighbors. Katie, now the Executive Director of FCS, moved to South Atlanta in 2001 as a Mission Year volunteer, and has raised her family in the

neighborhood.[4] She and her husband, Jeff, were the second set of intentional neighbors to move to South Atlanta. The first intentional neighbors were Leroy and Donna Barber, a Black couple who no longer live there but are well-known CCDA practitioners (the Delps are white). Katie explained that she moved permanently to South Atlanta based on a sense that being Christian meant living among "vulnerable" people and being a good neighbor:

> "Christianity was more and more becoming to me was not a religion for the powerful, but for the most vulnerable in our society, and so if I wanted to grow my faith, I needed to be in those places where vulnerable people [are]… I feel like I need to be in places of great need in order to grow my faith. And Mission Year gave that to me in just kind of this way to… The concept of really being a good neighbor really resonated with me." (interview, July 2015)

Another intentional neighbor, Rebecca, does not work for FCS but knew about their work in South Atlanta, and had a friend who became a South Atlanta intentional neighbor before she did. Rebecca was active in faith-based urban social welfare work before moving to Atlanta. Her reasons for moving to South Atlanta parallel Katie's; she also introduced the idea that Jesus himself would seek to be close to people living in poverty. She said,

> "I believe if Jesus were walking the earth today, he would be very concerned about, and spending lots of time with people who are stuck in

[4] Mission Year is a yearlong program in which Christian young adults (age 18-30) and married couples "live, work, go to church, do laundry, grocery shop, and build intentional relationships in marginalized neighborhoods." (Mission Year 2017)

> poverty. . . I think the vulnerable, the least of these, I'm always wondering who these people are and how to be connected to them because faith says that is where God is and it's important for me to one, I want to be where God is." (interview, July 2015)

To be close to God, in Rebecca's analysis, means to be in places where vulnerable people are. Both Katie and Rebecca articulate the sense that putting themselves in close proximity to vulnerable people is a meaningful way to practice their faith—so meaningful, in fact, that they have structured their lives around it. These responses echo previous research on intentional neighboring (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins and Martin 2014, Hankins et al. 2015, Hankins 2017, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011). For example, what Walter et al., also based on research from Atlanta, call "[t]he spatial solidarity of intentional neighbouring . . . is based on the faith-motivated call for Christians to live in close propinquity to the poor and racially segregated in order to know them and their needs" (location 2,918).

A third intentional neighbor, Erin, repeated these ideas about the importance of close proximity to people in poverty and, more broadly, 'people that are different from me.' She also related this concept to the scripture on loving one's neighbor. Erin works for FCS and participates in CCDA programs at the national level, and has lived in South Atlanta with her husband for nearly a decade. Erin talked about her faith-based motivations openly, and as with Katie, I got a strong sense that she was practiced in explaining her life to curious outsiders.

> “That is kind of like my life story; it has been a theme, that idea of faith and justice. Living among the poor, serving, and being a part of the downward mobility and upside down economy and all those kinds of buzzwords.
>
> . . .
>
> Our faith is very much tied to kind of how we live our day-to-day lives and to some extent why we moved into the neighborhood. It felt like living among people that are different than me gives me a bigger view of God. Opportunities to love and serve your neighbor are opportunities to love and serve God. Being able to connect in those ways. I feel like a lot of the most informative spiritual moments in my own life have come during times of living among the poor.” (interview, August 2015)

In the first section above, Erin talks about the “buzzwords” of “downward mobility and [the] upside down economy.” These terms are commonly, though not exclusively used in New Monasticism milieus like the Simple Way community in Philadelphia; my previous research identified similar language used by youth at the ‘Protestant’ Catholic Worker house, the now closed Open Door Community in Atlanta (Bolton 2015). These terms refer to class- and race-privileged young people shunning the trappings of ambition and conventional success in order to live in faith-based service to others, usually those less privileged. Erin connects these concepts to intentional neighboring. However, she does not focus solely on living close to people in poverty. She emphasizes “living among people that are different,” and points to “lov[ing] and serv[ing]” one’s neighbor as of religious significance.

A fourth intentional neighbor and former President of the South Atlanta Civic League, Josh, also explained his move to South Atlanta through the faith lens of loving one's neighbor. He first detailed his experience with Mission Year, which led him to meet FCS staff and become an intentional neighbor permanently when he moved to South Atlanta in 2005:

> " [Being an intentional neighbor] absolutely is a product of my faith and the faith/spiritual experiences that I've had. . . There's scriptural references to loving your neighbor as you love yourself. What is a neighbor? Who is a neighbor? What does that mean? There is some mindfulness attached to that and some intentionality. We have responsibility, with my particular Christian interpretation, that there is a responsibility of intentionality that comes along with loving your neighbor. That means reaching out, looking out for your well-being. Being in a relationship. Cultivating experiences together. I try to do that with the people that, literally, are my neighbors." (interview, August 2015)

Unlike the previous passages, Josh's language omits any references to his neighbors as vulnerable, and in fact does not talk about poverty at all. He invokes Christian scripture on loving one's neighbor alongside mindfulness and intentionality, terms that would not be out of place at a yoga class. Yet he is also speaking to what it means to be an intentional neighbor, and suggests that a sense of Christianized duty or responsibility undergirds his actions.

Only one neighbor, Chris, who defined himself using the term “strategic neighbor,” did not identify strongly with Christianity as his reason for moving to South Atlanta. A former FCS employee who was involved with an FCS arts program as a child living in Decatur, he used the term ‘strategic’, which was language that FCS used before changing the term to ‘intentional neighbor’. Chris, a Black man in his thirties, was Vice President of the South Atlanta Civic League at the time we met, and was actively involved in a number of neighborhood activities; he was perhaps best known for starting a program to clean up the large number of tires that people dump in South Atlanta. Chris identified spirituality as important to his life and decision-making processes:

> “I do go to church, but not on a regular basis. I'm not, wake up every Sunday morning and go to church, but I do attend church. I’m spiritual. So I get a chance to, I believe in praying, I believe in connection to God. I do believe in communal support, like minded folks. So that’s what church is, it’s gathering of like-minded folks that believe in a specific religion.” (interview, July 2015)

However, he did not point to Christian faith as undergirding his decision to become a strategic neighbor. As the only Black person whom I interviewed who identified as a strategic or intentional neighbor in South Atlanta *and* the only such person who did not identify closely with Christian faith as his reason for moving there, Chris’s responses occupied a unique space among this group of research participants.

Intentional neighboring and bridging difference

Intentional neighbors' narratives also shared a common theme of bridging social difference across racial lines by moving to South Atlanta, and they attached transcendent meanings to this project of crossing racialized boundaries. While some neighbors talked in general terms about a desire to live in a diverse place directly, others more specifically identified a need to make amends for racism, including residential segregation in cities. The neighbors' children mostly attend South Atlanta's 'failing' public schools, although Katie is a vocal proponent of school choice. These narratives again echo previous research on intentional neighboring (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins and Martin 2014, Hankins et al. 2015, Hankins 2017, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011). Hankins (2017) finds that

> "Their [intentional neighbors'] quiet politics are about interactions across difference, "building relationships" they like to say, or "transaction" as Dewey might put it, and seeking to undo the gap between their privilege and that of their neighbors." (4)

The neighbors here similarly talked about spatial closeness not just as a way to be close to people in need, as described in the previous section, but also as a way to form bonds across social distance. Read together, intentional neighbors' narratives sanctify their efforts to live in an interracial neighborhood and developing lasting relationships with neighbors across racial lines.

Some intentional neighbors used broad terms like 'diverse' to talk about the kind of neighborhood in which they want to live, with little descriptive detail

beyond a general sense of valuing difference. For example, Erin, the FCS employee, said,

> "It was very important to us to live in a diverse community. I think we just feel like when you are only living around one group of people that you are missing out. You are missing out on other views of the world. Other views of God." (interview, August 2015)

Here Erin speaks in quite general terms about the worth of being around people different from oneself, including different faith standpoints. Later, Erin noted that she would like to see South Atlanta have more types of diversity "outside of just black and white," partly because she is in a multicultural marriage that falls outside that binary. Katie, FCS's Executive Director, also noted that she would like to see more diversity along these lines, and implied that a white minority might indicate a lack of diversity. She said,

> "I think we want to continue to grow in diversity and not just economic diversity, racially diverse. There are more white people living there now than there were, but it's still a minority. It's still not…I would like it to go beyond black and white. I've always said I hope that we can be just this really solid, like, blue collar community where people can still afford to live in the city and know their neighbors and be involved and have a good sense of neighborhood." (interview, July 2015)

These sentiments illustrate a desire for diversity, but crucially, South Atlanta has not yet reached the ideal form of diversity for Erin and Katie, which would be more multiracial than along Black-white lines. For Katie, at least, wanting

diversity is not quite the same as being comfortable with her perceived status as a white minority. Does increasing diversity 'outside of just black and white' mean that the women would like Black residents to be fewer in number? The answer to this question is unclear. To add context, multiple FCS employees argued that since South Atlanta has such a high vacancy rate (close to 25% in 2015), the in-migration of additional neighbors of any race does not have to spell displacement of current Black residents.[5]

Chris's comments about diversity provided an even further layer of complexity, as he also seemed to imply that South Atlanta would benefit from diversity that entails less Blackness. Chris said,

> "To be honest with you, I see [redacted] as a neighbor, not as a white person, right. I see [redacted] as a neighbor, not a white person, right. Because what it does is it provides this really intricate layer of diversity, as well. So, having a neighborhood where it's not predominately black means that you have folks that have a different point of view on life throughout the neighborhood. So if I look to my left and there's an Indian person that's two doors down from me and a white person that's next door and an Asian person across the way, I think that that's really true harmony. I think that's what Martin Luther King was talking about in his last speech. He talked about little white boys and little black girls going to the same school and playing on the same playground.
>
> . . .

[5] I address these arguments further in Chapter 5.

Yeah, I think that that's a better neighborhood." (interview, July 2015)

Given the negative impacts of residential segregation on Black communities, it certainly makes sense that Black people like Chris might like to live among a greater racial diversity of people. In the context of Atlanta's tight housing market, though, the implications of this sentiment are still complicated, even coming from a resident like Chris. Chris indicated that he is well-off enough to own multiple homes in South Atlanta, which he rents at affordable prices to lower-income neighbors.

While the implications for current Black residents of Erin's, Katie's, and Chris's particular definitions of diversity are somewhat unclear, Josh talked explicitly about South Atlanta's Blackness as one of its admirable, even 'sacred' qualities, including its Black religious history:

> "I didn't realize the . . . extent of the amazing people that have stepped foot in this neighborhood. And what this neighborhood does for Black people back during segregation, even slavery.
>
> . . .
>
> Some amazing performers and artists, politicians over 100 years, have stayed in South Atlanta, performed in South Atlanta, visited this particular area. That's really amazing. That makes me feel like I'm standing on holy ground, sometimes." (interview, August 2015)

As well as framing South Atlanta's Black history as 'sacred' and 'holy', Josh also talked about his desire to honor the neighborhood's Blackness in the present day too. He related this sentiment to his discomfort with being the first white

President of the South Atlanta Civic League:

> "I definitely see this as a historically Black neighborhood. I am committed to following Black leadership and deferring to Black leadership in this neighborhood and yet, here I am the President of the Civic League. I've been trying to bring in other folks to the executive board to get other… particularly, younger folks involved, so that they can be groomed to take over. The guys that grew up in this neighborhood, I want them to feel like, yeah, I can be president of this."
>
> (interview, August 2015)

Even though Katie's comments about white people as a minority in South Atlanta hinted at discomfort with a Black majority, she later made it clear that the work of building in-depth relationships with her Black neighbors across racial lines is very important to her, and that she takes seriously forms of oppression like Black men's criminalization. She followed,

> "[When] I think of reconciled culture . . . there's no longer the systematic bias that we all live in that there is now of white privilege and the over-criminalization of African-American men.
>
> . . .
>
> We believe one another's stories is the biggest part of it. I believe that as a black man, you get pulled over in your car way, way more than I do. I believe [it]."
>
> (interview, July 2015)

Katie speaks to the CCDA concept of racial reconciliation and concludes that the

continuing oppression of Black men is one reason that ‘we’ cannot claim to be reconciled. When Katie and I did our interview in the summer of 2015, high-profile police shootings of Black men had been receiving media attention since the 2014 killing of Michael Brown and subsequent uprising in Ferguson, Missouri. Katie also grounds her analysis in the context of intentional neighboring, in that relationship-building within systemic racism requires learning how to live in proximity to one another.

Finally, Rebecca spoke in the most intimate detail about her commitment to forming relationships across racial lines by living in South Atlanta. She talked about the complexities of her interracial relationships, her insecurities about hurting others more than helping, and her doubts about her role as a white mother figure in South Atlanta. She told three stories along these lines.

> “A good friend of mine, she’s probably my closest friend in the neighborhood, lives down the street from me, and she’s black. She was getting broken into a lot . . . one neighbor told her that the reason she was getting broken into is because she’s friends with all the white people in the neighborhood . . . There was insecurity in me, are you going to pull away from our friendship because you’re afraid that more crime will happen to you? And she reassured me no, that's not going to happen.
>
> . . .
>
> Kids in the neighborhood all the time speak about my hair, like, I wish I had hair like you Ms. Rebecca, or my [biracial] daughter’s hair is softer than their hair. So they talk about it a lot, sort of idolizing it as good and

> theirs is bad. So we try to have intentional conversations about that.
>
> . . .
>
> I've wondered, am I coming across, to my neighbors, as the white lady who's trying to save these poor black kids in my neighborhood? Because kids are over at my house all the time. So I've made a very intentional move with my neighbors to try and posture myself to learn from them." (interview, July 2015)

From worrying that she is directly causing harm to her friend to self-consciously positioning herself as learning from her neighbors, Rebecca goes far beyond the surface level of her experiences as an intentional neighbor in a predominantly Black neighborhood. In these passages, Rebecca talks about the pain and doubt that she feels as a result of engaging in interracial relationships. Her commitment to living in South Atlanta means taking the emotional risk that some neighbors may see her as an interloper or would-be savior figure, regardless of her best intentions.

Taken together, we can think of these narratives as articulating, first, forms of "spatial solidarity" and "the quiet politics of the everyday" at the site of the neighborhood that closely resonate with Hankins, Walter, and others' earlier work with a very similar group (Hankins and Walter 2012, Hankins and Martin 2014, Hankins et al. 2015, Hankins 2017, Walter et al. 2017, Case 2011). Incorporating spatial analysis of religious sensibility, we might then call these narratives transcendent geographies of race, or faith-based frameworks that comment on spatialities of race. Specifically, the intentional neighbors draw on

faith to imagine racialized futures that challenge dominant spatial paradigms. Using Christian faith as their foundation, the intentional neighbors present narratives about living harmoniously in interracial neighborhoods and, in some cases, developing lasting, in-depth relationships with neighbors across racial lines. Some of these narratives are problematic, such as Katie and Erin's resistance to living in an overwhelmingly Black neighborhood, and power dynamics were not fully unpacked in most of them.

As I argued in Chapter 2, coming from an explicitly religious standpoint lends the neighbors a certain freedom or permission to imagine a different world. In some of these examples, the intentional neighbors largely articulate geographies of race that break, even in small ways, with long-held patterns of confinement and containment of Black communities. They imagine having meaningful connections with Black neighbors and working to repair some of segregation's wounds in South Atlanta, which challenges the patterns of white flight that have shaped cities and continue to do so (Kruse 2005). Transcendent geographies do not have to be transformative, though; for example, Katie's concern with a lack of white diversity suggests that her framework bumps up against oppressive ways of seeing, in certain ways reinforcing spatial control of Black communities (Domosh 2017) at the same time as her other comments challenge this paradigm.

I call these transcendent *geographies* of race because intentional neighbors tie understandings of their faith to place, and they understand place in racialized terms. They also pose *where* as an essential question for people of

faith. In their framework, one's body should be in places like South Atlanta that have historically been loci of injustice: racial segregation, and then abandonment mixed with 'predatory inclusion' in later years (Bolton and Holloway 2015). Once situated in places like South Atlanta, their faith draws them to build strong relationships with one's neighbors, a practice that is key to developing a sense of place-based community.

An unspoken issue in the intentional neighbors' stories about their lives in South Atlanta is that even if intentional neighbors do everything they can to mobilize privilege for the benefit of their neighbors, they are still in unequal social positions relative to their neighbors who are Black and low-income. Rebecca spoke the most frankly about these uneven power dynamics; in sharing her anxieties, she laid bare some of the insidious effects of systemic racism that make her interpersonal relationships difficult to navigate. While intentional neighbors may wish to overcome these hierarchies, not fully acknowledging the power dynamics at play means not thoroughly analyzing the impacts of the intentional neighboring model, its roots in the mixed-income housing paradigm, and the displacement pressures that it may foster.

iii. Long-Time Residents on Intentional Neighbors

This section shows how long-time, predominantly Black residents also outline profane geographies of South Atlanta that are in need of transcendence. While they did not sanctify the in-migration of new residents as explicitly as intentional neighbors did, they welcomed intentional neighbors as signs of

progress in their long-disinvested neighborhood. I interviewed over twenty South Atlanta residents who are not intentional neighbors, in the sense that community-building along race and class lines was not their primary reason for moving to the neighborhood. This section focuses on a subsection of these residents, most of whom are elderly Black women who have lived in the neighborhood for most of their lives (although one has moved to a retirement home in another neighborhood); are active in neighborhood life or have been in the past; and know many people in the neighborhood, which made them gatekeepers of a sort. I frequently refer to these residents as *long-time residents*; while this is not perfect terminology, it gets at their extensive tenure and experiences in the neighborhood. All of these women have been South Atlanta community members for years, and I primarily focus on them here to show how their spatial understandings of race and transcendence find points of compatibility with those of the intentional neighbors.

