SOCIAL THOUGHT & COMMENTARY

Hostility as Technique: Making White Space in a Black City (Observing a City Over Time through Collective Filmmaking and Collaborative Research)

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ABSTRACT

This commentary examines how White space gets produced in a Black city, highlighting the affective dimensions of this production. In addition to showing how hostility works to produce White space, it establishes a link between this contemporary production and the repetition of the original colonizing project. Finally, this commentary thinks through the ways in which collective filmmaking by long-term residents of the city—in this case, Detroit—offers important alternative affective ways for thinking about and valuing the present and future of the city. In this way, the Black city emerges as a site of possibility, countering persistent images of abandonment and dereliction. [Keywords: Detroit, post-Fordism, Black cities, affect theory, White spaces]

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A White waiter in his mid-30s is hostile to his Black customer at a new vegetarian restaurant in Detroit.[1] At one point, he tells the customer to get his audio-visual equipment out of the way, to the back. The customer, a Black anthropologist, leaves a note on the bill pointing out that it would be nice to be nice. A friend, a Detroit resident, recognizes the phenomenon, what I have come to call *hostility as technique*,[2] and tells the anthropologist that he should tell the Black owner of the neighboring art gallery, where the "Filming the Future of Detroit" film project regularly meets. The gallery owner is also part-owner of the restaurant. The friend also tells the anthropologist about an outdoor ice-skating rink in the center of the city that used to be all Black. It is now almost all White. She says that staff there tend to be rude to Black customers.

On a different day in a nearby location, a White manager yells at a Black Detroiter—an urban planner—and the anthropologist to bus their table at the café as they are walking out, late for another appointment. The anthropologist points out that there is no sign to this effect. How was he to know? "Are you from Detroit?" he wants to ask the manager.[3]

This essay examines post-Fordist affect from the position of the Black Other. Detroit, formerly home to the assembly line that was supposed to produce (White) prosperity, has become "ground zero" for White space reclamation.[4] Black Detroiters who remain in the city are increasingly made to feel out of place, including the descendants of Black assembly line workers.

My awareness of hostility as a technique for making White space in a Black city emerged out of my experience doing research in Detroit—in this case, collective filmmaking and other collective forms of investigation. By examining hostility as technique, I am unearthing the forms through which Black residents lose influence and decision-making power about what happens to their city and the extent to which that city might ultimately abandon their interests. Even though I am also an anthropologist, I couldn't help but experience the hostility about which I now write from the perspective of a *Black* researcher.

The argument in this piece is based on seven and a half years of research in Detroit, including a review of the historical and theoretical literature about the city; interviews with urban planners and Black residents; my direction of a collective filmmaking project ("Filming the Future of Detroit"); my work on a project on "Museums and Publics: Engaging Detroit, Berlin, and the Future of the City" with collaborators from architecture, urban

planning, and museum studies; and observations of the sometimes subtle ways in which space gets established and maintained in Detroit. In this research on the production of White space in the city, the Detroit Institute of the Arts has emerged as a key site. The Museum itself is widely seen by Detroiters as a White space as evidenced by multiple popular articles as well as the city's willingness to sell the Museum's art to pay off the then-bankrupt city's pensions. Even though the Museum technically belonged to Detroit before the bankruptcy, it didn't feel like a space deeply engaged with Detroit residents.

My original intent was to structure a project around the future of the city from perspectives mostly left out of the broader discussion, to ask research questions that could and would be relevant to Detroit residents, including those that filmmakers from the Filming the Future of Detroit project have posed over the past seven and a half years: Should I stay or should I go from the city? Does a developmentalist approach serve Detroit residents?[5] These questions also included those posed as part of the connected "Museums and Publics" project that focused on a vision initially established by the Detroit Institute of Arts, which proposed building a public square just outside of the Museum. We asked: For whom is one establishing a cultural square in the center of the city? Who will the planners actually "engage"? Are they only using this concept to attract future funders, or will their design actually include the visions and designs of long-term Detroit residents?

In an interview I conducted after understanding the prevalence of hostility against Black residents—mostly by White newcomers to the city—I spoke with a White urban planner from the suburbs of Detroit who recalled her family's movement away from and then back into the city:

> I think that there is a lot of, like, nostalgia baked into White people who maybe moved to the suburbs of Detroit...during, like, the White flight eras. I know, like, during the pandemic, my mom has driven my grandma around the city...past all of the homes that, like, her parents owned or her siblings owned that they moved out of around, you know, the late 60s and 70s. And so, I think that there is like a place of, you know, remembering, like, what was...until it like came to a drastic halt for them. That, I think, also really drives people [back] to the city.

From the vantage point of a White planner, one gets a glimpse of nostalgia for a time when Detroit felt more like "home," when being "at home" meant being without "Blackness." One can also begin to see an impetus for White return: the imagination of a homecoming. While there is a sentimentality to this return for those who previously fled the city in search of White Fordist dreams in the suburbs, it does not feel sweet to all Detroiters.[6] Many Black residents experience it as hostility. Increasingly, as White suburbanites lay claim to Detroit's "comeback" through regulating Black residents and claiming White space, the homecoming feels like occupation.

