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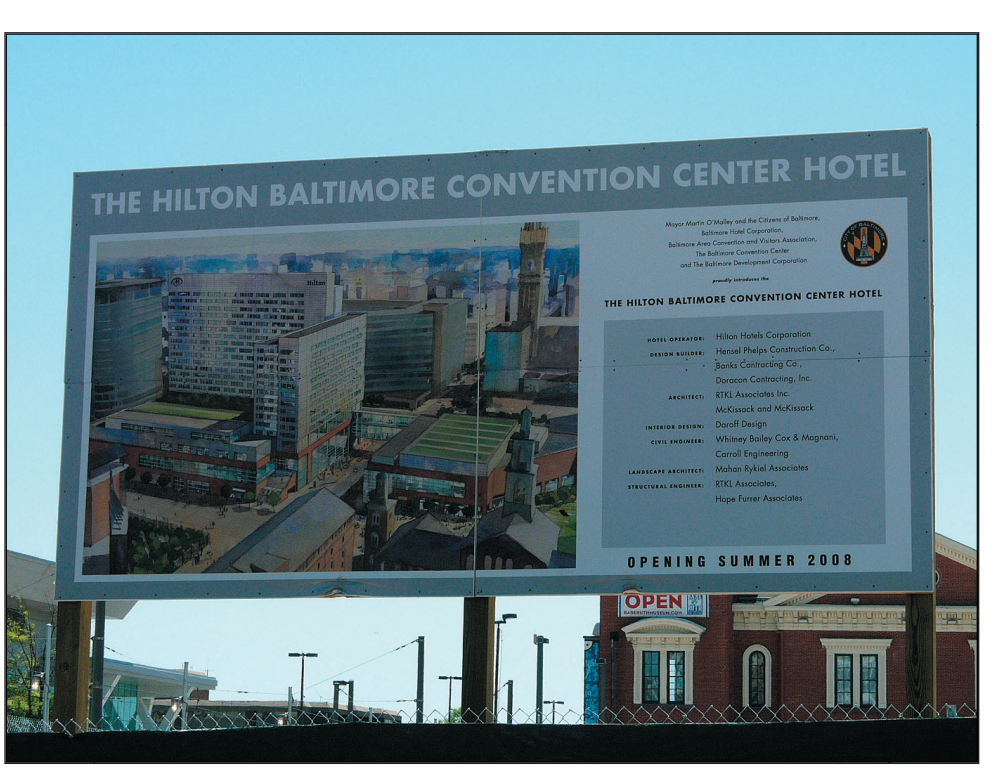
INDYPENDENT READER

Baltimore Summer 2006 Issue 1



PRODUCTION OF SPACE/DESTRUCTION OF PLACE

Gentrification Equals Racism • The Creation of the Ghetto • Baltimore's Surveillance Cameras • Segregated Housing Policy in Baltimore • Looking at Community Power • A Network of Power and Control • A Conversation between David Harvey and Marisela Gomez • The ABCs of Urban Revitalization

INDYPENDENT READER

building a new society on the vacant lots of the old...

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The first Independent Media Center was founded to cover the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization in November and December 1999. This first IMC created an environment for independent media makers of all types (audio, video, print, Internet) to work together covering the protests in a democratic and collaborative manner. Seattle IMC was the beginning of a global independent media movement which focuses on reporting the world-wide struggle against neoliberal capitalism and a range of local issues. There are now over 130 IMCs around the world. Baltimore IMC has been publishing since July 2001.

WHAT IS campbaltimore?

campbaltimore is a group that organizes projects and discussions around critical cultural, political and social issues in collaboration with community organizations and activist groups in Baltimore.

Indypendent Reader

The Indypendent Reader is funded by benefits, donations, subscriptions, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

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The Indypendent encourages the contributions of activists, journalists, and new writers. The editorial group reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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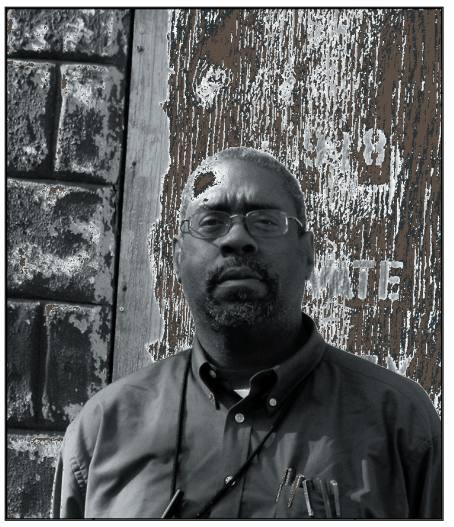
Gentrification Equals Racism to Me

by R.B. Jones



The footprint of gentrification is across the throat of my childhood neighborhood. It does not surprise me because I grew up in the shadow of Downtown Baltimore. The first home I remember was in the 700 Block of George Street between Fremont Ave. and Myrtle Ave. A short stroll down George St. took one to Pennsylvania Ave and a couple of blocks south on Green St. and I was at Lexington Market, the place of hot dogs, Konstant peanuts and their still delicious peanut brittle. I never thought my neighborhood would be anything other than what it was.

At age three I moved a couple of blocks away onto Harlem Ave. where I could look out of my window and see the Washington Monument until the Murphy Homes Housing Project highrises were built in the early 1960s. During those days, gentrification was a word I never heard. Urban renewal was the catchphrase-I heard adults refer to it as Negro removal later on.

I lived in Harlem Park, the first urban renewal district in the country with inner block parks and building code improvements that unfortunately included firewalls made of asbestos. I expected my neighborhood which included Lafayette Square, a church lined park area with beautiful flowers and a debating society made up of retired men on park benches, to remain a proud black neighborhood. It was a neighborhood full of black medical professionals and stable families whose breadwinners worked in places like Bethlehem Steel, General Motors, Armco Steel and other manufacturing plants like London Fog. We didn't need gentrification or renewal, so we thought.

Even the Murphy Homes, which displaced my first home were not bad places to live when they opened. In fact, compared to some of the slumlord owned buildings, the Murphy Homes were quite a step up. When they opened they were occupied mostly by two parent families trying to make the transition from public housing to their own homes. Later when the poverty and dysfunction overtook the occupants and the heads of households became predominantly impoverished and poorly educated young single mothers, things changed for the worst. Still the Murphy Homes were very close to downtown as were their elder sister Lexington Terrace Housing Projects.

While the trend was to flee to the suburbs, those parcels of land close to downtown were left to poor black folks who were supposed to stay in their neighborhoods and expire out of sight of the upper classes and their middle class managers. The housing projects were used as dumping grounds and they were allowed to deteriorate in the most abject way. When they were unsustainable in the face of lawsuits about concentrating the poor and racially segregating poor blacks in areas already occupied by impoverished African-Americans, the projects were blown up.

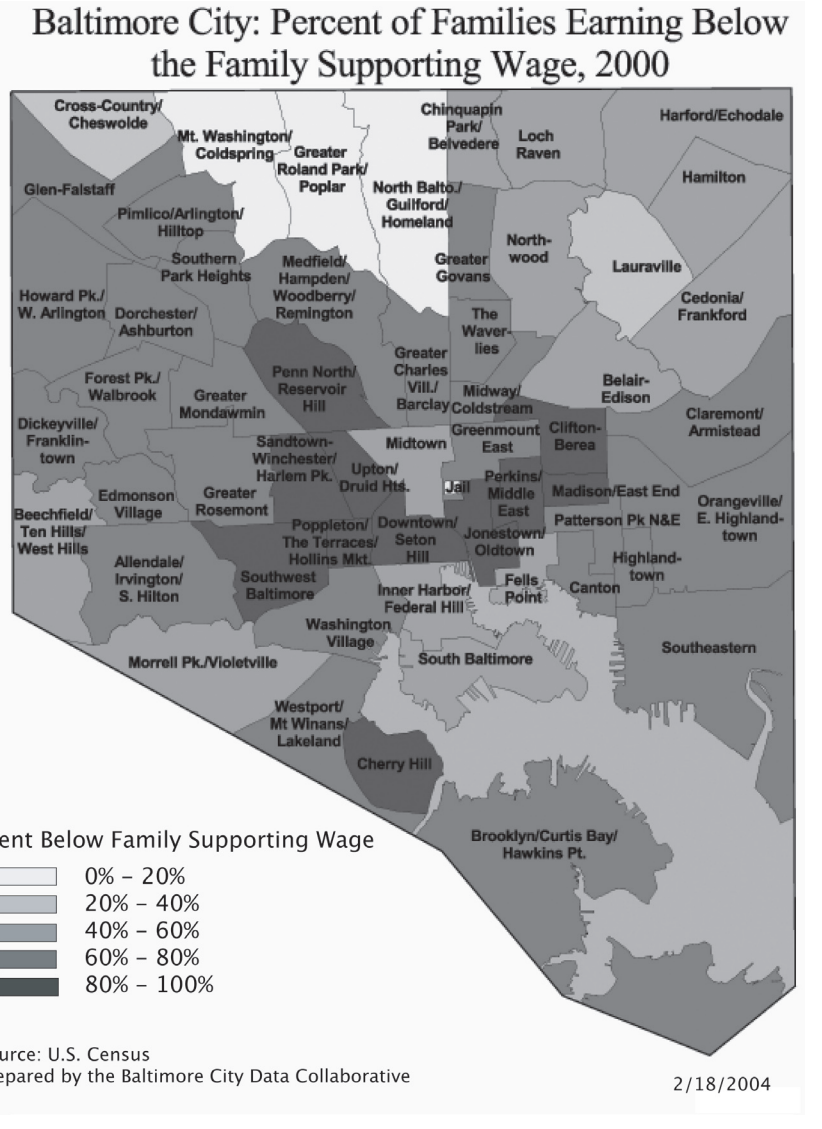
Where Lexington Terrace's foreboding high-rises once glared at travelers along the Expressway that goes nowhere along Franklin and Mulberry Streets, now stand The Terraces a community of renters and owners. South of there is the neighborhood of Poppleton, which is being gentrified which, usually means moving in middle-class white people. My old neighborhood is now called Heritage Crossing. George Street is gone and the streets in that neighborhood that is almost surrounded by a wall are named after prominent African-Americans.