These residents overwhelmingly identified as Christian, and most said that Christian faith plays a significant role in their worldview. Over the course of interviews, it became clear that they, too, drew on transcendent geographies of race to talk about their neighborhood. In exploring the impact of faith-based organizations in cities, it is important to consider that urban residents do not have to be associated with a faith-based organization to be motivated by deep religious conviction. These residents talked in depth about South Atlanta's difficulties over many decades, and framed the presence of newer, predominantly white residents as a sign of better years to come. For example,

some argued that the presence of civically engaged white neighbors mitigated the city's neglect of South Atlanta, leading to a better quality of life for residents. Some of them articulated faith narratives about loving one's neighbor that fit well with those of the intentional neighbors, while others expressed a strong sense of relying on God to help them survive in difficult environments.

Historical neglect and 'whites moving in'

Dawn, who was most actively involved with FCS out of all long-time residents whom I interviewed, and who became involved with CCDA at the national level, told a particularly textured history of the neighborhood's past.

> "Okay, first of all [in the neighborhood's prime] there were no vacant lots. All the houses were occupied. There were people in every house out here. You know, sometimes people would move but it would never be a situation where the house would stay empty and boarded up and all that kind of stuff. We were neighbors, true neighbors. Everybody watched out for everybody else's children. If there was a need among neighbors, we took care of each other, okay?
>
> [. . .] In the seventies, [during] what was called "White Flight" a lot of Black people moved to those communities where White people left, so they abandoned this community. [. . .] The majority of the people who go to those churches drive into this community every Sunday and on whatever days that they have things. They drive in here and then they leave. Some

of them own property here that is not taken care of. They inherited it or they outright own it so it's pretty much not taken care of.

[. . .] In the 1980s . . . a lot of the businesses had gone. They were just gone. Not so much that they had moved. Okay, well those small grocery stores closed because, okay, not only did we have people leave the community, but if you understand that more people got automobiles so they could go to Kroger. Well, there was A&P and Big Apple and they could leave to go to get whatever it is they needed. So that kind of put the other, put the smaller stores out of business.

[. . .] This side of town, the south side of town, we get all kinds of stuff that other people don't want . . . on this side of town there is always problems with dumping. Dumping is just bringing stuff on this side of town, and I thought that this was just peculiar to the south side of Atlanta, until I got involved with all these Empowerment Initiatives and went to all these conferences and talked to other people in all these cities and found out that for some reason, I don't know what it is with the south side of town but they had the same issues.

[. . .] And then in the late nineties and early 2000s, people started building all these houses. . . when the bottom fell out in 2008 and people got foreclosed and, like I said, they were giving to these owners who just could not afford to pay them. They started out with what was reasonable and went from there with balloon payments and just all kinds of foolishness. And then people were losing their jobs." (interview, July 2015)

This excerpt provides important context for the long-time neighbors' analysis of new residents. All of the long-time residents told some version of this story, but Dawn's iteration was the most comprehensive. Dawn tells a story about a South Atlanta that had a tight-knit community; other residents went into more detail about the infrastructure that supported such bonds, such as local stores that one could walk to and a General Motors factory that employed many residents. A lifelong resident named Joan explained that South Atlanta residents built a strong communal lifeworld under the restrictions of segregation in which, as a child, she could not recall feeling exposed to racial violence. Dawn tells a story of decline since that tight-knit period, from white flight up to the 2000s foreclosure crisis. Her narrative was echoed by other long-time residents, resulting in a picture of South Atlanta as disinvested and neglected by the city.

These stories about South Atlanta's decline intertwined with long-time residents' evaluation of the intentional neighbors and other newer white residents. I asked residents if they noticed any changes in terms of the neighborhood's residents in the past few years, and how they evaluated their presence, if they had not already raised the topic. Joan, who was born in the neighborhood and lives in the same house in which she grew up and raised her own children, gave a frank response. She said,

> "Now we have whites moving in, and I figure with that we'll get a little better protection than we've had in the past, I'll be honest with you. Because the one thing, whites going to call attention to things and they going to keep on them whereas they going to ignore me unless I just keep

on, and I know I'm not the type to just keep on them. That's the way I am. I'll report it one or two times, and then I'll just say, oh I just give up. I just throw it them like that. Why do you think whites are more likely to keep on things? Well like I said they keep on. They want attention to it, and I don't fault them for that. I think that's good and if an issue is high enough I think it should. But the people at City Hall tend to recognize them more so than me. I'll just be honest with you." (interview, July 2015)

Joan continued:

"I'm happy to see them out here doing something . . . really the changing I don't see anything wrong with it . . . I would like to see it better, and when I say that like I say houses occupied and friendly people. And those that I've met, and that's black or white, have been positive I'll say . . . I think it's improving, and I hope to see it improve even more." (interview, July 2015)

Linda, a woman who lives in a part of the neighborhood that has seen comparatively less development and new residents, expressed a similar sentiment. Other research participants referred to her part of the neighborhood as 'rough'; for example, her house is close to a well-known drug and sex work hub, and she told me she rarely interacts with her immediate neighbors. When I asked her about new residents, especially on the other side of the neighborhood, she was unequivocal in her analysis.

"That's good. We need them. [. . .] You've got both white and black moving back into town so that's good. So my prayer is Lord, please let me live to see it become a community better than what it has been. It can get

> better, we've got the market [small grocery store run by FCS] down there now and that's good. And I don't know whether a lot of people are aware of the farmer's market down there. But it [South Atlanta] could be better. I would welcome to this community . . . people that care about the community, not just somebody, the people that own these places that rent down here, you see it when you walk, you came up this way, all this trash and stuff out here." (interview, June 2015)

Here, Linda expresses greater distress than Joan over the current state of the neighborhood, as she lives in an area of South Atlanta with heightened crime issues.

Two long-time residents spoke to the downsides of intentional neighbors' and FCS's presence, but ultimately concluded that both provide benefits to the neighborhood as well. Dawn noted frankly that "we have people, basically Caucasian people who think that they know what the best is for the people who live in this community without asking them what they think is best . . . and this has always been a problem." At the same time, she said, "any progress that's made is progress," and "they [FCS] have done, to my personal opinion, very good work in South Atlanta" (interview, July 2015). A lifelong resident, Nora, said that some of her neighbors believe that "these people come in and take over," specifically by buying houses that low-income residents could never afford. When I asked Nora why her neighbors might think that, she said, "a lot of people don't like to work" and want handouts (interview, July 2015). Here, she characterizes suspicion of intentional neighbors as evidence of a character flaw: unwillingness

to work and make enough money to buy instead of rent. FCS and intentional neighbors, she said, have done a good job of “bringing the neighborhood up.” “If they’re coming to help, upgrade things,” middle-class white neighbors are welcome, she said, noting that she perceives white neighbors as more likely to attend neighborhood clean-up events (interview, July 2015). Both Nora and Dawn spoke to concerns about FCS and intentional neighbors taking over in South Atlanta, but then justified their presence as contributing to neighborhood progress or ‘upgrade.’

At times, I found the women’s cautious acceptance of FCS and intentional neighbors, as well as an overall lack of critical perspectives among research participants, somewhat surprising. Although I interviewed a wide range of South Atlanta residents, I am certain that I missed people with less optimistic analyses, and also that some research participants were reticent when they talked with me. While I made it clear that I was not associated with FCS, my role may have been confusing to some participants. A woman in her thirties who attended Civic League meetings, Stephanie, was the most outspoken critic whom I interviewed. Speaking about Civic League meetings, which were attended by a disproportionate number of white residents during my research period, Stephanie said,

> “When words go unspoken, it goes as if it didn't happen. It doesn't mean it's not happening; it just means that it's unspoken. I think there are a whole lot of people who don't like what's happening but don't go to [Civic League] meetings. A silent side.”

(interview, July 2015)

Stephanie also discussed her skepticism of FCS's philosophy, specifically around the idea of fostering dignity in residents of low-income neighborhoods. Suggesting that she found it condescending, she said, "I'm already awesome, I'm already great, I'm just stuck in this. There's a lot of us stuck." Practices that she characterized as indignities, such as FCS's annual tradition of selling donated Christmas toys to South Atlanta residents, "builds pockets of people being mad and not talking about it. Already, especially Black women, [we are] already pigeonholed as being so angry," she explained. She also noted that "the religious aspect [of FCS] is a problem" (interview, July 2015). While I draw parallels between the intentional neighbors' and long-time residents' transcendent geographies and the ways that they intersect, it is critical to consider what points of dissonance may have gone unspoken and who may have gone unheard altogether.

Trusting God with 'neighbors from hell'

While these examples do not significantly reference faith, all of the women quoted above identified as Christians, and elaborated at length in interviews on how their beliefs help them make sense of the world around them. Pairing the former examples with the latter discussions, transcendent geographies of race start to emerge that center around trusting God in dire scenarios, in part through the lens of loving one's neighbors and enemies. Illustrating the first concept, Linda described a time when she called on God in a dangerous situation at

Carver Homes, a public housing project that is now the HOPE VI mixed-income Villages at Carver complex.

> "There was an incident where a person was killed over in the Carver Homes area. And law enforcement, because the officer shot the person, they said they had to pull all law enforcement officers out. But because we were community-oriented out here [Linda served as a community police representative], we were able to stay because we got along with the community.
>
> Whenever I would go out there, Father God, I'm going here, protect me. And just say your child is out here, just praying . . . when I left my home I'd say, waking up, Father God, I thank you for this day, protect me when I'm out here among these people [at Carver Homes] . . . sometimes you're going to a situation [that] don't look too good but you still, because you work with the police department, you had to go into them. So with me, I don't know about nobody else, but I would be saying a prayer, okay God this don't look too good, okay hey, watch over my back." (interview, June 2015)

Here, Linda tells a story about asking for help from God for bodily protection, as a representative of the police force entering a place where an officer was recently killed by gunfire. Jeanette also talked about engaging her faith in God in dangerous interpersonal situations. She had previously discussed her 'neighbors from hell' who once exchanged gunfire that ricocheted past her house. She expanded on this story in the context of saying that "Church is every day. It

should be an everyday thing. Church is in your heart, so it should be an everyday thing." When I asked how this idea translates into everyday life, she said:

> "When we had neighbors, we had some neighbors from hell, and they would do and say all kind of different things, and I tried to avoid any confrontations with them, but I also tried to let them know what could be and what could not be on my property and stuff. And that way, you have to go to them as a friend, not as an enemy. You can't go yelling and cursing and all of that. You have to go to them as a friend, and not as an enemy." (interview, July 2015)

Jeanette explained her belief that 'church is every day' by giving this example of treating as friends her neighbors who posed harm to her. I asked if she would expand on what faith has to do with what she called 'trying to do something good in the world'. She responded,

> "Well, we live by faith. We walk by faith and not by sight, because if we lived by what we see, we wouldn't be able to make it. We have to have the faith that things are going to change, that things are going to get better in bad situations. You have to have faith that they're going to get better. If a person is ill, you have faith that they're going to get better. Of course, sometimes that's not God's will, but we still have the faith that they're going to get better." (interview, July 2015)

On the topic of meaningful pieces of scripture, she said,

> "Psalms 27, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from which cometh my help,' because we know all our help comes from the Lord. So we live by

> the scriptures. And ‘the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want’. So He’s going to provide regardless, and I tell a lot of people, I was raised on faith, because I’m from the country, and we were poor. We had nothing. It was nine of us in a little three-room house, outdoor plumbing. We had…Not carry water, but we toted water when we were children. We had to tote wood when we were children. [‘And chop,’ her husband interjected] Yes. So I came up real poor, real hard, but I thank God for that life because it led me to a better. It made me the person I am now. To trust and to have faith.” (interview, July 2015)

As with the discussion of her neighbors’ gunfire, Jeanette talks about faith as essential to surviving challenging life experiences and explains that this worldview emerged from growing up in rural poverty. Even, or perhaps especially in situations of abjection, Jeanette suggests it is critical to have faith that ‘things are going to get better’. In the meantime, it is necessary to treat enemies as friends and live as though ‘church is every day’.

Dawn expressed a faith narrative with some important parallels to Jeanette’s. Reflecting on her experience at CCDA national conferences, where she connected with people working in disinvested urban neighborhoods all over the country, she said:

> “I find . . . in most of the cities, especially big cities, that we all have the same problems. We all have the same burdens. We all have the same struggles that we continue to -sometimes we get discouraged and we say, well Lord, things are not getting any better. But as a Christian that’s not for

> us to say. We are to do what we are commanded to do, to teach, and to preach and to share the gospel. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. And if we could get to the point where more people did that, understood that, things would be better, even if the environment, the physical environment is not perfect. But people would be able to survive and live." (interview, July 2015)

Dawn reflects two of Jeanette's key points here—first, the Christian faith-motivated principle of loving one's neighbors, and second, that in situations of despair and deprivation, it is critical to keep trusting God. She brings in the idea that work in the 'secular' world (here, community development) may not appear to be successful, but people can still 'survive and live' by embodying Christian values such as loving one's neighbor.

Like the intentional neighbors, these long-time residents also outline what we can think of as transcendent race geographies. First, drawing on their long geographical knowledge (McKittrick and Woods 2007) of South Atlanta, long-time residents depicted new, predominantly white residents as moving the neighborhood from the brink of neglect, even while they articulated a certain sense of risk of outsiders 'taking over'. They characterized white, middle-class residents, with a focus on FCS and intentional neighbors, as bringing tangible benefits to South Atlanta such as improved civic services. More generally, with some qualifications, they talked about such residents bringing a sense of 'progress' to a neighborhood with a history of municipal and capital neglect. Here, they outlined a geography of race in which their long memories of the

neighborhood's abandonment bring them to a point of cautiously welcoming people who seem capable of such 'progress,' all the while recognizing the problematic context that enables these conditions. Progress, here, is a combination of capital investment and a sense that new residents share certain neighborly, communitarian values with long-time residents.

Long-time residents also drew on transcendent themes centered around relying on God for provision in deprived urban spaces while striving to practice Christian neighborly values; in doing so, they outline a set of profane geographies in need of their transcendent action. We can also draw a certain link between these themes and their cautious optimism about white, middle-class neighbors. While they generally did not situate the discussion about new residents in terms of Christian faith, they talked about the need for Christian faith in the context of long-term deprivation in South Atlanta, and about relying on God while practicing the faith-based principle of loving one's neighbor as an essential part of finding meaning and direction in this context. Their understandings of the transcendent require them to be open to things getting better in South Atlanta and not always knowing how or why God will intervene, and in this context their openness to newer, whiter residents makes sense.

iv. Conclusions: Power in Transcendent Geographies of Race

There are some crucial points of compatibility in these residents' and the intentional neighbors' transcendent geographies of race. First, both groups talk about their wishes to see the South Atlanta neighborhood become a space that

better reflects their own understandings of the transcendent. Secondly, both groups frame the movement of middle-class residents, including intentional neighbors supported by the work of FCS, as a sign that the neighborhood is moving closer to their transcendent ideals. While intentional neighbors explicitly tie their movement to South Atlanta to their faith, long-time residents locate new neighbors as one source of hope in a more diffuse interpretation of how God intervenes in profane spaces; together, they sanctify this process. Their compatible transcendent geographies also rest on a shared conviction that cultivating relationships with one's neighbors across racialized divides is a tool of transcendent action. For both intentional and long-time neighbors, the call to love one's neighbor seems to go beyond surface-level platitudes: intentional neighbors have significantly restructured their lives in order to fulfill that call, while long-time residents generously receive new residents into the community in which they have spent much of their lives, even as they express some caution about white residents 'taking over'.

Key elements of long-time residents' transcendent geographies are also markedly different from those of the intentional neighbors, which speaks to their experiences living in a segregated, disinvested Black neighborhood for many years. First, the narratives that piece together these geographies are quite different from those of the intentional neighbors. Intentional neighbors tied faith to their reasons for moving to the neighborhood, whereas long-time neighbors used faith frameworks to evaluate neighborhood life more broadly; the former group's sense of agency in moving to South Atlanta is absent from the latter group's

stories. Most notably, the theme of completely relying on God for provision and protection is not at all evident in the intentional neighbors' narratives. Here, even if God does not provide in the way one thinks he should (as in Dawn's example of neighborhoods failing to become more livable over time), the long-time residents emphasized that trust in God remains essential. The possibility of imminent bodily harm is also much more present in their faith narratives than in those of the intentional neighbor. While Linda talked about calling on God in her job as a community police officer, Jeanette talked about the spiritual necessity to approach neighbors who shot at one another as friends rather than enemies. In comparison, intentional neighbors spoke about faith more as a motivating, inspirational force in their lives that drove them to leave the comfort of middle-class neighborhoods for South Atlanta.

These discrepancies speak to the racialized material inequalities between intentional neighbors and long-time residents, which should increase our skepticism about the assumption that targeted in-migration of middle class neighbors is good for all South Atlanta residents. Market logics undergird this assumption and the mixed-income paradigm more broadly, as the arrival of middle-income residents and dispersal of low-income ones is taken as a net good due to the influx of capital that the former group brings. However, alongside the ostensible benefits that research participants identified regarding this movement, there is also the real possibility that long-time residents could find themselves squeezed out of the neighborhood as gentrification pressures intensify. While some FCS staff and intentional neighbors argued that South

Atlanta has such a high vacant housing rate that significant gentrification is not possible, the future section of the BeltLine planned for Atlanta's south side will run directly alongside main thoroughfares in South Atlanta. Displacement from gentrification is a legitimate concern in the neighborhood, and FCS and intentional neighbors' presence deliberately contributes to this process. While part of FCS's 'gentrification with justice' entails building or rehabilitating affordable homes with no-interest loans, this strategy cannot stave off the wave of rapid speculation that the BeltLine has thus far seen. Long-time Black residents could easily find themselves priced out by rising rents, burdened by high property taxes, or bought out of the neighborhood by speculators buying investment properties. Therefore, as South Atlanta residents sanctify the process of middle-income residents moving in, they risk limiting the scope of transcendent possibility to the confines of a market framework that also drives displacement of people of color. The next chapter delves further into displacement pressures in South Atlanta by examining FCS staff and South Atlanta residents' co-construction, along lines of race and faith, of what I call a displaceable subject.