* * *

The language of a "comeback" in Detroit implies a previous fall. In White and adjacent imaginations, Detroit has figured as an "abandoned" space since at least 1967, when anti-Black police violence sparked the famed Detroit Rebellion, subsequently quashed by military occupation (see Kaufman 2017). The language of abandonment, though, works to erase the 40 years of Black mayoral leadership inaugurated in the 1970s by Coleman Young. It invisibilizes the persistence of Black Detroiters in the city, despite White flight and the industry removing itself initially sparked by the demands of Detroit labor unions (see Sugrue 2005 [1996]). This language of abandonment rhetorically removes the sustained Black presence as well as White responsibility for the city's current state of massive inequality in comparison to White spaces in the city and the suburbs (see Kinney 2016).[7] It turns the frame away from White billionaire investors who have bought up plots all over the city and allowed them to look abandoned (see MacDonald 2017); away from the mortgage foreclosure crisis that cost Black Detroiters their homes while keeping White banks and investors solvent; and away from predatory taxation policies that siphon assets from Black Detroiters to fill coffers in the predominately White county in which the city sits (see Atuahene 2018, Atuahene and Berry 2018). The dominant discourse turns the frame away from all these forces toward Black residents and "their" elected leaders, implicitly blaming them for Detroit's fall from grace.

In recent years, though, talk of abandonment has given way to dreams of White (re)settlement. Whitney Smith, a current resident who previously worked for the city, dates this shift to the 2014 election of Mike Duggan, the city's first White mayor after an era of Black mayoral intervention:

> [I]t wasn't even just [because of] his political platform. I believe it was...the larger narrative that was reproduced and continued to be produced by the larger, you know, news outlets and media of Detroit...[seeing it as] the 40 dark years of Detroit...there's all these articles really that described Mike Duggan as this great White hope.

If the language of abandonment and the birth of a "great White hope" seem at odds, one should look more closely. Linking economic shifts to their visual representation, Rebecca Kinney (2016) ties the emergence of Detroit as ground zero for White resettlement to the proliferation of ruin photography in the 1990s. She focuses on one photographer in particular, Camilo José Vergara, who worked to picture "the potential in ruin." In his photographs, the "derelict built landscape" appears as "an object of beauty" and possibility (Kinney 2016:40). Kinney compares this imagery to that of the frontier, which, in Anna Tsing's (2004) terms, "must continually erase old residents' rights to create its wild and empty spaces" (quoted in Safransky 2014:246). In ways related to how "the western frontier" discursively emptied Indigenous land to countenance White settlement, Kinney shows how figurations of Black Detroit as a "vacant," "beautiful wasteland" ultimately serve White re-colonization.

What does this mean for Black Detroiters who never left? Some report spaces in the city that used to be predominantly Black (or viewed as abandoned) are systematically becoming White spaces. By "White spaces," I mean spaces in which White presence dominates. Here affect becomes a key dimension of this domination. As spaces become Whiter, Black Detroiters and Black people in the city report persistent experiences of hostility in the Whitening space. These experiences have the effect of making many Black people feel uncomfortable or annoyed, unwelcome and frustrated.

The sting of White return, some Black Detroiters observe, echoes earlier episodes of Indigenous and Black dispossession.[8] What binds these histories is not only the imagery of abandonment and resettlement, as scholars like Kinney (2016) have argued (also see Safransky 2014), but more pointedly, hostility has become an affective technique for making White space. To call hostility a technique is not to say that the systematic effect of an increasing, everyday hostility is a conscious or explicitly stated part of urban planning but rather that its persistence throughout the city—and in the training that has led to elite contemporary urban plans—has a

cumulative and systematic effect. Disavowal seems cyclical, and the current turn expels Black, Indigenous, and People of Color while welcoming White people and establishing White space. Here this technique works apart from necessarily conscious intent. Most important is the social effect—how it is felt in and through Black bodies.

Furthermore, hostility as a post-Fordist affect appears largely absent in a literature that centers the position of White subjects. Ultimately, this article about hostility and the creation of White space exceeds Detroit, but Detroit works as an ideal location to observe its emergence—a laboratory of White space re-production of sorts.

