

# The Postcolonial Ghetto: Seeing Her Shape and His Hand<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This article maps the ghostly outlines of urban postcolonial subjectivities by hinging together several moving parts/frontiers: connotations of postcolonial; applications and implications of ghettoed places and lives; a telling of the closure of a vibrant, innovative urban community high school; and literary depictions of the subtleties and macro-aggressions of historical and ahistorical domination. Theoretical contributions include the construct of post+colonial; elaborations on the space and place of the ghetto; a mapping of colonial-metropole-nation relations and provisions for a cartographic discourse of urban postcolonial subjectivities; and a discussion of the colonizer's constructions of the postcolonial subject as dispossessed, murderable, and still haunting.*

*Keywords:* Ghetto, Postcolonial Studies, Urban Education, Colonialism, Imperialism

When the state decided to close East Oakland Community High School (EOC) in 2007, nearly the entire student body, along with their families, teachers, and supporters, marched 8 miles through sporadic rain to the school district offices. Their journey transgressed lines of representation drawn by a state administration that had depicted the youth as disorderly, anti-school savages. It also transgressed colorlines and hood-lines, very real social divides that structured ghetto space. On Macarthur Boulevard and 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, a group of Dirty Mackin Boyz (DMBs) locked arms to block the march as it crossed through their turf. The vice principal ran up to one young man, a former student. She said urgently, “They’re closing EOC. We’re marching for the school.” The youth motioned, his set dropped their arms, and the marchers passed. State turf also had its gang. Police were hired in extra numbers to protect the administration from the community. But sometime near midnight, the cops joined hands with the youth to pray and weep in the hallways of the central office after the decision to close the school was finalized. Outside, a caravan of cars pulled up to drive marchers home. Waiting alongside them was Lola, the jeepneyed-out “Mexican Bus” of glittering lights, multicolored paint, figurines, and flowers. Named after the daughter of a member of the Chicano teatro group Culture Clash, Lola regularly carried heavily intoxicated cosmopolitans to their urban playgrounds in San Francisco’s nightlife. That night she ferried marchers for free, a postmodern magic bus ride from state turf to barrio homes.

The Black Star Line (see Figure 1), an independent, black-owned van service would later transport many of these same youth—also for free—in the daily ghostlife of East Oakland Community High School. After school closure, a group of students set up their

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‘school’ in a West Oakland Victorian building, rent-free, courtesy of Marcus Garvey’s organization, the United Neighborhood Improvement Association. On school days, they crisscrossed from Oakland’s eastside ghetto to its westside one, over water to San Francisco State University, and through economic zones to a downtown charter school. They rode the Black Star Line, county buses, and the expensive commuter monorail train named BART. Eclectic transit was a necessity of living across fractured spaces. In between, they were not there, black bodies in white space.<sup>2</sup> Students often spoke of a peculiar absence-presence, of feeling hypervisible yet invisible in modes of ‘public’ transportation not meant for them, in stores where they could not buy, in universities where they were curiosities—in moral geographies whose purity was predicated on their not-being-there.



*Figure 1.* The Black Star Line and United Neighborhood Improvement Association, providing transport and space in the ghostlife of EOC. (Photo courtesy of Nicole Hidalgo.)

By skipping over or passing under white space, youth disappeared from one place and reappeared somewhere else. Theirs was a black space travel akin to quantum tunneling, rather than a smooth commute on a contiguous freeway.<sup>3</sup> This teleportation

<sup>2</sup> As elaborated later, I use whiteness and blackness as analytic categories not necessarily limited to phenotypically white and black people.

<sup>3</sup> “Black” refers to a counter-spatial imaginary that is not reducible to a racial category. These youth were Latino, African American, and mixed race.

trick connected otherwise discontinuous space and, in the process, defragmented the ghetto. Part of the decolonial imaginary is the ability to transport oneself and others to a place where cops weep, where Black Star and Lola are connections on the same underground railroad. The tunnels and not their destinations constitute “practices of freedom” (Foucault, 1988, p. 3) that emancipate despite the persistence of colonialism.

This paper deploys two perhaps irreconcilable frameworks: a poststructuralist analysis of ghetto colonialism and a decolonial “reimagining” (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007) of the ghetto in terms of “solidarities within, between, and across spaces” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 10). In this respect, I am content neither to show the hand of power nor to describe forms of resistance from below. Borrowing the words of Patricia Williams (1991), this project is about recovering “her shape and his hand” (p. 19)—the shape of the ghetto within, despite, and because of the colonial exercise.

Williams’ (1991) great-great-grandmother was the property of Austin Miller, a prominent Tennessee judge who was her slave-owner and her bedmate and thus Williams’ forebear. No records describe what becomes of her, in contrast to the abundance of writings by and about Miller and his (white) sons who also became lawyers and judges:

I see her shape and his hand in the vast networking of our society, and in the evils and oversights that plague our lives and laws . . . [in] the habit of his power and the absence of her choice.

I look for her shape and his hand. (p. 19)

In discussing hauntings as social phenomena, Avery Gordon (1997) builds upon Williams’ insights: “This is a project where *finding the shape described by her absence* captures perfectly the paradox of tracking though time and across all those forces that which makes its mark by being there and not being there at the same time” (p. 6, emphasis original). Thus, my interest lies in the forms of being that are erased by power, but are there nonetheless.

There are exercises of power, such as the closure of a school, and then there are practices of freedom, such as the quotidian *living* and *dreaming* by urban students and their families. Between the time EOC was condemned and its closure, there were four months that students, parents, and teachers continued to come to school. The state continued the habit of his power. Two weeks before standardized testing, the administrator ejected all of the arts, sports, and tutoring programs funded and run by The Avenues Project, the school’s partner non-profit organization. Students continued to meet with tutors in private homes (which unexpectedly produced the largest increase in test scores of any high school in the city and one of the largest in the state—a result discovered two months after closure). Banned from their school on death row, they built darkrooms in their homes, recorded tracks in neighborhood studios, and edited film on borrowed laptops. On the last two days of classes, they organized a freedom school in a local church, leaving district space altogether. This prompted the administrator to send police to make sure teachers were not stealing equipment from the district. (The police could tell they weren’t.) One news channel ran a hit piece on the final ceremony of the school, illegally videotaping through a crack in the church door. Because people embody lives as if living free, power often gets in the way but seems unable to become an absolute force.

Practices of freedom do not exist simply as a reactive response to power, nor can they be completely decoupled from it. Daily lives preoccupied with subsistence are radical. They contain forms of solidarity, of space and time defragmentation, and of strategic resource acquisition that persist somewhat autonomously from the workings of power. This perspective abstains from totalizing power—from viewing space and subjectivity as seamlessly structured by it, such as described at length in Foucault’s (1977) *Discipline and Punish*. Likewise, this view differs from resistance theory that so often reduces such daily struggles to a creative response to oppression and thus a symptom of it (as critiqued by Kelley, 1997). But power is very real. A state administrator concluded that East Oakland Community High School was pathological and then terminated its existence: a fatal coupling of the science of school closure and the power to commit it. The most recent push for accountability in education is yet another modernist project to create utopic schooling systems, where deviant schools must be closed and impure bodies and minds must be reformed. Paradoxically, embodiments of liberation and exercises of power exist simultaneously—her shape and his hand. They interfere with and haunt one another:

In contrast to the totalizing utopic (i.e., no-place) space of modernity, heterotopic spaces are the simultaneously mythic and real spaces of everyday life capable of juxtaposing into a single place a great variety of different sites which in themselves may be incompatible. (Paulston, 1999, pp. 452-3)

The ghetto is thus heterotopic, not in the postmodern sense of unbounded heterogeneity but in a postcolonial sense that colonizing power is alive and well. Yet accompanying it at every instance and beyond every instance are lived realities that transgress its borders. So at a basic level, what I mean by postcolonial is that colonization is not over; we are intimate and complicit with it, yet we act, dream, and live in ways that are not limited by its horizons.

In this space, I will not comprehensively discuss postcolonial studies in education but rather try to reconstruct it as a usable tool for the dirty work of schooling. If *post-* simply signifies *after*, meaning colonialism is over, then postcolonialism really makes little sense in the ghetto context. And here I echo the mistrust of the term by Indigenous scholars and other writers on neocolonialism (e.g., wa Thiong’o, Ngo, Smith, Miller, & Wright, 2009). I can only make sense of this word through its unintended meanings. The verb form of *post* as in “keep someone posted” refers to keeping someone informed of the latest development or news. Post+colonial studies then announce the latest development on colonialism. Or the noun *post* is a place where an activity or duty is carried out. Post +colonial then refers to the place, people, or cultural arena where colonial activity or duties are carried out. I am certain of one thing: post+anything in academic jargon signifies that things are much more complicated than previously thought. At the very least, post+colonial refers to our complicity in empire, in our own colonization and in that of others. It refers to how the categories colonizer and colonized are no longer distinct.

Having said this, what does a borrowed and bastard postcolonial framework have to offer to urban education, without just becoming a jargon-filled way of restating the same conclusions that could be better expressed in other terms? First, this framework challenges inclusion. It views the dislocation of people into subordinated positions as part of the modern school system, rather than an accident of discrimination. Second, it gives us the postcolonial vision to recognize decolonial strategies and imagine a reality beyond

the colonial structure. It looks to practices of freedom that defy modernist logic. It situates alternative epistemologies as foundational truths, not just as voices to be included into the current truth regime. Third, by critiquing empire—in our case, U.S. imperialism—it looks to define solidarity beyond the nation. It rejects the investments in whiteness and global exploitation that are upheld by imperial education. Finally, the post+colonial framework does not give up on the dirty work of engaging imperial power and colonial institutions like schools, school reform, and mainstream circuits of citizenry. Rather, we must rethink our engagement as strategic maneuvers in a broader agenda of decolonization and remain vigilant about the dangers of our participation in empire. Put simply, postcolonial studies in education denounces colonial schooling and announces decolonial struggle; it denounces imperial education yet demands a strategic anticolonial approach to schooling.

