ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:	RACE, RIOTS, REAL ESTATE, ARCHITECTURE
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This thesis examines inequalities in the use of, the management of, and the opportunities provided to the built environment, specifically through the context of race, riots, and architecture. By investigating the history and context of racially charged riots in the United States, this thesis seeks to understand the role that architecture has played in exacerbating the perceived oppression through the physical environment, and seeks solutions where architecture may play a role. Architecture is a form of cultural communication, and therefore it can be "read" and understood as a spatial expression of the values and beliefs of a dominant perspective (the cultural hegemony) for a particular time. Culture divides space and time as a means to communicate to others within the society what is important, significant, and "natural."

RACE, RIOTS, REAL ESTATE, ARCHITECTURE

by

Robert Grooms II

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Preface

April 12, 2015, Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old resident of Baltimore Maryland was arrested by the Baltimore City Police Department. While in police custody, Gray sustained a spinal cord injury and subsequently died one week after his arrest on April 19, 2015. In a search for answers, the residents of Baltimore responded with protest. Unsatisfied with the city's handling of the situation the protest turned into an uprising of violence and demonstration. Highly visible and widely televised, the questions of why would people forcefully destroy the community in which they live, became one of the many topics of debate. In response, many rioters asserted that "they can't destroy what they don't own." Thus raising questions of ownership, identity, and the sense of connection to place. While a direct catalyst, the death of Freddie Grey, is not the sole contributing event that led to the violent insurgency in Baltimore. In fact, the increasing tension is a result of an extensive pattern of systemic racism, increasing poverty levels, poor access to jobs, marginalization, police brutality, and inequalities within communities of color when compared to their corresponding white communities, even those which also have suffered economic distress.

These causes of unrest are not new revelations, nor are they unique to Baltimore. In fact, the disparities of black urban communities were well documented in great detail by the 1968 Kerner Commission report appointed by President Johnson which suggested: "Our nation is moving towards two societies, one black, one

white, separate and unequal."[1] Craig Barton describes these separate and unequal communities as being constructed through legal instruments of control that are implicitly spatial. Reinforcing boundaries that are both visible and invisible separating black and white space. These boundaries establish the political, social, and productive spaces available for black occupation, consequently negotiating these constructed boundaries has become central to black cultural identity.[2]

This thesis argues that the construction of boundaries as a result of systemic racism is inherently spatial. Therefore, it can be seen as an issue that is partially architectural. The area and neighborhood around Johns Hopkins offers an exceptional example and opportunity to study the ways in which such boundaries are created as well as maintained, and how might those boundaries be bridged through design.

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[1] Harris, Fred, and Curtis Lynn. 1998. *Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race, and Poverty in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1

[2] Barton, Craig. 2001. *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press., 2-3

Dedication

To my parents, who through their sacrifice provided me with opportunity and access that many are not privileged to have. Thank you for your sacrifice and instilling in me the value of education.

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A special thank you to my thesis committee David Cronrath, Margaret McFarland, Michael Ambrose, Brian Kelly, and Steven Hurtt for their guidance and constant support. I would also like to thank my friends and studio cohort for helping push me across the finish line, especially Yoel Alemayehu and Eli Shanklin. I would also like to thank my fiancé for her love, support, and words of encouragement throughout this entire process.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Theory

Introduction

> *"How can we destroy what we don't own."*
> \- Unknown Baltimore Rioter, April 2015

The conception of this thesis essentially began with a simple, but a multifaceted question inquired by a news reporter to an unknown participant in the Baltimore riots. When asked, how you could destroy your community, the unknown black male simply responded, "We can't destroy what we don't own." A contentious, but equally profound statement that is rooted in layers of troubled history, systems of institutionalized racisms, social division, and economic disparity. More importantly, for the purpose of this thesis, a deeper analysis of the statement reveals an issue that resides below the layers of prevalent socioeconomic conditions. The statement in question reveals an internal conflict between an understanding of self and place. A conflict between two unreconciled strivings, two thoughts, two souls, and two warring ideologies in one dark body.[3] An analysis of the statement beneath the surface conveys an internal conflict that has yet to be addressed but rather temporarily repressed by means of an emotional and violent response. A crisis that has been suppressed for generations, a warring conflict that has often and repeatedly been misunderstood by individuals on both sides. The predicament in question, which this thesis will argue is a contributor to the

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[3] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell., 3

disconnection between place and space, is an internal conflict of an unreconciled identity.