The question that must be asked is, "where are all the poor people who used to inhabit that area?" Gentrification, when it comes to black people means their removal with little or no input or compensation. The biotech park north of Hopkins is a perfect example. The bottom line is that whenever the power elites decide to take a black community's property they find plenty of collaboration in elected officials. Gentrification is class warfare, often with a racist element. Black property owners have historically been run roughshod over in this city. Many of them were forced out of their homes for the expressway along the Route 40 corridor from Green St. to Pulaski St. Others were forced off of Druid Hill Ave. for the McCulloh Homes Extension.

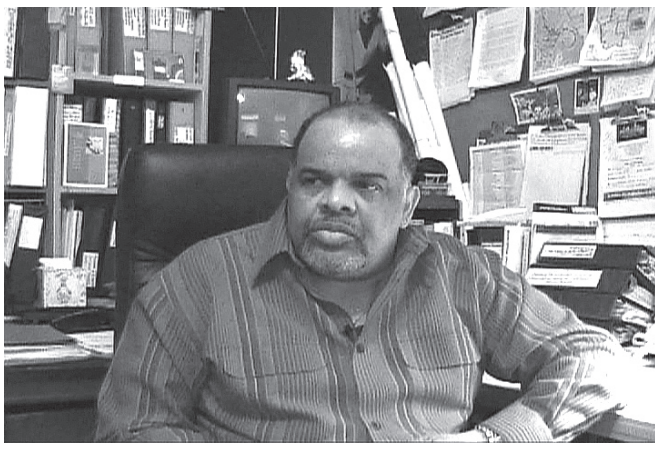
I view all gentrification with suspicion because I understand that it is usually based in class warfare. That is the dilemma in gentrifying the older part of downtown. The underclass and the working poor are not going to stay out of downtown and the gentrification forces want them out. The nouveau downtowners don't want to mingle with those failed by the education system and a job market shrinking by the day. They see the underclass as a threatening reminder of an unpleasant economic reality in 21st Century America. The underclass will not become invisible and they will not go to hidden locations to expire quietly.

I hope I live long enough to see how gentrification is attempted in about 20 or 30 years when global warming has made some uptown neighborhoods waterfront property. That should be interesting.

R.B. Jones is a poet and independent writer.



The Creation of the Ghetto: An Interview with Glenn Ross



Glenn Ross is a community consultant and activist. This interview was recorded at his home in East Baltimore in April 2006.

Nicholas Wisniewski: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Glenn Ross: I've been living in East Baltimore all my life, and I'm fifty-six-years young. I've been living in this house, in this neighborhood, for about twenty-seven years. I started organizing around the rat problem that was in the area. I joined the neighborhood association, got very active, joined a number of different boards, and I realized there was a lot going on in this area that a lot of residents weren't aware of. As a new homeowner and a single parent for twenty-six years, I'm the type of guy who needs to know what's going on in my community. And this is what really started me and got me involved in becoming a community advocate. So when people ask me what got me started I can honestly tell them a rat; now here it is a few years later and I'm dealing with the two-legged rats.

NW: In many ways, this interview is informed by discussions we have had over the last several months where you have talked at length about the creation of the ghetto. The general perception today sees large pockets of hollowed out urban neighborhoods as ghettos created solely by the people who live in them. Of course, these perceptions are conditioned by racist stereotypes of certain minority populations as being lazy, ignorant, and criminal. However, you have suggested a more complex set of social, economic, and political factors that contribute to the creation of the ghetto. Can you describe some of these factors?

GR: Well, I think it all starts with planning. A lot of the neighborhood organizations plan from season to season, year to year. But when you look at Baltimore City, when you look at some of the major institutions like Johns Hopkins or The University of Maryland, they have their twenty, forty, sixty-year plans. I have had the opportunity to see long-term plans working with the city and in my twenty-three years working with Johns Hopkins. Years ago, you could walk into Johns Hopkins and they had this huge map of East Baltimore, and you could see the future development plans that were going to happen. As you see, I'm a map person, and so what I did was I cross-checked what I saw from the City and from Johns Hopkins and just looked at the similarities. Some people in the neighborhood don't understand done deals. Some development projects are going to work, and there's not much you can do about it, but with the neighborhoods so fragmented and unable to work together they [the City Government and Hopkins] are able to come in and just dominate the whole area. Years ago when I looked at this map I saw all these blacked-out spaces throughout the city, and especially in East Baltimore. And I knew that whatever was blacked-out meant that whatever was there wasn't going to be there in the future. And in other areas, especially public housing, we saw only a dotted line, which meant something was going to happen but we didn't know what.

A related factor to consider is how the drug culture shifts, and here in East Baltimore it happened in a South-East pattern. It has moved from the Greenmount/Barclay community, the Oliver community, the Middle-East community (which is now the biotech park area), it came here in the McElderly Park community about fifteen years ago, and now that drug culture movement is just east of Patterson Park. Now saying all that is to point out that up on Greenmount and North Ave. was a blooming neighborhood forty or fifty years ago with well-to-do African-Americans and a lot of live entertainment up in that ar ea.

And there are two ways of destroying a community and forming ghettos: one is that you take the resources out of the communty–you get poor city service which creates a lot of confusion among residents; or you can take the people out, like they're doing down in South-East (the Canton area, Fells Point, Upper Fells Point) where because of high-priced housing many Latinos and Native Americans are being forced out, and being forced into a predominantly African-American neighborhood that has problems. To me, that's by design. And if you follow the history of all these neighborhoods that have decayed, you will find that the resources leave the neighborhoods first, there is a change of administration in the public school system, you start getting poor city services; and what normally happens is that any responsible family, when they see their neighborhood decaying, they will move out, and the people that remain most of the time are senior citizens who can't go anywhere, or the renters. So with this drug pattern you can also see the decay of neighborhoods, and why the drug culture follows ghettos. For instance, lets look at the Middle-East community where the bio-tech park is going to be. Years ago you could go up there and buy anything twenty-four hours-a-day, and this is only blocks away from Johns Hopkins, and you have to ask the question: how can the neighborhood be that bad, that crime-ridden, and it's only a couple blocks away from Johns Hopkins? Because they knew years ago that they were going to come in with this bio-tech park, so they let the neighborhood decay. The residents moved out, the houses remained vacant, and people weren't buying them. The houses were in bad shape, some were torn down and before you knew it entire blocks were demolished, and what happens now is you've got vacant lots with high weeds and nothing being done.

NW: As we look around East Baltimore we see many abandoned and boarded-up buildings. For many people, this image of vacant buildings signifies the ghetto. But I understand that the majority of these properties are in fact owned by the City, private investors, and large institutions like Johns Hopkins. What would be the economic incentive for all of these parties to land bank so many properties in East Baltimore?

GR: For one thing, as long as all these houses stay vacant, the property values depreciate, and people don't want to live there. If you come to the Middle-East area you may have 30 to 40 houses on a block with only 6 houses occupied, so how much do you think those properties are worth? So they deliberately do this and deteriorate properties. There are a lot of interests in here because the "so-called powers-that-be" here on earth–because that's the only place they'll ever have power–they know where these areas that are going to be decayed are, so they invest in these areas and they milk these properties for rent and put no repairs back in them. For example, when Jack Reed was the general Superintendent of Housing Code Enforcement, his job was to crack down on slum landlords. And in this area here in McElderly Park, we knew he was one of the biggest slum landlords because we knew he owned property. And when we would talk to other slum landlords and tell them we were going to report them, they would say, "we don't care" because Jack was the biggest slum landlord. So I went to *The Baltimore Sun* newspaper and exposed it. And the investigative reporter there found out that this was going on citywide. These areas were being allowed to decay. And through the investigation we found out that it was not only Jack Reed who was land banking, but City agency people, people affiliated with Johns Hopkins and family members of politicians who all knew what was going to happen. So this is how Dan Henson, the Housing Commissioner at the time, was put on the hot seat in front of the city council. So a lot of things had to change and City agency people had to make it known what properties they owned. So that's one investment reason why they would do this: they are milking these properties. And once the neighborhood is decayed, they want to come in and do a biotech park.

NW: There are many obvious disadvantages that face residents in the most impoverished neighborhoods of Baltimore. But one which many people don't always think about, and which I know you are working hard to bring visibility to, is the poor health conditions residents suffer from as a direct result of their environment. Could you describe some of these environmental health problems that exist in poor neighborhoods?

GR: Well, with environmental problems, it is environmental and health racism as I see it, because it is always around poor people. To the East of us there is a lot of industry and even down south in the harbor. At one time, the harbor used to be known as one of the ugliest areas in the city. And almost all your immigrants used to live around the harbor, and they all had environmental problems. As the harbor developed, they forced these lower-income people to move, and they steered them into other neighborhoods. Now those neighborhoods that they're in now are having environmental health problems. They are taking a lot of contaminated soil and materials from out of these brown-field sites down by the harbor and trucking them back up into these poor neighborhoods. Pat Tracey and myself have just put together an environmental Toxic Tour where we take people to these sites so residents can see it for themselves. If you look at some of the houses in the area you have rats, garbage, drug-use; that's a serious health problem. So for us to be right here between the a.m. shadow of Hopkins Bayview and the p.m. shadow of East Baltimore Johns Hopkins, and yet we have some of the worst living and health conditions in the nation? It really shouldn't be like that.

NW: As you have said before, the removal of public resources (schools, trash collection, police, etc.) along with private resources (grocery stores, banks, and other businesses) are the physical forms of dispossession that constitute the creation of the ghetto. What is the local political atmosphere that allows this disinvestment of resources to occur? What is it that keeps poor communities fragmented and unable to organize against these forms of dispossession?