CHAPTER 5: MAKING DISPLACEABLE SUBJECTS IN SOUTH ATLANTA

i. Introduction

During the summer of 2015, a locked gate on a side street became a divisive focal point among residents of South Atlanta. George Washington Carver High School and Slater Elementary School sit on a self-contained campus, separated from South Atlanta by park land and trees. This site is the former campus of both Clark University and its Gammon Theological Seminary, both historically Black institutions that moved to the Atlanta University Center in Atlanta's West End neighborhood in 1941 (South Atlanta Civic League 2018). A road enables pedestrians and cars to take a shortcut from the campus to the neighborhood. In the early summer of 2015, local police locked a pre-existing gate that lies along this road, impeding car and pedestrian access to Gammon Street. Locking the gate raised a perplexing jurisdictional issue; residents asked, who owns the land on which the gate sits? Was the police department allowed to lock the gate, or was it Atlanta Public Schools' responsibility to manage the road? The gate closure led to passionate debates in the South Atlanta Civic League over the broader question of who belongs on Gammon Street. Meetings held at Community Grounds, a nonprofit coffee shop run by FCS, became contentious as residents started to frame the issue in terms of racial tension in a gentrifying neighborhood. Mothers whose children attend the public schools defended the

teenagers, citing the widespread criminalization of Black youth; they were joined by several faith-based intentional neighbors. Residents who led the effort to close the gate found support from elderly homeowners and renters alike, who expressed fatigue from decades of police negligence of the neighborhood.

This series of events in the South Atlanta neighborhood raised questions of racialized identity and belonging in a neighborhood in which vacancy rates currently remain high, but gentrification pressures mean that displacement is a looming future possibility for some residents. Participants in the debate, who were themselves diverse in their racial identity and socioeconomic class, argued over whether Black youths ought to be able to walk freely along the public neighborhood street without police interference. Some residents questioned their neighbors' association of Black teenagers with criminality, whereas other residents, both white and Black, assumed their criminality and insisted on a stronger police presence to keep them off the streets. We might see the Gammon Street issue as an attempt to articulate boundaries – to suggest that some people no longer belong on the neighborhood's streets, or to insist that stigmatized people do in fact belong.

Following Chapter 4, this chapter further traces the contours of transcendent geographies of race in relation to these questions of neighborhood belonging, including but not limited to the Gammon Street gate issue. I examine three points of interest in particular: first, FCS's faith-motivated 'gentrification with justice' approach; second, the gate controversy; and third, in-depth interviews with a cross-section of South Atlanta residents. Drawing on books by FCS's

founder Bob Lupton, participant observation notes, and interview transcripts, I argue that South Atlanta residents and FCS staff articulate a process of making transcendent space in part by identifying people whose displacement would be good for the neighborhood. These unwanted people are to be contained in a space that I call 'somewhere else,' bringing to mind the Black geographies scholarship on confinement and containment. Transcendent concepts such as the Kingdom of God—and the question of who belongs in it—are used to create a binary between good and bad neighbors, and to justify this movement 'somewhere else.' Displacement here does not strictly refer to eviction from one's residence, but to a broader process of being pushed out from urban space through systemic pressures.

These displaceable subjects are assigned racialized characteristics that strongly invoke the image of the dangerous, criminal Black man that has long influenced U.S. urban policymaking, yet at the same time, the boundaries of these subjects are slippery. For example, some participants in this research advocated pushing out only the worst troublemakers, while others suggested that the displacement of 'innocent' people tied to troublesome residents would benefit the neighborhood too, such as tenants renting from predatory landlords. There is also slipperiness over whether displaceable subjects are residents of South Atlanta or outsiders who come into the neighborhood to cause trouble. Race and power very much matter to the definition of displaceable subjects, since some residents and institutions have more power than others to transform South Atlanta into the kind of neighborhood they would like it to be, while other

residents are at risk of being identified as displaceable themselves. This uncertainty over the subject's boundaries exemplifies the harm of a binary between 'good' and bad' Black residents, as it shows that the inclusion of 'good' residents is conditional and changeable. By using displacement as a tool for making transcendent spaces, the participants discussed here justify race-based spatial exclusion.

ii. Transcendent Spaces and Displaceable Subjects

FCS and the Kingdom of God

Key sources from FCS, including foundational texts and in-depth interviews with senior staff members, identify racialized figures who do not belong in neighborhoods in which "gentrification with justice," a concept infused with transcendent meanings, is taking place (Lupton 2007). First, books written by FCS's founder Bob Lupton[6], who has now retired from his operational role at FCS, dig deeply into the philosophies undergirding the organization's mixed-income housing program. Lupton is perhaps most well-known in the evangelical realm for criticizing traditional Christian charity programs that provide goods or services to the poor without asking for anything in return; he argues that "one-way giving" is a "toxic" form of charity (Lupton 2011, 2015). In his 2007 book *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*, Lupton criticizes one-way giving in urban ministry programs and argues for a "gentrification with justice" strategy in

[6] This chapter refers to Bob Lupton as Lupton herein because he is quoted as the author of a book. All other participants, even those who gave permission for their real full names to be used, are referred to by their first names for consistency in descriptions of research participants.

its place. He argues that development—specifically, community development in disinvested urban neighborhoods—solves the problem of one-way giving, as it "enables others to *do for themselves*" (Lupton 2007, 32, emphasis his). Drawing on his experiences working in the majority Black Atlanta neighborhoods of East Lake, Grant Park, and South Atlanta, Lupton advocates for the return of middle-class people of faith to disinvested urban neighborhoods as part of a "theology of gentrification" and a key component of community development that breaks patterns of one-way giving (121).

Lupton shows a keen awareness of how gentrification displaces low-income people from their neighborhoods in inner cities, fueling the suburbanization of poverty. Ministries that renovate homes in "communit[ies] of need," he argues, could unwittingly set off the "spark that ignites the fires of gentrification—a movement that is now displacing the poor at an alarming rate from those very neighborhoods" (iii). Lupton suggests that to reduce displacement, faith-based, middle-income people should intentionally become 'gentry' by moving into urban neighborhoods; he argues that people of faith will act more ethically as neighbors to the poor than their secular counterparts. He writes,

> "The city needs land-owning residents who are also faith-motivated, who yield to the tenets of their faith in the inevitable tension between values of neighbor over values of property. That is why gentrification needs a theology to guide it … We cannot rightly take joy in the rebirth of the city if no provision is being made to include the poor as co-participants. . . . We

> can harness the growing tide of gentrification so that it becomes a redemptive force in our cities. In other words, we can bring about gentrification with justice." (Lupton 2007, location 1379)

If gentrification can be 'harnessed' by people with Christian ethics who will value their relationships with neighbors over money, he suggests, the process of rising property values and displacement pressures will be more just. Lupton's writing also echoes certain justifications for mixed-income housing developments, as he presents land-owning residents as capable of reviving deprived urban spaces through their social capital.

While Lupton articulates displacement as a serious concern, he goes on to outline conditions under which displacement might actually be acceptable, or even desirable.

> "But must gentrification always spell displacement for the poor? To some degree, yes. Yet displacement is not entirely bad. There are drug dealers and other rogues that *need* to be dislodged from a community if it is going to become a healthy place to raise children. Overcrowded tenements and flophouses *should* be thinned out or cleaned up, and this inevitably means displacement of some of the vulnerable along with their predators. Bringing responsible property management back into a neglected community does spell disruption for those who have chosen or been forced by necessary to endure slumlord economics. But what may be disruptive for the moment can become a blessing for those who yearn for

a better way of life *if* – and this is a big *if* – the poor are included in the reclamation process by the returning gentry." (Lupton 2007, location 1345)

Although he believes it can be mitigated through the gentrification with justice strategy, displacement is still inevitable in Lupton's analysis. One displaceable subject is the drug dealer or "rogue" who makes the neighborhood unfriendly for children, presumably through criminal activity. Lupton also renders acceptable some displacement of people caught up in these "predators'" networks and properties. In these analyses, people presumed both guilty and innocent of crime are displaceable; residents' association with 'slum' conditions, even if they play a passive role in maintaining them, makes their presence undesirable. In the same chapter, Lupton suggests, "We can buy crack houses and renovate them into residences for mission-minded couples" (location 1374). Here, he ties the displacement of people who sell drugs to faith-based community development. When people associated with drug-related crime move out, Christian households can move in and transform the neighborhood with God's kingdom in mind.

In interviews, FCS senior staff members expanded this idea that some level of displacement from South Atlanta is good for the neighborhood. They echoed Lupton's focus on crime, and explained their own ideas about the mix of residents that make a neighborhood 'healthy.' FCS employee Jonathan Malmin is a Project Manager for the organization's mixed-income housing program and was an intentional neighbor in a different part of Atlanta at the time of this research. Like Lupton, he discussed the concept of healthy neighborhoods:

> “If you look at what Christ came to announce, he came to announce that the Kingdom of God is here. What does the Kingdom of God look like, is the next obvious question. And so if we say it's a place where life happens and where a holistic life happens, what does that look like? . . . Anytime you take houses and you put new owners in them and at times, new owners with higher incomes than some of their neighbors, that's the definition of gentrification. But I would say the most healthy communities have a diversity of income, diversity of work, and life in them. And to a certain extent, it's needed. To the extent that it pushes out bad and unhealthy local disordered behavior, whether that's crime, drugs, what have you, that's good. What you don't want to see is where you're pushing out established residents that have a long-term history and a vested interest in the neighborhood that have worked for the good of the neighborhood.” (interview, August 2015)

Jonathan links the concept of a healthy neighborhood to one that is mixed-income, and ties both these ideas to the image of the Kingdom of God, similar to FCS’s mission statement to “[produce] flourishing communities where God’s Shalom is present” (FCS 2018). More explicitly than Lupton and Jim, Jonathan articulates a binary of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ South Atlanta residents, each of which connect to different, racialized meanings. At the same time, he echoes much of what Lupton and Jim say on the same topics, suggesting that he has absorbed their perspectives as an FCS employee.

FCS President Jim Wehner also endorsed this idea that some displacement is desirable. Speaking at a 2015 open house event showcasing FCS's work, he said that the organization "has been known to" purchase a house in which residents are believed to be selling drugs, evict the residents, and place a low-income family in the newly rehabilitated home (participant observation notes, March 2015). Jim noted that FCS does not ask South Atlanta residents for approval before initiating this process of removal. Here, Jim's focus on evicting residents engaged in drug crime echoes Lupton's, yet touches on a slightly different theme. While Lupton talked about replacing drug dealers with 'mission-minded' families, Jim focused on providing a home for a low-income family, with no reference to their faith. Both Lupton and Jim construct subjects to be displaced and subjects to replace them.

Jim also defined a healthy neighborhood as one that does not have too many low-income residents, and connected this idea to a strategy to 'flip' South Atlanta. While Lupton defined healthy neighborhoods by the absence of drug and criminal activity, Jim said at the open house that a neighborhood in which 75-80 percent of residents are low-income "cannot be healthy" (participant observation notes, March 2015). An excerpt from my interview with Jim shows how this idea connects to FCS's (then Charis Community Housing's) mixed-income housing strategy:

> "We haven't flipped the neighborhood completely . . . it was almost 85% rental when we first started. We want to flip that so it's about 75% home ownership. So 75% homeownership, 25%, so there is still a place for

> rental in the neighborhood. But then of that 75% homeownership, we want a third of it to be low income families.
>
> . . .
>
> [W]e are trying to make sure that the affordable homeownership is in place, and then as there is stuff done around that, the market will come back in, and at some point, the neighborhood will have a healthy real estate market, meaning that there will be houses for sale and houses being bought as homeowners are transitioning and moving, maybe growing out of one house and moving to a new house." (interview, July 2015).

The term healthy here refers to a neighborhood in which market-rate real estate flourishes, or as one that attracts mainstream capital investment. FCS Executive Director Katie Delp, who is also an intentional neighbor discussed in Chapter 4 and below, cited the same percentages as Jim in an interview, confirming an intention to have more market-rate than low-income people buying homes from FCS, thus likely decreasing the number of low-income families living in South Atlanta over time if successful.

Jim and an FCS board member talked more broadly about the need to better connect South Atlanta to investment from the private market, and the sense that processes like gentrification can only be good for the neighborhood in that they invite such investment. Jim said,

> "I want to position FCS in between the neighborhood and what the market will do. What FCS wants to do is we want to be an advocate and a conduit to bring the market back to the neighborhood."

FCS board member Allen Bell made similar comments about the home-building and -rehabilitating work then done by Charis and now by FCS, saying,

> "I believe in what [Charis] physically does to turn around properties and do it in a strategic neighboring way where the free market won't go in. . . We felt like if we could do 60 more houses the market would take over and the private home developers would come and take over." (interview, September 2015)

Allen also described intentional neighbors as "pioneers" with "missionary zeal," and talked about the role of gentrification in neighborhoods like South Atlanta:

> "To quote the famous movie *Wall Street*, the evil criminal Gordon Gekko says, greed is good. Gentry are good. . . I think people who use that moniker, 'oh, gentrification is bad,' I think half their brains have fallen out. I think that they are biased and prejudiced against hard working people who have some measure of success."

This sense that the 'market taking over' would be a net good for South Atlanta ties to Jim's logic that renders low-income people as displaceable wherever they live concentrated together, as their poverty is anathema to the market.

These FCS leaders plot a path toward making a neighborhood that reflects their understandings of the transcendent; Lupton's concept of God's shalom spells out this spatial imaginary. Relying on a faith-based version of the

mixed-income framework, in which in-migration of middle-income residents takes place alongside ‘de-concentration’ of poor residents, they create a binary between good (or healthy) and bad (or unhealthy) neighbors, the latter of whom are displaceable. We can think of their shared vision as another example of transcendent geographies of race, as they use faith narratives to touch upon themes from Black geographical scholarship. They ask and answer Jonathan’s question, “what does the Kingdom of God look like?”, in the context of South Atlanta and neighborhoods like it. One aspect of this framework centers on Christian neighborly values and defines a set of South Atlanta residents who resonate with these values. For Lupton, good neighbors are the faith-motivated intentional neighbors who choose neighbor over property values to ‘harness’ gentrification. While Lupton and Jim said little about good neighbors who already live in poor neighborhoods as opposed to in-migrating intentional neighbors, Jonathan’s good neighbors include “established residents . . . that have worked for the good of the neighborhood.” In this analysis, these groups belong in the Kingdom of God that is to be actualized in urban spaces. The latter example from Jonathan touches upon a racialized respectability politics, by which Black people earn white approval by displaying values acceptable to white gazes. This also brings to mind Black geographical analyses in which white onlookers both define acceptable forms of Blackness and situate them in particular places.

Displaceable neighbors in this faith-based framework are people associated with crime or drug activity and, for Jim, people living in concentrated poverty, both of which have heavily racialized associations. We can also use the

term ‘unhealthy’ to describe how Lupton, Jim, and Jonathan characterize such neighbors, which weaves a biopolitical thread into the “prescribed spatial arrangements” that they outline (Shabazz 2015, Domosh 2017). Along these lines, Shabazz documents the efforts of Chicago police to dissolve vice districts, seen as hubs of disease and immorality, and aided by Black middle-class people who were loath to be associated with such activities. For all three men, crime and drugs are markers of “unhealthy . . . disordered behavior” that does not belong in the healthy neighborhood. Lupton makes a direct connection between bad and good neighbors in his assertion that “We can buy crack houses and renovate them into residences for mission-minded couples” (location 1374). For Jim, low-income people are unhealthy by their demographic concentration. Crime and poverty easily fit into racialized tropes about urban neighborhoods, and these qualities constitute the counterweight to respectable, “established residents.”

The Gammon Street gate and the South Atlanta Civic League

A cross-section of South Atlanta residents fiercely debated the Gammon Street gate issue in South Atlanta Civic League meetings in the spring and summer of 2015; drawing on different understandings around race, space, and transcendence, they contested the boundaries of displaceability. The Civic League overlaps with FCS in key ways because some FCS staff do live in the neighborhood, and have in the past held leadership positions in the Civic League. In addition, some Civic League leaders such as its current president, Josh, identify as intentional, faith-based neighbors, as discussed in Chapter 4. In

fact, most of the Civic League's leadership positions in 2015 were held by self-identified intentional neighbors, about half of whom are Black while the rest are white. Yet the Civic League's history extends further than FCS's tenure in South Atlanta. Residents who grew up in the neighborhood and have lived there ever since, from those born in the 1940s to the 1990s, recalled the Civic League as an essential site for people living in the almost exclusively Black neighborhood to gather and develop strategies for meeting community needs. Older residents described the Civic League, which was founded in 1952 and led by a man named Lucious Simon from its first year until 1998, as a way for residents to organize themselves because their needs were ignored by the power base of Atlanta. A diverse set of residents attend Civic League meetings today, but newer, whiter neighbors are overrepresented at meetings; in interviews, both senior residents who remembered the previous status quo and newer residents like Josh expressed this concern.

The gate that Atlanta police locked in 2015, preventing car and pedestrian passage from the Carver High School campus, was discussed at monthly Civic League meetings throughout the summer. Before the gate was locked, residents framed high school students walking down Gammon Street, which connects the high school to South Atlanta residential streets, as a truancy issue. One resident in particular, Kristi, a white woman who had lived in the immediate area for approximately a decade and who purchased three homes in the neighborhood during the 2000s foreclosure crisis, was particularly vocal about high school students using the street. An *Atlanta Progressive News* article analyzed her

public Facebook posts on the gate, noting that Kristi “regularly refers to Black, male students as “gang members” in her posts and on different occasions, she wrote that she had sent the photos to police, called for a police car to patrol the street when school lets out, and used the hashtag #closethegates." (Simonton 2015). Kristi frequently discussed these concerns at Civic League meetings. During my research period, Civic League meetings had a strong emphasis on crime reports given by police assigned to the neighborhood's beat, and so her discussion of crime concerns was not entirely out of place.

After the gate was locked in June 2015, residents connected these prior truancy and crime discussions to the incident. Some residents, including Kristi, argued that the gate should remain closed, even though doing so would impede many students’ main thoroughfare to their homes at the end of the school day. Other residents and community organizers argued that Kristi and others treated Black teenagers as criminal subjects. At a July 2015 Civic League meeting, Kristi told attendees that she works from home and feels “threatened” by students walking past her home; she also asserted her right not to be interrupted during work (participant observation notes, July 2015). She articulated a sense of frustration so strong that “we are considering leaving . . . [we] feel thrown out and abandoned” by South Atlanta residents who question the gate’s necessity (participant observation notes, July 2015). Kristi also served on a local ‘truancy task force’ whose members authored a document endorsed by Atlanta Public Schools that “instructs members of the public on what to do if they see a school-aged child in the community during school hours: Dial 911” (Simonton 2015).