Background

My examination of hostility builds on a growing conversation within anthropology on post-Fordist affect (Berlant 2007, Muehlebach 2011, Muehlebach and Shoshan 2012). Danilyn Rutherford (2016), expanding on Massumi (2002) as well as Deleuze and Guattari (1987), defines affect as "a felt bodily intensity, the feeling of having a feeling, a potential that emerges in the gap between movement and rest" (286). In post-Fordist contexts, this felt intensity takes a particular form: it appears as longing for a lost stability (see Berlant 2007, Muehlebach 2011, Ahmann 2019).[9] As Lauren Berlant (2007) theorizes, the fantasy of the present and future at the heart of this longing is linked to the recent past of the "white working-class" (278) for whom the Fordist era meant steady employment and a temporal regularity that allowed Fordist subjects to make social connections, go on vacation, and earn enough money that they could establish a comfortable "home life." Berlant does not valorize this fantasy, but they do note that many people attempt to reproduce it even after doing so is no longer economically tenable. Through film analysis, Berlant glimpses "post-Fordist affect from the perspective of the economic bottom" (2007:295). But Berlant's "economic bottom" means White workers and their descendants. The prevailing vantage point in scholarship on post-Fordist affect, indeed, is one that prioritizes White loss. And White loss, if effectively manipulated, can lead to White rage against non-White Others whose presence appears, as Sara Ahmed puts it, "as a threat to the object of love" (2004:117)—that is, other White people.

In this framework, as Tyrone Palmer suggests, Black affect is "*unthinkable,* falling within the epistemological closure of Man's episteme; buried

beneath an overdetermined discourse that reads the expression and performance of Black affect as always already excessive, inadequate, or both" (2017:33). Here one might argue that it is not only Black affect that is unthinkable or, in practice, unthought but also that White fear blocks the possibility of feeling with Black Others.

Pushing back against such thoughtlessness, I am examining the force of White post-Fordist dreaming on Black Detroiters, many of whom experience this dreaming as hostility and who nonetheless work, in the face of this hostility, to build futures for themselves in this place.[10] In this context, one will see how generalizations about post-Fordist affect often fail to emphasize its racial and racist dimensions, misapprehending the present and ultimately overdetermining the urban future. They tamp down the possibility of an alternative Black future that is already thriving in this so-called abandoned city—more accurately described as a city abandoned by White people. Claims that the Black city is vacant implicitly suggest that the city must orient itself toward a White future.[11] But such an orientation forecloses Black possibility and the Black present. It also reveals a blindness toward the ways that White hostility is actively shaping the future of Detroit—a blindness that, in effect, supports colonial persistence (see also Mignolo 2011).

Beyond providing an analysis of the hostile production of White space in a Black city, I am also offering an already deployed strategy for uncovering that neglected possibility. Filming the Future of Detroit is a project based on community research, generated in the spirit of what Arjun Appadurai (2013) calls "deep democracy," meaning that even non-academics can and should be engaged in research about their communities. What would it take to have adequate plumbing, to prevent basements flooding? What can we do to prevent water shutoffs? In the Detroit films, we do community research by focusing on central research questions that we then investigate and produce as probative films in multiple genres for a broader audience. Below, I trace a brief history of this process in Detroit and other related places.

An Original Colonization That Keeps Repeating Itself: Vacancy and Disavowal

In Detroit, space appears vacant until it becomes White space. This is an old story that both requires and obscures the hostile work of emptying land of

its original inhabitants. But, as Tiya Miles notes, "Beneath the popular culture chatter that calls Detroit a 'ruin,' grotesquely suggesting some natural process of decay at work, we can dip our fingers into the water and touch the outlines of an alternate, historical dimension" (2017:1). Interrogating the linked dispossessions of Indigenous and enslaved peoples, whose removal and bondage enabled the building of Detroit, Miles insists, "Detroit is not the scene of natural disaster, but rather the scene of a crime—a crime committed by individuals, merchant-cabals, government officials, and empires foaming at the mouth for more...pushed from the guts of an all-consuming capitalism" (2017:1–2).

Of course, this crime is illegible as such, because the settler logic of private property naturalizes it. As Nichols puts it:

> The distinction between legality and illegality that operates in the land acquisition process of a settler state is particularly fraught and unstable. It requires positing the state as the legitimate source of law, while acknowledging, even fostering, the extralegal mechanisms that make this possible. (2020:38)

Here, "Indigenous peoples are figured as the 'original owners of the land' but only *retroactively*" (Nichols 2020:33)—that is, after the land has entered into a new legal regime that creates and then protects White "ownership" and White supremacy. Put simply, Indigenous land was turned into private property so that it could be taken away.

Historian Michael Witgen (2019) recounts how this process happened in the city of Detroit:

> [There were] a series of 11 treaties...the treaty of Greenville in 1895 to the Lapointe treaty in 1842, that essentially extinguish Native title to the state of Michigan, so if you could imagine 1805, if you're a Native person in Michigan, you're in a majority Native state. And within your lifetime, within basically a period of 25 years, that state's going to be transformed from a Native state with a majority native population of approximately 40,000 [to a White-owned state]. A Native population remains in place. They were not removed. There's not catastrophic warfare. There's no massive population loss through disease. It is simply a forced negotiation of treaties with their extinction of Native

titles. The native land is then put into public domain and made available at a subsidized rate to White settlers.