GR: First of all, if you look at Johns Hopkins (and Hopkins gets blamed for everything), but Hopkins isn't the only culprit that we see here. Hopkins would not have been able to come in and dominate East Baltimore and buy up as much property as they did if the politicians didn't allow it. For years, politicians have told community organizations, "do not deal with Johns Hopkins," only for the politicians to go in the back door and ask for political and financial favors. If you look at the politicians here in East Baltimore, these people have been in power for the last thirty to forty years. And when Hopkins wants to distribute funding for a research project, they ask the politicians who to give it to, and they always recommend some community organization that is "politically correct," and by doing that they keep people divided and keep these different groups in competition with one another.

NW: In the midst of Baltimore's "urban renaissance," with renewed interest in real-estate, many of these blighted neighborhoods which were systematically deconstructed over the last three decades are now in the cross-hairs of speculative investors and developers. What proactive steps, strategies, and actions can be taken by residents to avoid the seemingly inevitable gentrification of neighborhoods and the displacement of people in the name of progress?

GR: As I said earlier, community organizations have been taught to be territorial, they are taught to not work together. This city is afraid of coalitions. I'm from a predominantly African-American community, and for years I have tried to form a coalition of neighborhood leaders and organizations, but couldn't get through. Still I was able to form the South-East Stakeholders Coalition. We brought together neighborhood organizations, service providers, libraries, commercial businesses, all just to come to the table and talk about the different things going on. Development, the environment, health–all the things that are going on in our neighborhood and what we need to do to protect our neighborhood so we don't get caught up. But community people need to learn to play the game, because if the "powers-that-be" find out you're trying to do something positive, they'll cut you off. So if we can put together a South-East Stakeholders Coalition then it can be done in other parts of the city too. But as long as we stay fragmented like we are, there's nothing we can do.

Looking at Baltimore's Surveillance Cameras by John Duda

"We are at war" Homeland Security funded camera watching a downtown street corner

There are very legitimate reasons to be scared that the proliferation of video surveillance is rapidly encroaching on our rights to everyday privacy and anonymity on the streets of Baltimore. Spurred on by counter-terrorism paranoia, recent advances in camera technology and computerized image processing are bringing George Orwell's dystopian nightmare of inescapable social control within reach of today's bureaucrats. Traditionally, surveillance cameras required a human being to make sense of any visual information they captured, so that the only way a camera could produce more data than a real human observer would be through such relatively crude strategies as having a single person watch a whole bank of monitors. Often the potential for real-time control through surveillance has been abandoned in favor of merely making video recordings which could then be used at a later date to punish offenders.

This situation is rapidly changing. Through integrated sensor technology and computerized image processing, cameras are becoming more and more "intelligent". The Baltimore police, for example, have just begun installing cameras on squad cars which automatically read license plate numbers and compare them against FBI databases and are soliciting bids to retrofit the city's existing networks of stationary cameras with the same technology. In Chicago, whose example Baltimore followed when installing the 'POD' cameras (the pole-mounted cameras in bulletproof steel casings with perpetually flashing blue lights–the acronym stands for Portable Overt Digital), many cameras have been retrofitted with acoustic sensors which attempt to detect and pinpoint the location of gunshots, and even more sophisticated cameras able to detect potentially 'illegal' patterns of motion (like leaving something on a street or walking in a circle) are currently being installed.

A 'POD' Camera on Greenmount Ave

With every new technological development (and every uncritical adoption and deployment of these developments by municipal governments), the net of electronic surveillance gets cast wider and made harder to escape. From a civil liberties standpoint, such developments are potentially disastrous. The Fourth Amendment protects against "unreasonable searches", but in privacy cases judges interpret this as meaning that if you don't have a "reasonable expectation of privacy" in a given situation, then you don't have any right to privacy. As the information which can be gathered legally under the Fourth Amendment becomes more and more easily processed by computers, we can begin to see how the implementation of "Big Brother" rests on a more or less perfectly legal foundation. Taking the example of Baltimore's new license plate readers–it would be hard to argue that it is illegal invasion of privacy for a police officer to read your license plate, but does this mean that the police therefore have the legal right to construct a system which could track and record the location of your car at all times? The facts on the ground created by the spread of pervasive automated, artificially intelligent, and effectively networked electronic surveillance devices are transforming public spaces into potentially terrifying spaces of observation and control.

multiple camera networks watching the same street corner

A Network of Networks

Yet one has to be careful not to think that electronic surveillance of public space, in Baltimore as well as elsewhere, is a simple matter. It's not just that there is a network of surveillance cameras continually watching the city, but rather that there are multiple networks of cameras, each one using different technology and deployed for different reasons, forming an overlapping patchwork of different partial regimes of surveillance. And while concerns about totalized surveillance, its destruction of privacy and potential for totalitarian abuse are valid concerns, if our only reaction to any surveillance camera is (entirely justified!) paranoia about Big Brother, we are missing a lot about what the cameras can tell us about the dynamics of public space in Baltimore. For example, it is at the very least interesting to note that the very first network of surveillance cameras on public streets in Baltimore was the "Video Patrol" system, launched in 1996 and now consisting of 64 cameras. These cameras were installed and continue to be operated by the "Downtown Partnership" (a public/private nonprofit composed of both elements of the government and for-profit corporations), explicitly as protection for businesses operating in the area. Under the guise of public safety, formerly public space has at least in part been turned into a space where civic rights are sacrificed in favor of smoother corporate operations.

If we want to learn about the urban environment reflected in the camera's lens, none of Baltimore's camera networks can tell us more than the POD cameras. With their incessantly flashing blue lights, these cameras brand entire neighborhoods as criminal. While in other parts of the city, a police light might be taken to indicate an emergency, the streets monitored by these cameras have been marked as permanent emergencies, as territories distinct from the "normal" or "good" areas of the city. Rather than addressing these territories as communities of fellow citizens, the cameras address entire blocks as potential criminals, feeding into a logic in which extraordinary regimes of policing and incarceration appear justified. The City of Baltimore has installed at least one camera which illustrates this point perfectly: a camera is equipped with a motion detector and a taped recording connected to a loudspeaker; when anyone walks past the apparatus, their picture is taken, and the recording informs them both that they are a criminal and that they have been photographed .

It's frightening to see just how easily the optical state of emergency imposed on Baltimore's public streets connects with the belief held by the current US government that our misadventures in counterterrorism have somehow rendered the Constitution null and void–when asked about the privacy concerns raised by the installation of the multi-million dollar camera network installed across the downtown area in 2004, Dennis Schrader, Governor Ehrlich's director of homeland security,simply replied "We are at war."

Yet what do these cameras actually see? In the case of cameras deployed to combat crime (rather than to catch those elusive and phantasmagoric terrorists skulking around the light rail on Howard street), it is unlikely that serious criminals will be deterred or serious crimes will be prevented - banks are, despite extensive video surveillance, still robbed all the time! What would be interesting to see is what kind of "crimes" are actually caught by the Baltimore police on camera–what proportion of them are for relatively minor and selectively enforced offenses like "loitering" or "disorderly conduct"? More fundamentally, isn't the kind of incidental, everyday crime taking place on the streets in view of the cameras merely symptoms of a much larger crime, that of a system of government that at city, state, and national levels, and in collusion with private interests, has sought to underfund and underdevelop inner city communities, reinforcing institutionalized racism along the way? From this perspective, surveillance cameras appear to be merely instruments for helping to manage the crisis which spills out into the street in the form of drugs and violence, rather than to eliminate this crisis by looking at its causes. Which camera caught the people who let the Baltimore city public schools fall apart? Where is the surveillance camera which could catch property speculators as they profit off vacant buildings, or institutions like Johns Hopkins when they try to steal people's homes? Or where is the camera that can reveal who is profiting from the imprisonment of more than two million people in this country? If we are interested in solutions for rebuilding our communities rather than illusory panaceas, we're going to have to look beyond the blank stare of public surveillance.

corporate-funded surveillance downtown

[1] "Cameras scan license plates for stolen cars", Baltimore Sun 4/3/2006.
[2] "Chicago moving to 'smart' surveillance cameras", NYT 9/21/2004 http://www.policeone.com/police-products/investigation/video-surveillance/articles/121178/.
[3] http://www.policeone.com/police-products/investigation/video-surveillance/articles/121178/.
[4] "24-hour camera surveillance in city is part of bigger plan", Baltimore Sun, 6/10/2004.

Do they work?

Since surveillance camera networks are expensive (Baltimore's CITIWATCH cameras alone cost $2.9 million to install), the overwhelming majority of police claims tend to be anecdotal statistics (like claims that the presence of the camera caused "crime" to drop 57%). Rarely do the police release real statistics about the impact of cameras. In Baltimore, an official was forced to admit during a city council hearing in 2002 that despite six years of exuberant reports of the effectiveness of the camera network in stopping crime, no proper statistical study with controls for all possible variables had been done.[1] When real studies are done, the praise heaped upon cameras by police and other officials tends to be contradicted by less encouraging figures. In the United Kingdom, where there are approximately 4 million cameras operating throughout the country, a 2002 government report showed that cameras had a negligible effect in fighting crime[2], as did a follow up report in 2005.[3] Other cities in the US, among them Oakland and Detroit, considered installing surveillance cameras, but gave up their plans citing concerns about CCTV's effectiveness. And when studies are broadened to look at more at abuses than results, the conclusions can be frightening: a 1997 study by Hull University showed disturbing trends among camera operators towards prejudicial observation of youth and people of color as well as rampant voyeurism on the part of male camera operators.[4]

[1] http://www.aclu-nca.org/boxSub.asp?id=8
[2] http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hors292.pdf
[3] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/leicestershire/4294693.stm
[4] Norris, C. and Armstrong, G. "The unforgiving Eye: CCTV surveillance in public space" Centre for Criminology and Criminal Justice, Hull University, 1997.

History: Housing Policy and Segregation in Baltimore by Chris Gladora

In what could prove to be a landmark case for public housing, the 2005 ruling in the class action lawsuit *Thompson v. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD*) found the department guilty of violating the Fair Housing Act by concentrating African-American public housing residents in poor, segregated areas of Baltimore City. The case, currently in court to decide the appropriate remedy, could radically change Federal housing policies that have left Baltimore one of 16 "hyper-segregated" metropolitan areas in the nation by 1990.