The Mirror Stage and the Formation of I

The mirror stage is a concept in the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. The mirror stage is based on the idea that between the ages of 6 to 18 months of development, infants construct the ability to recognize their own reflection in a mirror. Lacan states that the first premise in the development of self-consciousness is when the child looks into a mirror and sees its reflection. In doing so, the child begins to connect their unfolding image, body movement, and experiences to the physical environment. After that, the child begins to understand that the image it sees reflected in the mirror is itself. This milestone, as described by Lucan is an important revelation in early childhood development. Without the ability to walk, or support their body weight, the child is able to recognize their own reflection which represents an important permanent structure in the construction of subjectivity. [4]

Upon the recognition of its own image, Lucan describes the child as being overcome with a sense of jubilation. This sense of euphoria occurs as the child sees itself as a unified image, a whole self, a coherent image. The child sees its own reflection and can assume a sense of self-consciousness. Thereby, constructing a unified identification with its image, experience, and relationship to time and place. It is at this stage in which

[4] Lacan Jaques, and Sheridan Alan. 1977. *Ecrits: A Selection*. United Kingdom: Tavistock Publications/Routledge Classics. 1-3

the child's sense of consciousness forms an identification with its image. The image reflected in the mirror is more than just a reproduction of the object before the mirror, it represents consciousness and the development of subjectivity.[5] This, according to Lucan is the first achievement in constructing consciousness in the subjective self as it relates to place and space. The basic concept of the mirror stage is essential to understanding the formation of subjectivity, and how it relates to the construction of otherness for many black Americans as articulated by W.E.B DuBois in the early twentieth century.

The Construction of Otherness

How does it feel to be a problem? The is the opening question raised by DuBois in his book of essays *The Souls of Black Folk* in which DuBois articulates a peculiar sensation that black Americans experience as the struggle to define their individual identity in an American landscape becomes increasingly more complicated as race relations evolve. DuBois states that black Americans are "born with a veil and gifted with a second-sight."[6] The veil in which DuBois references is what he states as the problem of the twentieth century, and it can be argued of the twenty-first century, it is a problem of the color line. "The relation of the darker to the lighter races of men."[7] The gift of second-sight DuBois references is the idea that black Americans are "born into a world

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[5] Lacan Jaques, and Sheridan Alan. 1977. *Ecrits: A Selection*. United Kingdom: Tavistock Publications/Routledge Classics. 3-4
[6] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell., 3
[7] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York, NY: Bantam Dell., 10-11

that renders him no true self-consciousness, a world in which he only sees himself through the revelation of the other world."[8]

What DuBois is unfolding in his opening essay is the same internal identity crisis that is expressed in the opening paragraph of this chapter by the unknown Baltimore rioter. In *The Souls of Black Folks,* DuBois describes this internal struggle to render a self-fulfilled identity in relation to time and place as a double consciousness. "It's a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body."[9] In contrast with Lucan and his idea on the development of subjectivity, DuBois states that through the process of double consciousness black Americans cannot render a self-fulfilled identity without the sense of looking at their image through the eyes of the outside world and being perceived as an 'other.' A constant struggle and conflict between internal awareness and external perception.

The concept of double consciousness is a sensation of feeling as if your identity is constantly divided, thus making it difficult to construct a unified identity that is not at war with the other. For black Americans in particular, the dominant American culture has historically repressed and defined blackness as 'unnatural,' thus, making it difficult

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[8] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York, NY: Bantam Dell., 3
[9] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York, NY: Bantam Dell., 3

to conceive a unified sense of self. Essentially, black Americans are constantly struggling with the feeling of being too black to be American, and too 'whitewashed' to be black. Therefore, in the process of trying to reconcile the two opposing identities, or sense of self, one begins to recognize themselves as an 'other,' despite having equal claim to black and American culture.

The Perception of Otherness

To thoroughly understand the perspective of those subjected to the perception of double consciousness it is useful to examine the beginning of *Invisible Man* by novelist Ralph Ellison. In the novel Ellison uses an unidentified protagonist to articulate the process of trying to reconcile one's divided identity, and equates the concept of double consciousness to being an invisible man. The protagonist articulates the idea of being invisible by narrating the following:

"I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me…

It goes a long way back, some twenty years. All my life I had been looking for something, and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory. I was naïve. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I could answer. It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: That I am nobody but myself. But first I had to discover that I am an invisible man!" [10]

Similar to the ideas expressed by DuBois, through the protagonist, Ralph Ellison is articulating the perceived difficulty of unifying one's divided identity. Ellison equates

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[10] Ralph, Ellison. 1952. *Invisible Man*. New York, NY: Random House Inc. 3-15

the inability to achieve a self-conscious understanding of identity to that of invisibility. Despite the protagonist being a man of substance, flesh and bone, and possessing the ability to think and process for oneself the protagonist of the story feels as if he is invisible because people refuse to see him for what he is.[11] The protagonist is invisible not because he is a paranormal phenomenon, but because he exists 'behind the veil.' As articulated by DuBois, the veil is characterized by the limitations of seeing and being seen unclearly. Furthermore, DuBois stresses that the idea of double consciousness is the awareness of being simultaneously an American and not American, thus denying black Americans the opportunity to embrace a true self-consciousness.[12]

The Deployment of Cultural Stereotypes in Constructing Otherness

The construction of otherness voids black Americans the freedom of constructing their own identity based upon one's unique perspective and relationship to time and place. Instead, black Americans are forced to view themselves as for how they may be perceived by the outside world, both within and outside of the dominant culture. The perception of double consciousness creates conflicting instances of not being able to identify with any particular place without external influences creating an unresolved sense of self. In the development of consciousness, it is not unusual for external factors to influence one's sense of self, however, in the case of black identity the perception of blackness is constantly influenced by the dominant culture's oppressive ideology.