Land treaties, depopulation, genocide, and theft were the primary techniques for native disavowal. For Black people in what became the United States, disavowal began with kidnapping, body snatching, human bondage, and chattel slavery. It then persisted through racially restrictive covenants (Sugrue 2005), enactments of eminent domain (Nichols 2020, Sugrue 2005), mass incarceration, and predatory lending as well as subsequent foreclosure (Atuahene 2018, Atuahene and Berry 2018). All of these are hostile acts, but obvious hostility quickly dissolved into discourses of "vacancy" and "abandonment." This process keeps repeating itself, beginning with colonial expansion in 1492 (see Mays 2015) and persisting beneath the pulse of that "great White hope" for a homecoming today.

But it does not take an academic to make these connections. They are manifest in the built environment. Consider the Michigan Adventure Center, run by the State Department of Natural Resources, which advertises itself as "Bringing 'up north' to downtown Detroit!" in a section of the city it was, in effect, helping to gentrify.[12] As if to naturalize this process, all the people pictured at stations, where visitors can stick in their heads to see images of "'up north'...downtown," and most of the visitors are White.

The hunting exhibit at the center (Figure 1) features the "Wild West." When visitors enter the main space, the center immediately confronts

PHOTO BY DAMANI JAMES PARTRIDGE

Figure 1. Michigan Adventure Center: Waterfall.

Figure 2. Michigan Adventure Center: Who is hunting whom?

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Figure 3. Michigan Adventure Center: "Hide and Hunt."

them with the statue of a Native American man with a wooden bow and arrow, hovering above an indoor waterfall (Figures 2 and 3). If the visitor climbs to the second floor, they will encounter a hideout and hunting scope where they can view him amidst the animals and trees. Viewed from below, the Native American man appears as an intimidating figure.

Viewed from above, the visitor can see him through a "hunting blind" that "raises you above your prey, giving you a better view, and allowing you to shoot downward for safety." What does this exhibit mean? One could view the Native American as an early hunter, but this explanation leaves several chilling questions unaddressed. Why does he seem to threaten the visitor as they stand below? And does he appear as the only person who fits within the hunter's scope? Is he meant to fade into the natural environment, or is he the last living obstacle to White space-making strategies?

This barely coded violence sits alongside a persistent language, and now imagery, of vacant space—a space that falls under the purview of the hunter who is historically told "to 'Go West, young man' to leave behind the comforts and sophistication of the established citadels in search of adventure and fortune and to tame this great continent" (Safransky 2014:237). Safransky goes on to note, "Unbeknownst to many, the Michigan legislature passed an Urban Homesteading Act in 1999 intended to transfer 'underutilized' public land to private ownership in poor cities like Detroit" (2014:242). Offering a broader understanding of a systematic process is the concept of *terra nullius*, which originates with the Romans but also is an idea that gets used in global European colonial administration. According to the authors of *Emptied Land*, a volume that addresses issues of settlement and the organization of property in the Middle East: "The powerful effect of the concept is not only legal but also cultural, historical, and ultimately political: stripping the indigenous people and their culture of their status as rightful owners of land, resources, and political power and legitimating such dispossessions by presenting the land as empty" (Kedar et. al. 2018:9).

While I do not know what it feels like for the living Native American to look through the exhibit's hunting scope (see above) and see this representation of indigeneity as the target, I was struck with horror by the explicit link between the gentrifying urban center and its violent preamble, particularly its attempt to implicate me as a willing executioner.[13] Even though the Adventure Center was in Detroit, I felt deeply out of place. Consciously or not, the effort to displace seemed linked to a broader strategy of hostile techniques. In other ways as well, the exhibit and the visitors were making me feel uprooted. I also encountered other hostile expressions and stares. A White mother, making space for her child to climb a ladder at the center, looked at us—all people of color and most of African descent, including young Black children—as if we should be removed.

In seeing us as problems, though, what did she refuse to see? What does the hunter's scope hide? For one, it makes it hard to see lives that persist in spite of violence. As Kyle T. Mays (2015) writes, the city is *still* an indigenous space. He remembers the indigenous and Black school started by his aunt and quotes a former pupil:

> I enjoyed learning the culture and history of Native Americans, of us. It was different because I could learn about how the Indians lived back then, instead of about how they were killed off by white people. That was refreshing and important for me growing up as a Black and Indian child. (2015:236)

This observer makes clear that talk of erasure without the acknowledgment of a persistent presence leads to *further* erasure and *further* dispossession.

For those who identify with the hunter, looking through the hunter's scope makes it hard to see alternative futures for the city. While critical Black, Latinx, and Indigenous Detroiters sometimes marvel at how they have been making do under harsh conditions of dispossession, capital, and social divestment, they clearly have been doing more than making do. They have been doing more than many of the new White Detroiters have been willing or able to recognize.

In addition to analyzing the relationship between Black and Indigenous dispossession, part of the argument here, following Aihwa Ong (2003), is that Blackness is graduated, with those seen as Black experiencing the most intense effects but other radicalized subjects also experiencing processes of blackening and forms of erasure. Of course, here, skin color and colorism also play important roles.