The case was filed by the Maryland American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1994 on behalf of African-American public housing residents. After their homes were destroyed in a wave of high-rise public housing demolitions in the 90's, the residents were left with a relocation plan that limited their housing options to other segregated areas of the city. The ACLU alleged the local and federal housing officials engaged in a pattern of racial discrimination, in violation of the Constitution, and that the defendants did not take required action to ameliorate the effects of intentional race-based discrimination. The District Court found that while the city and local housing authority had no power to develop housing outside the city, HUD failed to consider regionally oriented desegregation and integration policies in Baltimore, in violation of its mandate under the Fair Housing Act to promote fair housing affirmatively.

In the court's own words, HUD had an obligation "to do something more than simply refrain from discriminating," and that "[t]hrough regionalization, HUD had the practical power and leverage to accomplish desegregation...." Furthermore, "This Court finds it no longer appropriate for HUD, as an institution with national jurisdiction, essentially to limit its consideration of desegregative programs for the Baltimore region to methods of rearranging Baltimore's public housing residents within the Baltimore City limits." Such remarks bear a chilling resemblance to the 19th-century German political thinker Friedrich Engels' theory on housing, from his 1872 The Housing Question, which concludes that social problems in cities aren't really solved but simply moved to somewhere more politically acceptable to those who hold the reigns of power.

A History of Segregation

During the trial, the ACLU presented a chronology of public housing policies in Baltimore, beginning in the 1930's with federal "slum clearance" and public housing programs. Before then, Baltimore African-Americans lived all over the city and surrounding counties. But the federal programs restricted them to segregated and economically depressed neighborhoods. By the mid-1930's, 89% of Baltimore's African-American population was confined to an area surrounding the downtown central business district.

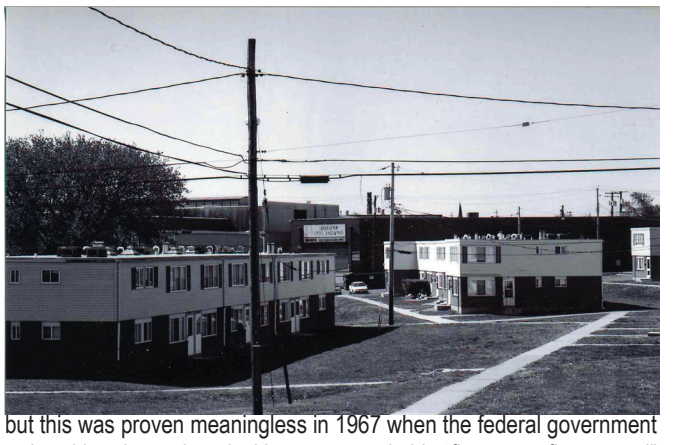
From that point on, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) basically ran two housing programs (and legally so), one African-American and one Caucasian. For example, between 1937 and 1943, the city and federal government built seven officially segregated public housing projects that were explicitly selected to reinforce patterns of existing neighborhood segregation. The federal government even went so far as to admit that its purpose was actually "not slum clearance but rather using the projects to block the Negro from encroaching upon white territory." Also during this time period, the Afro-American newspaper proposed suburban sites that were cheaper than the federal program's, but these were never considered.

After World War II, Baltimore City continued its segregationist programs and expanded its methodology with the introduction of public housing high-rises. In 1950, the City Council restricted most public housing to inner-city slum clearance sites where African-Americans lived, allowing only white projects on vacant land. The only vacant site (of a total of 39 considered) outside the city chosen for additional African-American housing was Cherry Hill, an isolated peninsula adjacent to a city landfill and incinerator.

Also restricted to slum clearance sites were the three African-American high density high-rises built by the HABC: the Lafayette Courts, Lexington Terrace, and Murphy Homes. These projects were constructed next to older low-rise projects thus creating a large, dense cluster of poverty and segregation around downtown Baltimore.

In the period between 1950 and 1964, Baltimore embarked on an aggressive urban renewal program that displaced more than 25,000 people, 85% of them African-American. In 1953, the City's Redevelopment Commission designated eight areas of the city to be redeveloped, including urban renewal projects in Waverly and the area just west of Johns Hopkins Hospital. In Waverly, a residential and commercial project that included 290 apartments and 270 parking spaces was designated by the Redevelopment Commission for white occupants only. According to a 1952 study by Morgan State University, the project displaced what was formally a racially mixed community with 61% African-American and 39% Caucasian, with many of the African-American residents moving to segregated projects in the city. The East Baltimore component of the City's 1950's redevelopment project expanded Johns Hopkins Hospital into the block bounded by Broadway, McElderry, Monument, and Caroline with housing for Hopkins students. Once complete, a fence was erected around its perimeter that became symbolic of the tensions between Hopkins and the community. The City ignored protests by the Urban League that the Waverly and Hopkins urban renewal projects essentially amounted to government-sponsored "segregation in the name of redevelopment."

The landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education marked the end of legal segregation yet little changed in public housing in Baltimore. HABC replaced its official segregative policy with one of "freedom of choice,"



but this was proven meaningless in 1967 when the federal government ordered it to be replaced with a more equitable "first come first served" policy. However, a 1992 HUD report found that no changes were ever made. Instead, HABC pursued a policy of "limited integration" that included hand-me-down housing allowing African-Americans to move into older surplus Caucasian housing, which then quickly resegregated. This included the Latrobe and Perkins Homes and projects in isolated industrial areas such as Westport and the Fairfield Homes.

More recently, programs that could have broken up concentrations of poverty with scattered site housing were shot down. Baltimore City Council fated the Section 23 Leased Housing Program by limiting its area of operation to predominantly minority urban renewal areas - the only city in the nation to do so. Similarly, HABC's scattered site Rehabilitated Housing program concentrated nearly all of its 2800 units in inner-city minority areas adjacent to large existing public housing projects.

Next Steps

At time of writing, the Thompson v. HUD case is in a remedial phase, in which the court will decide what action HUD must take to ameliorate this history of segregationist policy. According to Philip Tegeler of the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, the challenge for HUD will be to develop a comprehensive remedy in a case where local and state housing authorities are no longer part of the lawsuit. One option might be to target project-based subsidies, such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, to non-segregated "opportunity" areas, expanding voucher-based housing mobility through a regional program and using housing acquisition strategies that do not require rezoning. With another construction crane popping up almost every day in the City, one wonders what the Baltimore "renaissance" will mean for the families who have suffered through the years. Hopefully, a new set of policies can be set in place before it's too late.

Looking at Community Power

by Howard J. Ehrlich

Bill Domhoff, author of the best-selling sociological monograph, *Who Rules America?,* tells this story to illustrate what ruling class power is all about. Speaking of an enormously wealthy and powerful woman, he said, "She knew that if she walked across a room and slipped and fell, there would be somebody there with a pillow to catch her." Of course, not all people of power are treated like royalty, or act like royalty. In fact, most power brokers in cities such as Baltimore are invisible to the community. To be sure, they know each other and often act together, but they are seldom up front. Think of going to the theater. What you see is a polished performance. What you don't see are the conflicts and decisions that resulted in the performance: how the play was selected, the choosing of the cast, the dramaturgical changes, the design of the set, and so on. The same is true of many community decisions. The backstage maneuvering is seldom public, and the details of public meetings, when they are held, are typically staged to keep the audience in line. Only in a crisis are the elite performers on stage; mostly what the public sees are the managers and bureaucrats who represent the elites. The sociologist, Del Miller, said that to really understand a city's power structure, you have to look at the issues that shake the entire community. These don't occur every day. Moreover, the issue that excites one community may be of little notice in another.

The ability to make decisions which affect the city and the lives of those who live and work here is concentrated in a small number of people. They are the key influentials. Most are men, are white, are likely in their fifties, and are quite rich. They know each other well. They have gone to the same prestigious schools, go to the same churches, drink at the same parties, belong to the same clubs, and live in the same parts of town. We know these people by the positions they occupy–officer or director of a very large industrial corporation, the top level in community financing–banks, real estate, insurance, partner in a top law firm, president or trustee of a university or large foundation or maybe of a major civic or cultural association. If we start by looking at the positions people hold, this will lead us to new ways of looking at and charting community influentials and their networks of involvement in community decisions. This is often easily accomplished by examining the corporate boards that people sit on. People who sit on more than one board are in a place to exercise influence over more than one firm and on more than one issue facing the community. [The Centerfold is an outstanding depiction of corporate interlocks.] Related to this analysis of positions is an analysis of a specific community issue or conflict and the actors involved in them. Those involved in multiple issues are likely to be the key influentials in the community. Usually, however, most local influentials in Baltimore and other big cities tend to "specialize," involving themselves in issues of real estate, development, and finance.

Winning and Losing

Specific community issues can evoke a specific grouping of influentials, and that grouping may change over time. The power elite, which only surfaces for major issues (read that as big bucks), may only be peripherally involved in any given issue. In that regard, power structures can come and go, and often that confounds the judgment of winning or losing in community struggles. Here's a case in point. A coalition of citizen's groups stops the construction of a water treatment plant in their neighborhood promoted by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). The Corps withdraws after many months of public struggle; the coalition disperses. The ACE was outflanked and publically embarrassed and yielded. However, the victory did not create long-term citizen organizing.

This was not the kind of issue that shook the city. The conflict, even though it went on for almost a year, was resolved without most people even knowing it had occurred. The citizen's groups were able to mobilize resources that the ACE could not because of the rules, regulations and laws it had to follow. Had the protagonist been a major developer in the city, the coalition would have been smashed. Was there a winner and loser? Yes and no. In this case, the ACE went down the road and is building the plant in another community. (This other community was dominated by a private firm which was able to get some concessions for themselves, though not for the community.) How do we score that? Did the first community win and the second neighborhood lose? Or is the idea of winning and losing not a good metaphor in talking about community power struggles. Some activists cast the issue differently. From their perspective, there were two goals. One was the location of the water treatment plant; the other was the furtherance of democracy and participation. The two, of course, are not incompatible, though frequently the participants line up only on one side.