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[11] Ralph, Ellison. 1952. *Invisible Man*. New York, NY: Random House Inc. 3
[12] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 3

Consequently, the black experience is defined by the inability to construct an authentic self-conscious identity, and instead, it is shaped by the perception of others and that of cultural stereotypes perpetuated by the dominant culture.

As argued by Mario Gooden in his book *Dark Space*, due to the joint history regarding black identity and its influence on American culture, the use of cultural stereotypes functions as a tool to control the ambivalent and create boundaries of division. Elisabeth Bronfen elaborates on this idea by arguing that the conception and deployment of cultural stereotypes is a resource used to deal with the instability that arises from the division between self and non-self by preserving an illusion of control and order.[13] Furthermore, the "othering" of black Americans denies them their equal right to American history unless accompanied the qualifying prefix "African," which Gooden argues is a "historical and social exorcism." Essentially, despite blackness being as American as "apple pie," the use and deployment of cultural stereotypes create a sense of "otherness," which in return functions as an apparatus to deny black Americans their inheritance of an American identity that amalgamates black and American culture. While conversely, serving as a resource which denies white Americans of their own sense of blurred blackness which is inherent because of the complex shared history through the transatlantic slave trade and integrated bloodlines of black and white Americans.[14]

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[13] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 102-103
[14] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 100

Self-Stereotyping as a Counter Reaction to Otherness

It is interesting to note that in the process of reconciling one's split identity, the self-stereotyping of black culture has emerged as a counter reaction to the implementation of cultural stereotypes deployed by the dominant culture. In other words, rather than creating a hybridized cultural image that embraces black culture as well as the dominant culture, iconography is used to reposition the power of "Africa" as being central to black identity in America. Gooden states that "black Americans have generally resisted the lenses of others eyes in constructing self-consciousness, rather than merging the two selves."[15] Historically, instances of this resistance has surfaced during the New Negro Movement of the 1920s, the Black Power Movement of the 1960s, and the widespread adoption of the term African-American towards the end of the twentieth century.[16] It can be argued that these attempts to create a unified black identify is a response to the sense of not belonging to any particular place or time, and as DuBois noted emerges out of the inability to merge one's double self into a better truer self.[17] Though a noble gesture, ironically, the attempt to define a black American identity through the process of self-stereotyping out of fear of cultural hybridization, results in the creation of an essentialized black cultural expression that does not underscore the complex narrative regarding the black American experience. Cornel West notes that though the process of defining a unified black identity puts black doings and sufferings at the center of discussion, it reinforces a narrow dialogue concerning race.[18] In addition, it assumes a homogenous descendancy from Africa while representing Africa

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[15] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 99
[16] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 99-100
[17] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York, NY: Bantam Dell. 3
[18] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 103

as a single ethnic group and not a diverse continent comprised of numerous countries. Therefore, while embracing the image of Africa has cultivated new subjectivity among black Americans, it can be argued that its imagery is only superficial and cannot function as an agency to reposition social, economic, and cultural relationships, nor does the use of imagery have the power to create a new understanding of self beyond surface level representation. The understanding of self in relation to identity extends beyond the two-dimensional representation of imagery, and is unique to history, place, and time.

The Geography of Otherness

Historically, the city of Baltimore's neighborhood composition is comprised of a very complex geography, characterized by racially and economically homogenous communities distinctly divided along the notorious 'color-line.' A number of public and private institutions have functioned throughout history to instill provisions that would uphold the purity of homogenous communities. The results are a collection of communities that oppose otherness and embraces a unified vision of 'self' and 'we.' As noted by Richard Sennett the understanding of community is that of a specified social grouping in which those who are included within the fraternal order believe they all share something in common. "The bond of community is one of sensing common identity, a pleasure in recognizing 'us' and 'who we are."[19] Communities that rely on racial and economic homogeneity are dependent on perceived similarities from within,

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[19] Richard, Sennett. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 31

that opposes differences across defined borders. However, the sense of community purification denies the fact that similarities exist across the boundaries of emphasized cultural and economic homogeneity.