Hipster Arrivals: Making Space "White" Again in Post-Industrial Detroit

A young artist from my hometown in upstate New York bought a house in one of the hip, unincorporated areas of Detroit—a part with a much smaller (less than 20 percent) African American population in the middle of the city but with a different tax base. He had joined a neighborhood watch and patrolled the area with the (mostly non-Black) residents, making it safe for his recent arrival and persistent presence.

One has the sense that the hipster versions of "cool" and "hip" circulate more broadly, from the city back to the suburbs. Furthermore, inasmuch as they own their property themselves, they will not be disenfranchised in the same way as long-term Detroit residents (see Atuahene 2018, Atuahene and Berry 2018, Atuahene and Hodge 2017). If they are renting, they are more flexible about moving, because the newly "developed" luxury apartment buildings aren't relevant for them anyway.

The public face of racism seems less aggressive, but the night patrols suggest a kind of persistence, the effect of having grown up in segregated homes and schools—often suburban and elite spaces, from Harvard to Detroit—in which there were hardly any Black people. Cheap living seems cool, and new possibilities can be imagined as a result of the opportunities that this cheap living affords, at least until neighborhoods become completely gentrified. But this process might take some time. By the time it happens, owning one's own property, being buoyed by generations of prosperity, or at minimum, having access to credit, will mean that one won't be forced out so easily—or, at least, not as easily as those on whom the city and the banks are foreclosing.

Here, expansion—a cyclical process embedded in the initially subtle reiteration of a Manifest Destiny logic or *terra nullius*—eventually becomes hostile again, as the number of newcomers increases. There is less negotiation and experimentation, much more implementation (of capitalist expansion) in the end. In fact, even without explicit weapons, hostility via various forms of policing and erasure, turning Detroit into a "blank canvas," becomes a significant means for making spaces "White."

Counteracting Hostility: Filming the Future of Detroit as New Affective Possibility

From the perspectives of Detroiters, the "failed city" analysis reduces the possibility of thinking in a different way about the present and the future of Detroit. To what extent do Detroit residents offer critical care and love in opposition to the persistent hostile acts? Detroiters critical of developmentalist logics (see also Escobar 2011) and capitalist accumulation, including the followers of Grace Lee and Jimmy Boggs, see their critique getting lost and invisibilized in the process of outside reclamation that calls itself a "comeback." Detroit residents are not simply resilient. In

fact, many have become analysts of future possibility based on what they see going wrong now, including the failure of capital to serve them.

Collective filmmaking and research—in this case, the Filming the Future of Detroit project—has become an important way to investigate possible futures beyond hostility and White-space creation. In contrast to Emily Hong's (2021) arguments about collective filmmaking and solidarity in the "multiply-produced film," the fact that we have produced multiple films over an extended period of time changes the dynamics. Our method has resulted in short films that have followed multiple research agendas. We have worked collectively to produce films that would then be shared with a broader public, as opposed to producing a single film that would then be sent to film festivals and circulated in artistic markets. We are still working on the elements of distribution, but for the purposes of the research on hostility as technique, directing this project has allowed me to see how spaces get produced over time, both in terms of my presence in Detroit but also in terms of what I saw the filmmakers observing. Here, it is not just the films themselves that are critical but also the discussion that took place around the films, filmmaking, and the research that has gone along with these processes. These films thus offer alternatives to the seemingly inevitable *developmentalist* approach that assumes it knows better than the long-term residents themselves about what should be the future of the city and how to understand the present.[14]

In the Filming the Future of Detroit Film, *Developmentality* (Linkon-Fryzer 2015), one of the main protagonists who grew up in Detroit and now lives blocks away in the "inner ring" suburbs remarks: "I don't even think it's being called gentrification. It's being guised as revitalization of Detroit. I think that we should call it what it is."

Filmmaker: Which is?

Protagonist: Gentrification. It's like really misleading and scary that some people think it's for the betterment of the city, when it's for the benefit of people in power, like Dan Gilbert and like Mayor Duggan.

Following this argument, the film *Marginalized Voices in Hegemonic Spaces* (Rogers and Johnson 2015), also critiques the celebration of a so-called "comeback," featuring the perspective of a recent Detroit high school graduate filmmaker, her former award winning debate team, and

their coach. She goes back to the school to rediscover the power of her debate experience. In one scene, the film pictures a current debater practicing her lines in rapid succession, squeezing all of the words into speedily read paragraphs in order to be sure to make all of her points: "As women of color, we are warriors, not pacifists...Women of color have been fighting for everyone, but her own fight is erased...Ever since the middle passage, the bomb was already dropped."

The filmmakers follow this scene with the debate coach talking about counter-narratives and master narratives: "The master narrative is like what White people [have produced]…their dominant narrative that we know. The counter-narrative is the marginalized voices. 'I didn't like it when you beat me. Nope. I didn't like it when you raped me. Nope. I didn't like any of that.' We need the marginalized voices in hegemonic spaces."