To understand then the postcoloniality of the ghetto, we have to see how it is simultaneously a figure—her shape—and a structure—his hand. This article is the first of two manuscripts intended as one discussion, and, as an incomplete project, it is already haunted by a shape that threatens to unravel the paper's main propositions. In this paper, I start with colonialism—his hand. Specifically, ghetto colonialism is a dislocating procedure, a specialization of colonial cartography. I then proceed to what a postcolonial vision can see in this picture and what the postcolonial subject can do—her shape. Her shape haunts its own representation by the modernist hand, such as how the racial black Other transgresses its own categorization and reappears in unwanted and unlikely places. I conclude with what these ghostly lives might be whispering to us about decolonizing education.

### Seeing His Hand: Ghetto Colonialism

In his 1948 essay, *Harlem is Nowhere*, Ralph Ellison wrote, “the reply to the greeting, ‘How are you?’ is very often, ‘Oh, man, I’m *nowhere*’” (p. 57). Sometime in the year of EOC’s closure, I encountered a young man whom I’d known, barely 15, African American, smoking a cigarette, walking the other direction near the corner of my street in East Oakland. In passing, I led with the gruff courtesy, “What’s up?” To which he replied, “*Shit*.” He, one of the first students to be ejected formally from EOC, and I, the co-founder of said school, often came face-to-face on the streets of our shared neighborhoods. A mutual haunting. For me, he is a specter of my complicity in the colonial institution of schooling. (Sometimes the dislocating hand is my own.) Although I was not an official employee of the school, his dismissal could not have happened without my acquiescence. “You *do* work here!” he rebuked me afterwards. EOC had one of the lowest suspension and expulsion rates among high schools in Oakland, a fact that ironically helped construct its pathology. Yet those who disappeared from EOC also disappeared off the formal records and further vanished in the discourse around school closure. Pathology generously rewrote us as anticolonialists. Our colonial complicity erased, pathology also erased the violence of this pushout. Thus, the ghettoed subject appears fleetingly as a problem, then vanishes as a person from the official record. For him, I may have been a specter of the violence of being pushed out, likely neither the first nor the last in a course of displacements from American civil life: from EOC to the next alternative school to the corner with the three liquor stores, one tobacco shop, and me. Not unlike Ellison’s Harlem, this everyday sense of dislocation “has been reduced to a

gesture, a seemingly trivial word” (p. 55). I argue that dislocation is the primary feature of ghetto colonialism, and is evidenced by various colonial cartographies.

Cartography has been a key technology in the invention of colonialism (and thus modernity). From Gerardus Mercator to Halliburton GeoGraphix, the hand that maps is a hand that orders the world in the service of empire and perforce produces colonies. Furthermore, colonial cartography is trickster magic: a shapeshifting sort that “depends for its strategy on this *positional* flexibility which puts [the colonizer] in a whole series of possible relationships with [the colonized] without ever losing him the upper hand” (Said, 2002, p. 1009). Even as I write, No Child Left Behind is coming to its 2014 endgame whereby all students will test at proficiency—an objective that can only be accomplished by eradicating students and schools who do not meet this new biopolitical target; the United States is upping its combat mission in Afghanistan—a charge led by a charismatic black President; and his Secretary of Education is preaching the Chicago model of school reform around the nation—a model that demands the eradication of the ghetto (Lipman, 2007). The trickster is shape shifting again, producing new regions of displacement and mapping these cartographies of nowhere onto bodies.

This approach of thinking of ghetto as a dislocating procedure, rather than a fixed sociological space, differs from many analyses that have mapped the ghetto by identifying its origins, borders, and population (e.g., Massey and Denton, 1993). In my view, the ghetto is unfixed. Also, I extend their classical analysis of the ghetto as black to signify a blackness beyond phenotype (i.e., the ghetto is not where black people live but rather where blackness is contained). I also rethink the assumption that the ghetto is by essence an urban space; to me, it is rather a dislocation from the metropole/metropolis. Nonetheless, I build off the classical perspective of the ghetto as “a racially demarcated space actively constructed by Whites, as a method for containing Black community development and mobility” (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 798). Below, I present different definitions of the ghetto and, thus, different mappings. I overlay these multiple definitions to illustrate their composition and precision on one hand and decomposition and imprecision on the other. These alternative sociocultural mappings reveal how the ghetto takes up space. And yet how it is a non-space. In this respect, I defer any final, sociological definition of the ghetto, recognizing it instead as a dislocation.

### ***The Ghetto is a Space of Confinement***

A typical dictionary definition of the ghetto includes three important elements: *walls* (containment of bodies), legal and civil *divestment* (economic deprivation of those contained), and *racial marking* (minority status of the bodies contained). But this “racialization of space and spatialization of race” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 10) is historically black, and thus articulated with *blackness* in the case of U.S. ghettos. In *American Apartheid*, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) trace its development through residential segregation, beginning with explicit discrimination against black Americans in the post-WWII period: rejected home loans, government redlining, blockbusting by realtors, home owners’ restrictive covenants, and racial violence. These color-conscious strategies evolved into ‘colorblind’ ones despite, or perhaps because of, the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Free-market racism now fatally couples white-flight and blackness with low property values. These patterns persist across class so that, even in middle and upper income black neighborhoods, property values are greatly diminished. Segregation, then,

leads to the impossibility of black wealth and the amassing of white wealth through permanent advantage in property relations (Shapiro, 2004).

Massey and Denton map the ghetto by tracing the line of segregation for black people in metropolitan areas. Applying this lens to Oakland, the ghetto then might look something like the red shaded regions in Figure 2.<sup>4</sup>

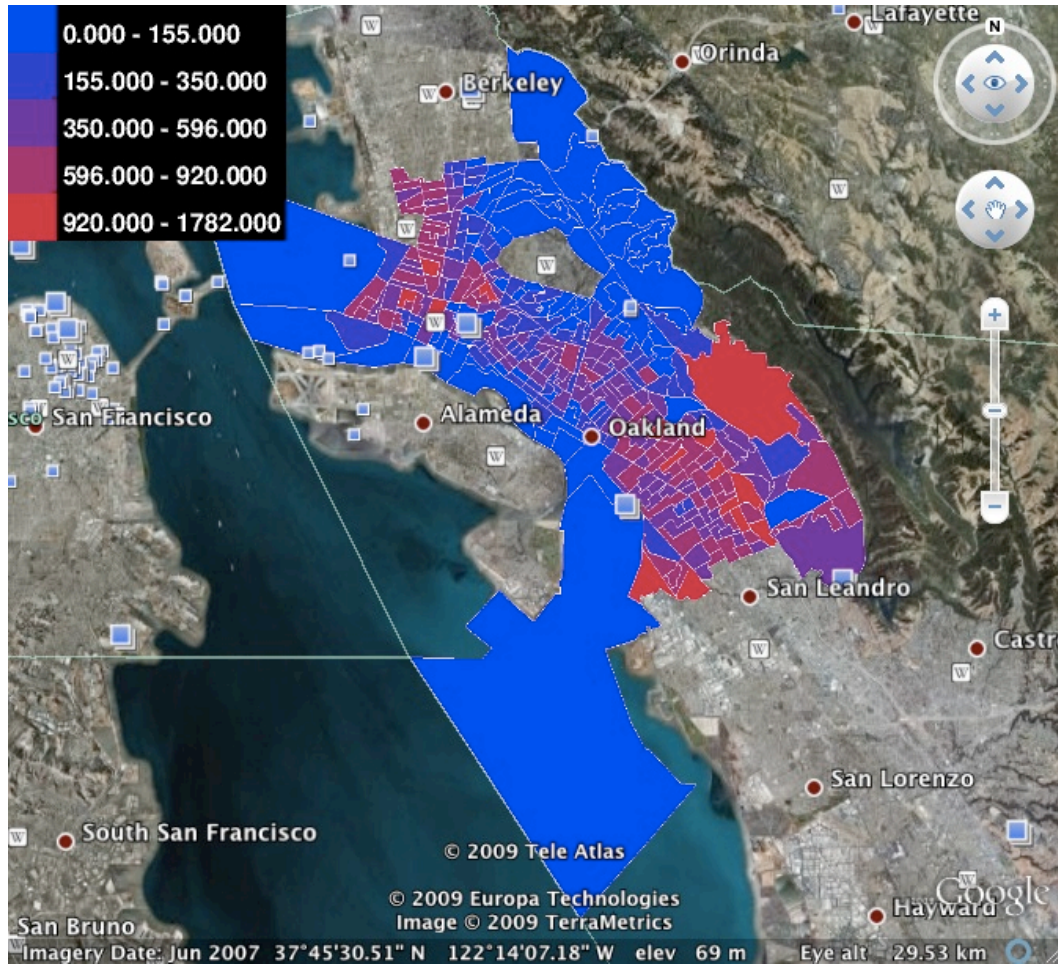


Figure 2. Map of African-American residents in Oakland by blockgroup, US Census 2000.

For Massey and Denton, segregation is the problem. The solutions are integration, assimilation, and the eradication of the ghetto. This view has some potentially important reformist policy implications, such as the advancement of black middle-class wealth and

<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 is far less precise than Massey and Denton's mappings and is meant to provide a visual concept rather than a sociological report. I used basic census data for block groups. Red indicates higher population. This creates particular problems with block groups that simply cover a large geographic area and large population. Most noticeably on the map, the large region in the northeast of Oakland is colored red but would also be high population for Asians and Whites too and, thus, would not be considered segregated by Massey and Denton's analysis.

education, but it is also open to two obvious critiques. For one, it locates pathology *in there*, in the ghetto and its imagined culture of poverty (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 789). By attributing “racial isolation” as an explanation for unwed mothers, crime, welfare dependency, it reproduces the highly problematic deficit culture theses forwarded by the likes of Oscar Lewis (1968) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. More fundamentally, this view assumes the zone ‘outside of the ghetto’ to be the place of universal rights.