However, Kristi framed students walking home at the normal hour as potential troublemakers too, as her Facebook post that requested after-school police patrols on the street indicates.

Although Kristi lamented a perceived lack of support from her community, a group of Black women who have each lived in the neighborhood for decades, including several of the long-time residents discussed in Chapter 4, agreed with her that the gate should remain closed. At the contentious July Civic League meeting, a retirement-age Black woman who has lived close to the gate for multiple decades expressed her desire for it to stay locked. She argued that she was compelled to block her driveway to prevent truant students from socializing in her yard, and that she had heard gunshots in the vicinity, which she connected to absentee students. While this resident ultimately blamed Carver High School for the problem, she held firm that students' access to her street created a sense of danger and intrusion that she wished to avoid by keeping the gate locked. Another Black woman who is a long-time homeowner on the street vocally supported the gate's closure, citing the safety of an elderly relative who lives with her. In an interview, Jeanette, the resident with the "neighbors from hell" in Chapter 4, also supported closing the gate. She recalled,

> "the children from Carver used to walk the street in the middle of the day, going back and forth to the drug house . . . So I know how they congregate and everything, cursing, and trash, shooting, and fighting, and all that stuff." (interview, July 2015)

Linda, the retired civilian policewoman from Chapter 4, said in an interview that, simply, the gate "should be locked if it's going to stop crime" (interview, June 2015).

While this group of residents allied across lines of race, age, and class to support keeping the gate permanently closed, another group strongly opposed their actions. Some of these residents connected the gate to the broader issue of the criminalization of Black youth. Stephanie, the woman who was most critical of FCS and intentional neighbors in Chapter 4, argued in an interview, "all we're doing is caging [students]," and erroneously assuming (based on racial prejudice) that students are "scary or about to do something wrong" (interview, July 2015). This woman suggested that students could be mistaken as criminals simply for behaving in a raucous manner with their friends after school. Civic League president Josh, the intentional neighbor discussed in Chapter 4, advocated on behalf of the students at Civic League meetings throughout the spring, when the issue of truancy on Gammon Street was frequently discussed, and summer, when police locked the gate. Josh argued that students walking up and down Gammon Street are not the neighborhood's "enemies," and that many of them live in the neighborhood and use the street to walk home. He suggested, "a comparatively...small group of people," perhaps 22-23 students, were "repeat offenders" whose activities transgressed social or legal boundaries (participant observation notes, April 2015). In an interview after the tense July meeting, Katie Delp, another intentional neighbor from Chapter 4 and Executive Director of FCS,

echoed these arguments and also pointed to public school issues. Katie remarked,

> "If we had an actually functioning school that didn't have kids dropping out and had kids engaged, we probably wouldn't have this issue. [. . .] I don't like using the police either, because I don't think these kids are criminals… But I mean there are some. Right? You get some kids who aren't in school who are causing problems." (interview, July 2015)

In the July meeting, Katie also noted, "We have more good kids than bad kids [in South Atlanta]" (participant observation notes, July 2015). Here, a cross-section of residents argued that the gate issue risked marking all Carver students, who are almost all Black, as criminals or 'enemies' presumed guilty simply for walking on neighborhood streets. Josh and Katie added the caveat that some students did act out, but closing the gate was a poor solution that would exacerbate existing systemic inequalities, including the criminalization of Black youth and inadequate public education.

In this conflict over the Gammon Street gate, residents debated another spatial dualism of good and bad Black students; this parallels Lupton's, Jim's, and Jonathan's analyses above, but with more contention and disagreement among participants. Their conversations also dovetail with themes from the Black geographies literature on white and Black people and institutions acting together to define Black respectability (Shabazz 2015); yet here, respectability connects to the 'right to stay put' in a gentrifying neighborhood. One subset of residents argued that troublesome teenagers need to be kept off neighborhood streets,

although they disagreed in some key ways about the boundaries of this group. For residents who advocated to close the gate, all students using the street fit into this group, acquiring guilt by association; even those who caused no disturbance would be prevented from using the street. Josh and Katie turned this all-encompassing characterization into a dualism by separating well-behaved students from their troublesome counterparts. Other residents countered the idea of good and bad students and its basis as a justification for closing the gate altogether, most notably Stephanie, who worried that her children would be wrongly characterized as 'scary' for having fun with their friends.

Residents did not often directly draw on transcendent concepts in these spatial contestations, but we might see these discussions as textured by participants' faith positions, or as "performative practices of place-making informed by understandings of the transcendent" (Tse 2013, 2). Some residents involved in the gate conversations did not identify themselves with religious belief; however, this does not preclude "understandings of the transcendent" from informing their place-making practices (Tse 2013, 2). Stephanie, the resident who worried that students would be criminalized, did not talk about her own faith in Civic League meetings or in our interview, but she did say that "the religious aspect [of FCS] is a problem," and that she "want[s] justice, not equality" (interview, July 2015). Further, Katie told me in an interview that Kristi, who led the effort to close the gate, is "not of faith" (interview, July 2015). Reading Tse, we can at least situate Stephanie in the grounded theologies framework as taking "a position on the transcendent" by rejecting FCS's religious basis (Tse 2013, 8).

Both Stephanie's position on the transcendent and her arguments about the gate issue stood out, since she did not adhere to the idea that 'bad' students should be policed or restricted from accessing Gammon Street; she avoided that framework altogether.

Josh and Katie, who advanced the idea that only a few "bad kids" were causing problems on Gammon Street, are faith-based intentional neighbors, as I showed in Chapter 4. Josh used a 'love thy neighbor' framework to explain his faith motivations for living in South Atlanta, while Katie talked about a need to be close to people in living in poverty. Their faith positions, which center on the idea that building relationships across social and racial difference is God's work, might help to explain their willingness to cast most of the high school students in a forgiving light. Still, they echoed the FCS staff discussed earlier by presenting a binary between good and bad residents, and thus they contribute to FCS's use of this logic as a tool for making transcendent spaces.

The Black women who supported closing the gate altogether, including Jeanette and Linda, also strongly identified as Christian in our interviews. Chapter 4 detailed Jeanette and Linda's crime fatigue after decades living in South Atlanta, as well as their deep sense of faith in God in dangerous situations. Their fatigue around crime and emphasis on God as a source of protection contribute to their transcendent geographies in which it is a priority that police respond to any signs of crime, after years of experiencing high crime and police neglect. They, too, sanctify the logic that certain people should be dispersed from South Atlanta's streets.

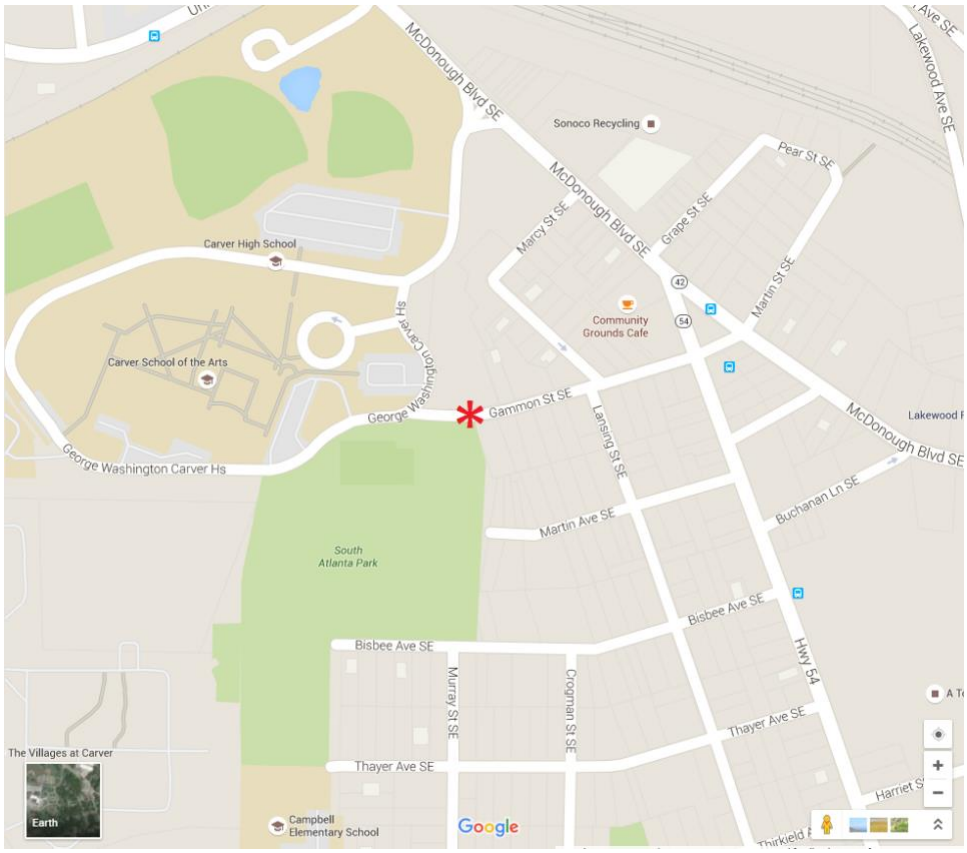


Figure 1: Zoomed-in Google map of South Atlanta (2018a). The red asterisk represents the location of the controversial gate, which blocked off Gammon Street from South Atlanta Park and the campus of George Washington Carver High School.

Figure 2: Photo of locked Gammon Street gate featured in Atlanta Progressive News article (Simonton 2015).

Displaceable subjects across South Atlanta

Neighborhood residents further sketched the boundaries of displaceable subjectivities as they probed questions of belonging and neighborhood wellbeing, removed from the organizational contexts of FCS and the Civic League. Situated in their own transcendent geographies of the neighborhood, displacement again emerges as a process that they see as necessary. A Black woman who owns an affordable Charis home, Tamara, commented on former public housing residents

moving to South Atlanta. This interview excerpt details our conversation, with my own contribution in italics:

> "Some of the behavior that was systemic, living in public housing, transfers over when you move into populations like this. So we have to address the social behavior that's transferring when you transfer.
>
> *Claire: What do you think that [addressing the social behavior] would look like?*
>
> I think it will be a daunting task, because again, are we trying to tell you that how you are is not right? It's not right *here*. It was right where you were. It was okay there. But we're here now, and we have to transfer your mind. Like when God renews you, saves you by renewing your mind. . . . You think you can do an interview with gold teeth in your mouth? Right? Or tattoos all over your face? Or you want to be an emo. That's not working. You know what I'm saying? It's not working. And the environment that you chose to try to come into, if you want to stay in that environment . . . then it has to be renewing of your mind to what's really going on over here. This is a different playground." (interview, June 2015)

Tamara's comments set parameters of acceptable personal behaviors in the neighborhood, and she draws a distinction between those behaviors allowable in public housing compared to the "different playground" of South Atlanta. In fact, learning a new set of social behaviors is necessary if new residents "want to stay" in the neighborhood. Because public housing has become so closely associated with racial segregation, Tamara's remarks make it clear that she is

probably talking about Black people. Her reference to doing an interview with gold teeth evokes racialized imagery as well, given that wearing gold teeth as a fashionable accessory has roots in low-income Black communities. In her analysis, activities negatively associated with the confluence of poverty, Blackness, and housing segregation must be unlearned in the "different playground" that is South Atlanta. At the same time, she suggests that God is capable of renewing troubled minds, which at once intensifies the stakes of bad behavior in that wayward residents must be reborn with the aid of a higher power, and conveys some optimism that they can change themselves.

Other residents paralleled Tamara's arguments about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, but instead of focusing on personal aesthetic behaviors like wearing gold teeth, they expressed a need to push out people involved in the drug trade and sex work. In Chapter 4, I quoted long-time resident Linda as saying, "my prayer is Lord, please let me live to see [South Atlanta] become a community better than what it has been." Later in the same interview, Linda also expressed her desire to see the departure of residents associated with crime:

> "Whites [are] moving back into the area, business type owners [are] moving back in and maybe getting rid of some of this riffraff with the prostitutes."
>
> (interview, June 2015)

Here, Linda connects the presence of new white neighbors to the disappearance of "riffraff" near her house, the latter of which she would welcome. Gendered as female sex workers, these "riffraff" are also racialized because the sex workers

who congregate near her home are predominantly Black. As Chapter 4 detailed, Linda lives close to a high crime part of the neighborhood, and she expressed exhaustion with a history of police allowing criminal activity to proliferate near her house. She suggested that the opposite end of the neighborhood, which is more evidently gentrifying, receives more attention from law enforcement than the blocks surrounding her home. One of Linda's closest neighbors in proximity, a young Black man named Sean who lives with an elderly relative, further connected the influx of new white residents to his hope that undesirable figures will leave the area. Sean said,

> "More white people [are] moving in, getting houses. That's a good thing that they're moving in. They can get rid of some of the bad...I ain't met no white people over here that's trying to gang bang and stuff like these young black boys. None of that gang and drug stuff." (interview, June 2015)

Pauline, Sean's elderly relative, echoed similar sentiments. Here, people whose displacement is desirable are young, Black, male, and involved with gangs and drugs. Sean, himself Black, frames these people in opposition to new white residents; the latter's presence is good because it may drive out the former group. Like Linda, Sean and Pauline are long-time residents and live on the side of South Atlanta that is widely perceived to be less desirable and more crime-ridden. Unlike Linda, they are not connected to neighborhood groups, and neither had heard of the Civic League or FCS; they provide an important perspective as

residents disconnected from the official institutions of neighborhood life in South Atlanta.

In these analyses, some participants tie transcendent concepts to their desires for a neighborhood less impacted by poverty and crime. Tamara and Linda directly associate their understandings of the transcendent with the elimination of problematic behaviors and people from their neighborhood. Tamara suggests that faith in God could help people to perform behaviors appropriate for her vision of South Atlanta. Linda draws on a faith narrative to express her desire for the neighborhood to change, which includes the removal of “riffraff” sex workers; in Chapter 4, she drew on her Christian faith as an essential form of armor for entering the Carver Homes housing project as a citizen policewoman.

While Sean did not directly tie faith to his comments about neighborhood life, he talked about faith in God as a guard against an even harder life than he already has; his desire for the people whom he regards as most dangerous to leave South Atlanta is compatible with this understanding of the transcendent. Regarding his religious beliefs, Sean said, “I don't know the difference between Methodist, Baptist, all that I just look at myself as a Christian. Job [in the Old Testament], he got everything back plus more, but I think it was wrong to kill his family at all” (interview, July 2015). When I asked him if he related to the Job story, Sean said, “Yes, because I think I've been in a long struggle, long struggles, long struggle to live. And everything, stuff you go through will test your faith and make you believe there's no God--how God could let this happen”

(interview, July 2015). Sean also said, “prayer keeps me sane I guess, cause if I ain't believe in God and I couldn't pray about nothing it'd be harder than it were” (interview, July 2015). Sean describes a sense of Christian faith that endures despite events that tested his belief in God, and an understanding of the transcendent wherein faith in God makes him more ‘sane’ in a difficult life.

Overall, this group of residents tied the in-migration of white people to the expulsion of poor people of color more directly than any of the previous examples, further situating the market logics of gentrification and displacement as important tools in the making of transcendent neighborhood geographies. Tamara focused on personal dress and attitude, bringing to mind themes of intraracial, class-based policing of space discussed in Shabazz (2015) or Domosh (2017), while Linda, Sean, and Pauline focused on street violence and physical safety as their major concerns in daily neighborhood life. The latter three residents lived close to the neighborhood’s drug and sex work hub at the time of this research, while Tamara lived in an area with far less visible street crime. In Chapter 4, I contextualized long-time residents’ welcome of white neighbors within their long-term geographical knowledge of the neighborhood’s history of abandonment and municipal neglect. In this chapter, we can understand another nuance of geographical knowledge expressed here by these residents as they focus on the need to expel people who present danger. Together, they speak to a form of geographical knowledge in which one’s survival feels precarious. Whiteness appears here as having the power to purge Black people who are experienced as sources of this violence; the presence of white people means

that the troublesome “young black boys” are driven away.

iii. Conclusions: Displacement to ‘Somewhere Else’

This chapter has examined how South Atlanta residents and FCS staff participate in a process of identifying people whose displacement to ‘somewhere else’ is key to the making of transcendent geographies in the neighborhood. Within the limitations of racialized market logics that have come to seem like ‘common sense’ in the urban process, participants set up a binary between good and bad Black residents that is deeply problematic to the larger question of Black people’s right to stay put in cities. Jim from FCS and other research participants argued that gentrification in South Atlanta is unlikely to directly displace people because the neighborhood has high vacancy rates and residents are perceived to move frequently; further, it is difficult to measure this kind of displacement (Slater 2009). Yet displacement also refers to the sense discussed by Marcuse and then Slater (2009), in which neighborhoods gentrify to the point that they become another of many unaffordable places to live in cities, and poor residents are pushed out to urban peripheries. As the broader Atlanta metropolitan area becomes unaffordable for low-income and very low-income people (Blau 2015), this kind of displacement is certainly a tangible possibility in South Atlanta, and this story is also playing out in cities across the globe (Lees et al. 2016).

However, displacement in these narratives speaks to an even broader process of people with certain racialized characteristics being pushed out from a gentrifying space, whether or not they live within its boundaries, which brings to

mind Black geographies scholarship around confinement and containment (Shabazz 2015, Bailey and Shabazz 2014). Here, unwanted people are to be moved out of sight and contained 'somewhere else,' and understandings of the transcendent are used to justify this movement. As in the Gammon Street gate example, in which residents debated whether the students causing trouble lived in the neighborhood or not, there is slipperiness over where these subjects call home. Displaceable people in this chapter's examples are also unambiguously Black; associated with low-income class markers like Tamara's gold teeth; and engaged in criminal activity, perceived as criminals, or associated with 'predatory' figures. These traits bring to mind the trope of dangerous Black men that has long been used to justify the abandonment of the inner city, and South Atlanta residents rearticulate and reshape this image within the neighborhood's unique context. South Atlanta residents and FCS staff do the work of pushing this person 'somewhere else', and framing this movement as a necessary part of the neighborhood's upward trajectory. I call it 'somewhere else,' echoing Bailey and Shabazz's (2014) queer Black subject "around the corner," because participants did not explain where this subject goes. The vague terminology captures this uncertainty.