Sennett describes this purified sense of community as a unified identity and mutual bond that binds individuals together because of their common understanding of one another. However, Sennett argues that the common identity that the group is dependent upon is based on a false, mythologized common image. These false set of beliefs creates a coherent image of the community in which members are drawn together because of their perceived shared set of beliefs, dislikes, and goals. Nevertheless, it is these very beliefs that create an inauthentic perception of community, which can be argued, is in response to the fear of differences. Sennett elaborates on this idea by stating "the image of the community is purified of all that might convey a feeling of difference let alone conflict, in who 'we' are. In this way, the myth of community solidarity is a purification ritual."[20]

Homogenous enclaves are not grounded in reality and only exist because of the enforcement of physical geographic boundaries, as well as cultural practices that reinforce the notion that varying degrees of differences between social groupings promotes discord, or tension within heterogeneous communities. Similar to the ideas presented by DuBois regarding the othering of black Americans through cultural stereotypes, Sennett suggests that culturally constructed homogeneity proclaims a lie

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[20] Richard, Sennett. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 36

about who 'we' are. Thus, it is necessary for homogeneous communities to repress deviants, as a method to convince themselves of their mutual dignity through their collective sameness. In other words, who 'we' are as a common identity is afraid of something 'other' than 'us.' Therefore, if something that is different is introduced, the common identity that binds the collective 'we,' is subject to be hurt by their own exploration of 'otherness.'[21] However, the fear of otherness, which binds together purified communities is not a sustainable method of development. Functional cities thrive from diverse neighborhoods, skills, and services through direct social contact that distills the myth that differences amongst individuals engender conflict.

Boundaries and the Reinforcement of Purified Communities

Richard Sennett argues that the fear involved in the identity process prohibits individuals or social groupings from freeing themselves from history. Thus, to create a defined self-identity, it is important to conserve the known past rather than to confront the unknown present.[22] Therefore, the creation and preservation of abstract and physical boundaries are key for purified communities to conserve the unified sense of self in relation to place. Clearly defined boundaries act as a divider between 'us' and 'them,' which in return makes the perceived differences between bordering communities more apparent.

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[21] Richard, Sennett. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 42-43

[22] Richard, Sennett. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 11

Constructed homogeneity is dependent upon the perceived differences that exist

beyond the borders of protection. In urban life, borders and edges uphold this utopian

idea that those within the boundary all share the bond of common identity in

recognizing 'who we are.' The 'we' feeling expresses the desire to be similar.

Therefore, it becomes a way to avoid looking deeper into each other. Instead,

individuals imagine that they know all there is to know about one another because of

their collective sameness. In return, this image is upheld and reinforced by the idea that

those who exist within the boundary share a common identity and the outside world is

absolute otherness.[23]

Carceral Forms of Containment

Richard Sennett expresses the idea that the utopian principles of idealized community

harmony are achieved through constructed racial and economic homogeneity.

Therefore, in order to achieve this purified sense of community solidarity, it is essential

to establish borders that define 'us' from 'them.' Rashard Shabazz argues that the

borders established to define and spatialize 'otherness,' operate as carceral forms of

containment to monitor and deny the freedom of mobility across boundaries. In the

book *Spatializing Blackness,* Shabazz repositions the work of Michael Foucault to

underscore how carceral forms of containment within prison enclosures became

"mechanisms of normalization," and appropriated by other institutions to organize and

discipline the masses.[24] Within the context of the built environment, these carceral

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[23] Richard, Sennett. 1970. *The Uses of Disorder.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 27-32
[24] Rashad, Shabazz. 2015. *Spatializing Blackness.* Chicago, IL: University of Illinois. 4-5

forms of containment are most notable at the boundaries of racially homogenous communities, or the "space in between" that divides "us" from "them." These carceral forms of containment also emerged through built forms that disrupted the continuous urban fabric and embraced the ideologies of modernism that prioritized order, repetition, and orthogonal geometry. As noted by Shabazz, the modern adaptation of order, punishment, and control is no longer a public spectacle as the antiquated monarchical societies. The modernized framework of containment practices has become part of the function of everyday life and appears in seemly mundane practices such as the organization of cities, to ensure efficiency and continued surveillance of those who pose a threat to civility.