Here is a more direct case. A number of years ago Baltimore was declared a "nuclear free zone" by a vote of the City Council prompted by a small group of activists. Around the same time Hawaii County (the Big Island), held a referendum (a more directly democratic process) on their nuclear free zone status. A large number of people were involved in collecting signatures and getting out the vote. The vote lost, yet a large number voted for it. Which of these furthered the goal of participatory democracy?

For the political influentials and elites, there is a genuine fear, if not disdain, of democracy. The democratic process is seen as a threat to their power. Public citizens cannot be trusted. The control of elite affairs is delegated to top-level management, experts, and those foundations and faculties of universities who share their elitism or are at least willing to sell their services to the highest bidders.

Reasons for Study

The study of community power structures is of considerable importance to community organizers. By identifying the power players, we can often prevent secret deals and actual corruption. Secondly, by being able to identify these political elites, we may be able to neutralize or block their entry into the arena of a particular community decision. Finally, by being able to explain events and issues to the community that will result in a greater understanding of the democratic process.

Generally speaking, neither the political elites or most liberal community activists are focused on fundamental social changes. Most conflicts hone in narrowly to the issue of contention as opposed to the underlying process of how we want community decisions to be made. To address that we need an image of a future society.

Baltimore City

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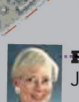

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"The University-Military-Industrial Complex:
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University Profiles: The Top 10 Universities Funded by the US Military, and how much they recieved in 2000

1. Johns Hopkins University $371,852,000
2. University of Pennsylvania $103,398,000
3 University of Texas Austin $73,248,000
4. University of Southern California $73,248,000
5. Massachusettes Institute of Technology $54,303,000
6. University of Minnesota $41,993,000
7. University Stanford $37,637,000
8. University of Washington $35,150,000
9. University Carnegie Mellon $30,978,000
10. UC San Diego $30,991,000

(source : "Defense Funding at 50 Universities" www.fiatpax.net/profiles.html - "The University Web of Corporate Power")

Economic Domination

As the largest private employer in the state of Maryland, with over 46,00 employees in 2002 (estimated employment in 2007 is close to 100,000). Johns Hopkins institutions have surpassed and replaced Bethlehem Steel and other manufacturing industries as the economic powerhouse of Baltimore's new economy.

Indirect Funding: Hidden Subsidies

As noted above, a substantial number of Hopkins Hospital service workers are eligible for public assistance while working full-time at the hospital. Thus public assistance to full-time workers is a hidden government subsidy to the hospital, supplementing the low wages it pays to its service employees. Hopkins and other Baltimore hospitals shift the burden of wage payments into the community at large.

A Hopkins hospital environmental service worker who earns an annual income of $20,800 a year ($10/hour) while supporting two children, qualifies for over six different public assistance programs: total annual costs to taxpayers per worker

Tax-Exempt Status

Hopkins' non-profit status does not come without a cost. As Baltimore struggles with a dwindling tax base, Hopkins institutions own $505 million worth of tax-exempt property, according to current tax assessments. Were these properties subject to taxation, Hopkins would have to pay $12 million a year in property taxes to the City. Instead, the burden of paying for services falls on the rest of Baltimore's residents and businesses.

Hopkins' Profitability

According to a report commissioned by Hopkins, the non-profit Johns Hopkins institutions--generate over $7 billion in business statewide: one of every 28 dollars in the Maryland economy. The Hopkins institutions are among the most "profitable" of all private institutions in Maryland, both non-profit and for-profit. Hopkins earned a combined income of over $200 million in the 2002 fiscal year. Their unparalleled renown in military research and medical care attracts more grant funding than any other academic institution: $1.4 billion in 2002, more than twice the amount of the second-highest ranking recipient: University of Pennsylvania, $418,546,510.

www.nathanielturner.com/robertmooreand1199union2.html

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Dr. Sanford D. Greenberg
Benjamin Howell Griswold, IV
Lee Meyerhoff Hendler
David C. Hodgson
R. Christopher Hoehn-Saric
Stuart S. Janney, III
Robert L. Johnson
Edward J. Kelly, III
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J. Barclay Knapp
David H. Koch
Donald A. Kurz
Robert J. Lawless
Joanne Leedom-Ackerman
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Kwok-Leung Li
Roger C. Lipitz
Edward J. Ludwig
Christina L. Mattin
Gail J. McGovern
Peter A. Meyer
Kweisi Mfume
James A. Miller, Jr.
Hon. Diana Gribbon Motz
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Naneen Hunter Neubohn
Ronald M. Nordmann
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Morris W. Offit
Elizabeth P. Owens
Walter D. Pinkard, Jr.
Michael F. Price
Joseph R. Reynolds, Jr.
Brian C. Rogers
David M. Rubenstein
Mark E. Rubenstein
John F. Ruffle
Frank Savage
Vadim M. Schick
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Dr. Rajendra Singh
Adena Wright Testa
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Christopher J. Watson

Global Dimensions

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Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts & Sciences
Whiting School of Engineering
School of Professional Studies
Medical Campus
Johns Hopkins Medicine
Bloomberg School of Public Health
School of Nursing
Downtown Baltimore
The Peabody Institute
School of Professional Studies
Washington,D.C.
The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies
Washington Area Programs
Applied Physics Laboratory
Montgomery County Campus
The Bologna Center
Villa Spelman
Hopkins-Nanjing Center
Johns Hopkins Singapore
Singapore Conservatory of Music
European Office

Baltimore: A Conversation between David Harvey and Marisela Gomez

Mikal Veale - Photographer

Residents who live north of the Johns Hopkins medical campus have been negatively impacted by the East Baltimore revitalization effort. Household displacements have occurred as part of a $1 billion redevelopment project that will construct five life science buildings, retail space and housing. The Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC) has organized against this redevelopment. This discussion was part of the (Re)living Democracy *project at the Contemporary Museum (Nov. 2005), which focused critically on urban renewal in East Baltimore. David Harvey is author of* The Urban Experience, Spaces of Hope, *and* A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Marisela Gomez is Director of SMEAC. Cira Pascual Marquina, the Museum's curator, and Nicholas Petr of the campbaltimore group, facilitated the discussion.*

Question: Would you describe the situation in East Baltimore. What is SMEAC?

Marisela Gomez: SMEAC, Save Middle East Action Committee, is a community organization in East Baltimore. SMEAC formed in 2001 after residents learned their homes were to be taken so that a biotechnology park could be built. The area is a huge 20 block, 90 acre area initially impacting 800 residents, then another 1,600 in the next several years. Supposed you learned about your community like they did, through *The Sun*? It is usually the marginalized, poor people of color who find out this way. These are the reasons a community like Middle East is treated this way. Keep this in mind.

For over four years, SMEAC slowed down, but did not stop, this redevelopment process. You don't stop big projects initiated by Johns Hopkins University. But you can slow it down, you can seek to change the dollar amount of those whose homes are to be used and you can still struggle for the right of re-entry. You can still fight to make sure the residents who are to be moved out can stay in the neighborhood.

Q: What is EBDI and its relation to the development project?

Gomez: EBDI (East Baltimore Development Inc.) is a for-profit/not-for-profit entity created to manage the development project. EBDI determines where relocation occurs. It raises funds to ensure the progress of the project.

Q: What is the broader context of the struggle over housing in East Baltimore?

David Harvey: When I was still at Johns Hopkins, something was set up called the Urban Health Initiative, formed from the good will of doctors and researchers. They had a program in the community on asthma and were concerned about the community, but, as you know, Hopkins is a corporation. The administration did not like famous people from abroad seeing the poor people of East Baltimore and the related problems. It was an image issue for Hopkins, not only financial.

In the 1970s, the support from Medicaid was sufficient. This changed as Medicaid was cut. There were two basic options for Hopkins administration: develop preventive medicine programs; or gentrify the whole area. The main strategy adopted was to remove the people from around the Hospital. So, part of the situation is the Hospital's interest in gentrification.

The situation with Hopkins and East Baltimore is not a unique circumstance. What we see is a political economy of dispossession, a taking-away from people who have little. There's a history of it, of benefits captured. There were lots of struggles in the cities at the end of the 1960s. Incomes in the bottom 20% were rising. Things were going up. The end of the 1960s, early 1970s saw benefits gained in the areas of environmental protection, and occupational health and safety. Legislation passed. Then, in the early 1970s, the corporate counter-attack began. The first place to experience this counter-attack was New York City in 1975 during its fiscal crisis.

The banks went on strike, forcing the City into bankruptcy. They took over control of the city budget to pay off bondholders. Municipal services were attacked. The budget crisis was used to remake New York City into the center for global finance; then, to make Manhattan into a playground for the rich. Funds for public schools and higher education were cut. The City University of New York, an experiment in free and open education, was attacked. The corporate elites pushed against public education, health care, and public transportation. This corporate attack was an effort to dispossess the population of New York City of rights and privileges. The corporate counter-attack on New York City was a pilot project used as a model by the Reagan Administration. And this model is exactly what the International Monetary Fund through structural adjustment programs used in Nicaragua, Mozambique, the Philippines, Mexico, and elsewhere. They could not solve problems of capital accumulation, but they could save class assets by actually robbing as many around the world of their assets as possible.

How was consent for this corporate counter-attack constructed? First, through the sheer weight of corporate power, through business organizations like the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, through conservative think-tanks like the Heritage Foundation, through capturing *The Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*. In short, there was a tremendous ideological assault. There's a line from former Secretary of Treasury William Simon, who was delighted with the Chile experience under the Pinochet regime: "Tell the City to drop dead. I want New York City to hurt so bad that no other city would try to do what New York did."

In the 1960s, the 400 richest individuals were worth $650 million on average. Now they are worth $2.8 billion, according to *The New York Times*. The top .1% has increased by 300% its national income share. If you examine tax returns for 2003 and 2004, controlling for inflation, the top 1% had income increases of 3.5%; the top .1% was raised by 9%. There's been a constant taking away to feed that 1%, a taking away of educational and health benefits, of workers' pensions. [See Joseph Kay on "Forbes 400 List of Richest Americans: Snapshot of a Financial Oligarchy," World Socialist Web Site.]