The coach goes on:

> If they become united, it will be the young Black people that can actually change Detroit, so that the gentrification that is happening in midtown, downtown, Dan Gilbert Town, isn't happening. They can do something about that, [the fact] that they're being left out of the redevelopment. They can just have a Black critical eye and not just one based purely around economics. We can see that economics has not gotten Black people anywhere in the city of Detroit in the past 30 years.

Figure 4. "Detroit Proud" Billboard.

Economics here references capitalist and developmentalist economics, an economics that appears as void of affect but is actually hostile in its approach.

During the December 2015 screening at the Jam Handy, a former automobile industry film studio near downtown Detroit—in which *Marginalized Voices in Hegemonic Spaces* also premiered—another short film in our series, *Detroit in Motion: Transcending Time* (Ham and Maynard 2015), began with the sound of hip-hop music, street art, and short rhythmic visual clips, including one of a "Detroit Proud" billboard (Figure 4). The film shifts from styles of dance invented in Detroit to other Detroiters adapting them into new dance forms that help to inspire new collectives. These moves and movements then circulate around the world. One of the dancers notes the collective practices of movement in Detroit: "I like coming to the community, and the community builds me up." In a number of films in the Filming the Future of Detroit series, building up and being loved become persistent affective dimensions of living and growing up in the city, often linked to artistic communities that help residents to thrive. The absence of love is also frequently noted in the developmentalist approach.

More broadly, the Filming the Future of Detroit films show a living and breathing city whose residents constantly innovate toward the future, finding ways to support each other and challenge the reality they are given, repurposing the available analytical tools for thinking about the present and future of the city, even while these efforts frequently go unseen by those

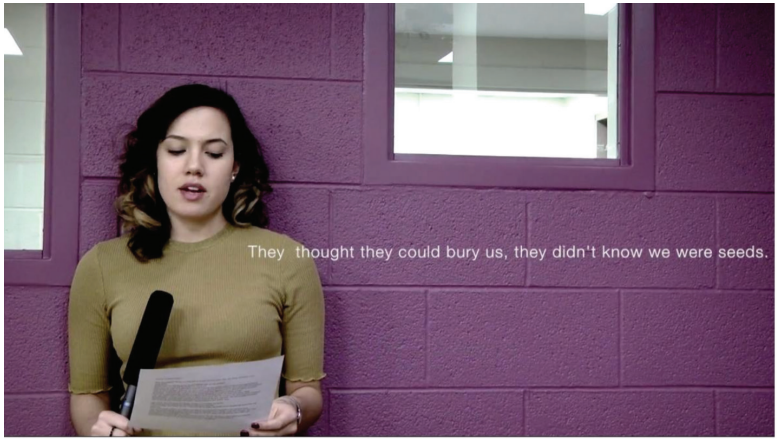

Figure 5. Scene from *Visions of the Future Detroit*. Candice Cavazos reading her poem, "Painfully Painted."

who rely on developmentalist logics. The films offer the possibility of seeing contemporary Detroit as a site of innovation against the logics of the market towards an affect that emphasizes the collective and projects love.

In another film produced by a young woman from Detroit (Esquivel 2016), the filmmaker interviews one of her friends, a young Latina-Syrian woman from the city, who reads her poem in front of a purple background (Figure 5): "Why are people telling me that this is a new Detroit, when the only thing changing are my neighbors? Where are my people going to go? Where are my people going? Why can't you just ask me what my name is?" The film dreams about futures in Detroit for the residents it engages, but it also expresses ambivalence about whether or not this billionaire-planned future has been planned for them.

What Kind of Power Y'all Got? (Hawkes, Spence, and Bendolph 2016) takes on the challenge of finding and affirming other Detroit-based forms of living. The film follows a Detroit-based activist group: "New Era Detroit addresses the root problems of systematic injustice by beginning with ourselves. We make sure that we educate ourselves. We make sure that we practice what we preach. We hold one another in our group accountable." The film shows the group marching through neighborhoods, distributing food on public buses, and hugging fellow Detroit residents. Again, love is critical to surviving the present and imagining the future for Detroit from the perspective of residents. Other forms of resistance are also critical.

Detroit: Driving the Future of Sound (Abfalter 2014), also part of the Filming the Future of Detroit series, takes viewers through a deeper history of Detroit-based resistance. The film opens with DJ Psycho on the turntables at a club with a "Scratch Life" t-shirt in black and white. It then cuts to graffiti somewhere in the city that reads: "DJ Psycho...UR [Underground Resistance] special ops...250 LBS of Fuck U!" An interviewee outside the techno club notes: "Detroit, from what I understand, is the inventor of techno music." The film then cuts to another scene in which DJ Psycho wears a hoodie that proclaims: "Detroit Techno Militia." Throughout the short film, his t-shirts and hoodies provide a subtext. DJ Psycho offers a history of the invention of the music in Detroit... He even goes to a memorial with impressions of the hands of "The Detroit Giants" album cover: Hard music from a Hard City: Riot EP. "You can definitely link the music to how the city was structured...The city was built around these industries that eventually abandoned us. We had to do something...We had to do something, so the things that weren't meant to be instruments...We ain't

got a club, you know. Gonna set up on the corner...that was the battle. We didn't have nothing but time to learn, you know."