In education studies, Gary Orfield and Susan Eaton’s (1996) work on resegregation similarly takes racial isolation as a cause rather than a symptom of inequality. First, the focus on racial isolation ignores the increasingly multiracial nature of ghettos and the ‘multiculturalism’ of model white communities. That is, black space is not just black people nor white space just white people. Second, this approach can overlook how desegregated schools can still be savagely unequal. Berkeley High School, the first school in California to voluntarily desegregate, still produces bifurcated outcomes: an educational dead-end for Black and Latino students on one hand and a higher ed pipeline for Asian and white students on the other (Noguera & Wing, 2006). Tracking institutionalizes racial inequality in integrated schools (Oakes, 1985). Accountability ensures a testing science to racialize college access, even if students fulfill college-prep coursework. Furthermore, integrated settings are rarely race-neutral, but are often white spaces with a racist, heterosexist, and classist “hidden curriculum” (Apple, 2004). Also, integration often means deconcentration of people of color—so that policies for mixed-income housing and school, like Chicago’s Renaissance 2010 and implementation of HOPE IV, can “pathologize Black urban space” and legitimize “displacement and gentrification ... while negating that urban communities of color and their schools are spaces of community” (Lipman, 2007, p. 215).

Underneath it all, integration assumes that inclusion into mainstream public education can someday produce equal entitlements for all people. However, other analyses of racial space (e.g., Lipsitz, 2007; Silva, 2001) demonstrate that entitlement requires exclusion. The space of privilege produces, and is agonistically constituted by, the space of oppression.

### ***The Ghetto is the Excess of Purified Space***

White “pure space” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 14) is both motive and effect of ghettoization, in the form of suburbs, gated communities, and cosmopolitan city neighborhoods. Perhaps the most teachable illustrations of these “moral geographies” (p. 12) are Levittown, USA and the Cross-Bronx Expressway. For a visual experience of this narrative, we can look at episode 3 of *Race—The power of an illusion* (Adelman, 2003), a documentary film segment featuring the post-WWII construction of nearly all-white suburban Levittown—cookie cutter houses that allowed for returning GIs to become homeowners, so long as they were not black. The segregated Levittowns (plural, as multiple versions were built by William Levitt & Sons in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Puerto Rico) promoted their photonegatives of red-lined, block-busted, all-black ghettos. The Cross-Bronx Expressway, built from 1948 to 1963, reveals a cartography whereby black space becomes simply a freeway overpass to make pure space contiguous. In *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop*, Jeff Chang (2005) begins his history of the hip-hop generation with the bulldozing of the South Bronx by master architect Robert Moses in order to connect Manhattan with its Levittowns: “There are just people in the way, that’s all” (Moses, quoted in Chang, p. 11). For the dislocated poor, Moses built the massive

towers that became the iconic housing projects for the twentieth-century East Coast ghetto.

These “moral geographies based on romances of pure spaces” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 12) map the ghetto as an excess—that which is left over, the “matter out of place” (Douglas, 2005, p. 44) that must be gotten rid of as pure space is expanded. This view suggests an impermanent ghetto fragmented by white throughways and subject to the changing appetite of white property rights. The maps by artist Gus D’Angelo (Figures 3, 4, 5) provide the basis for a *gedanken experiment*—a hypothetical research project.<sup>5</sup> If we could literally connect the dots between Starbucks, ATMs, mainstream supermarkets, and other conveniences necessary for white life, we can begin to map out the matrix of white pure space. D’Angelo’s maps reveal a network that links Oakland’s multicultural Lake Merritt to the bourgeois Rockridge district in Oakland to the hills of Piedmont to the liberal oasis of university-town Berkeley. But it also maps out how freeways and throughways quarter the flatlands.

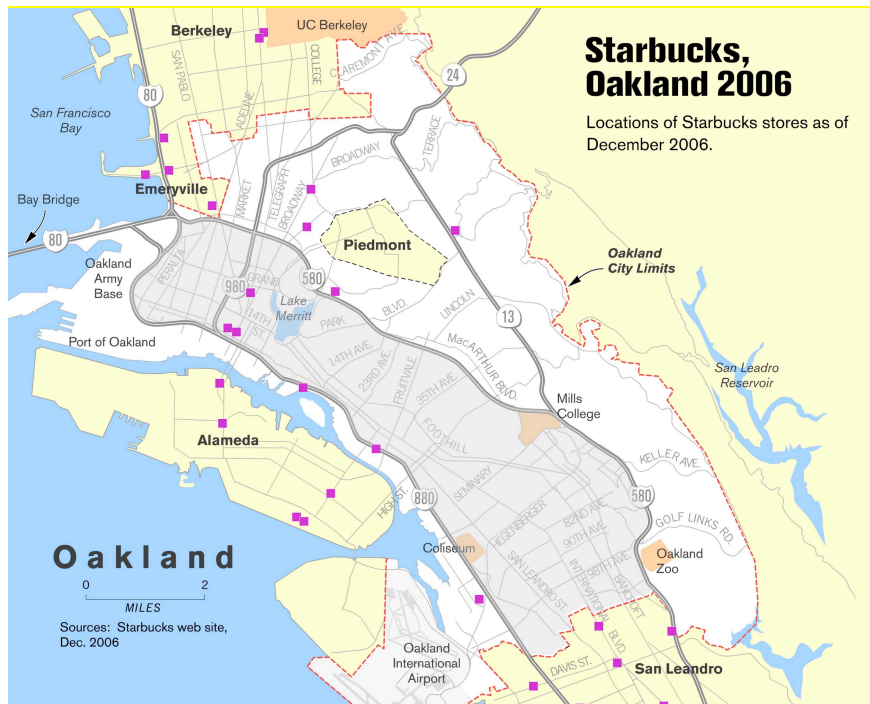


Figure 3. Starbucks locations in Oakland, 2006. Courtesy of Gus D’Angelo.

<sup>5</sup> *Gedanken experiment* refers to a “thought experiment” that is often conducted in anticipation of a future empirical study. These *gedanken*-maps are meant to suggest a participatory action research project of social cartography (Paulston, 1999) in our local ghettoized spaces.

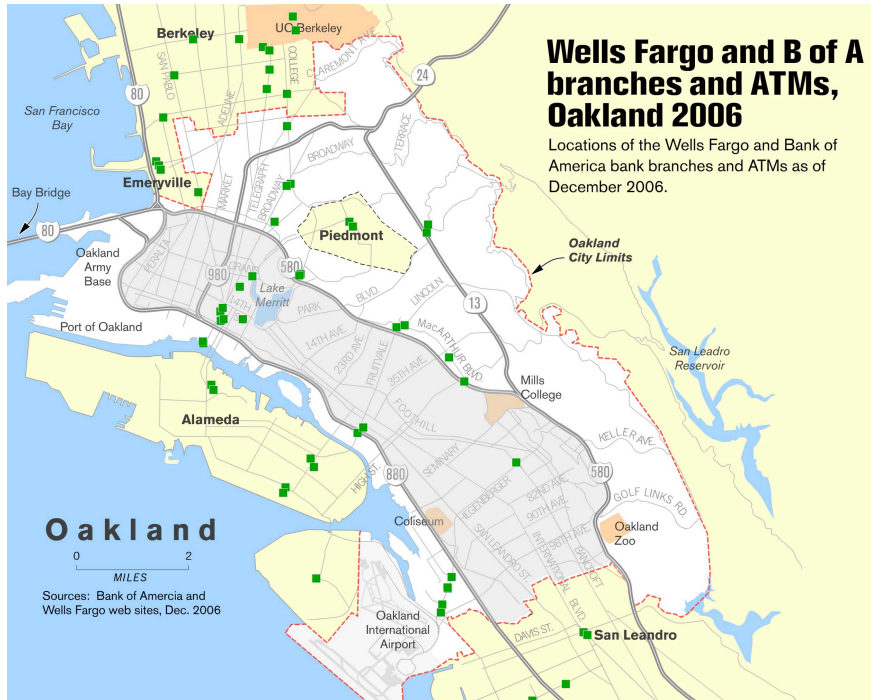


Figure 4. ATM locations in Oakland, 2006. Courtesy of Gus D'Angelo.

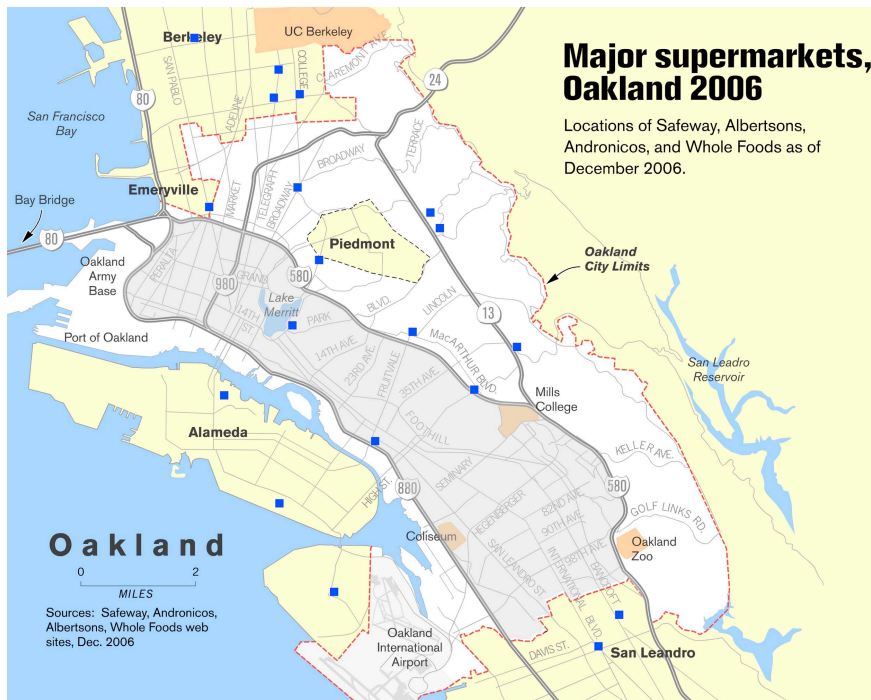


Figure 5. Supermarket locations in Oakland, 2006. Courtesy of Gus D'Angelo.