People like Hopkins President Brody have a grasp on economics, on international institutions, on this city. We must ask why? Why the corporate counter-attack has been so successful? In Britain, Margaret Thatcher said, "I'm out to attack the soul," to attack solidarity. Ideologically, individualism has a lot to do with it. The 1960s movements liked individual liberty, but they also worked to advance social justice. Neoliberalism says "We give you individual liberty. Forget social justice!" This has to be put in general political-historical perspective. We have to stop this across the board. In East Baltimore, the political battle for "the right of return" is crucial. It's not enough to accept, "We'll give you some money, then go away." In London, there's complete gentrification. The other crucial issue, of course, is to construct an alternative.

Q: Why aren't people aware? Why can't those who are aware inform the people being affected?

Gomez: Ultimately, it's about individualism. I'm not from this country, but from Central America. The United States is not about social justice. Individualism has always been what drives the US. Why is there fragmentation in the poorest communities? It's all about individualism. How can we change it? Let's not fool ourselves about what capitalism is. It is never about communities moving forward. If we understand this, then maybe we can move forward.

SMEAC organizes people impacted by one thing in East Baltimore. Why this fragamentation and individualism? An institution like Hopkins can give an individual an opportunity to do research in a community. You might even get to sit on a board. You might move forward individually, but individualism moves us backwards to promote ourselves. Hopkins is a corporate entity here. Every development project in East Baltimore occurs with Hopkins involvement. It's a power in East Baltimore. The City does not participate with low-income communities on house building projects. The City supports gentrification. We have to organize. Yes. But, we also have to ask ourselves what is it in the US that supports this individualism and fragmentation. In the US, people pretend that there are two political parties. But when you look at the US from the outside, it looks like a one-party system.

Harvey: Marisela, what is the main clue to your success? What's your trick in organizing?

Gomez: SMEAC went to people and said, "You're gonna lose your houses. They don't give a shit about us, when we're poor and black." So we organized on this issue, the issue of equity when they went to take people's homes. SMEAC organized around this one issue, the issue of shelter. People did not know if they were going to have their house. This urgency brought people together. You can't go to the community from the outside and organize. Rather, people themselves have to decide that they have the power to organize. The situation didn't feel fair. It felt like segregation. But people felt power in numbers. They felt power in talking about it together. And people went back again and again with the same demands, with one voice. SMEAC represents 150 houses in this community. Activists knocked on doors and asked, "Is this fair?" We represented a group of people who said, "You can't tell me what's good for me!" It made a difference. SMEAC challenged the rhetoric for four years.

Every chance EBDI gets, it tries not to be transparent. But SMEAC holds them accountable, challenges them, throws off their agenda. The history of East Baltimore shows what a bad neighbor Hopkins has been. Residents still don't feel it's bad intentions, but ignorance. Still people need justice.

Q: [Addressed to David Harvey on New York City]

Harvey: Basically, it's been the gentrification of Manhattan with the other four boroughs being let go. There are disparities in income and in education. The rich had lots of property and wanted to get its value back. There was the slogan "I Love New York" of the Manhattan Partnership at the same time the elites supported disciplining the police and fire department unions. The unions responded with slogans like, "Fear the City!," "Get mugged on the subways!," "If there's fire in the hotels, forget it!" This got to Europe and elsewhere and people stopped coming to New York. Then, the City said, "OK, we'll give more jobs." But then these jobs were in Manhattan, not in the Bronx or the other boroughs. Manhattan as the "gilded ghetto." Guilianni cracks down on crime with the "zero tolerance" policy. Harlem is beginning to be gentrified now, but the Bronx remains a poor area.

New York is a divided city. While the median income in the boroughs decreases, it is up 12% in Manhattan. In the 19th century, Engels observed, "The bourgeois solves problems by moving people around." They take poverty elsewhere. This is a big problem in the central cities. Mayors hope to balance the budget by bringing high-end development to cities, investments in condos and harbor recreation. There is a logic here, but we must transform this logic. Organizing starts locally as in Marisela's work. But a broader movement must be built to take the City back. City-wide. Then state-wide. Then nation-wide. We have got to push on federal policies.

I've been criticized for being nostalgic about the New Deal. The US had a period when there was a momentum to demand social justice. We also had such momentum in the late 1960s and early 70s with legislative gains. The corporations complained about this as "anti-capitalist" legislation.

Social justice movements in the US have not eliminated individualism. We still need to deal with this ideology, even among the most oppressed people. We need to develop solidarity of some kind, and a united front against corporate power to make something happen. SMEAC shows that

even a relatively small group with purpose and solidarity can make a difference. We need to build alliances, we need solidarity to take back the City, to end this dispossession. People have a right to the City! It's an important right. Saying, "Here's $300,000. Now get out" is no answer.

Q: The electoral system is not functioning. What power do people have?

Harvey: There's been a shift of the power structure in the last 30 years. Most representative, democratic institutions have been disempowered. Two things must be done. First, people need to reclaim the terrain of democratic institutions. Second, look at how the French stopped their country in 1995 when public benefits were attacked. They just stopped the country from running. People got rid of the president in Bolivia. Why not in the US? These are examples of the crucial importance of street action. There was no public awareness of the problems of globalization until the Seattle protests. Massive street action can change things. We must think in those terms. Impeach Bush, but also impeach the Democrats! We must pull the discussion towards street action, to direct action. I can't see another way to work something up.

Q: Why has Hopkins responded to SMEAC?

Gomez: We've developed an organized presence. At decision-making meetings, the community is involved. It's SMEAC's grassroots organizing approach. When activists can say, "I represent 20 blocks," they have accountability. SMEAC consistently demands a voice at the table and always says what the resident membership has to say. Sometimes it takes six or eight months, but we keep going back.

Harvey: We should remember that Johns Hopkins is not monolithic. Hopkins has its internal problems. It's also important to push inside the institution.

Q: Marisela, who are the natural allies of SMEAC? What national alliances are there among social movements now?

Gomez: There are a lot of groups in East Baltimore. Those groups which have a history are important to build alliances with. And unions. And the churches. We did not get as much support as we hoped from churches. But it is difficult to build alliances in East Baltimore except with those dealing with housing issues. Redevelopment is blossoming in the US so everyone can get involved. We made a video of the SMEAC struggle for use by other communities. Maybe this can help stop unfair development.

I spoke with a professor in New York City who said to me, "If you had done a good job, no one would have had to relocate." I said, "What do you mean? We have struggled so much. We got a benefit package." But she's right. It should have been people first, not bricks and mortar. The train had already started. We did not save Middle East, but brought equity. The problem is that we started from a context of individualism, of fragmentation. The need for collaboration is huge. Organizations within institutions are important. Hopkins students picketed at graduation on housing and development issues. We have to raise a ruckus inside and outside. But we also have to build alliances.

Harvey: I agree entirely. Organizing at the base by those immediately affected is the way to go. In Baltimore, ACORN does not speak to BUILD; BUILD does not speak to ACORN. This is ridiculous. Some of this is individualism, but it's more about "my organization," a possessiveness about my organization. This is a political problem. There's always been this thing in Baltimore since I've been here. This has been paralyzing in Baltimore for years. "I have a little power and don't want my power center messed up." This is turf politics. When the organizing is their own, that of the affected, then organizing can reach out farther. However, I'm not an organizer, but an academic. I'm reluctant to do politics. I do not have answers. I just try to observe and reflect.

Q: What are examples of successful re-development projects in the US?

Harvey: Absolutely successful? No such example, though there are many examples of groups impacting and constraining [rampant development]. But shifting the balance? I have property in Hamden and have seen the values go up. We need to think in a broader context. If a project looks successful now, we must also ask if it will look successful in five years? Things are constantly shifting, games being played. The level of community action is critical. There's never a clear victory, but an ongoing process. We get organized and make a nice urban environment. Then rich people come in and buy it. There are many examples of success in bettering the urban environment, then property speculators start moving in. You buy a house for $80,000, then five years later it sells for $200,000.

Q: The New Greenmount West Community group is attempting to appropriate two buildings in the Station North Arts District. They want to get these buildings from the City--School 32 for a community center and a factory building for a solar factory. Here's an alliance between a low-income based community group and group of artists/activists at the Cork Factory. I see these groups attempting an alternative to gentrification. Ms. Gomez, are you aware of this struggle in Greenmount West? Do you think this is a defensive or a proactive struggle?

Gomez: SMEAC is aware of this struggle and has worked with Dennis Livingston [an activist in Greenmount West]. Is it defensive? I do not think so. I think they have a little more power than the Middle East community. But the fact that there was already a plan was unfortunate. New Greenmount West is not as organized as Middle East at this point. And the community group has not done organizing from the base as SMEAC has done. This is an important question: How to take successes like SMEAC in organizing and make it city-wide, state-wide, nation-wide? Given the small numbers involved in SMEAC, how can we take what we learned and link with Greenmount West and go forward and go city-wide. We haven't been able to notch it up to city-wide because we do not have the funding. We have to do a lot of lip service to our funders. They do not understand the importance of notching up to the city-wide level.

Q: What is the role of the City Council? Of the media?

Gomez: Organizing is not just the organizing of residents, but also working with government. We need to build social capital to effect change. SMEAC worked with City Council reps knowing we might need legislation for the "right to return." We tried hard. There were three City Council reps, now there is just one for East Baltimore. We've worked with Paula Branch who has a lot of pressure on her. We've had lots of meetings with Branch and thought we were making headway, but she didn't respond. But Branch did get legislation saying that 33% of those residents who get back in Phase I have to be "low-income." But then we had differences on what the definition of "low-income" is. So, we have differences with City Council reps, but we have to cultivate those relationships.

The media? We did not get *The Sun* to print what SMEAC members were saying. It's difficult to get coverage that supports us. We know that the Mayor is trying to make Baltimore's image "up-and-coming" for his bid for Governor.