There is also slipperiness around the boundaries of this displaceable subject, which links to the binary between good and bad neighbors that emerges. Some research participants emphasized that Christian faith makes people into good neighbors, while other residents focused on faith as an essential protection against bad neighbors. Yet in the FCS examples, the "established residents"

whom Jonathan wants to keep in South Atlanta could be unwittingly swept up in the cluster of poverty that Jim, President of FCS, would like to de-concentrate, or they could be the people whom Lupton wants to evict based on their proximity to crime or drugs. Similarly, Sean distinguished himself from the “young black boys” dealing drugs near his house, but other residents might easily assume that Sean is dangerous, intends harm, and is displaceable. Sean is heavily tattooed and, during my research tenure, frequently walked or biked around the streets of South Atlanta during the day. I met him when he was riding his bike in close proximity to the gas station where drug dealers and sex workers gather. In other words, the good/bad binary that so many participants articulated is nearly impossible to enact in practice, which makes the question of who exactly must go ‘somewhere else’ murkier and lays bare the racism of its underlying logic.

Critically, this research shows residents from disparate race and power locations aligned with one another along key themes, yet drawing on different geographical knowledge bases informed by different concepts of transcendence. For example, Black residents disconnected from neighborhood civic groups, such as Sean and Pauline, overlapped with white community development professionals with access to wealth and power in their desire to see drug dealers driven out of the neighborhood. In this example, Sean and Pauline outlined a sense of geographical knowledge of South Atlanta in which the risk of being victimized by street violence is high, and faith in God is challenging to maintain in the face of difficult life experiences. In contrast, Bob Lupton, Jim Wehner, and Jonathan Malmin from FCS, none of whom lived in South Atlanta at the time of

research, have a bird's-eye geographical knowledge of South Atlanta in which its social issues and vulnerabilities are obstacles to be cleared on the path to remaking the neighborhood with God's shalom in mind. They reach parallel conclusions about the need to move drug crime 'somewhere else', but Sean and Pauline's conclusions draw upon issues that directly affect them, while FCS staff evaluate these issues from a distance granted by race-based and institutional power.

Race and power also matter in these transcendent geographies of race because the people and institutions with more power have greater abilities to actually change the landscape of the neighborhood, and to do so on their own terms. For example, FCS has funding from sources ranging from private foundations and individual donors to federal HUD programs, which allow them to rehabilitate or build dozens of affordable and market rate homes in South Atlanta. FCS's leaders and employees thus have far more ability to shape the neighborhood's landscape. A number of residents interviewed noted that the Civic League has built a productive relationship with key city institutions that can shape South Atlanta, and the engaged presence of police and city officials at Civic League meetings is evidence of these networks. Yet the Civic League's leaders are primarily middle-income, relatively new, and/or intentional faith-based residents. While any resident may attend Civic League meetings, a voting membership cost at least $25 a year at the time of research, which several low-income residents noted as a barrier to membership (South Atlanta Civic League 2017). Low-income Black residents may still be able to have a voice in Civic

League meetings, but the organization's current structure leans in favor of well-off residents. Again, this situation suggests that some residents' perspectives on development and displacement are more likely than others' to materialize in the neighborhood's landscape. While neither FCS nor the Civic League have unfettered power to materialize their ideal vision for the neighborhood and thus move displaceable subjects 'somewhere else', power disparities mean that low-income, Black residents are far less able to do so.

Decades of housing policy provide the context in which the idea that people in low-income neighborhoods benefit from the dispersal of unruly, poor residents and the in-migration of middle-income residents has emerged as a 'common sense' logic. This idea that 'bad' residents should be dispersed from disinvested neighborhoods is the same one underpinning state policies that displace low-income people of color and fuel the suburbanization of poverty, from the federal HOPE VI program that excluded people with felonies from living in new developments to municipal, state-sponsored 'greening' gentrification projects (Checker 2011). While the idea of dispersing people in this way has emerged, within the limitations of this framework, as the only solution in crime-ridden neighborhoods, both 'bad' (displaceable) and 'good' (respectable) residents have been widely dispersed through the displacement paradigm with no choice in the matter (Goetz 2013). As a consequence of HOPE VI, for example, Goetz (2013) shows that poverty has generally become concentrated in other places rather than eliminated. This paradigm moves the deep marginalization that fuels crime from one place to another, and moving such

problems around perpetuates the links between poor neighborhoods and racially biased criminal justice systems (Alexander 2012). The inability of the formerly incarcerated to access stable housing, for example, is linked to recidivism (National Health Care for the Homeless Council 2013). If these systemic issues are not resolved and are replaced instead with the exploitative logic of displacement-based policy, somebody always has to live next door to a house whose residents traffic illegal drugs.

The next chapter focuses on Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) national conferences, where participants discuss these systemic, racialized issues explicitly, and place them at the heart of a Christian agenda for racial justice. Speaking at a different tenor from the South Atlanta residents chronicled in these previous two chapters, CCDA leaders advocate for Black lives, migrants' rights, and recognition of stolen Native land. At the same time, I argue that a focus on and sanctification of market-based community development strategies lack the tools needed to actualize these racial justice aims.

CHAPTER 6: MARKET SOLUTIONS FOR BLACK LIVES

i. Introduction

While the previous chapters examined geographies of race and religion in the South Atlanta neighborhood, I examine here the broader Christian community development network of which FCS is a member, and outline the transcendent geographies of race that emerge from it. CCD practitioners frequently focus on neighborhoods that have characteristics in common with South Atlanta, specifically, low-income neighborhoods of color with histories of racial segregation and disinvestment and positioned at the cusp of gentrifying processes. Because of this commonality, the participant narratives in this chapter can be read as speaking about neighborhoods that are like South Atlanta, yet also distinct from it.

Drawing on participant observation notes from the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) conference circuit and examination of CCDA publications on- and offline from 2014-15, I show in this chapter that CCDA leaders put forth a narrative about the faith-based imperative to challenge systemic racism. Their collective agenda prioritizes ending police shootings of unarmed Black men, drawing attention to the unfinished projects of settler colonialism in the United States and Palestine, and advocating the rights of migrants to remain in the United States after unlawful entry. From the President

of CCDA to first-time workshop facilitators, I show that CCDA leaders promote a vision that pushes past the individualism typically associated with American evangelicalism and presents a more communitarian approach to racial justice. The leaders who put forth this vision are majority-minority, with a number of prominent Black voices. In contrast to this vision, I argue that CCDA practitioners' attempts to transform material conditions in low-income minority neighborhoods are stuck in that individualistic framework, putting forth neoliberal approaches to community development. Conference workshops meant to directly address material inequalities at the neighborhood level primarily focus on entrepreneurship, impact investment, privately funded housing developments, and other 'market solutions'. I ultimately argue that while CCDA leaders articulate transcendent geographies that pose a powerful challenge to normative ways of understanding space—specifically, those that have primarily benefited white people--the faith-based organization's 'best practices' have not yet caught up to these ways of seeing because they revolve around market-based strategies that cannot tackle the scope of the racialized problems posed by CCDA leaders. In fact, this focus on 'market solutions' contributes to the spatialization of Blackness that emerges in Chapters 4 and 5 in which inclusion for some Black people comes at the exclusion of others.

As Chapter 3 detailed, the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) emerged from John Perkins' 1960s civil rights work, and became a formal organization in 1989. Its member organizations, including FCS, are asked to follow a set of core principles including but not limited to the three 'Rs' of

redistribution, relocation, and reconciliation. Other principles include “leadership development” and “listening to the community” (CCDA 2018). While these principles are meant to create common ground among member organizations, there is not a strong top-down structure wherein CCDA leaders at the national level dictate specific policies and practices to members. However, CCDA hosts an annual conference that serves as a meeting point for members to learn best practices of Christian community development. Annual conferences typically have a one-word theme, and the ones I attended were called Flourish (2014, Raleigh, North Carolina) and Illuminate (2015, Memphis, Tennessee). At these conferences, CCDA board members and other influential members set the tone through their keynote speeches, their own books displayed in prominent places, and many email, blog, and other social media live updates. I interpreted the conferences, taken together with CCDA’s year-round social media, as serving as a bird’s-eye representation of the organization’s values and practices.

ii. A Faith-Based Racial Justice Agenda at CCDA

CCDA leaders and participants articulate a deep concern for racial justice, settler colonialism in contemporary land issues, and issues of displacement and disappearance. They characterize these as profane geographies in need of transcendent action. Official CCDA blog posts authored by the organization’s leaders frankly discuss these topics, and at conferences, keynote speakers and workshop leaders address them in prominent forums. Like CCDA’s leadership, conference keynote speakers are nearly all people of color, and most keynote

speakers are only well-known within CCDA and adjacent spheres. The Reverend Alexia Salvatierra, for example, is a past keynote speaker who co-wrote “Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World” (2013) published by InterVarsity Press, directs a statewide interfaith alliance in California, and speaks frequently at seminaries, churches, and faith-based events. Whereas thousands of CCDA conference attendees attend keynote speeches at once, thus setting the tone for the whole conference, workshops are attended by smaller groups. Some workshop leaders are also keynote speakers or other CCDA figureheads, but nonprofit workers, pastors, counselors, businesspeople, and artists also guide workshop sessions. These three forums—blog posts by CCDA leaders, keynote speeches, and workshops—are prime venues for articulating CCDA’s organizational values. In these spaces, people explicitly and passionately discuss themes of racial justice, including gender and class intersections; settler colonialism in the United States; and the impact of immigration politics on impacted communities, including Black-Brown alliances.

Articulating racial justice in the ‘Kingdom of God’

CCDA leaders took public stances to condemn the 2014 murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and to support the emerging movement for Black lives. This outpouring of anger and support took place most notably in a series of CCDA blog posts, and demonstrates the organization’s commitment to racial justice issues at the time. A blog post by CCDA President Noel Castellanos compared the Ferguson shooting to the plight of unaccompanied minors entering

the U.S. from Central America and children suffering in war zones in Iraq, Israel, and Gaza (Christian Community Development Association 2014a). After it was announced that a grand jury would not indict Darren Wilson, the police officer who killed Brown, CCDA published responses to the grand jury's decision from a wide array of members, all of whom characterized the decision as an outsize injustice. The executive director of Mission Year, an urban ministry program that has a highly visible presence within CCDA, posted a "Lamentation for Ferguson," which noted that Mission Year staff had read this lamentation aloud on their "weekly prayer call" to address their collective "disappointment, pain, and anger" (Casselberry 2014). Then, the CCDA Biblical Justice Committee posted a "Response to the Killing of Unarmed Black Citizens" on Dec. 15, 2014:

> As ambassadors of reconciliation and representatives of the Kingdom of God, we fundamentally oppose the epidemic of unarmed black men being killed by police officers. We mourn with the families and communities who have lost loved ones; we weep, grieve, and lament alongside of them. Additionally, we acknowledge that there have been a number of other cases within many of our communities where lives have been taken in similar fashion, only to be overlooked by the media and our nation. These losses are just as tragic.
>
> …
>
> We also want to proclaim that we believe that black lives matter, both to us and to God. For us, this is a theological statement rooted in the Imago

> Dei, one that declares that all people are divinely endowed as image bearers of the Creator.
>
> Over the course of our nation's history, we have deemed black life as criminal, inferior, and subhuman—even going as far as legally constituting black people as property instead of humans. We believe that in stating black lives matter, we declare that the lives of those who have been rendered "the least of these" matter.
>
> (Christian Community Development Association 2014b)

This post refers to CCDA members' familiarity with the fatal results of racial profiling "in our communities," followed by the assertion that *black lives matter*, the phrase that became a trigger point in the national conversation on police shootings of unarmed Black men and women. Further, the post situates anti-Black racism as embedded in the history and present of the United States. By asserting that "black lives matter, both to us and to God," the authors suggest a serious conflict between the nation's grim legacy of anti-black violence and the theological concept that all people are created in the image of God.

Intersections of race, class, and gender in the pursuit of racial justice emerged in CCDA conference workshops. In 2014-15, I attended two workshop sessions (one each year) led by two different churches that addressed remarkably similar themes. Both churches were led by pastor teams each consisting of a Black woman and a white man. In the first year, pastors from a small church in Durham, North Carolina led a session on their church's attempts

to build racial reconciliation, an important theme in CCDA that partly translates into efforts to build interracial church communities. Clive, the white male pastor, shared his observations that a veneer of racial reconciliation can allow white churchgoing norms such as music preferences to be “held up, glorified, [and] solidified” while non-white congregants are pushed to assimilate into white norms. Using religious language to frame white people’s responsibilities in this realm, he said, “in my collective identity of whiteness, I'm the crucifier . . . the crucified ones [should] drive the agenda and terms of Reconciliation” (participant observation notes, September 2014). His Black co-pastors affirmed this interpretation. At the 2015 conference, a co-pastor pair from Atlanta expressed some similar observations from their church ‘plant’ in the English Avenue/Vine City neighborhood, a historically Black area where a number of faith-based intentional neighbors live. The female pastor, Catherine, pointed out that gentrification (her term) in the neighborhood meant that more white people were attending the church. Along with tensions about how a “mixed race church” should look, she said, there was a struggle to move beyond “surface level diversity” (participant observation notes, November 2015). While these Atlanta pastors were more reserved in their critiques of white participants, their well-attended session directly confronted themes of race and interracial power imbalances in the context of transcendent geographies.

Nuances of gender and class within racial justice also emerged from these workshops. For example, the pastors from the Atlanta church discussed how some churchgoers are surprised to see a Black woman in leadership position.

They suggested that Black congregants more often expect to see men as pastors, and noted that some would-be Black congregants rejected the church because of discomfort with a Black female pastor. Tim, the white male pastor, added that he tries to disrupt congregants' perceptions that Catherine is his assistant rather than co-pastor through tactics such as going to the bathroom during meetings "so they have to talk to her". Catherine affirmed, "Pastor Tim has learned how to ascribe power to me so that I can be heard in conversation ... If I didn't point it out for him in the beginning it would never even occur to him" (participant observation notes, November 2015). Both pastors framed this power-sharing as a way to model God's kingdom, citing Old and New Testament passages. Gloria, the Black female pastor from Durham, similarly noted that when people look to her white male co-pastor for authority, he purposely turns to her and asks, "Gloria, what is your response?" In addition to these gender nuances, Gloria also spoke about class tensions as a Black, middle-class intentional neighbor. "I'm of color, but also of privilege," she said, and "if I transfer that to my own community, I would begin to colonize my own people." For example, she continued,

> "If I tell a pregnant woman, 'you have to keep that baby', I go home to my husband and she may go home to violence. If I'm not gonna get in there and help her raise her baby, I need to keep my mouth shut. [We can] oppress people further and not even realize it."
>
> (participant observation notes, September 2014)

In this example, she presented a careful analysis of race, class, and gender politics at once. By suggesting that it may not always be appropriate to discourage abortion, still a touchstone issue in many evangelical communities, she firmly placed Christian community development practices within an intersectional framework.

Seeing Brown in Jesus' crowds

In addition to this 'race talk' on intersectional Black issues, CCDA leaders also talked about justice for Latin American immigrants, Native Americans, Palestinians, and other people of color. A conference workshop that took place at both CCDA conferences I attended, and has been a regular workshop since at least 2009, addressed "Black Brown Partnerships" (participant observation notes, September 2014). Leroy Barber, formerly of FCS Ministries in Atlanta and former director of CCDA-adjacent Mission Year, and the Reverend Alexia Salvatierra, discussed above, led the session. Barber opened the session by recounting his experience as a Black man visiting Ferguson, Missouri in the wake of Michael Brown's murder. This visit, he recalled, coincided with CCDA President Noel Castellanos' trip to the U.S.-Mexico border to support a wave of unaccompanied child migrants from Central America seeking asylum. Barber posed a parallel between these two situations: unaccompanied children on the border, he suggested, had much in common with a community under military lockdown in Ferguson, even though "dividing walls" persist between Brown and Black communities. "Our role as the body of Christ," he said, is to heal Black-Brown

tension just as “Jesus broke down dividing walls through giving us peace.” Barber gave examples of Black-Brown unity reached through a faith-based commitment to breaking down these walls. One story involved Black and Hispanic church leaders who realized they both felt used by police and government officials, who would call on them to smooth over race-related public relations issues. Another involved Black hotel workers welcoming undocumented workers into a union fight when previously, “[Black workers] thought [immigrants] were taking [their] jobs away but realized the company was giving them away” (participant observation notes, September 2014). These examples illustrate a sophisticated level of thinking around interracial solidarities, while at the same time using Christian frameworks.

Influential CCDA figures also brought attention to people of color who suffer because of border disputes in the United States and Israel. Noel Castellanos frequently wrote about immigration issues on the CCDA blog. In one key post, he compared Central American child migrants to Michael Brown and “children in Iraq, Israel, and Gaza being killed and displaced by war and conflict,” and referred to a gospel of Mark passage (10:13-14) in which Jesus tells his followers that “mistreating children and not coming to their aid is unacceptable” (Christian Community Development Association 2014a). A 2015 conference keynote speaker, the Reverend Alexia Salvatierra, urged audience members to see migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border as Jesus saw ‘the crowds’ in the gospel of Matthew: “When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them” (Matthew 9:36). In the face of human suffering, Salvatierra said, "[Jesus] runs

with his light towards the darkness" (participant observation notes, November 2015). Here, she used the familiar device of encouraging believers to emulate Jesus's actions in his lifetime according to Gospel stories. In addition to Salvatierra, keynote speakers at the same conference included a secular Israeli man who served three prison sentences for refusing Israel Defense Forces (IDF) conscription and a Palestinian Christian man who runs a nonprofit dedicated to ending the Israeli occupation through nonviolent action. These two men spoke to the necessity of faith in the face of the occupation, the error of perceiving Israel or Palestine as chosen lands according to any particular religion, and the human cost of suffering caused by heavily militarized borders.