From this view, we might map Oakland’s ghetto very differently—as the photonegative of the “white spatial imaginary” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 13). In this hypothetical map, freeways, thoroughfares, museums, office parks, lofts, expensive monorail transit centers, haute ethnic cuisine, and other “playgrounds” for multicultural consumption (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007) make a white lacework of hubs and transversals that leave behind a fractured inner-city black space. This *gedanken*-map would look almost, but not quite, identical to the one limned by segregation. Instead of the overwhelming presence of the ghetto, we see its discontinuity: pockets of dark matter swept out of the way in the interest of modernity. The city of Piedmont in Figure 2 was an isolated oasis from the surrounding urban Oakland. In Figure 6, its continuity with the rest of the Bay Area is made more obvious.

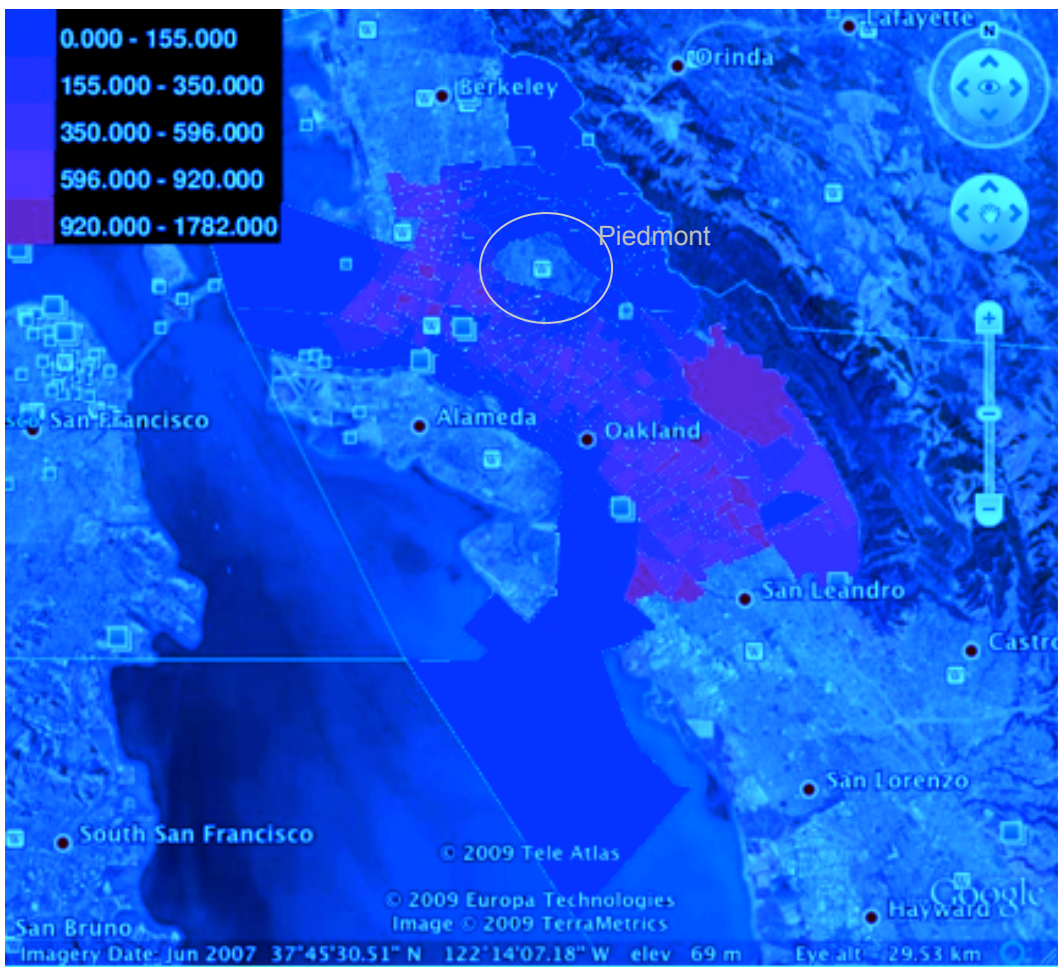


Figure 6. *Gedanken*-Map of white space in the East Bay Area

Integration into pure space becomes a contradiction, as pure space itself already interpellates black people as matter out of place.

**The Ghetto is a Zone of Violence**

In 2006, the *San Francisco Chronicle* provided one possible mapping of violence in Oakland, in the form of homicide rates, and keeps a regularly updated version on its website (Figure 7).

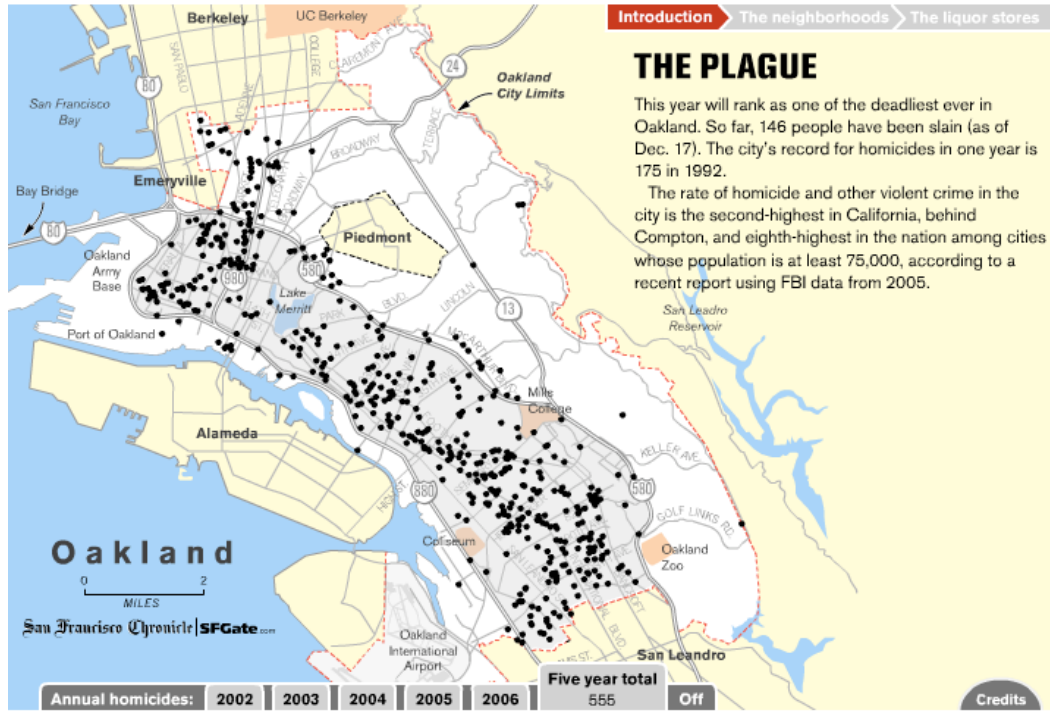


Figure 7. Map of Oakland Homicides 2002-2006. Reprint by permission of Gus D'Angelo and *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

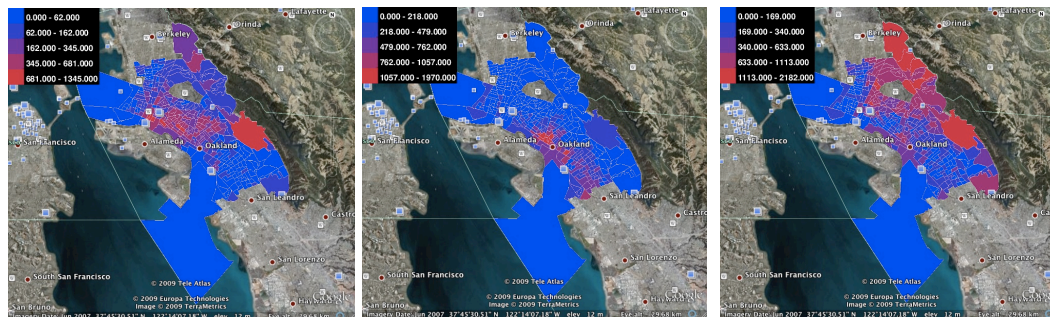


Figure 8. Maps of Asian, Latino, and White residents respectively by blockgroup in Oakland, US Census 2000.

Juxtaposing the maps of homicides (Figure 7) and of African-American residents (Figure 2), the violence does in fact map onto neighborhoods where black people live, but not perfectly. Indeed, the zone of violence includes many Asian, all Latino, and some white neighborhoods (see Figure 8). The white zones of non-violence also include many

non-white people (like the primarily white and Asian city of Piedmont). In a 1991 article, Denton and Massey describe how the succession of formerly white neighborhoods into all black neighborhoods no longer held true in the 1970s and 1980s. All-white neighborhoods are increasingly rare, although white-flight from multiethnic (in their study, this meant black, Latino, and Asian) communities was still a trend. Indeed, Watts, Roxbury, and Harlem, the three communities that Massey and Denton (1993) called “synonymous with black geographic and social isolation” (p. 17), are increasingly multi-racial yet mapping violence evinces their continued ghetto status.<sup>6</sup>

The *Chronicle* terms this distribution of death as “the plague” and highlights its containment to a specific geography: the shaded area between the 580 and 880 freeways, the two major thoroughfares for commuters and commercial transport across Oakland. The zone includes West Oakland (a bit to the west of Lake Merritt) and the “flatlands” of East Oakland (the vast region to the southeast of the lake). “The plague” metaphor reflects a moral cartography, overlaying discourses of pathology and contagion upon neighborhoods and, by easy inference, upon race. Despite the imagined threat that murder constitutes to the civil body (i.e., the white body), the overwhelming majority of homicide victims are young, black, and male. A real plague recognizes neither borders nor color; this one discriminates by race, gender, and geography.