Spatialized blackness, or as it relates to this thesis spatialized "otherness," is a term used by Shabazz to describe the mechanisms of constraint deployed into the urban fabric through architecture, urban planning, and systems of control that function through the policing and establishment of borders. Wherein these boundaries, that are both physical and abstract, create prison-like environments in an effort to "put a lid on interracial vice, greedy landowners who exploited poor blacks, race theorist who advocated segregation, city planners who sought to control blacks, the public-housing authority that wanted to contain crime, and federal policy that waged a war on drugs."[25] In other words, Shabazz is depicting the establishment of boundaries in an effort to construct racially homogenous communities that spatialize "otherness." The establishment of boundaries meant to separate "us" from "them," metaphorically

[25] Rashad, Shabazz. 2015. *Spatializing Blackness*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois. 2

prisonizes the landscape through carceral powers of isolation, containment, surveillance, the establishment of territories, and the creation of frontiers to spatialize and define "blackness."[26]

The Impact of Modernism

This thesis argues that carceral forms of containment within the built environment leads to the division of the equitable relationship and spatial simultaneity of individuals and their varying groups, and have a major impact on the construction of double consciousness and the inability to render a true self-conscious identity. This idea is a key component to understanding the perceived disconnect between the inhabitants understanding of self as it relates to place and space as articulated by the interviewee in the Freddie Gray uprising. Therefore, to more effectively conceptualize how carceral forms of containment when applied to the built environment affects the construction of identity, it is useful to underscore the impact of modernism as it relates to post WWII public housing practices. As noted in the earlier sections, in the construction of otherness, black identity is highly influenced by the subject's perception of self through the lens of outside world and the dominant culture perpetuation of cultural stereotypes. As it relates to the city of Baltimore, and specifically to the identity crisis portrayed through the statement "we can't destroy what we don't own," the impact of modernity and its relationship to the public housing landscape is vital to understand the

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[26] Rashad, Shabazz. 2015. *Spatializing Blackness*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois. 2-3

disconnection that arises in reconciling a divided identity as it relates to the built environment.

One cannot begin to talk about the influence of modernity within the landscape of the public housing system without mentioning the forefather of modern architecture. Le Corbusier, French Architect, at the height of the industrial revolution responded to the overcrowded, unhealthy, and chaotic cities – that became dangerous and unhealthy by stating "we strive for order, which can be achieved only by appealing to what is the fundamental basis on which our mind can work – geometry."[27] Corbusier argued that "where the orthogonal is supreme, there we can read the height of a civilization."[28] The principles behind Corbusier theory on modernism as it relates to urban planning held that that social welfare could be improved through design, scientific rationalism, and efficiency through mass production. These ideas were manifested within the built environment using minimal ornamentation, repetitive units, and high-rise structures. Corbusier believed that order, repetition, orthogonal design, and unembellished surfaces would work to stimulate a sense of classlessness and equality among its inhabitants. Thus, remedying the postindustrial city of the social ills which create inequality and the lack of perceived equity.[29] It was these principles, conceived by Le Corbusier and the forefathers of modernism that became the foundations of design associated with post-war public housing in the inner cities of America.

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[27] Le Corbusier. 1987. *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 93

[28] Le Corbusier. 1987. *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning*. New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 37

[29] Almedia, Teresa. 2013. "Le Corbusier: How a Utopic Vision Became Pathological in Practice." *Orange Ticker*. March 5.

One of the critiques of modernism, as it relates to its influence on public housing system is that it is non-referential to historical and urban context. Therefore, it is architecture and urban design that is fundamentally unidentifiable to its surrounding context. However, it is important to mention that while Corbusier's motivation was to improve the quality of life for its inhabitants, the ultimate failure of modernism within the public housing system can be blamed on the divisive social and historical context in which Corbusier's principles were applied. A divided American landscape in which racial motivation and economic exclusion distorted the guiding principles of Corbusier's ideas. Guiding principles that emphasized access to natural light, useable open space, fresh food, and green spaces were essential to promote sociability and foster social interactions. Le Corbusier aspired to achieve maximum efficiency and open-space by building in a linear fashion to improve social relations through the design of high-rise buildings that would become open air "streets in the sky."[30]

Unfortunately, the vision that became realized in the United States was a lackluster interpretation of Corbusier's plan which neglected many of the guiding principles deemed necessary to achieve success. Robert Moses, Committee Chair on Slum Clearance for New York City, is credited with mass producing post war housing in 1947 that exploited the principles of modernism to isolate and contain poor black families within the city's least desirable locations, with no access to public

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[30] Almedia, Teresa. 2013. "Le Corbusier: How a Utopic Vision Became Pathological in Practice." *Orange Ticker*. March 5.

transportation or functional open spaces.[31] As argued by Michal Ford, the translucent prisms of glass and vast lawns envisioned by Le Corbusier became concrete jungles of monotonous brick towers. Consequently, post war public housing became the typology that defined low-income housing responsible for dividing, segregating, and isolating poor black communities in inner cities across America.[32]

Essentially, modernist practices within the public housing realm defined the geography of 'otherness,' and functioned as carceral forms of containment to divide the urban landscape and isolate racially homogenous communities. Therefore, the essential question raised by this thesis is what the resemblance of an architectural intervention that can exist between the thresholds of division to transcend divided and often conflicting identities is? Does such an architecture exist, and if so, can it be read as an authentic spatial expression and cultural communicator that is recognizant of time, place, and history to bind divided communities that oppose 'otherness.'