Finally, critiques of racial injustice using the frame of settler colonialism also emerged within prominent CCDA forums. For example, a Native American faith-based activist named Charles Robinson integrated these themes with a scathing critique of nationalist Christianity in the 2015 CCDA conference opening keynote speech. Then-board member Mark Charles, who noted that his (Mark's) father is Navajo, introduced Robinson, who wore a feather headdress, by telling the audience that "This session will make you uncomfortable. It should make you uncomfortable. We need that . . . we are sitting on stolen land . . . the land title, the house you bought is on stolen land". This introduction set the tone for Robinson's keynote speech, which he started by saying,

> "We welcome you to the Choctaw lands. [. . .] I have some news for you: you are not God's chosen people and this is not your promised land . . . the USA does not have a land covenant with the God of Abraham".

He followed, "There is no such thing as a Christian nation; it doesn't exist biblically." Citing colonial dispossession, slavery, internment camps, and mass incarceration, he argued that Christians must recognize that "we are rich and powerful because . . . we are systemically unjust". Christians must "truly sit in [their] brokenness . . . shed[ding] the belief that [they] live in a Christian nation" and seeing themselves as simply 'of God'. Robinson cited 2 Chronicles 7:14 in the Old Testament to reassure audience members that if such a transformation happens among American Christians, "[God] will forgive their sin and heal their land" (participant observation notes, November 2015). When Robinson finished speaking, he received a standing ovation; the conference ballroom where keynotes took place held up to 2,900 people and was almost full. His speech substantially engaged with politics of displacement, and he risked alienating his Christian audience by directly implicating a theology that equates God and nation in the genocide of Native people and violent removal processes. Instead of alienating them, Robinson, who is a CCDA board member as of 2018, received overwhelmingly positive crowd feedback for suggesting that American Christians must fully repent for these dispossessions.

Transcendent geographies of race

Taken together, these examples ranging from first-time workshop leaders to the CCDA President demonstrate a strong interest in racial justice from an evangelical perspective. Heltzel (2009) and Marsh (2005) show us that progressive traditions have long existed among American evangelicals,

particularly along racial lines, although large numbers of white, conservative evangelicals shift the hard-to-define denominational orientation towards a conservative image. While Heltzel (2009) acknowledges some of CCDA's civil rights origin story, the organization's contemporary racial politics remain under-recognized in analysis of evangelical communities. As I show, CCDA gives platforms to numerous voices that put forth bold rhetoric around race and, importantly, geographies of race.

If these voices are read together as an argument about the geographies of race, we might first reference one of the blog posts on Michael Brown and Black Lives Matter, which emphasizes that "within many of our communities . . . lives have been taken in similar fashion, only to be overlooked by the media and our nation" (Christian Community Development Association 2014b). This post echoes the theme in the Black geographies literature in which criminalized, dehumanized Black subjects are systemically contained or hidden from view. And yet, the framing of 'our communities' suggests that the CCDA community, with its emphasis on middle-class people working in low-income, segregated neighborhoods, has some access to this hidden geographical knowledge. From the vantage point of 'our communities,' the much greater scope of loss of Black lives is visible. The multiracial church pastors' discussions similarly suggest that from the vantage point of 'doing CCDA', which involves intentionally stepping into mixed-race, mixed-income settings, the nuances of gender and class within Black spaces are more visible. By pairing white male and Black female pastors in a multiracial congregation, for example, CCDA practitioners are able to witness

Black and white congregants alike struggling to accept Black women standing at the pulpit instead of sitting in the pews.

The above examples also draw geographical imaginaries connecting racialized violence 'here' (Ferguson, the U.S.-Mexico border, the U.S. as a whole) and 'there' (Gaza, Israel, Iraq, Central America). These imaginaries are used to draw urgency to the struggles happening in 'our communities'. As well as place comparisons, they also outline connections between disparate sites of racial violence. In his keynote speech, for example, the Native advocate Charles Robinson referenced a "dominant white majority that remembers discovery, exceptionalism [and] [m]inority communities that remember slavery . . . mass incarceration, [and] stolen lands" (participant observation notes, November 2015). CCDA practitioners and leaders suggest that failing to make such connections between sites of racial violence has destructive consequences, as in the workshop that identified Black-Brown divisions as obstacles to the goals of Black and Brown communities to be free from racialized disenfranchisement.

All of these examples are also deliberately couched in religious language at virtually every turn. CCDA leaders imbue the phrase 'black lives matter' with transcendent meaning by adding "both to us and to God," and using a theological concept, the Imago Dei, that could just as easily be used to frame an 'all lives matter' argument. They pair that concept with the gospel of Matthew's attention to 'the least of these' to justify focusing on Black lives, and importantly, they note that Black lives "*have been rendered* the least of these" (emphasis mine), which draws attention to the social construction rather than naturalization of Blackness

as inferior to whiteness. Castellanos applies one of Jesus's moral lessons to the mistreatment of Brown children across the world, while Salvatierra elevates migrants to the status of New Testament figures. These connections made between social issues and religion also include challenges to normative theologies. Charles Robinson's rejection of a "land covenant with the God of Abraham" and the United States poses a direct affront to, for example, American Christians who vote for nationalist policies on the grounds of such policies' rightness according to God.

Here, religious meaning emphasizes the urgency of the need to transform space in the pursuit of racial justice. By connecting contemporary problems to sacred stories from thousands of years ago (e.g. Gospel passages about Jesus's life), and suggesting that an omniscient higher being is invested in them, these speakers sanctify struggles for racial justice. Further, in this framework, racial inequality becomes profane and insulting to God. The CCDA speakers rhetorically transform profane spaces, such as the street where Michael Brown's dead body lay for four hours, into sacred spaces, based on the argument that his life had profound meaning in the eyes of God. In turn, they urge their audiences to turn the profane into the sacred through the practice of Christian community development. With God on their side, they suggest, CCDA practitioners have the power to transform space in ways that undo long historical geographies of oppression. In other words, they articulate transformative faith-based geographies around race, or a framework that invokes religious meaning as it

calls for a profound reworking of spatialities that are thoroughly intertwined with white supremacy.

iii. Market Transformation?

In the midst of these transformative geographies around race, borders, and settler colonialism at home and abroad, there is dissonance in CCDA spaces around *how* to transform inequities in the context of low-income urban neighborhoods, which are the primary focus of CCDA member organizations' work. Specifically, a predominant focus on 'market solutions' within CCDA significantly limits the imaginative scope of responses to large-scale injustices. As I show in this section, sessions on impact investing and social entrepreneurship advise Christian community development practitioners to think small and to work outside structures of governance. Some discussions on housing are also framed within this narrow lens. This de-emphasis on the state's role in structural racism and the implication that faith-based groups can fill chasms left by the state fits well with Hackworth's (2012) concept of religious neoliberalism. However, I highlight an affordable housing working group within CCDA that rejects this framework and combines nonprofit programming with a policy coalition. I argue this group has the most potential to reconcile CCDA practices with the transformative rhetoric used by speakers and other leaders.

Social enterprise and entrepreneurship

At the 2015 Market Solutions for Community Transformation, a day-long preconference institute prior to the full CCDA National Conference in Memphis, speakers promoted small-scale impact investing as a way to support entrepreneurs in low-income communities. One speaker in a panel discussion, Joel, laid out the justification for doing this, noting that wealth created in places like Memphis is "based on not treating people well." Yet "God owns it all, so we're managing somebody else's stuff, [and] that somebody is the creator," said another panelist named Rex, and thus Christians should give "joyfully, generously, [and] sacrificially." Joel followed that the Christian perspective also means understanding that "capital is to do awesome stuff with, not to get more capital," and to emphasize "relationships [and] getting all of us around the common table" over business interests (participant observation notes, November 2015). The two men's framework here lays a foundation for impact investing as a way to right social wrongs rather than turn a profit.

Joy, another speaker on impact investing, emphasized the practice as primarily symbolic and for the purposes of relationship-building. She shared that in her experience working with churches, congregants feel uneasy acting as investors rather than charitable donors. To combat this discomfort, she challenges churches to go out into their communities, approach promising storefronts, and offer to make only small loans. "We are not going to transform capital availability for small businesses in the United States," she followed, but by practicing "not big grandiose gestures . . . so much of our faith is about not

practicing such gestures," churches learn to form financial relationships "that would reflect God's kingdom". A final panelist on impact investing similarly urged a "small is beautiful approach, while we're waiting for the macro magic wand" to resolve issues of access to capital in marginalized neighborhoods (participant observation notes, November 2015). While these speakers emphasized impact investing as a powerful alternative finance tool for building church-community relationships and addressing inequalities, they also framed it as a small-scale practice to be done on a piecemeal, community-by-community basis.

The Market Solutions preconference and multiple regular conference sessions in 2014-15 also heavily focused on social enterprise and entrepreneurship as tools of empowerment and agency for marginalized people of color in cities, including people with criminal records. Social enterprises such as Clarkston, Georgia-based Refugee Beads are also dotted throughout vendor areas at the conference (participant observation notes, September 2014, November 2015). Whereas social enterprises were often framed as businesses started by CCDA practitioners meant to benefit communities rather than increase profit margins, entrepreneurship programs were presented as ways to help individual people in marginalized neighborhoods to start their own profitable businesses. Joel, the impact investing presenter mentioned above, also talked about his ministry's social enterprise coffee shop on the south side of Chicago, which uses a municipal grant to train local teenaged workers (Dolinsky 2014). This model of using grant funding or donations to supplement a small business before it becomes profitable is similar to Community Grounds, the coffee shop

and small grocery store run by FCS in South Atlanta. Another Market Solutions 2015 presenter talked about his thrift store social enterprise program in Nashville that trains women to work “meaningful, sustainable jobs with a living wage” of at least twelve dollars an hour. “Because we were . . . successful we decided we should share that profit with our employees,” he followed, which meant taking 15 percent of profit and dividing it between all employees. After anxiety about whether the program would work, the presenter said, he heard a message from God: “If we’ll take care of the people in this neighborhood then he'll take care of the rest” (participant observation notes, November 2015). Social enterprises were thus framed as ways to create good service industry jobs in disinvested neighborhoods for people with little access to such jobs otherwise.

Presenters discussed entrepreneurship as a further step towards not just good jobs, but wealth creation in poor communities. A Black woman named Alexis, who works as a business startup advisor in low-income communities in Chattanooga, led a talk called Empowering Entrepreneurs at the 2015 Market Solutions preconference. Alexis argued that people in marginalized communities are full of creativity, but "their dreams can die when they do not have the right resources.” Profiling a woman who started a successful transportation business after participating in an entrepreneurship training program, Alexis made the case for developing similar support programs throughout the U.S., asserting that when “you economically empower a woman, you can change a community.” Juanita, also a Black woman who cultivates would-be entrepreneurs in low-income communities of color, shared that when she started doing her work, she quickly

realized that many people were already entrepreneurs running businesses, “some of them legal, some not.” She followed,

> "People are running their own businesses anyway but we have the responsibility to help to move them to profitable businesses . . . moving that line of poverty going into a more positive direction . . . [we need to] figure out from them how we can help them rather than taking the notion that we already know and that we're going to teach them."

When people learn how to open their own bank account, she finished, they take pride in "the fact that they can actually make a living doing their hustle." Joy, the impact investment speaker discussed earlier, pointed out that for many people emerging from the prison system, self-employment or “micro-business” is the only option, which makes it even more socially important to “support [the] most at risk communities in self-employment” (participant observation notes, November 2015). These speakers presented an entrepreneurship ethos that tries to put economic power in the hands of people systemically shut out from well-compensated jobs, and they also argued that CCDA practitioners should not approach such people with any condescension or sense of knowing their needs better than them. At the same time, they situated the tools of empowerment squarely in the realm of the free market. Marginalized people need to learn how to better access the financial mainstream, the argument implies, and the exclusive structure of those mainstream financial institutions, such as banks, is not really questioned.

Market solutions to affordable housing

CCDA also presents a number of market-based responses to housing and neighborhood development issues. Housing issues were not discussed in the Market Solutions 2015 preconference, other than a brief 'shark tank' session where one man presented an idea to turn a low-income housing project into a mixed-income development. However, in other conference spaces, presenters suggested market-based strategies to address housing issues in cities. For example, in a daylong housing preconference session in 2014 meant to function as a "a participatory first step toward an official CCDA "best practice," several presenters focused on housing developments that mostly relied on private funding. Jim, a developer in Oakland, said that he thinks community is important, and in particular intentional Christian communities. He helped to develop an interfaith infill co-housing community in Temescal, Oakland, California, which he called an "averagely depressed" neighborhood. While he presented the housing development, called Temescal Commons, as a meaningful community resource, it is difficult to see it as an affordability solution. A 1,356 sq. ft. condominium in Temescal Commons was recently estimated at $982,293 on Zillow, which compares to a median home value in the Temescal neighborhood of $1,089,800 (up from $728,000 in 2014) (Zillow 2018c, d). These figures also contradict the idea that the neighborhood is somewhat depressed (or was in 2014), even in the context of the Bay Area. Another presenter, Susan, discussed her work building an intentional neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina, "where people with disabilities are at the center." Private funding from community members, she

noted, allowed the development of the neighborhood, called North Street Community (participant observation notes, September 2014). Finally, a third presenter referenced a faith-based fruit company in Washington state whose owners built two affordable housing developments for employees and their families, again relying on private funding from the company's profit.

As previously discussed, FCS's gentrification with justice strategy is a market-based approach because it uses substantial private funding (though paired with HUD and municipal funds), and relies on individual households that elect to move to South Atlanta as intentional neighbors. The strategy also ideologically adheres to an ethos wherein FCS populates the neighborhood with mixed-income housing and neighbors as "a conduit to bring the market back to the neighborhood, as FCS President Jim Wehner told me in an interview (June 15, 2015). FCS's strategy provides one of the dominant paradigms around housing in CCDA spaces, and this influence is reflected widely in conference sessions, key books, and CCDA-adjacent programs. In multiple conference sessions and informal discussions in 2014-15, participants referred to FCS's housing program as a model for other cities—specifically, the practice of rehabilitating and building low- and market-rate housing using primarily private funds. For example, in a 2014 housing symposium preconference session, a presenter described this work, and mixed-income developments more generally, as a 'best practice' affordable housing strategy (participant observation notes, September 2014). Similarly, conference presenters and participants cited FCS's intentional neighboring strategy as a model for CCDA founder John Perkins'

original ‘three Rs’ principle of relocation. An example that typifies this influence emerged in an informal discussion group on racial reconciliation at the 2014 conference. In this discussion, a white participant explained that Bob Lupton’s popular book *Toxic Charity* led her to learn about FCS, which then influenced her decision to become an intentional neighbor in her home city.

Other influential voices in CCDA follow the FCS ethos quite closely. In his book *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood When God Is at the Center* (2015), CCDA President Noel Castellanos encourages readers to follow re-neighboring practices that he calls ‘*gente*fication’, which plays on the Spanish word for ‘people’ to emphasize the centrality of relationships between intentional neighbors and long-term residents. The book has been prominently featured in CCDA conferences through a pop-up bookstore, conference promotional materials, Castellanos’ own keynote speeches, and even workshops dedicated to discussing its contents. Castellanos characterizes the neighborhood where he is an intentional faith-based neighbor, La Villita in Chicago, as at low risk for gentrification. However, a number of news articles point to La Villita residents’ increasing concerns about gentrification partly due to an urban greening trail project that will run through the neighborhood (Serrato 2014, 2017; Greenfield 2016). Like FCS, Castellanos’ message suggests that gentrification in places like La Villita can be a good thing if done correctly as neighborly *gente*. Similarly, Mission Year, a large CCDA member organization that advertises prominently at CCDA conferences, focuses on recruiting young Christians to move into urban neighborhoods. While its website

embraces thoughtfully considered principles such as ‘Diversity & Solidarity’ with low-income residents, the only reference to housing is a call to see “neighborhoods revitalized” (Mission Year 2017). Here, too, the focus is moving people into neighborhoods rather than combating the vulnerability of such neighborhoods to market forces.

An affordable housing network within CCDA stands out in these market-based housing approaches. A loosely affiliated group of affordable housing advocates have hosted a pre-conference, workshops, and ‘Action Tank’ sessions since 2014. The description of the Action Tank, an in-depth session intended for experienced CCD practitioners, in the 2014 conference program encapsulates the work of these advocates:

> “While building and rehabbing housing is a significant part of CCD ministries, these efforts are not keeping pace with the rising cost of housing. Many of our low income neighbors can no longer afford to live in our communities. Action: Considering how both Joseph and Esther advocated with their governments to save a people from hunger and destruction, this Action Tank will consider policies that prevent displacement—policies that CCDA can support at local, state and national levels.” (CCDA National Conference 2014)

This emphasis on both displacement, often elided in re-neighboring discussions, and policy advocacy, instead of building and rehabilitating housing, marks two important shifts. First, it positions the work of stopping displacement as essential to community development practice, and it conceptualizes CCDA’s work at the

municipal level, where it has typically been focused at the neighborhood level with a handful of national campaigns on issues like immigration. Following the 2014 conference, leaders of these sessions formed an affordable housing network for CCD practitioners called CCDA Housing Advocacy, and hosted a monthly phone call that I followed for nearly three years. The monthly calls cover a range of affordability and anti-displacement policies, and discuss strategies for implementing them in municipalities across the U.S. For example, one of the group's leaders works with faith-based and secular progressive groups with large bases to build a multi-pronged housing policy agenda in Pasadena, California that includes housing trust funds, community land trusts, tax credits, legalizing accessory dwellings, and inclusionary zoning (participant observation notes, 2014-2016). This group's willingness to put such an emphasis on displacement, and to direct resources towards preventing it, sends a clear message that within the work of Christian community development, which has for so long focused on a market-friendly strategy of reinvesting in neighborhoods conceptualized as under-resourced, it is critical to address the negative consequences of capital influx into the built environment.

Transcendence and the problem with market solutions

In all, CCDA dedicated significant time and resources at 2014-15 conferences to this market-based framework. Within this framework, many of the participants above drew on transcendent concepts to suggest a "small is beautiful" approach to community development that relies on private funding.