From the young people that I work with, this map always elicits a strong affective response. They often begin to assign names to the black dots on the map. In a school district with 40,000 students, 555 homicides means that every young person knows of a person murdered almost more certainly than a college graduate from their neighborhood.<sup>7</sup> And homicides, of course, are not the only form of violence, only the most sensationalized. We could include robberies, rapes, assaults, and other crimes.

However, the focus on ‘crime’ naturalizes violence to pathologized places, as something that ‘happens in’ the ghetto rather than something that is ‘done to’ the people there. This kind of empiricism is part of a “professional vision” (Goodwin, 1994) that creates a figure and a ground: black-on-black violence is highlighted and institutional violence fades into the background.<sup>8</sup> This same sort of procedure occurs in schooling. Testing highlights the pathology of poor testers and poor test-teachers, and the sheer magnitude of an unequal school system is obfuscated. Bad students, bad teachers, and bad schools are colored red, shaded gray, and isolated as the source of contagion.

Denise Ferreira da Silva (2001) describes the ghetto as a “*zona de violência* (zone of violence)” (p. 441). She investigates incidents of police terror globally, including a night in 1993 when undercover police killed 9 people in her own neighborhood, a *favela* of Rio de Janeiro. The zone of violence is a “moral and legal *no man’s land*, where universality finds its *spatial* limits” (p. 422, emphasis original). That is, the ‘universal’ human deserving of ethical treatment is far from universal. It is always predicated on the dislocation of lesser humans—“the civilly dead who are therefore murderable” (Le Donne, 2009, p. 4). The spatialization of race means there are distinct ‘moral’ zones—ones in which enlightenment ideals of justice are in effect and ones in which they are

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<sup>6</sup> Of these three cities, Watts stands out as no longer majority black: 69.7% Hispanic of any race according to the 2000 U.S. Census.

<sup>7</sup> In East Oakland during this time, the two comprehensive high schools each year produced fewer than 100 graduates (combined) who were eligible to apply to a 4-year university.

<sup>8</sup> For example, of the maps that Gus D’Angelo created, only the ones of homicides and liquor stores were published.

permanently suspended. Ghettoized zones in schools are those in which the rights of students are suspended, and state agents are allowed free reign to implement any set of neocolonial educational and disciplinary tactics, ranging from high-stakes testing to English-only to Zero Tolerance to experiments in greed-based incentives (like one D.C. school's latest experiment in paying kids for good grades)—violence that would never be permitted in their privileged counterparts.

Once established, zones of blackness and whiteness and their associated racial subjugation or privilege can be re-circulated and refined for other bodies (read: Latinos, Asians, Whites, Jews, Arabs, etc.) as necessary. Therefore, the racial is more than phenotype; it takes biological race as its referent but is ultimately rooted in the logic of exclusion (Silva, 2001). This is why it still makes sense to talk about whiteness as a system of property (Harris, 1993) that non-whites can invest in and blackness as a system of dislocation that non-blacks can be subjected to. As the group Mothers Reclaiming Our Children put it, there are two laws—one for white people and one for black people—but “you do not have to be black to be prosecuted under black law” (Gilmore, 1999, p. 22).

A counter-map would highlight the institutionally permissible violences of police brutality, home evictions, immigration raids, environmental poisonings, school closures, suspensions, and pushouts. In this *gedanken*-map, we might have a legend for these forms of state terror. This map would describe a zone of permissible violence.

### **The Ghetto is an Imagined Place**

These maps provide a genealogy for why non-black groups become marked *as black* in the ghetto: “Blackness here, like whiteness, is not reducible to an embodied identity” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 14) and can be articulated in “chains of signification” (Hall, 1996) to diverse bodies, speech, behaviors, styles, ideas, and cultural forms. Thus, the ghetto is not only “a concrete place, whose racial and economic formation is material” but also “as much an imagined place” that is an assembly of competing discourses about gender and race (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 779).

Through the trope of the ‘urban,’ Zeus Leonardo and Margaret Hunter (2007) interrogate the multiple contradictory significations of the ghetto in the mainstream “urban imagination” (p. 780). It is simultaneously an exoticized site of the black Other, a horizon of cosmopolitan desire, and an idealized place of authenticity. In mainstream discourse, the ghetto is “decidedly feminine when the pundits talk about teenage parenthood, welfare dependence, and the out of control sexuality of women of color. However, the urban jungle can also be masculine when the topics are gangs, violence, and the drug economy” (p. 792).

Acting ‘ghetto’<sup>9</sup> has become national parlance for reproducing media minstrelsies of blackface and blackvoice, through which “the urban is simultaneously performed and ridiculed” (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p. 794). Playing up a little ghetto flavor gives the nouveau metro-citizen a cosmopolitan chic, the “urban without the burden” (p. 794), especially if s/he is not phenotypically black. At the same time, “Both people of color and Whites tend to imagine urban spaces as more authentically ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ than suburban or rural spaces” (p. 787). Thus, many people of color, but especially Latinos

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<sup>9</sup> I used scare quotes to distinguish ‘ghetto’ as a pejorative label from my use of ghetto as a dislocation. Throughout this paper, I use single quotes to indicate and problematize expressions in their mainstream usage.

and African Americans, who do not adequately perform being from the 'hood are often constructed as inauthentic.

As a vicious corollary, phenotypically black people or youth sporting urban styles are always already interpellated as 'ghetto' or culturally and morally deficient. Dwight Conquergood (1996) describes how urban males are already inked by the media as violent gangsters before they ever tattoo a gang insignia on their bodies. Massey and Denton (1993) show how when middle class blacks move out of the ghetto, the 'ghetto' status seems to move with them, resulting in a host of wealth and health disparities regardless of income level (Fullilove, 2004; Shapiro, 2004). Suburban and rural news, police, and government have expressed alarm at their growing 'urban' problems with the influx of Latinos, African Americans, urbanized youth, or refugees from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Thus 'ghetto' is not just a space but a portable status that can be cast onto bodies—some are temporarily and selectively branded, others inescapably so.

This portability allows the ghetto to be deferred to someplace 'over there.' Take Oakland, for example. From a view outside, the ghetto is sometimes elided with the whole city. When I lived near the metropolitan hub of Lake Merritt, my neighbors would say the ghetto started somewhere just past Park Boulevard. Deep within that territory is my latest residence off Fruitvale Avenue, and although people have been shot on the corner, few of my neighbors and none of my high school students consider my particular street of mostly single-residence houses to be the 'ghetto.' Often, my students think of the pejorative ghetto as somewhere other than their immediate neighborhood or sometimes as embodied by specific friends and family members. As a close colleague once remarked, you can always say the person to your left is "too ghetto" and the one to your right is "too bougie." People of color too can invest in "a white spatial imaginary based on exclusivity" (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 13); some police their home property values with the same fear of blackness as the most xenophobic suburban homeowner's association. Where the ghetto ends and white space begins is never clear. These multiple standpoint maps construct fractal and fluid boundaries for the ghetto but share an imagined monolithic, inner-city of darkness.

### **The Ghetto is a Dislocation**

Perhaps the truest measure of the ghetto is not its formation but its availability for dislocation. Hitler's final solution set out to clear the ghettos of Jews and thus clear Europe of ghettos. In Chicago, the demolition of Cabrini Green housing project has been underway for the last 12 years to make way for the expansion of the Gold Coast, one of the city's wealthiest neighborhoods: "Second grade African American children who attend an elementary school in the Cabrini Green area look out their classroom windows at new \$1.3 million townhouses" (Lipman, 2004, p. 30). This renewal is no less motivated by obliteration; only the manner in which it is carried out better fits the sensibilities of a neoliberal episteme (Foucault, 1977). The penultimate solution for Chicago's slums has resulted in the displacement of 50,000 souls (Schepers, 2002), most of whom relocate to high minority, high poverty areas (Koval, Bennett, Bennett, Demissie, Garner, & Kim, 2006; Venkatesh & Celimli, 2004).

Chicago Public Schools is an intimate partner in this project of urban renewal, called Renaissance 2010, in which public schools are closed then reopened as choice and charter schools (Lipman & Haines, 2007). Walter Payton College Preparatory High School was

built in 2000 within walking distance of the active ruins of the projects but had selective enrollment—i.e., not serving the black youth of Cabrini Green (see Figure 9). In the school district's own words, "As of 2008, the largest demographic at PAYTON HS is White. This demographic currently makes up 37.3% of the student population. The second greatest demographic is Hispanic at 19.4%, followed by African American at 19.3%" (Chicago Public Schools, n.d.). Of the 890 students at Payton, 28.4% are low income (ibid.). By contrast, the elementary school with the view has 98.3% African American and 97.2% low-income students (ibid.). Magnet schools like Payton were built throughout the city, targeting gentrifying locations (Lipman, 2004, p. 55). Chicago is the model of the new national agenda for urban schools, moving towards cosmopolitan centers and suburban ghettos.



*Figure 9.* Cabrini Green housing project tower block under demolition, circa 2006. (Photographer unknown<sup>10</sup>.)

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<sup>10</sup> Reproductions of this particularly haunting photograph populate the World Wide Web. See: <http://bldgblog.blogspot.com/2006/10/chicagos-inner-flute-ruins.html>, and <http://www.archinect.com/gallery/displayimage.php?pos=-6601>. When this photo was taken in 2006, people still lived in Cabrini Green. Payton HS was founded in 2000.