A New Spatial Paradigm: A Case for Hip-hop

As noted by Craig Wilkins, our worldview is a cultural pattern that shapes how we perceive the world around us and is to a large degree spatially influenced. Wilkins further notes, the "where" of our sensory experiences have a profound impact on our

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[31] Johnathan Mahler, "How the Coastline Became a Place to Put the Poor," *The New York Times*, December 3, 2012

[32] TED X. 2016. *Hip Hop Architecture: The Post Occupancy Report of Modernism*. TEDxMadison. Madison, Wisconsin.

ability to construct our own individual and collective identities. "Space comprises the social arena in which individuals reproduce or challenge their experiential boundaries of action and interaction."[33] Therefore, the perception of space is an essential element in the construction of identity and one's ability "to become, know, and name who we are." Structured space is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but a constructed entity, thus, structured space is not something that is universal but rather space can be read differently across cultures. If architecture, as stated by Paul Weiss is the "art of bounding space," then it can be concluded that architecture and urban design has a major impact on the construction and development of identity.[34]

Hip-hop is the product of the spaces that bound and defined a specific group and class of people. Hip-hop is a cultural movement that was created within a very specific time, place, and socioeconomic context. Hip-hop exists because of the deployment of architectural forms and urban planning policies that defined the spaces of the deprived, marginalized, and the geography of otherness. As argued by Michael Ford, hip-hop is a critique of modernism and a critique of the style of architecture that influenced hip-hop culture, in which he refers to hip-hop as "Modernism Post Occupancy Report."[35] Hip-hop became a vehicle for those confined within the urban carceral forms of containment to comprehend their understanding of location in space. Hip-hop culture exists because of the need for a disempowered inner city to authenticate and define its

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[33] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture, and Music*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 6-7
[34] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Architecture, and Music*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. 7
[35] TED X. 2016. *Hip Hop Architecture: The Post Occupancy Report of Modernism*. TEDxMadison. Madison, Wisconsin.

own divided identity in relation to its surrounding context. Hip-hop culture is a product of modernism that is specifically linked to the ideologies appropriated from Le Corbusier and his plans for the "City of Tomorrow."

Hip-hop and Space as Performed Communication

Craig Wilkins argues that "music both creates and is created by a distinct social context that is essential to the development of identity and subjectivity."[36] Wilkins continues to reference Henry Lefebvre, who defines space as being "produced by bodies (people) interacting.[37] This interaction is specific to time, place, and social formation, but is also historical – it has the past." Wilkins continues to say "if space is derived from experience and memory, whose communication is performed, and music is derived from experience and memory, whose form of communication is performance, then might we not look at sound and space as similar occurrences, constitutive of each other?"[38]

The point Wilkins is attempting to prove is that both music and space are forms of communication within and outside of a particular culture. Music, like many forms of art, is a product of time, space, social construct, and is recognizant of history. The construction of space is dependent on a set of interactions, a critical understanding of those interactions, and the recollection of those interactions through the process of

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[36] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Archtiecture, and Music*. Minnrsota: University of Minnrsota Press. 180
[37] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Archtiecture, and Music*. Minnrsota: University of Minnrsota Press. 180
[38] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Archtiecture, and Music*. Minnrsota: University of Minnrsota Press. 184

direct speech. Thus, space is an arena of performed communication between individuals and groups of people. With this understanding of music as it relates to space and the process of communication, Wilkins defines space more specifically as "(1) a socially constructed phenomenon of sonic organization and use. (2) Dependent on experience and memory linked to time – the past, present, and future. (3) Defined and communicated by people through their patterns of use."[39] Hip-hop culture was created from and within a specific spatial organization of public housing projects within isolated neighborhoods of racial and economic segregation. Thus, through the construction and organization of space, hip-hop functions as a form of performance based cultural communication with the ability transcend boundaries of division.

The Re-Appropriation of Space through Hip-hop

As noted above, hip-hop is a form of performed cultural communication, and one of the most notable characteristics of hip-hop culture is that it is a re-appropriator of space. Hip-hop culture was born from the politics of space and is known for its ability to transform space that was once seen as dispensable, and repurposes that space to make it vital in the process of constructing identity. The appropriation of space through hip-hop creates a new kind of space that can be read by the collective interactions of people engaged in the performance of cultural communication.[40]

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[39] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Archtiecture, and Music*. Minnrsota: University of Minnrsota Press. 184-185
[40] Wilkins, Craig. 2007. *The Aesthetics of Equity: Notes on Race, Space, Archtiecture, and Music*. Minnrsota: University of Minnrsota Press. 187

Through the productions of dance, graffiti art, and rapping in front of an audience, hip-hop is the manifestation of its participants need to perform and construct a new identity that is responsive to a particular space and time. Sekou Cooke underscores this idea by stating, "beyond the choreographic correlation of dance and architecture, the b-boy's appropriation of public space can be recognized as a space-making exercise similar to temporary installations and urban interventions. Breaking, which began as an occupation of street corners, alleys, and subways platforms, marks its territory within the city via the cardboard box and the dance circle. Break-dance is form." It is also important to note, that all of the examples mentioned are all part of the continuity of space, and simultaneous occupation of space rather than the well defined boundaries of the manicured urban park.