First, multiple presenters emphasized that because money is a resource from God, it should be used for human wellbeing rather than simply for further accumulation. In this view of the transcendent, humans are stewards of God's resources and should use them carefully to build relationships that "reflect God's Kingdom," as Joy said. Secondly, many presenters focused on only symbolic or small amounts of money, and some connected this small scale to transcendence as well. While Joy said that a faith-based approach to impact investing is specifically *not* about big gestures such as transforming capital availability for small businesses, the social enterprise manager spoke to his sense that "If we'll take care of the people in this neighborhood then [God will] take care of the rest." As for the housing developments, conference participants emphasized the carefully cultivated Christian values undergirding each project. Further, while FCS's gentrification with justice strategy has a broader scope than a single development, it focuses on one neighborhood at a time. In these various strategies, what one Market Solutions presenter called the "macro magic wand" is positioned as outside the realm of action for CCD practitioners, and the focus is squarely on small-scale, privately funded programs (participant observation notes, November 2015).

These transcendent geographies connect to participants' racialized understandings of urban space in two key ways, the latter of which seems discordant with the first part of this chapter. First, several participants spoke about the spatialized oppression of people of color in ways that echoed the CCDA leaders discussed earlier. For example, the entrepreneurship presenters

spoke to entrepreneur training as a way to counter patterns of containment, specifically mass incarceration and post-incarceration barriers to employment, that impact communities of color. The same presenters argued that people of color in low-income, marginalized neighborhoods already have the geographical knowledge of localized markets necessary to succeed in a business, and they simply lack access to mainstream financial institutions.

Secondly, these participants' overall focus on "small is beautiful" strategies suggest spatial understandings that bump up against the transcendent race geographies discussed earlier, simply because the earlier examples suggested that much greater transformation of unjust, racialized spaces is necessary. If one thinks of the keynote speakers' and other CCDA leaders as posing the problems and the latter examples the framework to approach those problems, an important question emerges: can market-based strategies tackle the scope of structural racism expressed by the CCDA blog posts on police brutality, the interracial church pastors, and the Native leader talking about stolen land?

I argue that they cannot do so. Social enterprise and entrepreneurship training programs may provide meaningful work to a small number of people, but cannot redress structural barriers by themselves. Speakers at the Market Solutions preconference argued that entrepreneurship training programs should be expanded in low-income communities. An infusion of funding for such programs, especially if built into municipal budgets or at other levels of government, could certainly result in material benefits for many people disenfranchised from adequately compensated work. However, relying on

building private businesses is problematic when so many people are structurally marginalized in ways that the market cannot remedy. As the CCDA presenters recognized, low-income people of color face labor market barriers such as geographical isolation, class and race markers that hinder their access to capital, and professional networks that systemically exclude minority-owned businesses. If we already know that low-income people of color face these barriers, why assume that becoming an entrepreneur would remove them? Even further, if a private foundation or government body put funding into entrepreneurship programs and participants failed to build unsuccessful businesses, it would still be easy to blame poor people for their own failures rather than these structural disadvantages. At the very least, social enterprise and entrepreneurship should be envisioned as small parts of a much larger agenda to reconfigure policy and workplace norms in pursuit of racial justice

All of this points to the paucity of a worldview in which work assigns value to people's lives. At one end of a spectrum, this ideology can come across as empowering. For example, some of the above examples are thoughtful and well-aligned with the intersectional racial justice agenda presented by conference speakers. Alexis's and Juanita's assertions that people in their predominantly Black neighborhoods already know how to be entrepreneurs, but lack the resources to participate in the formal economy, pushes back against the pervasive idea that Black people are inferior rather than grossly disenfranchised. At the other end of the spectrum, though, this way of seeing work has troubling implications. The same man who started the profit-sharing thrift store in Nashville

opened his presentation by telling a jarring story about his first experience with social enterprise. On a trip to Malawi, the man visited a prison full of inmates dying from famine. Noticing that the prison “had hundreds, maybe thousands of acres of land, men who could work, and water,” he thought, why not “put these men to work” to raise food for inmates and their families? For only $30,000, he finished, “this was my first view of what a social enterprise could be.” In other words, he considered a program using captive, unpaid labor as comparable to a thrift shop program meant to empower women with living wages. On his end of the spectrum, people are quite literally forced into being empowered by means of their labor. The point of this last example is not to juxtapose it as a bad market solution compared to the good ones discussed earlier, but to recognize the issues with posing poverty capital (Roy 2010) as a balm for the inequities of capitalism. If we keep basing people’s humanity on their ability to work, a longstanding dualism between the deserving and undeserving poor will prevail.

Similarly, a focus on private funding and individual exceptionalism (e.g. intentional neighboring) cannot meet the scope of the housing affordability crisis in U.S. cities. In the context of heavy speculation and rapid property value increases, especially in cities like Oakland but increasingly in cities like Atlanta, relying on private funding for affordable housing is simply not viable. In addition, encouraging middle-class households to move into disinvested communities is also not adequate for creating decent, affordable neighborhoods, and it contributes, if only marginally from a bird’s-eye view, to gentrification. As in the previous paragraphs, privately funded intentional communities or affordable

developments could be part of a much broader agenda to comprehensively re-shape housing policy landscapes. Two essential components of this agenda include affordability mandates for any new developments or redevelopments, and targeted downzoning so that developers have to negotiate with municipal government to ensure that some planned units are affordable. It is also necessary to dramatically increase the supply of affordable housing while recognizing the right to stay put and honoring the cultural histories of low-income neighborhoods of color. Yet as with the entrepreneurship argument, the scope of change goes much deeper than policy. Just as work needs to be decoupled from the right to full humanity, the premise that it is valid to forcibly remove poor people of color from their homes needs to be retired too. The fundamental flaw of the mixed-income housing paradigm, for example, is the assumption that displacement of poor people is somehow for their own good, combined with the power and money to enact that vision.

These approaches ultimately outline frameworks that are too limited in scope to match the transcendent geographies around police brutality, border struggles, and settler colonialism offered by other CCDA leaders. There are some similarities between the geographies of race that undergird these two broad frameworks. In the Market Solutions preconference, speakers pose entrepreneurship as a means to address the containment, confinement, and isolation of people of color, especially Black people. For communities disproportionately impacted by mass incarceration and confined into low-wage work and segregated neighborhoods, entrepreneurship could be a hopeful tool to

reconfigure these geographies. However, as I just argued, entrepreneurship training programs are ill-equipped to successfully tackle the structural labor market disenfranchisement of people of color. Similarly, presenters like Alexis and Juanita recognize and honor the geographical knowledge of people most impacted by racism. Yet the potential to fully actualize this creativity, knowledge, and understanding of their own needs is again limited by a narrow focus on market solutions.

iv. Conclusions: Transcending the Market

Whereas market-based approaches are limited by their narrow scope, the work of the CCDA Housing Advocacy network is more equipped to tackle the structural injustices of displacement, dispossession, and disappearance to which keynote speakers and other CCDA leaders drew attention. Where the latter group articulated transcendent geographies of race, sanctifying struggles for racial justice in their communities, the Housing Advocacy group grounds these geographies in a set of practices. The group does the ideological work of rejecting displacement as an acceptable outcome, and meets the scope of the affordability crisis by focusing on the state as a site of transformation. They then sanctify this approach by comparing it to the lives of Old Testament figures, Joseph and Esther, claiming that they “advocated with their governments to save a people.” Finally, they point to specific policies and strategies to rework housing landscapes in equitable ways. In all, they articulate grounded geographies

around housing justice that come closer to matching the scope of an ambitious agenda for racial justice.

CCDA leaders who denounce settler colonialism, mass incarceration, racist police shootings, and unjust immigration policy in well-attended conference sessions and widely circulated blog posts could widen the scope of their narratives to include the injustice of displacement from neighborhoods. If these prominent figures could frame gentrification and displacement as one aspect of multi-faceted racialized injustice, and one that can partly be addressed by pressuring policy makers, they could push the organization towards a critical community development that looks beyond market-based approaches to affordable housing.

The first voices in this paper urge practitioners to do Christian community development in ways that change racially unjust conditions in U.S. cities. In doing so, they articulate the need for transcendent geographies of race that at once recognize the brutalities of containment and read possibilities for liberation in the landscape. Coming from CCDA leaders of color, including multiple Black leaders, we can understand this framework as situated in Black geographies, even as Black-Brown solidarities and the struggles of non-Black people of color are examined. The second group of voices, those from the Market Solutions preconference and related sessions, also articulate geographies of race that have some similar threads to the first group and are also, at times, resonant with Black geographical thought. I argue that while this second group offers ‘market solutions’ that cannot tackle the scope of the social problems posed by the first

group, the CCDA Housing Advocacy group outlines an agenda for grounded practices imbued with a scope and urgency that matches the first group. In other words, there are openings for fully fleshed out transcendent geographies of race to emerge and thrive in CCDA spaces, and to be enacted in the cities where CCDA practitioners live.

Whether these openings are adequate to make Christian community development into a vital force that advances the right to the city is another question. From one angle, a deeply conservative streak within the organization could hinder this work. Aside from the heavy focus on market strategies that I just discussed, I observed some evidence of backlash and conflict in response to a perception that CCDA figureheads are becoming increasingly outspoken. In a presentation and accompanying blog post titled “Cause or Community?,” FCS founder and former CCDA board member Bob Lupton criticized the organization’s shift toward advocacy, asking, “Are we a cause-oriented organization that stakes out the “right” position on divisive complex social issues like immigration? Or are we a people who strive to see all sides?” (Lupton 2015). In the bigger picture, CCDA is part of a long history of missionary or settler Christians traveling around the globe, imposing their worldview on peoples in the name of God. Especially if working in coalitions where one theological worldview is not able to dominate, CCDA groups could be powerful strategic allies in promoting the right to the city, particularly, as I argue here, in the sphere of land appropriation and displacement. In the next chapter, I further consider the

implications of Christian community development, including my findings from the past two chapters, for racial justice in the 21st century U.S. city.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

i. Responding to the Research Questions

In Chapters 1 and 2, I asked the following research question, which sits at the intersection of interdisciplinary 'race in the city' scholarship, Black geographies, and geographies of religion: **how do religious social welfare practices and geographies of race interact to shape urbanization processes in the racialized city?** Grounding this overarching question in the research sites of South Atlanta and the CCDA conference circuit, I asked:

1. How do Christian community development practitioners, and residents of the communities in which they practice, articulate racialized understandings of space?

2. How do Christian community development practitioners, and residents of the communities in which they practice, articulate faith-based or theologically inflected understandings of space?

3. How do these racialized and faith-based understandings of space shape processes of neighborhood change in U.S. cities?

Taken together, these research findings highlight the need to challenge and rework the 'common sense' logics understood as capable of transforming profane geographies into transcendent ones, if we are interested in geographies that center the 'right to stay put' rather than the racialized 'privilege to stay put'. I

first showed how participants intersected understandings of transcendence, race, and urban space in a variety of ways, demonstrating a process of identifying profane geographies of race that clashed with their understandings of the transcendent. I demonstrated many instances in which participants, not limited to Christian community development practitioners, explicitly connected faith-based understandings of space to racialized ones. I also showed that in some cases, different pieces of narrative about race and faith hung together in ways that, when read together, offered transcendent interpretations of racialized space.

Participants' transcendent geographies of race took on different tenors, but shared the common thread that some injustice has afflicted Black neighborhoods in cities, and some transcendent action(s) can and must redress it. In Chapters 4 and 5, some participants broadly envisioned white and Black people co-creating a neighborhood in which people care about their homes and love their neighbors, and in which municipal actors respond to residents' concerns. FCS representatives talked about intentional neighbors bringing capital and social capital to the neighborhood, softening the inevitable blow of gentrification with faith-based neighborly values. A range of participants framed transcendent geographies as spaces absent of racialized 'riffraff'; these participants included Black residents living in close proximity to violence, who might themselves be characterized as unwanted, displaceable subjects. In Chapter 6, transcendent geographies around race include an end to police violence and divide-and-conquer logics that separate Black and Latinx people,

and a rejection of the idea that colonized indigenous territory is the promised land of white Christians.

Second, I showed how participants identified certain 'secular' tools or logics as capable of changing profane geographies of race into transcendent ones, associating these with their understandings of the transcendent. In Chapter 4, I showed that intentional neighbors and long-time residents draw on faith and race concepts to articulate a certain agreement that FCS and intentional neighbors are a welcome presence in South Atlanta; this agreement rests on the market logic of the mixed-income framework in which middle-income residents, here racialized as white, bring needed capital and social capital to disinvested neighborhoods. In Chapter 5, I showed that transcendent concepts and racialized meanings come together to further emphasize a binary between good and bad neighbors, and to justify the movement of a displaceable subject 'somewhere else'; this racialized binary also follows the mixed-income logic. In Chapter 6, I further argued that faith-based understandings of racialized urban landscapes are constrained by the framework of 'market solutions'; here, I examine the dissonant juxtaposition of calls for transformative racial justice and small-scale social entrepreneurship, impact investing, and housing development programs. These market logics are *sanctified* because participants understood them as critical to the making of transcendent geographies.

Third, the issue with these logics is that leaving the problem of racial injustice to the market, specifically as it is embedded in the urban process, results in the lifting of a few metaphorical boats while the tide of society's

profound racism washes away the rest. In these chapters, we see a spatialization of Blackness in which inclusion for some Black people in livable urban spaces comes at the exclusion of others. In Chapters 4 and 5, these forms of inclusion and exclusion are made clear as residents draw lines between good and bad neighbors. While good neighbors are a mixed-race group, bad neighbors are consistently depicted as Black. Neighborhoods like South Atlanta often struggle with high crime rates, and crime victims are themselves frequently from marginalized racial groups. Yet an approach that focuses on pushing 'bad seeds' out of sight, rather than directing resources into criminal justice reform, reinforces this conditional inclusion of good Black subjects. Ex-felons may be able to become successful entrepreneurs, but only if they are able to successfully work the logic of the market. At the same time, lacking clear alternatives in the neoliberal city, residents perpetuate this paradigm even if they may be swept up as 'bad seeds' themselves.

These processes also reflect the legacies of Christian missionary practice, in some ways diffusely and others directly. Specifically, we can see this parallel in the practice of crossing socio-geographical lines of difference to enroll people into these normative logics, believing that they simply need better access to the economic mainstream. This legacy is diffuse in some ways. For example, CCDA was founded by a Black man who intended it as a project to build Black economic autonomy in the thick of the Civil Rights era. Today, CCDA's national organization is led by many people of color, and I showed in Chapter 6 that conferences served as a platform for explicit criticisms of indigenous erasure. At

the same time, founder John Perkins frequently referred to residents of poor, Black neighborhoods as *indigenous residents*, and Lupton (2007) also uses the term on occasion. Similarly, in places like South Atlanta, the movement of white Christians into Black neighborhoods brings to mind the racialized dynamics of missionary practice. A CCDA board member even called intentional neighbors "pioneers" (interview, September 2015). While intentional neighbors frequently talked about listening to long-time residents instead of telling them what to do, and there was no hint of religious conversion attempts in already deeply religious communities, these echoes of the missionary paradigm remain.

If coupled with the remaking of 'common sense' logics around urban spatial processes, could transcendence be a powerful tool for just cities? There is some transformative potential in the process of drawing on a higher power or other understanding of the transcendent, and then grounding it in something as practical as community development, carefully combing through the geographies of the neighborhood scale. For example, this research shows that transcendent perspectives motivate participants' attempts to reach far across social boundaries in spatial solidarity (Walter, Hankins, and Nowak 2017), while participants in Chapter 6 draw on understandings of the transcendent to set the moral basis for just geographies. By vesting everyday 'secular' geographies of race with transcendent meanings, such as the closure of the Gammon Street gate by Atlanta police, the participants in this research insist that these changes to the built environment really matter. This devotional attention to the quotidian

dynamics of race in the urban process could play an essential the making of just cities, as the impacts of change play out in these micro-geographical details.

ii. Specific Contributions to the Literature

From one angle, this research contributes to the literature on race and the gentrifying city, as it sketches the contours of alliances and points of disconnect between differently racialized people living in a developing neighborhood. It lends insight into the racialized dynamics unfolding in neighborhoods on the edge of gentrification, specifically around community development projects, through in-depth qualitative engagement with people living through changes in their neighborhood and participation on a conference circuit in which such issues are being discussed about multiple U.S. cities in similar situations. This is a lens that still receives inadequate scholarly attention. I do not follow Lance Freeman's arguments that some non-gentrifying residents living in neighborhoods like South Atlanta simply *like* gentrification. Rather, this research shows people across racial identities, but coming from significantly different positions of social power, wanting to live in neighborhoods without fear of violence, and with access to basic material needs, a sense of community, and reasonable certainty that their problems will be heard and addressed by municipal officials. In a very simplistic framework, one might say that the long-time residents benefit from this whirlwind of change, while the displaceable subjects lose out. However, as I have already argued, the binary between these 'good' and 'bad' neighbors is shaky, and people in both groups are vulnerable to displacement in multiple ways. This research contributes to the literature by showing how diverse residents draw new

boundaries in the context of changing neighborhoods to both include (Chapters 4 and 6) and exclude (Chapter 5) racialized subjects in and from urban space. These acts of inclusion and exclusion suggest both significant limitations and possibilities for 'just cities', which I discuss further below.

As Chapter 2 argued, while the 'race and the city' literature helps us to understand the racially unjust formation of US cities, the theoretical depth of Black geographies scholarship helps us to grasp the sociocultural complexity of how race is embedded in urban space. This research offers insight into key themes from the Black geographies literature, particularly themes of spatial confinement and containment, and the production of knowledge outside normative frameworks. In Chapter 4, long-time residents welcome intentional neighbors to South Atlanta, seeing their presence as a reversal from decades of spatial containment, from segregation to post-Civil Rights marginalization. In Chapter 5, unwanted people are to be contained 'somewhere else' other than South Atlanta, and transcendent concepts such as the Kingdom of God—and the question of who belongs in it--are used to justify this movement. People from diverse race positionalities contribute to this containment narrative, but power inequalities mean that white people with capital are most able to enact it. In Chapter 6, CCDA participants call for an end to the containment, confinement, and isolation of Black people. Market Solutions presenters suggest entrepreneurship as a means to this end, while official blog posts after police killings of unarmed Black men focus on the sanctity of Black lives. At the same time, I argue that 'market solutions' are inadequate to disrupt these patterns of

spatial marginalization. Taken together, these findings speak to a longstanding dualism (Alexander 2010, Shabazz 2015, Domosh 2017) in which efforts to improve the lives of some Black people are accompanied by further containment of others.