DJ Psycho is in a record store, and his T-shirt reads: "'Detroit' State of Mind." While there, he talks about techno in relation to other music and producers that came after it: "This record is the basis for a lot of records that came after it. Like your Miami-based stuff. Your Atlanta-based stuff. You know. Shake What Your Mama Gave You by Poison Clan. Missy Elliott's *Lose Control*. And this is the record that kicked it off." He plays albums as part of his history lesson. (The film took off online in Germany with over 13,000 views on YouTube to date.) "Ghetto Tech...The east side of Detroit...the West Side of Detroit. You know what we're about. We've got to turn this party out...The atmospherics and what they make you feel like...It's a modern-day extension of the blues, if you will...We made this music, just because we had to step out of ourselves." A woman at Detroit's TV Bar confirms: "It make you move. It make you feel good. Want to put some on? I love it."

From an underground techno museum, DJ Psycho explains the history:

> The music has been described as the sound of the machine going to rust...You can definitely link the music to how the city was structured, you know? When you look at how the city itself was built around these industries that eventually abandoned us. We had to do something. We had to do something, so the things that weren't meant to be instruments became instruments. The 8-0-8 [Figure 6] wasn't meant to be a beat machine. It was something to accompany a guitar player. We figured out how to make those things work. And turntables, which weren't supposed to be instruments, we turned them into instruments...We ain't got a club, you know. Gonna set up on the corner…that was the battle. We didn't have nothing but time to learn…

DJ Psycho then points to another music-making machine: "This is like one of the weapons that Underground Resistance used on a constant basis."

Filmmaker: Weapons. Expand on that.

Figure 6. Underground museum pictured in the Filming the Future of Detroit film, *Detroit: Driving the Future of Sound*.

> **DJ Psycho**: It's weapons. This is what we used in the studio . . . These are the instruments that made the songs come out the way that they did. And it was always dependent on how well, or not well, somebody used it, to make these records come the way that they came out...That was the battle, but we didn't have nothing but time to learn.

The techno movement takes off at a moment in which most White people had already left the city and then engages in its own local and global circulations. It makes a statement about possibility, using the tools that have been "left behind." The makers of this possibility find themselves subject to a new hostile approach. They experience this hostility not only through everyday encounters but also in the widespread emphasis on "development," which counters the culture they have been creating. Through expressions of disgust, one sees the affect behind the push that builds and renovates but also displaces. Homeless shelters and unhoused people get removed from the center of the city just as they also see the city changing, emphasizing that this change is not for them. Whole neighborhoods like Detroit's Chinatown disappear (see MacDonald 2017). Hostility is the emotion behind the move that makes new built environments possible. Love wouldn't do that. But long-term Detroit residents also offer love. In devaluing and erasing the approaches of Black and Indigenous people in Black and Indigenous cities, one misses the possible presents and futures that Black cities actually offer. Whether or not these possibilities are

universal, they become necessary for many of us, particularly those of us for whom the enlightenment claims to universal inclusion fall short.

To conclude with the words of Detroit residents from another Filming the Future of Detroit film, *Bert's: Passing it Down* (O'Brien, Herbert, and Nowlin 2016), a young performer featured on a financially threatened Detroit jazz club at stage at Bert's: "I mean, honestly, I'm not saying that you can sound any type of way in a jazz club, but you will get love, regardless, if you stand on the stage and play." This was a Detroit experience created in the Black city. Institutionalized spaces of unconditional love though have become more precarious amidst the encroaching hostility.

Because the city government relies on billionaire planner investment for its future, it ends up serving billionaire interests instead of the people and creativity already there. As the 24-year-old developer in the film *Developmentality* (Linkon-Fryzer 2015) notes, "The place was empty. Nobody. There's nowhere to go. There's nothing to do. There's no reason to come down here. What I would say to you is this: Is Dan Gilbert really committing to something and making it happen? At the end of the day, this is all private business."

In the end, we've got to invest our economic resources into the marginalized spaces. But we must be led by Detroiters themselves, particularly those responsible for the persistent innovation through which we all find possibilities for escape. But it is not enough. Integration is headed in the wrong direction. We need large-scale transformation. Critical Black cities offer such space and possibility.

To end with words from another film that was part of the Filming the Future of Detroit series, *Detroit, The Intersection* (Alsubee 2021):

> **Main Protagonist:** This history of Detroit is so important in addressing racial issues, in addressing economic issues, in addressing the future of the region as well...
>
> **Filmmaker (as narrator in the film):** Rather than understanding 1967 as a start of a decline, we can focus, instead, on how 1967 was a starting point for activists and organizers who stayed in the city.

The other side of the failure of capitalism that one can observe in Detroit is the possibility that emerges out of this failure. But beyond acknowledging it, we need to invest in it and allow those who know to lead all of us.