Cooke further elaborates on the idea that hip-hop is an appropriator of space by stating that graffiti artist permanent alteration of the built environment with elaborate pieces of graffiti, is a representational performance that carries more architectural gravity than any other element of hip-hop. Therefore, Cooke connects the space appropriating techniques of hip-hop to architecture by presenting the idea that breakdancing is "form," and graffiti is "surface."[41] Hip-hop's unique ability to appropriate indeterminate and continuous space creates a framework to develop new spatial relationships in the construction of identity and the performance of cultural communication at a point in time.

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[41] Cooke, Sekou. 2014. "The Fifth Pillar: A Case for Hip-Hop Architecture." ArchDaily. *ArchDaily*. April 30. http://www.archdaily.com/501449/the-fifth-pillar-a-case-for-hip-hop-architecture.

Hip-hop Architecture

Sekou Cook notes that Architecture, for most of its history has lived atop of the Ivory Tower. Architecture as a profession and scholastic study has struggled with the issue of diversity and underrepresentation. Though the issue has gained notable exposure within the past few decades, in comparison to other creative forms of cultural expression, architecture remains the least accessible to minority groups within the inner city, and arguably is the most influential in the construction of identity.[42] Hip-hop is a descendant of Jazz music, and similar to Jazz, hip-hop has the uncanny ability to transcend cultural divisions and placeness. Le Corbusier, whom of which Michael Ford refers to as the forefather of hip-hop culture, had a deep appreciation for Jazz music. Corbusier understood the revolutionary influence of Jazz music and its corresponding ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. "Negro music has touched America because it is the melody of the soul joined with the rhythm of the machine. It is the music of the error of construction…innovative. It floods the body and heart, it floods the USA, and it floods the world. Jazz music is more advanced than the architecture, and if architecture was at the point reached by Jazz, it would be an incredible spectacle."[43]

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[42] Cooke, Sekou. 2014. "The Fifth Pillar: A Case for Hip-Hop Architecture." ArchDaily. *ArchDaily*. April 30. http://www.archdaily.com/501449/the-fifth-pillar-a-case-for-hip-hop-architecture.
[43] TED X. 2016. *Hip Hop Architecture: The Post Occupancy Report of Modernism*. TEDxMadison. Madison, Wisconsin.

Hip-hop is the modern transformation of Jazz music. As noted by Cooke, each major cultural era in Western society procures a variety of creative cultural expressions such as theatre, music, dance, fine art, and architecture. The first four forms of cultural expressions are found in the "four pillars of hip-hop": deejaying, emceeing, b-boying, and graffiti writing. Hip-hop culture would not exist if not for architecture, therefore, hip-hop cannot exist without architecture, urban planning, and urbanism, but of a different form than that typically defined by traditional urban planners. Architecture, as argued by Cook is, and should be known as the fifth pillar of hip-hop.[44] As Sennett pointed out, it would be important for hip-hop architecture or urban planning to avoid the purism sought through urban constructs of homogeneity. Therefore, the case for a hip-hop architecture is evident, and through hip-hop culture, architecture can be a transformative tool in the construction of identity across boundaries of division.

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[44] Cooke, Sekou. 2014. "The Fifth Pillar: A Case for Hip-Hop Architecture." ArchDaily. *ArchDaily.* April 30.

Chapter 2: Precedent Analysis

There appears to be at least three ways that architects have attempted to convey 'black identity' through architecture: (1) representations in the built form, (2) abstractions or metaphoric references, (3) or spatial experiences. This thesis critiques the use of symbols and abstractions, specifically those that are referential to Africa, to produce works of architecture that are viewed as "authentic" spaces of black cultural functions. The use of African abstractions functions as a tool to mythologize cultural stereotypes and suppress the engagement of a meaningful dialogue concerning black identity, race, and social justice. This discourse can escape the myths perpetuated by the dominant culture and readily accepted, even though they are negated by the black subculture. I will argue that the use of myths and cultural stereotypes to communicate black identity perpetuates the "othering" of black Americans, which as described by Du Bois "renders him no true self-consciousness."[45]

Additionally, this thesis argues that as opposed to using metaphors, subjectivity can be effectively rendered through spatial experience (i.e. metonymy over metaphor). Successively, enabling the subject to construct identity through spatial relationships and subjective experiences. This thesis is not particularly concerned with arguing against the use of abstractions and metaphors. However, this thesis seeks to challenge the traditional design method used to render black identity and

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[45] Du Bois, W.E.B. 1903. *The Souls of Black Folk*. 3

suggests that true identity is not constructed through the use of skin-deep aesthetics, but rather identity is extracted through the articulation of spatial experience as defined by boundaries or the lack thereof.