Paris is the future. There, black ghettos have already been relegated to the suburbs. Ironically, French President Sarkozy has termed his approach for managing these primarily black North African communities a “Marshall Plan” as a nod to U.S. imperialism (Lichfield, 2009). But maybe the urban has never been an essential characteristic of U.S. ghettos either. Modern migrant camps for farmworkers can hardly be called urban in any precise sense, but as situated dislocations they are certainly ghettoized spaces. According to Charles Aiken (1990), the Yazoo Delta in Mississippi is more segregated in 1990 than it was in 1950 (p. 223) as a result of new rural ghettos: all black townships marked by high poverty and high unemployment. As agribusiness wanted less black labor (p. 225), African Americans previously living in dispersed rural areas became dislocated people in discarded space. Federal housing tended to be built in areas left over by pure “white spaces” and became newly segregated communities created to maintain white voting power in the desegregated South (p. 226). In general, megacities with urban sprawl raise the question of what is or isn’t city, and the rise of edge cities and carceral cities helps us understand ghettos beyond the monoracial and segregated inner city (Soja, 2000).

The dislocatable are always subject to renewal. Perhaps post-Katrina New Orleans is another pro-utopic model, in which already ghettoized black people “face a concentrated campaign to disperse them to other regions” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 21). Thus, the ghetto is nowhere for good.

If we were to map the ghetto from this perspective, then it would be a palimpsest, a map of absences—of what used to be there—or perhaps a map of the condemned. Such projects are not easy to accomplish, as these obliterated communities, organizations, schools, people are rarely important enough to leave more than a trace in official records. No Child Left Behind offers us an interesting set of data for this—the schools which were closed, the schools to be closed, the schools always available for closure. This *gedanken*-map would offer us an image of the hand of power and its overkeen cuffing of poor communities of color.

### **The Ghetto-Metropole-Colony Relation**

Dislocation is what distinguishes ghetto colonialism from and connects it to other forms of colonization within the larger project of empire. The ghetto is less “a special variety of colonialism” (O’Dell, 1967, p. 7) and more a *specialization* of the colonial cartography. It is part of a division of oppression that abets in colonization elsewhere and in imperialism everywhere. My intent is not to invoke colonization as an *analogy* for racial oppression in the United States but rather to show how dislocation is the *actuality* of ghetto colonialism. Indeed, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) pushes us to think that there is no general form of colonialism. Every ugly instance is a unique specialization of the apparatus of empire.

If the overseas colony is “imperialism’s outpost, the fort and the port of imperial outreach” (Smith, 1999, p. 22), then the ghetto is imperialism’s *outcast*: the alley and the underground of imperial outlaw. With one hand, colonial cartography maps the colony as distant and exterior to the metropole yet as an indispensable asset to empire. With the other hand, it maintains the ghetto as intimately interior to the nation yet as an undesirable discard of the metropole/metropolis. Here, the metropole can be thought of as that utopic space of privilege that is made possible by its accumulation of the world’s wealth and its simultaneous purging of any share in the world’s subsequent suffering. The

colony is that frontier of empire where civilization is produced. The ghetto is that last refuge of the irrational to be eliminated. A triangular relationship between the three describes the processes of colonialism and imperialism.

A triangular model differs from classical colonialism theory (see Figure 10), which is typically conceived in terms of imperial centers and colonial margins (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1995). The classical colonizer-colonized (Memmi, 1965) binary is no stranger to education studies, as Paulo Freire's (1970) oppressor-oppressed paradigm is in many ways a response to Frantz Fanon's (1968) anticolonial treatise *Wretched of the Earth*.

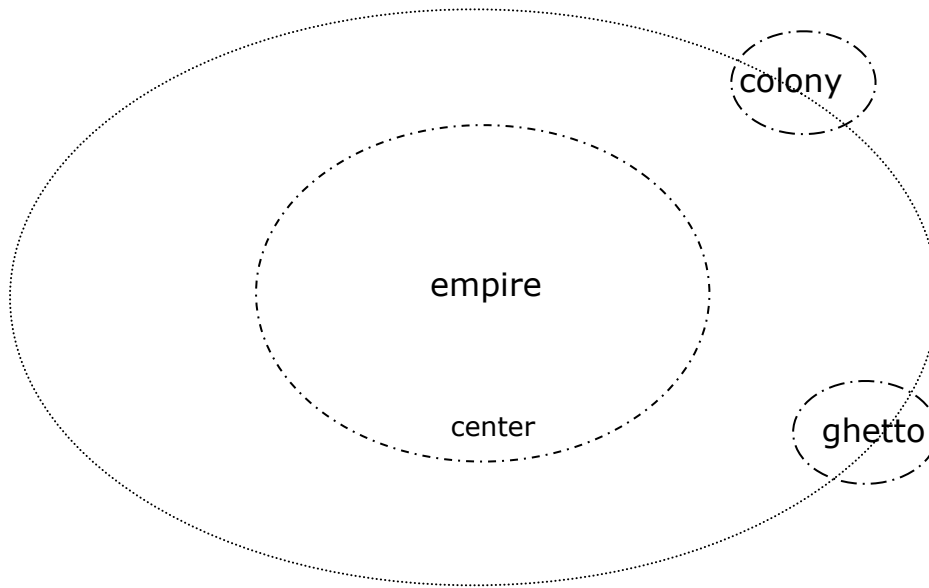


Figure 10. Center/Margin Binary

There are several problems with applying this center/margin binary to the ghetto. First, it reduces the conception of the ghetto to a “colonial analogy”—a metaphor rather than an analysis—that is rooted in an essentialized colonization (and decolonization) of an ideal overseas colony (Blauner, 1969, p. 393). This ghetto=colony metaphorical equivalency misses the colonial particularities of ghettos, such as the non-Indigenous status of black Americans and other minorities, as well as the decolonial differences, such as the problematics of establishing an independent nation within the metropole. Also, it is unclear about the complex relationships between people in ghettos and colonies, particularly how each may invest in the other's oppression. Furthermore, the binary conflates colonialism with imperialism (wa Thiong'o et al., 2009), and thereby assumes a static pole of power, despite the manifold adaptations that forces of globalization have taken (Ho, 2004).

The ghetto-metropole-colony triangle complicates the empire/colony binary in several important ways. It provides a model to articulate the particularities and differences of colonial spaces, their permeability, and relationships between these spaces; the interplay between imperialism and colonialism; and the decentered nature of power. In the triangular model, imperialism is a centripetal force whose primary motives are inclusion, seizure, and exploitation; and colonization is a centrifugal force whose primary

motives are exclusion, containment, and control. In Figure 11, these forces are represented by push and pull arrows to indicate how imperialism and colonialism are different processes that often work in concert.

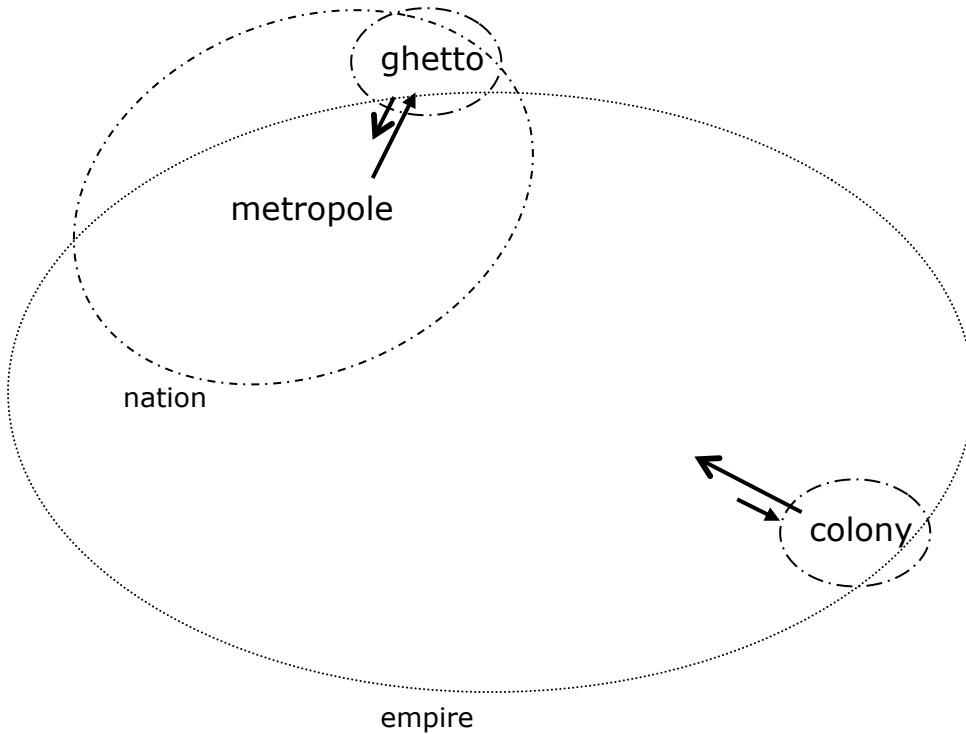


Figure 11. Ghetto-metropole-colony triangle

The unequal size of the arrows references how these projects can vary in their intensity. The overseas colony is simultaneously expropriated into empire yet held at a manageable distance.<sup>11</sup> Thus it defines the reach of the empire. It is a strategic location and acquisition in the expansion of empire. The ghetto, by contrast, is a dislocation, only marginally involved in imperial projects yet a major preoccupation in maintaining domestic order. As a dislocation, it reveals the boundaries of the nation.

The ghetto-metropole-colony is a lopsided triangle with no definite center. Colonial spaces are thus connected asymmetrically *through* empire. By considering imperialism and colonialism as forces, we can see how power is diffuse and how we are complicit in it. I like to think of imperialism as “investments in empire,” and colonialism as “what is being done to the colonized subject.” In this way, “who is doing it” to the colonized can

<sup>11</sup> Here, ‘colony’ is not meant to describe all actual colonies. It is an abstract construction in order to show one way the triangular model can be used to analyze difference between colonial spaces. Here, I have drawn the triangle to relate dislocation (the ghetto) to appropriation (colony). The model could be redrawn to think through other triangular relationships between colonies, metropolises, rural spaces, suburban spaces, metropolises that were former colonies, colonies formerly belonging to other empires, sovereignties under federal management, etc.

be the empire, another colonized subject, or the colonized herself. Similarly, we can all invest into and profit from empire, however unequally. Specifically, dislocation helps to elucidate ghetto-to-colony connections and the ways in which ghetto subjects make particular investments in empire.