Current and Future Challenges for SMEAC

by Marisela Gomez

The general results of SMEAC's organizing efforts have been to reach residents who have been historically disenfranchised and marginalized from decision-making concerning the changes in their community. Organizing residents to step out of this voiceless role to engage in a community-driven process has assured the voice of impacted residents in major decision-making affecting policy change. It has informed residents of their rights, increased resident involvement in their neighborhood and built stronger networks, and increased the perception that residents are primary stakeholders. This has been the struggle and accomplishments of the first 5 years, addressing only the first phase (30 acres encompassing approximately 900 houses) of the targeted 90 acres (20 square blocks). Though the non-community stakeholders have celebrated the 'ground-breaking' of this phase and applauded its successful completion, residents continue to wait to see them deliver on promises. At the completion of this first phase, approximately 400 households have been relocated, 25% to neighborhoods similar or with worst indicators than Middle East Baltimore. (According to the federal urban renewal legislation using eminent domain, the involuntary taking of land for development can occur only with an assurance that those affected will be afforded a better quality of life.)

In the first phase of this redevelopment project, the majority of children were living in rental households. Relocation assistance provides supplemental benefit to afford an increased rent, which is then discontinued after 5-6 years. These are benefits that assist only rent and do not provide employment opportunities to increase income. At the end of this period when these benefits are withdrawn, these families may be forced to move back into more deteriorated neighborhoods than Middle East. This places multiple generations at risk of moving deeper into poverty. SMEAC has advocated for and continues to await a plan to assess and assure that this does not occur.

Residents demanded, and current legislation dictated, that 1/3 of the houses being built in the redevelopment area must be low income (0-50% of the area median income (AMI)). However, the developers (Forest City), EBDI, the city government and the private donors (Annie E. Casey Foundation, Johns Hopkins Institutions and others sitting on the EBDI board) assisting this project have approved the initial construction of low-income units to be affordable to those with incomes at 30-50% of the AMI. This excludes affordability and the likelihood of returning for the residents of this area, whose income fall between 0-30% of the AMI. There remains much unfinished business pertaining to Phase 1 of the redevelopment project and an increasing pattern of no accountability of verbal or documented agreement or transparency of decision making processes. We continue to struggle to assure equity in this first phase and challenge the non-community stakeholders on their definitions of 'success'.

SMEAC now faces the challenge of the next two phases of this massive redevelopment project. EBDI announced that due to insufficient funding (due to poor planning, an unstable housing market) the previous plans for demolition and redevelopment of the remaining 60 acres would be different than the process for the first phase. Residents in these later phases remain unaware of how this will affect them. Will they eventually be relocated within the next 10 years or will their homes remain under the weight of eminent domain, at risk of the whim of EBDI and future redevelopment plans? Will current un-occupied houses be rehabbed or demolished? Will the planning of these later phases include organized resident voices?

The unknown of what will happen in the next year, ten or twenty years leaves many residents feeling they have no control over their lives. SMEAC's organizing strategy remains the same but our goals have changed to meet this new twist in the Middle East Baltimore Redevelopment plan. Information gathered from our door-knocking in the subsequent phases of the Redevelopment Project shows that residents feel they should be given the option to move or stay with the same benefit afforded residents in the first phase. If they stay, they feel that grants should be provided for them to improve their homes, competitive with the new houses being built adjacent to them. Residents also feel that they should be part of the decision-making process as to exactly what will happen in their neighborhood and the design of their neighborhood. SMEAC continues to organize residents to voice their needs to EBDI and the other non-resident stakeholders to include resident participation in their planning of the later phases. We spent the first 5 years chasing a train that left the station without the impacted residents. The redevelopment plan developed behind closed doors, without transparency to impacted residents, and imposed by EBDI on the backs of residents. We now have the opportunity to proactively impact the planning and policy for these later phases of this redevelopment project. However, we are also convinced that to a large extent, the degree of equity obtained in the first phase will set the standard for intentions and outcomes in the subsequent phases.

Maintaining community organizing as our basis, with resident participation driving the entire process, SMEAC continues to struggle for systemic change in the way urban redevelopment occurs. These include:

- the ways in which low-income, African-American community residents are viewed (i.e. as dysfunctional, walking pathologies who have destroyed the old community and must be removed as part of community revitalization efforts);
- the public narrative regarding community redevelopment and revitalization (i.e. that the "old" community has been destroyed primarily as a result of community pathology and neglect as opposed to the neglect and disinvestment by government and businesses in low-income, inner city areas);
- the "accepted norm" regarding the participation of and control by, those most directly impacted by revitalization efforts in all decisions affecting their and their families' futures (i.e. instead of those directly impacted being acted upon by decision-makers with power, they will be equal participants in redevelopment decisions affecting their communities);
- the lack of systematic tracking of whether/how, substantial and long-term direct and indirect benefit is afforded to affected residents impacted by urban redevelopment and eminent domain practices (i.e. economic/asset building, social, health, education, subsequent generations, other);
- the lack of focus of 'benefit to impacted community' as a key determinant in planning/implementing/evaluating redevelopment projects.

THE ABCs OF URBAN REVITALIZATION

by Scott Berzofsky

abandonment/blight: While abandoned or blighted properties may appear to be the antithesis of urban revitalization, they are in fact necessary preconditions: creating a situation in which investments by real estate and finance capital can produce profitable returns.[1]

artists: A community of artists can be instrumental in the revitalization of a city, adding energy, expression, and beauty to the environment. Artists can also play an important role in the process of gentrification by colonizing deteriorated areas where they find affordable live/work spaces and transforming them into fashionable neighborhoods that attract investors and businesses.[2]

authenticity: For a city to be competitive, it must emphasize and celebrate those characteristics which make it "unique" and "real." Claims of authenticity can be made for cultural, historical, or geographical features that are exclusively available in that city, such as regional cuisine, historical landmarks, or access to the waterfront. Celebrating authenticity is a smart and effective place-making strategy.[3]

beautification: The aesthetic improvement of the pedestrian landscape; often involving new sidewalks, street lamps, planters, newspaper box corrals, and the removal of graffiti and illegally posted fliers.[4]

brownfields: Vacant industrial and commercial properties where redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination caused by past activities. Brave developers with the vision to intervene at these sites can turn eyesores into engines of economic rebirth.[5]

creative class: As Richard Florida argues in his influential book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, attracting and retaining workers in knowledge-based fields such as writers, graphic designers, computer programmers, and artists is a key factor for the growth and economic development of cities in the post-industrial era.[6]

culture: In many ways, culture can be a catalyst for urban revitalization. Cultural facilities such as museums, art galleries, theaters, and academic institutions draw people to the city and enhance the urban experience with beauty, sophistication, lively performances, and radical ideas. Supporting cultural initiatives is also an easy and inexpensive way for private interests to secure their investments in real estate and business while presenting themselves as philanthropists. One creative approach is to convert under-utilized or abandoned buildings into galleries and artist's studios. This can be done at a low cost and will in turn generate a hip and contemporary atmosphere in the surrounding areas. Cultural development will increase property values and stimulate economic growth by signifying an active, thriving city.[7]

diversity: In one of the classic texts on urban renewal, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs champions diversity as the essence of a vibrant and successful city. Against the homogeneity and conformity of modernist architecture and urban planning, Jacobs argues for ethnic and cultural diversity; mixed-use commercial/residential streetscapes; a combination of old and new architecture; intimate, walkable neighborhoods that encourage spontaneous interaction; and a heterogeneous range of retailers.[8]

experience economy: In their provocative book, *The Experience Economy*, Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore identify a new paradigm of production in which the manipulation of affect and sensation becomes central to the profitable business. Since cities increasingly operate like businesses–competing for residents, investors, and consumers–they can benefit from the application of these principles.[9]

festivals: Under most circumstances, large masses of people in public spaces present a danger to authorities, as they are unpredictable and potentially destructive. However, in a controlled situation this mass can be mobilized to generate great profits. Festivals function this way while also promoting a celebration of community.[10]

gated communities: Driven by the legitimate fear of violent crime and burglary, many urbanites choose to live in luxurious gated communities designed to keep undesirable populations out. These communities offer their residents a comforting sense of security with amenities such as high perimeter walls, surveillance cameras, and armed guards.[11]

green space: A major factor for families and young people searching for a place to live is access to green space. Cities must make efforts to accommodate the active lifestyles of these critical markets or they will be lost to the suburbs.[12]

historic preservation: Historic buildings and monuments give cities a sense of heritage, identity, and prestige. We must therefore do all we can to preserve these landmarks for the appreciation of citizens, tourists, and future generations. Historic preservation is a sound economic strategy that also promotes civic pride.[13]

homeless: The presence of homeless people in our cities is an unattractive and persistent problem for revitalization efforts. No respectable person wants to live, work, shop, or vacation in a city filled with vagrants sleeping on benches, urinating in public, and aggressively panhandling for money. The public should be encouraged to resist the compassionate impulse to give to panhandlers, as it will only perpetuate the problem and enable drug-addictions. Instead, cities should pass legislation that criminalizes panhandling and camping in public to get the homeless off our streets and away from businesses.[14]

image: One of the most crucial aspects of an urban revitalization campaign is the cultivation and promotion of a positive image of the city. Cities must aggressively counter negative representations with savvy marketing and public relations strategies aimed at administering positive public perception.[15]

jail/prison: With massive unemployment in our inner-cities creating a surplus population of poor young people with no productive outlet, jails and prisons take on a new function in relation to revitalization: they not only incarcerate dangerous criminals, but also manage and contain this potentially explosive class that threatens the stability of city life.[16]

kid-friendly: While attracting young adults is a top priority for growing cities, this group alone will not support a thriving economy. The city depends on the patronage of families for survival and must therefore promote a kid-friendly image of safety and fun.