Secondly, it contributes to fleshing out an epistemology in which the "histories, bodies, and experiences" of Black communities produce important forms of knowledge (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4). In Chapters 4 and 5, South Atlanta residents' knowledge of the neighborhood's past, and sense of being exposed to danger in their present surroundings, shapes their approach to changes in the neighborhood, as well as their sense of who is welcome and who would be welcome to leave. In Chapter 6, the true scope of loss of Black lives is only visible from the vantage point of 'our communities'; in other conference spaces, residents of low-income minority neighborhoods are well aware of their communities' needs, yet the market largely excludes them. This research speaks to a vast body of knowledge around exclusion and violence, and also around forging livelihoods and a sense of meaning in the absence of advantages taken for granted in many white communities, such as living in low-crime neighborhoods or having access to mainstream sources of capital.

Finally, the most original contributions of this research strengthen our understanding of geographies of religion. Specifically, the research speaks to the cultural geographies and postsecular cities literatures, both of which ask how religious sensibilities—and institutions that form around them—are involved in struggles for urban justice. Through the study of FCS and CCDA, I show that

these faith-based organizations play mixed roles in this milieu, pairing progressive practices around urban life with punitive ones, transcendent ideas with limited ones. In FCS's case, faith-motivated participants tied to the organization are at once striving to bridge segregation through neighborly bonds, and willingly participating in the racial politics of displacement. In CCDA's case, organizational leaders are eager to participate in agonistic urban justice agendas; at the same time, many of their tools for accomplishing this are too narrowly based on 'market solutions' to address their aims. We should continue to be ambivalent about the potential for faith-based organizations to advance aims of urban justice; understandings of the transcendent can show us unique openings to the possibility of a better world, or they can close the door to such possibility altogether.

The key contribution from this research is the linking of transcendence to the racialized landscapes of disinvested urban neighborhoods. For example, long-time residents' understandings of transcendence, highlighted in Chapter 4, tell a story about faith in God as an essential means of survival in a landscape that presents a risk of violence. Jeanette drew on her Christian faith not only to endure violence between her neighbors, but also to treat them with neighborly love, while Linda called on God to protect her in the segregated, neglected Carver Homes public housing complex. Further along the spectrum of race and class privilege, intentional neighbors drew on transcendent concepts to explain their presence in South Atlanta; they saw themselves as part of a project to make profane geographies into transcendent ones. These particular transcendent

understandings of the urban landscape also contribute to the making of the displaceable figure discussed in Chapter 5; for multiple residents and other stakeholders like FCS staff, making South Atlanta in the image of God means pushing certain racialized subjects 'somewhere else'. Finally, CCDA leaders and conference participants argue for undoing racial injustice in the urban process on the grounds that it is God's will to do so. In all of this material, research participants enrolled market logics into the project of making transcendent geographies of race, and in doing so attached sanctified meanings to the market.

iii. Towards Critical Community Development

These research results show us a path forward for a turn toward critical community development in neighborhoods like the ones in which CCDA works. Specifically, both the limitations and promises of this research demonstrate the need for community development to embrace structural change, in part through policy advocacy, and focus on preserving and building decent affordable housing. Leaving behind the reliance on market strategies that produce racial exclusion, and embracing the close cross-cultural ties of South Atlanta and the racial justice politics of CCDA could provide some guidance for a critical politics of community development.

Policy change and the role of critical community development

Significant policy changes are essential to keep housing affordable and stem displacement in U.S. cities, and reinvigorating a critical politics of

community development around the issue could go a long way towards changing policy landscapes. On the first point, Lees et al. (2016) and others note that municipal institutions and governing bodies frequently pair with developers to create powerful agendas that prioritize market logics and exacerbate gentrification. In fact, these public-private development agendas have much stronger impacts on gentrification processes globally than the individual 'pioneers' thought of as perhaps most responsible for gentrifying neighborhoods in the public imagination (Lees et al. 2016). States thus play an active role in perpetuating racial injustice in the urban process, and have comparatively few tools in place to mitigate it. Yet there are numerous policies which, if implemented with 'teeth', could significantly reduce displacement of low-income people from their homes.

Some signs of change are emerging. Washington, DC implemented inclusionary zoning in 2009, which requires developers to make a percentage of new units affordable, and some other large cities including New York, NY have followed suit (Schneider 2018). In Atlanta, a public-private partnership will pay seniors' property tax increases for the next twenty years in the rapidly gentrifying Historic West End neighborhood, and the city council announced that inclusionary zoning will be implemented around the BeltLine on the Westside, despite state-level policies that attempt to limit the practice in Georgia (Stokes 2017a, Stokes 2017b). While Atlanta's tax abatement program focuses on keeping people in their present homes, inclusionary zoning policies may struggle with effectiveness (Schneider 2018) and can still involve displacement of low-

income households in order to build new developments, even if some units are affordable. In spite of promising trends fueled by popular pressure, many further policy changes are necessary, with a needed focus on both quality and quantity.

Policies that expand the supply of affordable housing and push for its distribution throughout cities (i.e., not only in already poor neighborhoods), as well as tenant law that reduces the ability of 'slumlords' to poorly maintain properties, are also necessary at a minimum. It is critical to at once provide housing options and stability for low-income residents and end forms of segregation that cluster affordable housing into isolated spaces. Residential segregation is the key issue that keeps people isolated from jobs and warehoused in underfunded schools. At the same time, policing practices that result in the imprisonment of disproportionate numbers of people of color are able to thrive in segregated neighborhoods. However, the solution does not lie in 'creaming' strategies that allow some people to stay in place while displacing others, or putting others at risk of displacement. The argument in favor of transforming low-income neighborhoods into mixed-income ones, whether through Lupton's neighborhood-scale 'gentrification with justice' or the large-scale replacement of public housing units with mixed-income developments, relies on the idea that this process infuses neighborhoods with social and economic capital, improving low-income residents' access to viable schools and employment (among other factors). These kinds of approaches rely in part on displacement. Sociologist Patrick Sharkey (2014) notes, though, that place-based investment that tackles employment, public schools, and criminal justice

mechanisms but does not rely on the in-migration of higher-income residents is promising. As Sharkey points out, existing policies put substantial investments into places, but these tend to benefit the wealthy; the home mortgage interest deduction is a notable example of such. It is time to replace the displacement paradigm with one that at once unequivocally supports residents' right to remain and addresses the entrenched consequences of residential segregation.

Second, community development organizations, whether community development corporations (CDCs) or other groups with similar functions to CDCs, could play a critical role in pressuring municipal governments to enact policies aimed at the 'right to stay put' and place-based investment. Community developers could in fact be a critical locus of intervention because they tend to have ties both to people on the ground in neighborhood residents who use their services, and state actors with whom they partner on development projects such as affordable housing implementation. Specifically, community development groups could take stronger stances against the displacement of neighborhood residents and return to the more outspoken roots of the early community development movement, discussed below. They could leverage their relationships with state actors to push for a wider, bolder suite of policy shifts at the city level, with a vision guided by residents most likely to be negatively impacted by property value increases in their neighborhoods.

Scholarship on the history of community development organizations in the United States explains how neighborhood-based groups that coalesced in the 1960s around agonistic, redistributive strategies morphed into professionalized

institutions that would drop community organizing tactics in favor of market-based practices (DeFilippis 2004, Newman and Lake 2006, DeFilippis 2008, McLeod and Emejulu 2014). Newman and Lake (2006) draw on Castells (1983) to argue that the community development movement emerged in the 1960s in the form of grassroots, neighborhood-based groups that strove to assert "cultural identity as a basis for pressing claims for the redistribution of political power and attendant material resources" (45). Specifically, the movement "briefly embraced a politics of difference by encompassing populations previously marginalized on the basis of race and class," and in doing so built political power intended to redress the spatial injustices of urban development practices of the time (45). In the context of the late 1970s recession and the rightward turn of the 1980s, McLeod and Emejulu (2014) argue that "organizations that supported conflict models of social action were actively targeted for defunding and marginalized by state actors," which pushed community development groups towards non-confrontational approaches (DeFilippis 2008). Another interpretation (Newman and Lake 2006) is that these shifts effectively divided community organizing and community development into "two separate spheres," with the former becoming much less politically palatable. This era saw government and philanthropic funders invest in community development corporations (CDCs) both "focused on the physical revitalization of place rather than the transformation of local governance" and "unambiguously market-based in their larger goals and programmatic details" (Newman and Lake 2006, 54; DeFilippis 2008, 33). This shift towards DeFilippis' (2004) 'neoliberal communitarianism' entailed a very

different relationship to the state from the earlier paradigm; instead of making demands of the state, community development practitioners were steered towards at once working toward ‘consensus’ with state and private actors, and de-emphasizing state responsibility to meet community needs.

In the context of displacement-based housing policy and accelerating gentrification, this paradigm shift to market-based approaches means that community development organizations have the potential to exacerbate displacement issues. CDCs and similar entities play a critical role in implementing affordable housing programs in the United States, from federal community development block grants (CDBGs) to localized initiatives. Yet when the affordable housing paradigm, having also shifted to become more market-friendly, involves displacement, CDCs play a role in that process as well. For example, CDCs helping to implement HOPE VI funding find themselves taking part in a program that evicts residents from public housing. There is also some evidence in the literature of community developers actively participating in gentrification processes in concert with state and private actors. DeFilippis (2008) writes about a CDC in East Harlem in the early- to mid-2000s that was “openly promoting gentrification,” emphasizing a market-rate owner-occupied housing initiative (281). Checker (2011) discusses the concept of environmental gentrification, detailing a greening project led by a Harlem CDC in the late 2000s that used the language of environmental justice, but threatened further displacement in an increasingly unaffordable area. Linked to then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s city-wide sustainability plan, the project was also pitched as an

economic development plan appropriate for a disinvested neighborhood, but "Harlem was already seeing an influx of economic development . . . [as] the average sale price of an apartment reached $895,000 [in 2007] (211). This example demonstrates CDCs participating in state-led gentrification, which Lees et al. (2016) emphasize as a leading edge of global gentrifications.

CCDA and the 'secular' community development trajectory

While CCDA has unique roots in evangelical Christianity, member organizations still have many elements in common with secular community developers, which means that lessons from this research are also relevant to community development at large. Since faith-based organizations are eligible for federal funds including HUD, CCDA member groups can and do work with the state. For example, Lawndale Christian Development Corporation in Chicago, a member organization well-known within CCDA, has received Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding (Lawndale Christian Development Corporation 2017). Charis Community Housing, now rolled into FCS as its mixed-income housing program, rehabilitated some housing using HUD funds, including the Martin Street Plaza public housing complex in the 1990s (Georgia Department of Community Affairs 2010, Ball and Greene 1997). In addition, networks within CCDA such as CCDA Housing Advocacy work in coalition with state actors or state-funded community developers.

Further, there are notable similarities between CCDA's trajectory and that of the community development model more generally. First, echoing

neighborhood-based community development groups' focus on strengthening political power, Perkins and his Voice of Calvary ministry led voter registration efforts for the heavily disenfranchised Black community in Simpson County, Mississippi because "we knew real change would not come for Mendenhall's blacks unless they gained their civil rights" (190). At the national level, CCDA has had a policy wing aimed at topics like comprehensive immigration reform since at least 2009 (Hill 2010). However, few resources or conference sessions are offered to train CCDA participants around policy issues. As Chapter 6 detailed, conference sessions and other training opportunities much more frequently engage a Christianized approach to market-based strategies also used by secular community development organizations, such as job training, promoting entrepreneurship in marginalized neighborhoods, and, to a lesser extent, privately funded housing programs. While CCDA also stresses interpersonal aspects of community development such as relationship-building and religious ministry, market-based approaches are frequently emphasized as operational best practices.

While Perkins' participation in the Black cooperative movement in the U.S. South is comparable to the community development movement's early focus on democracy and redistribution, CCDA's shift to fostering entrepreneurship fits with the latter movement's overall trajectory (Newman and Lake 2006). FCS's focus on market-based strategies, including Bob Lupton's rejection of one-way giving and the organizational strategy to 'flip' South Atlanta into a mixed-income neighborhood with 75% of residents as homeowners, also fits very well with this

paradigm. As Chapter 6 noted, CCDA conferences dedicate multiple sessions and a Market Solutions for Community Transformation day-long pre-conference to the topic. This emphasis on entrepreneurialism is in some ways compatible with Perkins' original concern with Black economic self-determination. Despite these compatibilities with Perkins' vision for Black economic power, the movement away from cooperatives, with their democratic, redistributive structure, to entrepreneurialism fits with the move towards market-based approaches in the community development landscape.

Embracing critical community development

In light of community development's turn toward market-based approaches, some scholars have argued in favor of a new movement toward "critical community development" (Newman and Goetz 2016; Rose 2002, Fursova 2016). Here, community development is conceived as a "counter-hegemonic practice" (Fursova 2016). For Newman and Goetz (2016),

> "a critical approach to community development means engaging the politics of place wherever those decisions take place. . . This means addressing immediate needs within communities as well as reaching beyond neighborhood boundaries to affect change." (696)

The authors give a convincing example of how community development groups in the 1960s and 1970s responded to discrimination in access to housing mortgage finance by organizing to achieve change in, at once, their communities and at the federal level:

> "[P]eople in urban neighborhoods across the United States . . . worked within their communities and then built a movement across the country achieving two major pieces of federal legislation—the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA), which gathers information about home loan applications and originations, and the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) which encourages depository financial institutions to do business in and with communities." (696)

For Fursova (2016), critical community development looks like a coalition of community agencies collectively campaigning at multiple municipal government institutions to increase residents' access to public space and recreation services in a marginalized neighborhood. In both these examples, community development groups engage in social movement-reminiscent strategies to push for change at some level of government, which is more antagonistic than an approach that strictly aims to carry out market-friendly programs in close relationship with government. As Newman and Goetz, Fursova, and Rose (2002) show, working in coalitional relationships with other community and advocacy groups seems to be a key strategy for success, although highly localized programs such as the Fifth Avenue Committee's Displacement Free Zone, formed when Committee leaders realized they had unwittingly participated in Park Slope's gentrification through development activities, can also be powerful examples of critical community development (Rose 2002).

Instead of trying to build justice into processes like gentrification, community development organizations could take steps to stop the

consequences of such processes as thoroughly as possible through new strategies. As gentrification continues, for example, community developers need a path of action that pushes back against the unchecked movement of capital into poor neighborhoods. CDCs and other community development organizations could form and/or join coalitional efforts to enact policy changes that would curb gentrification, as CCDA's affordable housing work group has done. This kind of work would represent a significant change in strategy for many (but certainly not all) CDCs, as it constitutes a return to the social movement roots of the community development movement. Specifically, engaging policy via community organizing, base-building strategies would enable community developers to both impact policy *and* build relationships of solidarity with residents of low-income neighborhoods. Furthermore, such a shift would be in line with the critical gentrification literature, which shows that state-developer partnerships are the leading edge of gentrification; impacting policy would therefore target the appropriate set of actors.

The limitations of CCDA's work—its over-reliance on market strategies and lack of critical eye towards the displacement paradigm—are clear in this paradigm. However, there are further important lessons from this research that can be drawn upon to strengthen critical community development and a movement for just cities. First, in South Atlanta, long-time residents' and intentional neighbors' faith-motivated openness to neighborly bonds across lines of race and class, however imperfect, constitute a spatial solidarity (Walter et al. 2017) that could strengthen and sustain the work of equitable community

development at the level of municipal policy. Long-time residents' observations that new neighbors might bring useful resources and a strengthened sense of community, as well as intentional neighbors' focus on 'being with' people different from themselves and understanding their needs, could all be mobilized for a 'just city' agenda. These relationships are problematic, as I noted in Chapter 4, in no small part because of the significant power inequalities between white, wealthier residents and low-income Black residents. It is unjust, for example, that long-time residents observe that they only receive attention from the city when white residents live there. Similarly, this power imbalance all too easily enables white residents to skim over the needs of low-income residents in favor of their own agendas. Nonetheless, as the movement of capital into disinvested urban neighborhoods keeps shuffling the white middle class into places like South Atlanta, a sense of social cohesion among new and old residents could provide the foundation for the collective action needed to remake the urban policy landscape around equitable community development.

Secondly, CCDA national leaders' intersectional focus on racial justice could also inform such a critical community development politics and just cities agenda. Their emphasis on killings of unarmed Black men by police, the violence of anti-immigrant politics, and the erasure of occupation of indigenous lands provides a clarity of purpose that a more understated or colorblind racial politics would not. It should be explicitly stated that racial inequalities are the foundation of unjust cities, if the point is to change these dynamics (Castree et al. 2010), so that they do not get lost in the noise of other agendas. At the same time, CCDA

leaders' position that God is against the spatialities of racial oppression provides a powerful model that can also be used in other spaces, including 'secular' spaces. By taking a position on the transcendent (Tse 2013) and aligning transcendence with racially oppressed people, CCDA representatives create a useful ethical framework for transforming urban geographies.

* * *

Geography matters to racial justice, both historical and contemporary. Communities of color, especially Black communities, have been subjected to the worst excesses of the interplay of capital and white supremacy on the urban landscape. They have been segregated and re-segregated multiple times, and then experienced fiscal abandonment and disinvestment in these segregated neighborhoods in the second half of the twentieth century. Now, as the same land is speculated upon with minimal regulation, the same people who made neighborhoods livable against all obstacles—and those who lived through the worst conditions—risk being priced out of urban cores and not enjoying the benefits of more livable neighborhoods. Gentrification is not the only process that changes neighborhoods in ways that put minority residents at risk, but it has accelerated in urban places; per Lees et al. (2016), it is the leading edge of urbanization processes around the world. Community development institutions, with their social movement history and unique position embedded in neighborhoods of color, can play a transformative role to both advance the 'right to stay put' and encourage place-based resource distribution that moves us toward just cities.

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