Putting domestic matter in place supports imperial matters in Other places. Examining how commodity racism used the imperial imagination to discipline domestic workers in Victorian Britain, Anne McClintock (1995) demonstrates how the domestic organization of race, gender, and labor is not only isolated oppression but a force that fuels imperial projects abroad. The sixteenth-century organization of the Jewish ghettos aided the transition of Italian cities from Medieval to Renaissance and provided an exploitable resource to finance the colonizations of the New World and the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Sennett, 1994). Richard Sennett shows how Venice capitalist formations were rooted in the organization of the Jewish ghetto around fears of race, religion, sexual deviance, and disease. In the Age of Manifest Destiny, extracted labor from enslaved Africans benefited Southern cotton states certainly, but Northern states also accumulated capital to fuel industrialization and territorial conquest of North America (Tabb, 1970, pp. 24-26). Hortense Spillers (2003) analyzes how this slave capitalism depended on domestic arrangements of the black woman's labor and reproductive birthright. Similarly, the emergence of the Black ghetto in the latter half of the twentieth century allowed for white suburban home ownership as described previously. Furthermore, this accumulation of wealth to white male GIs provided the financial ability and appetite for consumption to fuel the U.S. transition from the Great Depression to a Post-WWII military empire (Gilderhus, 2005). The present-day U.S. "empire of bases," unrivaled in over one thousand military bases worldwide, was achieved in no small part by domestic spatial, legal, and civil arrangements that facilitate investments in empire (Johnson, 2004).

Dislocation also makes inclusion, however marginal, seem attractive. The tantalizing promise of civil rights since the Civil War has lured many black men into military service, Latinos into the Marine Corps, and now undocumented immigrants into enlisting as green card soldiers (Mariscal, 2007; Ngai, 2004). On the flip side, the slightly dislocated ghetto's proximity to the metropole makes it still an alluring destination for many third-world colonized. U.S. ghettos paradoxically display affluent poverty from the wealth of first world waste, even as the cost of barely living is high.

This asymmetry between the pull of empire and the push of dislocation gives rise to *imperial education* on the one hand and *colonial schooling* on the other. Imperial education is training for inclusion into the metropole, which stands in contrast to colonial schooling, a form of management of populations in the ghetto. Imperial education is the project of inclusion: one that prepares a few model students to enter the university and then, presumably, the middle class. These investments in empire are also investments in whiteness, often disguised as "college going culture" or "speaking standard American English." They require the loss of language and culture in the name of academic achievement and productivity (Gutierrez, Asato, & Baquedano-Lopez, 2000). They offer twisted incentives, such as the money for grades program being piloted in D.C. schools (Sanchez, 2008). They can require explicit training in individualistic bootstrap ideology. They can involve military schools, recruitment, or green card soldiering (Quinn & Meiners, 2009). These acts are predicated on the getting some share of the bounty of empire, which is independent of one's specific colonial status and, yet, dependent on the continued colonizations of people everywhere. Educational imperialism then stamps

some urban schools as ‘good’ while their neighbor is ‘ghetto.’ Through imperial education, individuals from oppressed communities invest into oppression elsewhere.

### Dispossessed, Murderable, and Still Haunting

Portia: Then must the Jew be merciful.  
Shylock: On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.  
(Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, IV.i.182-183)

Shylock is one of those figures in the Shakespearean pantheon who calls into question the morality of Western society. Shylock is a Jew living within the segregated walls of the original Venice Ghetto—after which all others are named. Antonio, the Merchant of Venice (also the name of Shakespeare’s play), is a respected Christian philanthropist and upstanding citizen of Venice. The plot progresses when Antonio borrows money from Shylock to support a friend’s courtship of Portia, a beautiful heiress. When foul weather at sea destroys his investments (of three ships), he is compelled to default on his loan, and Shylock demands his collateral, the infamous “pound of flesh” to be sliced from the body of the noble Antonio. Portia, our chaste object of love, literally portrays justice in the guise of a male “doctor of law.” She insists that Shylock show mercy “not strain’d” but freely given “as the gentle rain from heaven” (IV.i.184-185). This avatar of the law passes her Christian ethics as unmarked, natural, and universal. As a racial Other already excluded from “the domain of universal justice” (Silva, 2001, p. 423), Shylock exposes that the universal is finite with his simple question, Why?

Ironically, Shylock is subjugated to this ‘mercy’ in the end. Found guilty of desiring to murder a citizen of Venice, he finds his life and possessions forfeited. He is not put to death, however. The Duke of Venice pardons him “before thou ask it” (IV.i.470, emphasis added), on the condition that Shylock convert to Christianity. A pauper but still breathing, he responds, “Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that” because “you take my life / When you do take the means whereby I live” (IV.i.370-373). We can read these twin exercises of law as acts of colonization and then neocolonization: the expropriation of Shylock’s wealth and then the imposition of religion, docility, and the status of living death. The unmarked confluence of law, race, gender, and religion takes the marked body of the Jew first as its object of plunder, and then as its object of mercy. In short, we can think of the violence of plunder to the violence of mercy as the shift from colonialism to neocolonialism. This colonization does not take place in some ‘distant’ territory but is located within internal borderlands where the city-state meets its ghetto. *We* can read this as colonization specifically because of our postcolonial subjectivity, which I will discuss in due course.

When the state administrators geared up to close EOC, they first had to render it murderable (Agamben, 1998). A totalizing anthropology was applied to the school—the ethnographers were administrators with notepads, making 3-minute visits to classrooms. Their findings concluded that somehow this small school was so irrational in its pedagogy, so monstrous in its culture, that it was not even eligible for the basic procedures for school closure laid out in the ‘rational’ world of No Child Left Behind.

Once rendered abject, students were offered state ‘mercy.’ They were granted enrollment by random lottery into the existing flatland high schools, which the administrator claimed provided excellent education for their children—an offer met by laughter from the parents. They perceived it as either a barefaced lie or a barefaced belief that colonial schooling was what befitted their children. Parents knew full well that they

had founded EOC precisely because those schools could not serve their children. For example, in 2003, out of an original class of 1630 freshman, only 362 graduated, with 87 completing the minimum coursework required to apply to college.<sup>12</sup> Parents found that their children were assigned randomly to different schools *before thou ask it*, including one case of four siblings assigned to four different schools.

The pairing of dispossession and mercy constitutes the majority system of colonial education for ghetto schools. In the case of California, dispossession shifted in the 1970s from formal segregation and unequal funding to free market residential resegregation. The Proposition 13 tax revolt equally divested all schools of public funding, making way for unequal private re-investment into wealthy districts, producing our current system of “semi-private public schools” (Morrow, 2008). The only truly public schools remaining are our dispossessed ghetto schools and prison reformatories. Dispossession takes many forms: the new institutionalization of failure through high stakes testing and exit exams, the drop-out rate for urban teachers, the bark and the bite of school closures, the state takeover of bankrupted school districts.

“False generosity” might be the term that Freire (1970, p. 44) would attribute to mercy, the second aspect of colonial education. Now sufficiently abject, school communities like ours in Oakland are supposed to be grateful for any new regimen of test prep, the outsourcing of afterschool programs to private tutoring corporations, the placement of liberal and underprepared teachers in the ’hood, and so on.

Shylock rejects dispossession and mercy, and the false invitation to join the domain of universal justice. He recognizes it as violence. Parents similarly rejected these acts of mercy. Most pulled their children out of the school district and enrolled them into charter schools, despite the poor quality of choices offered by those alternatives. One aspect, then, of the decolonial is the refusal to accept colonial schooling as a stand-in for education:

He will prefer a long period of educational mistakes to the continuance of the colonizer’s school organization. He will choose institutional disorder in order to destroy the institutions built by the colonizer as soon as possible. (Memmi, 1965, pp. 137-8)

Such refusals appear irrational to liberal reformists. In the EOC ghostlife, many parents chose to leave the district and either enrolled their children in charter schools or, in some cases, did not send them to school at all. Some chose to enroll their students in a charter school with neither honors nor Advanced Placement courses, sending them to class each morning in a converted house in the westside ghetto. It is difficult to express, without understatement, the risk taken by these students and their parents, the trust they had to muster in the volunteer adults staffing the program, and their total distrust of the Oakland school district. The state administrator saw these actions as irrational. Denouncing of colonial education, in both its aspects of dispossession and false generosity, appears completely irrational within the colonial epistemology.

The postcolonial subject, as her shape begins to take form, is illegible to the rationalist eye. Shylock’s rejection of mercy makes no sense. The irrational must be engaged on its own terms, as a non-Newtonian, non-linear worldview rather than simply a misunderstanding of the ‘rational.’ Postcolonial subjects understand how the rational

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<sup>12</sup> Source: California Dept. of Education data for class of 2003, Castlemont and Fremont High Schools.

fractures space, time, and subjectivity for colonized people. In order to defragment and remake coherent places, histories, and selves, a bit of time warping and quantum tunneling is necessary.

Fast forward 400 years from the time of Shakespeare and the sixteenth-century Venice Ghetto, and we encounter a twenty-first-century Shylock courtesy of Sony Pictures: a bearded Al Pacino wearing a red tam that marks him as a Jew in a crowd of unmarked Venetians. The opening of Radford's 2004 film, *The Merchant of Venice*, deviates from Shakespeare's play by informing us: "By law the Jews were forced to live in the old walled foundry or 'Geto' area of the city... The Jews were forbidden to own property. So they practised usury, the lending of money at interest. This was against Christian law." This 2004 version is the sixth film adaptation of the play, and each reconstitution of Shakespeare's comedy speaks at once to historical imaginations and contemporary anxieties about race, religion, and law.<sup>13</sup> As audiences to Radford's version we bring to our viewing the intertextuality of the modern ghetto. Through postcolonial eyes, we simultaneously see the physical walls of Renaissance Venice and the invisible walls that contain modern ghettos, the racialization of the Jew and that of black, brown, and Othered 'urban' folk, the criminalization of usury and of modern ghetto economies (e.g., day labor, unlicensed small businesses, sex work, drug trade). Like usury, condemned and consumed by Antonio, modern ghetto labor is represented as immoral by intersecting legal, religious, racial, class, and social mores and is simultaneously in demand by its primarily white clientele in the mainstream social sphere. When Shylock speaks, our ears hear his voice through the modern discourses of discrimination, not just the pentameter of Shakespearean verse. Thus, the link between the ghettos of Renaissance Europe and post-WWII U.S. superpower is less than historical but more than just etymological; it is a part of the cultural imaginary that defies historicism to compose the meaning of the modern ghetto.