Examining White space as produced in Detroit has helped me to see how it is also produced in other places, including White liberal spaces like rich research universities or college towns where hostility is not explicit but often felt. Ultimately, this article about hostility and White space creation exceeds Detroit, but Detroit works as an ideal location to observe its emergence and possibilities for a systematic counter. ■

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Endnotes:

[1] I understand Black and White in this text as social constructs that have real material effects, including assertions of White supremacy, dispossession, criminalization, and marginalization as well as Black power, Black excellence, and Black possibility.

[2] By highlighting *hostility as technique,* I will analyze the push towards normativity as a push towards making spaces White. Hostility becomes a principal technique linked to the capitalist logic of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003), a regular feature of capitalism in which the accumulation of land becomes central (see Coulthard 2014, Coulthard and Simpson 2016). Here, I also take serious Coulthard and Simpson's (2016) critique of Marxist developmentalism. In *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Coulthard writes: "Although it is beyond question that the predatory nature of capitalism continues to play a vital role in facilitating the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples in Canada, it is necessary to recognize that it only does so *in relation to or in concert with* axes of exploitation and domination configured along racial, gender, and state lines" (2014:14).

[3] As an anonymous reader of an earlier version of this article observed: "One can be Black and in Detroit but not from Detroit and feel hostility [while] one can be White and not from Detroit and claim ownership."

[4] Here, one should take Ford's anti-Semitism as well as his company's collaboration with the Nazis seriously (Ribuffo 1980, Silverstein 2000).

[5] In response to teleological developmentalist logics, Arturo Escobar (2011) writes, "We need to start thinking about human practice in terms of ontological design, or the design of worlds and knowledges otherwise." For Detroit residents, "development" often means dispossession.

[6] Thomas Sugrue (2005 [1996]) argues that removing industry from the city (to counter labor unions) began even before World War II. White people abandoning the city, then, has much more to do with jobs migrating out than with the 1967 uprisings. Narratives of "White flight," though, tend to blame Black residents for ruining the city.

[7] According to the US Census Bureau, Detroit is 78.3 percent Black, 14.7 percent White, 0.4 percent "American Indian and Alaska Native," and 1.7 percent Asian. See United States Census Bureau (n.d.).

[8] The language of dispossession problematically assumes an original kind of ownership based on a conceptualization of private property (see Locke 1988 [1689]) originally tied to Whiteness: "In short, dispossession did not proceed through macro assertions of sovereignty but through microlevel practices that worked to dismantle one infrastructure of life and replace it with another" (Nichols 2020:45). Nichols (2020) continues: "In a succinct articulation of the 'negative' logic of Indigenous proprietary interests, the court concluded that aboriginal title was 'a right not to be transferred but extinguished'" (46). Unfortunately, Nichols takes less seriously Afropessimist analyses of dispossession linked to the potential claims of stolen bodies not offered the same dubious Whitened claims to "humanity" (see Wilderson 2020, Buck-Morss 2000).

[9]For related cases of loss beyond traditionally Fordist contexts, see Dzenovska (2020), Finkelstein (2019), and Schwenkel (2013).

[10]In addition to Black Detroiters, Indigenous, Latinx, and Chinese residents also face hostility as a White space-making technique (see, for example, MacDonald 2017).

[11]While Afropessimists argue that Blackness is always already outside liberal, White possibility (see Palmer 2017, Wilderson 2020), I will not take up that argument here.

[12]Please see Outdoor Adventure Center (2019).

[13]See *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (Goldhagen 1996). While citing this title, I do reject Goldhagen's essentializations of Germanness, which think too simply about Jewish/German connection.

[14]As anthropologist Aimee Cox points out, "Detroit is...constructed in the past and future tense but rarely in the present. It is easier to discursively erase real live human beings in the past and future than it is in the present" (2015:62).

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Foreign Language Translations:

Hostility as Technique: Making White Space in a Black City (Observing a City Over Time Through Collective Filmmaking and Collaborative Research)
[**Keywords**: Detroit, post-Fordism, Black cities, affect theory, White space]

敌意作为手法: 在黑人城市制造白人空间(通过集体拍摄影片以及合作研究对一个城市进行的长期观察)
[**关键词**: 底特律, 后福特主义, 黑人城市, 情感理论, 白人空间]

Hostilidade Enquanto Técnica: Fazendo Espaço Branco numa Cidade Negra (Observando uma Cidade ao Longo do Tempo Através da Realização Colectiva de Filmes e Pesquisa Colaborativa)
[**Palavras-chave**: Detroit, pós-Fordismo, cidades Negras, teoria do afecto, espaço Branco]

العداء كتقنية: جعل مساحة بيضاء في مدينة سوداء (مراقبة مدينة بمرور الوقت من خلال صناعة الأفلام الجماعية والبحث التعاوني)
كلمات البحث: ديترويت، ما بعد-الفوردية، المدن السوداء، نظرية التأثر، الأماكن البيضاء