litter: A clean downtown evokes a sense of pride and safety for those who live, work, and play there. Unfortunately, litter remains an unglamorous feature of many cities. To combat this problem, teams of street-sweepers should be assembled that exploit the no-cost labor provided by the criminal justice system. This solution enhances the appearance of the pedestrian landscape while simultaneously teaching criminals the value of community service.[17]

main streets: As an alternative to the predictable homogeneity of malls and big-box retailers, many consumers desire a more personal and authentic shopping experience. Downtown commercial districts should recognize this trend and embrace their own distinctive regional architecture and unique, independently owned local establishments.[18]

mixed-use: Many young urbanites want to live in dynamic mixed-use communities that combine office, retail, and residential spaces within a safe and convenient village-like environment. Such accommodations are increasingly in demand as traditional distinctions between "work" and "life" become blurred through liberating advances in communications technology.[19]

neighborhood branding: For a neighborhood to attract residents, investors, businesses, and consumers it must establish a unique identity that distinguishes it from other parts of the city. One of the easiest and most effective ways to do this is by inventing a catchy name or slogan for the area. Advertising this name or slogan on banners and billboards hung throughout the neighborhood will create a buzz, suggesting that something exciting is happening there.[20]

outdoor dining: Outdoor dining enhances the quality of urban life, creating a "café culture" which projects an ambience of affluence and conviviality onto public spaces. The presence of outdoor diners also facilitates a form of casual surveillance that discourages street crimes by producing what Oscar Newman calls "defensible space."[21]

poverty: Because the elimination of poverty in our cities would require a revolutionary restructuring of society that no business leaders or government officials are prepared to undertake, a policy of social exclusion and spatial containment is recommended to manage this unsightly problem.

restrooms: Public restrooms are often dangerous places that attract forms of deviant behavior such as drug-use and prostitution. Once a central part of urban life, believed by social reformers like Frederick Law Olmsted to promote cleanliness and discipline, these facilities have become obsolete in the revitalized city. [22]

Starbucks: The fast-growing coffeehouse chain has become synonymous with the sophisticated urban lifestyle. An essential ingredient in the recipe for revitalization, Starbucks is a "must-have" amenity for upwardly mobile urbanites.

tolerance: Cities must position themselves as inclusive and tolerant places where alternative lifestyles are welcome. By embracing difference and transgression they can gain a progressive edge and become more exciting places to live, work, and play.[23]

tourism: Many North American cities have experienced significant economic decline in recent decades as industrial manufacturing jobs moved overseas in search of cheap labor. In response to this loss, some cities have reinvented themselves as centers for leisure, recreation, and entertainment by building convention centers, luxury hotels, sports stadiums, shopping malls, aquariums, and themed restaurants. These attractions not only draw visitors to the city, but also generate rewarding new jobs and additional tax revenues that benefit the entire community.[24]

urban renaissance: The rebirth of a culturally and economically depressed city. More than just an improvement that can be measured in statistical or economic terms, an urban renaissance is a shared ideology of progress and success that transforms the way a city sees itself… and the way it is seen by others.

video patrol: A network of exterior surveillance cameras used to make citizens feel safe, deter crime, and serve as an investigative tool. Studies show that high visibility increases the efficacy of video patrol as a crime deterrent by raising awareness of police power and making individuals internalize the laws and codes that govern behavior in public spaces.[25]

white-flight: The mass exodus of white middle-class residents from U.S. cities during the post-war period. White-flight was primarily attributed to an increased fear of crime and racial tension that followed the immigration of lower-income African Americans into urban centers. Ever since, cities have struggled to bring back this critical demographic from the safety and comfort of the suburbs.

expressways: A product of the post-war period when many cities experienced conflicts between different populations, expressways were constructed to serve a dual function: they provide a direct route for cars to travel between the suburbs and the downtown business and commercial districts while bypassing dangerous slums and act as a physical barrier that further enforces these social boundaries, discouraging the poor from venturing into the revitalized center of the city.

youth: The cities that are branded as "Cool-Towns" and "Talent-Centers" will be best positioned to attract and retain the valuable youth market, a key growth factor.[26]

zero-tolerance: The aggressive model of law enforcement associated with the Giuliani administration in New York City. Specifically aimed at nuisance or quality-of-life crimes such as littering, urinating in public, public intoxication, loitering, j-walking, or unsolicited window-washing, the zero-tolerance policy is credited with cleaning-up some of the more sleazy parts of New York, such as Times Square, and should be adopted by all ambitious cities.

[1]Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996), 45. Deutsche is paraphrasing Neil Smith's theory of the "rent gap," for more on this see Neil Smith and Michele LeFaivre, "A Class Analysis of Gentrification," in J. John Palen and Bruce London, eds., *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighborhood Revitalization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).
[2]Gary O. Larson, *American Canvas*, National Endowment for the Arts, 1997. See in particular, Mary Anne Mears' comments on the relationship between artists and urban revitalization in Baltimore, quoted on pages 128-9.
[3]Elizabeth A. Evitts, "Quest for Authenticity: The Future of (Baltimore) Retail," *Urbanite Baltimore*, July 2005, 29-31.
[4]See The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore's "Beautification Initiative" at http://www.godowntownbaltimore.com/clean_beautification_initiative.html
[5]Steve Johnson, EPA Administrator, quoted at www.epa.gov/region4/waste
[6]Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class ... And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2003). Influenced by Florida's book, Baltimore's Mayor Martin O'Malley introduced his "Creative Baltimore Initiative" in 2004, see http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/cinvestment/creative.html
[7]"The Role of Arts in Urban Revitalization," a panel discussion moderated by Adam Gordon, Editor-in-chief of *The Next American City*, including participants Mayor Martin O'Malley of Baltimore and Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York, at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, April 23, 2004. For excerpts of the event, see http://www.americancity.org/article.php?id_article=29
[8]Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).
[9]Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theater & Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).
[10]See The Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts, at http://www.bop.org/
[11]For more on gated communities and the militarization of urban space, see Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles," in his *City of Quartz* (London: Verso, 1990).
[12]http://www.parksandpeople.org/home_onepark.html
[13]http://www.baltimoreheritage.org
[14]The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore recently introduced legislation that criminalizes panhandling in Baltimore at night. See http://www.godowntownbaltimore.com/clean_panhandling.html
[15]Elizabeth A. Evitts, "Branding Baltimore: The Search for City Identity," *Urbanite Baltimore*, September 2005, 38-41. See also Richard O'Mara, "Backstory: Baltimore–Home of 1,000 Slogans," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 5, 2006.
[16]For more information on the prison industrial complex, see http://www.criticalresistance.org
[17]The Downtown Partnership of Baltimore's team of "Clean Sweep Ambassadors" benefits from the City's Community Service Program, which "provides workers to the Clean Team as a supplemental, no cost source of manpower." See http://www.godowntownbaltimore.com/clean_safe_team.html
[18]Elizabeth A. Evitts, "Quest for Authenticity: The Future of (Baltimore) Retail, "*Urbanite Baltimore*, July 2005, 29-31.
[19]For several examples of dynamic mixed-use development projects in Baltimore, see www.harboreast.com, village-lofts.com, and Twelve09Living.com
[20]www.mainstreet.org
[21]Cate Han and Stacey Seltzer, "Idea: Give Tax Breaks for Cafes and Restaurants with Outdoor Seating," *Urbanite Baltimore*, March 2006, 53. See also Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* (Collier, 1973).
[22]See Tom Burr, "Unearthing the Public Toilet," *Documents*, Spring 1995, 51-9.
[23]Mayor Martin O'Malley's Creative Baltimore Working Group, *The Creative Baltimore Initiative: Doing More to Attract, Engage and Retain the Creative Class*, 2004, available at http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/cinvestment/images/CreativeBaltoWhitePaper.pdf. Among the Group's recommendations is "Marketing to the Gay Community."
[24]http://www.baltimore.org
[25]http://www.godowntownbaltimore.com/clean_video_patrol.html
[26]http://www.cooltownstudios.com

EMINENT DOMAIN, THE BASICS:

In the U.S., eminent domain refers to the government's power to appropriate private property for public use without the owner's consent. Eminent domain is most commonly used when the acquisition of private property is necessary for the completion of a public project such as a road, and the owner of the required property is unwilling to negotiate a price for its sale.

The Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution requires that just compensation be paid when the power of eminent domain is used, and requires that "public use" of the property be demonstrated. Over the years the definition of "public use" has expanded to include economic development plans, which use eminent domain for the purpose of generating more tax revenue for the local government.

In 1981, the Michigan Supreme Court, building on the precedent set by Berman v. Parker, 348 U.S. 26 (1954), permitted the Detroit neighborhood of Poletown to be taken in order to build a General Motors plant. This expansion of the definition was argued before the United States Supreme Court in February 2005, in Kelo v. City of New London, a case in which homeowners fought the City of New London's attempt to use eminent domain to seize their property for the development of a Pfizer biotech park. In June 2005, the Supreme Court issued its decision in favor of New London, ruling that private property may be condemned by eminent domain and used for private development projects that are predicted to have a "public benefit," such as the creation of jobs or the generation of increased tax revenue.

In her dissent on the case, Justice O'Connor wrote: "Any property may now be taken for the benefit of another private party, but the fallout from this decision will not be random. The beneficiaries are likely to be those citizens with disproportionate influence and power in the political process, including large corporations and development firms. As for the victims, the government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result."

related resources:

Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC)
Office: 410-522-3360
SMEAC is a membership-based, community organization formed in 2001 and governed by Middle East Baltimore community residents. SMEAC's mission is to represent and advocate for the citizens of East Baltimore -- a very low-income area primarily populated by people of color -- who will be impacted by the development of a biotech park, commercial and housing units, and to empower these citizens to negotiate fairly with the powerful institutions directing the project.

South East Community Organization (SECO)
Office: 410-327-1626
SECO is a democratically controlled organization that enables community residents to participate in decisions that affect their lives. One of SECO's primary goals is to build the capacity of grassroots leaders to identify needs and take advantage of opportunities in their community.

Megaphone Project
Office: 410-338-0946
A 501(c)(3) nonprofit, Megaphone Project produces low-cost documentaries that amplify voices for social and economic justice in Baltimore.

Community Law Center
Phone: (410) 366-0922
The Community Law Center is a nonprofit public interest law firm which creates and implements innovative legal strategies for community organizations to improve conditions for low income urban communities.

Neighborhood Design Center (NDC)
phone: 410-233-9686
NDC mobilizes volunteer professionals in support of community-sponsored initiatives to improve local neighborhood livability and viability by providing lower income communities with access to professional community design services.

For more related resources, contact info@baltimoreimc.org or contact@campbaltimore.org

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