In reading Shylock this way, one sees that although the U.S. ghetto emerges historically long after the Jewish Ghetto of Europe, it is its cultural antecedent through postcolonial eyes. If we think of the U.S. ghetto as the remake of the original Jewish Ghetto, it nonetheless becomes our first and firsthand experience through which we come to know the original. As Bliss Lim (2007) shows us, if you see the remake before the original, then "the time 'afterwards' starts to come apart ... since intertextuality itself is always temporally discrepant" (p. 122).

One marker of postcolonial vision is a dis-temporality, a disorganization of time, but not in the free-wheel postmodern sense. Rather, the postcolonial sense of time emerges from a specific set of disruptions, so that we can see the time now (colonization), the time before that (pre-colonial), and the time outside of all of that (postcolonial). In each space, time, then, is multivocal and yet particular—we speak, read, and conceptualize the world through this pidgin dialect of time—what Jorge Solís, Shlomy Kattan, and Patricia Baquedano-López (2009) would call a "chronolect." The chronolect is both a dialect—a way of speaking about time—and a dialectic—a synthesis of sometimes competing ideologies about time.

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<sup>13</sup> The 1916 silent movie by Lois Weber was the first film version of *The Merchant of Venice*, and coincidentally the first feature-length film ever by directed by a woman. Weber's films generally reflected an interest in controversial social themes. Also, several American legal treatises of Shakespeare look at Shylock's contract with Antonio, the role of courts, and of Portia: 1911 Edward J. White's *Commentaries on the law in Shakespeare*, and 1883 C.K. Davis's *The Law in Shakespeare*.

### **Still Missing: The Postcolonial Subject**

I must keep from breaking into the story by force. (Harjo, 2007, p. 36)

A structuralist analysis of the ghetto as a space of oppression risks reducing the culture of people who live there into a set of coping strategies (Kelley, 1997), thus narrating the ghetto subject as nothing more than a symptom of colonialism—which is just another dislocation into the non-being. Yet the ghetto subject is there, not just subjugated but a subjective actor. This paper sets the groundwork for a richer discussion on postcolonial culture, subjectivity, and agency. It makes sense to conclude with what was hinted at in this paper—her shape—and thus what ought to come next.

This paper began with an analysis of the ghetto as a dislocation, discarded domestic matter of the empire, to critique integration as a “false hope” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 182). Then, taking dislocation as a key feature of ghetto colonialism, I presented the ghetto-metropole-colony triangle to articulate the connections between colonial spaces and to produce a framework for recognizing imperial education. We can think of imperial education as inclusion into the metropole and colonial schooling as managing the bodies and minds in the ghetto. How can we then think of decolonization as refusing both of these projects and yet existing in a practical way? The actions and daily lives of some East Oakland youth and families provided a few hints to answering this question. This paper ends with some directions for more work to come.

#### ***A Post+Colonial Framework for Education***

Decolonizing ghetto schools denounces, announces, and makes some strategic demands. This post+colonial framework:

- Denounces imperial education. As we move from colonial analogy to a post+colonial analysis, we can develop the language to recognize and denounce imperial education. Primarily, imperial education offers some relief from oppression in exchange for increased investments in whiteness and capitalism.
- Denounces colonial schooling. Its twin aspects of dispossession and mercy require the formation of good/bad schools, students, and teachers. Its actions always preserve the superiority of the reformist gaze and the regimes of truth from outside the ghetto.

A post+colonial studies agenda for urban education would by necessity involve a critique of imperial and colonial schooling. By recognizing these twin aspects of schooling and how they can be distributed throughout white and black space, we can critique power in its decentered forms and our own complicity in it.

A post+colonial agenda in urban education must also offer us an alternative to these forms of miseducation. It has to haunt the empiricism of schooling science that has taken over the art of education. This agenda:

- Announces postcolonial vision. In teaching, research, and learning, this is the development of techniques to see his hand and her shape simultaneously. The challenge is to see how her shape still exists and acts in her own sovereign logic and landscape and thus maps past, present, and future possibilities. Postcolonial vision is matrix-seeing and freedom-dreaming all at once.
- Announces quantum tunnels, time warps, and other practices of freedom. In our teaching, research, and activism, we find and devise passages through schooling that

are translocative, not gradual. The point and profit in postcolonial vision is to devise chutes-and-ladders through cartographies of containment, not to just comply with the rules of the system. These revolutionary leaps through cracks in the concrete can be a “painful path” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 185), and we should make no mistake that there is no easy magic implied by quantum tunneling.

A post+colonial agenda in urban education finally insists on strategy, on taking space in the domain of empire, even in the master’s house. A “methodology of repatriation” (Tuck, 2008, p. 10) is a fitting description; Native American repatriation of stolen heritage has required a portfolio of strategies of engaging with the colonizing nation. This agenda:

- Demands a strategic anticolonialism. This means taking and making space. Schools and other institutions can never be purely decolonized but rather provide avenues for decolonial change agents to reclaim resources from the empire.

### ***Spatial and Temporal Imaginaries***

The bulk of this paper has critiqued how the “white spatial imaginary” inscribes the ghetto as a specialization of colonial cartography. This post-structuralist critique of ghetto colonialism does not account for the large amounts of migration in and out the ghetto, the permeability of the ghetto’s borders, the diasporic nature of the people who live there, and the creolization of global symbol systems that occur there. In other words, it fails to mention how ghettoized communities themselves imagine, maneuver within, and transform space:

For aggrieved communities of color and other non-normative populations, on the other hand, a different spatial imaginary exists. This perspective on space revolves around solidarities within, between, and across spaces. (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 10)

In order to illustrate this differing spatial imaginary, George Lipsitz (2007) opens his article with 82-year old Tootie Montana testifying against police harassment of the Mardi Gras Indian tribes in New Orleans. He spoke “from his perspective as a resident of the Seventh Ward, the oldest continuous free black neighborhood in the United States, as a black worker whose labor as a lather had helped build houses throughout the city of New Orleans, and as a respected elder—Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Tribe and reigning ‘Chief of Chiefs’ of all the Mardi Gras Indian tribes” (p. 10). At the end of the sentence, “I want this to stop,” he collapsed to the floor. He died later that night. Eight weeks later, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, making way for the state campaign of permanent dislocation of black people from the city: “Tootie Montana passed away while championing the right of black people in New Orleans to occupy and traverse urban space” (p. 10). The black Indians of Mardi Gras are one example of “resource-poor but network-rich” (p. 21) ghetto communities that “function all year round in their neighborhoods as mutual aid societies” (p. 11). Despite poverty and dislocation, “ghetto and barrio residents turn segregation into congregation” as part of a black spatial imaginary “based on privileging use value over exchange value, sociality over selfishness, and inclusion over exclusion” (p. 14).

But the black spatial imaginary is also a temporal imaginary. The Mardi Gras Indians are “social clubs of black men who masquerade as Plains Indians and parade through their neighborhoods in flamboyant costumes” (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 10), a tradition that has been practiced for more than 100 years. Musician Cyril Neville describes his family’s literal masking as Indians as a claim to ghetto space: “The mythology of the tribes is based on territorial integrity—this is our plot of ground where we rule” (Neville, cited in Lipsitz, p. 12). Thus, black Indian masking is a way of imagining Indigeneity, and thus invoking a different right to belong to land that lies outside, prior to, and higher than white property rights to own it. This funky time warp takes black absence in the colonial cartography and makes it a presence in an Indigenous one. It is also intertextuality at work again, a postcolonial vision that links the black ghetto to Native American colonization, not unlike our postcolonial reading of *The Merchant of Venice*.

These postcolonial subjects turn interrupted time—that is, the white interdiction of Indigenous life in North America—into genealogy, continuity, and contemporaneous time. They defy bloodlines as the only marker of kinship. They turn exterminated peoples into ancestors, and racial others into brothers. These solidarities are only possible through postcolonial traversings of space, time, and colorlines.

Finally, this paper has ignored the postcolonial subject herself. I use “her shape” to interpellate the postcolonial ghetto subject—not because she is decidedly feminine but because she is decidedly queer. A queer of color critique, as developed by Roderick Ferguson (2004), locates the possibility of agency in unlikely figures of capitalist society who are otherwise postulated as symptoms of domination. Thus Ferguson says black people are already queer—monstrously feminized and hypermasculinized—as subordinated yet inassimilable trans-figures. The Mardi Gras Indians in this respect are queer figures, illegible to the science of power: a bunch of black men dressed as Indians, congregating on a city corner, and not contributing enough to capitalism. As the Zapatistas (1996, p. 20) say, “We did not exist . . . we did not count, we did not produce, we did not buy, we did not sell. We were a cipher in the accounts of big capital.” Yet the postcolonial subject, as queerly there and not there, is a seething spectral presence—“a crucible for political mediation and historical memory” (Gordon, 1997, p. 18).

Her shape haunts the maps drawn by his hand. She implies a different spatial and temporal geography of tunnels and time warps. She herself is not fully legible to colonialism’s eye and cannot be defined by its sciences nor described through its grammar of power. In this respect the postcolonial subject is a spook, a wraith-like absent presence. She is still only a hint of a figure in this paper.

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