Identity Through Representation

In order to engage in a more profound discussion of architecture and representation, the definition of architecture must first be understood by a more formal definition and its functional identity. One could define, architecture as the means in which buildings are conceptualized and produced to create habitable interior and exterior spaces and separate those spaces from others. Functionally, however, as expressed by Darell Fields, architecture is "an institution that maintains social codes by the production and deployment of knowledge, ideology, history, theory, and art." Within this definition, architecture functions as a means of cultural expression that communicates values and beliefs to participants in society. While the functional and formal definition of architecture is distinguished by their technical differences, these ideas operate as tools to reinforce "the regime that controls them." Thus, architecture operates as an institution that emphasizes the dominant culture values and beliefs in order to signify what is "important" or "natural."[46]

In order to further understand the functional definition of architecture and its connection to the construction of black identity through the built environment, it is

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[46] Fields, Darell. 2000. *Architecture in Black*. Brunswick, NJ: The Athlone Press. 47-50

also helpful to understand how black culture and African American art is represented in traditional American Art museums. In her book *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum,* Bridget Cooks argues that black art exhibits "have been curated through two guiding methodologies: the anthropological approach, which displays the difference of racial Blackness from elevated White "norm," and the corrective narrative." The second curation approach represents black art and artist as "an institutional curiosity concerning the presence of racial otherness, commonly coupled with a desire to perpetuate the superiority of mainstream White culture through its contrast to a Black difference defined as inherently inferior."[47] Architecture has many parallels and overlaps with visual arts. Thus Cooks' perspective is useful in constructing the complex relationships between race, space, representation, and cultural identity.[48]

Identity through Cultural Signifiers: Abstractions

The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) designed by David Adjaye, Phill Freelon, and Max Bond Jr. is located in Washington DC. The museum occupies the last undeveloped plot of land along the National Mall. Within a sea of white stone and marble, the immense deep-brown rust colored metal façade of the NMAAHC distinguishes it from its neighboring

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[47]Cooks, Bridget. 2011. *Exhibiting Blackness.* Boston, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press. 1-2
[48] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 100-101

buildings and other cultural institutions. The inverted pyramid-tiered panelized metal cladding of the building's exterior purposefully sets it apart, as well as, evoke a sense of pride and presence within the cultural landscape of the nation's capital. The design of the museum can be read through many lenses, all of which rely on certain African signifiers and cultural metaphors to establish its presence as an "authentic" space for African American culture and history.[49]

As stated by Mario Gooden, "the design for the National Museum of African American History and Culture relies upon its association with the image of the tiered capitals of the caryatid veranda post at the Ogoga's palace in Ikere, Nigeria." That is, the inverted tiered façade is meant to abstractly reference the tiered capitals of the caryatid veranda post at Ogoga's palace in Nigeria. Gooden also states that this reference is not particularly a distant historical memory since the capitals were carved by Olowe of Ise in the early 1900s. The design of the façade can also be read as an abstract representation of the Yoruba crown. The Yoruba crown is native to Nigeria and symbolizes the highest level of authority vested in Yoruba leaders. The headdress of the Yoruba crown can also be further abstracted to reference to the iconic symbol of the church hat historically worn by women in the black church. These metaphoric references to African culture are meant to invoke an honorific status of black identity.[50]

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[49] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 111
[50] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 109-111

As articulated by Mario Gooden, the use of abstract "Africanisms" denote the building with "positive connotations (cultural heritage, legitimacy, and value) and make them "recognizable" and more acceptable to the general public." The use of abstracted metaphors reinforces a narrow discussion concerning race and blackness. Furthermore, it assumes a homogenous connection between black culture and Africa. The African abstractions configured into the building's façade are not particularly responsive to its surrounding context, nor do they respond to specific historical, political, or socio-spatial relationships. Despite the museum's proximity to notable federal institutions, many of which were partially constructed by the hands of black slave laborers, the building's design and site strategy timidly acknowledge these facts. Thus its complex contextual relationship is not a part of any comprehensive dialogue concerning the architectural language of the building.[51] Therefore, it can be argued that while the design of the museum may "standout" through the design of its façade, through its construction spatially the building is actually conforming to its surrounding context in order to not be read as "defiant."

Figure 2:1 NMAAHC site context and proximity along the National Mall
(Source: Author via Google Maps)

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[51] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 109-111

Figure 2:2 Axonometric diagram comparing the NMAAHC facade to its surrounding context (Source: Author)
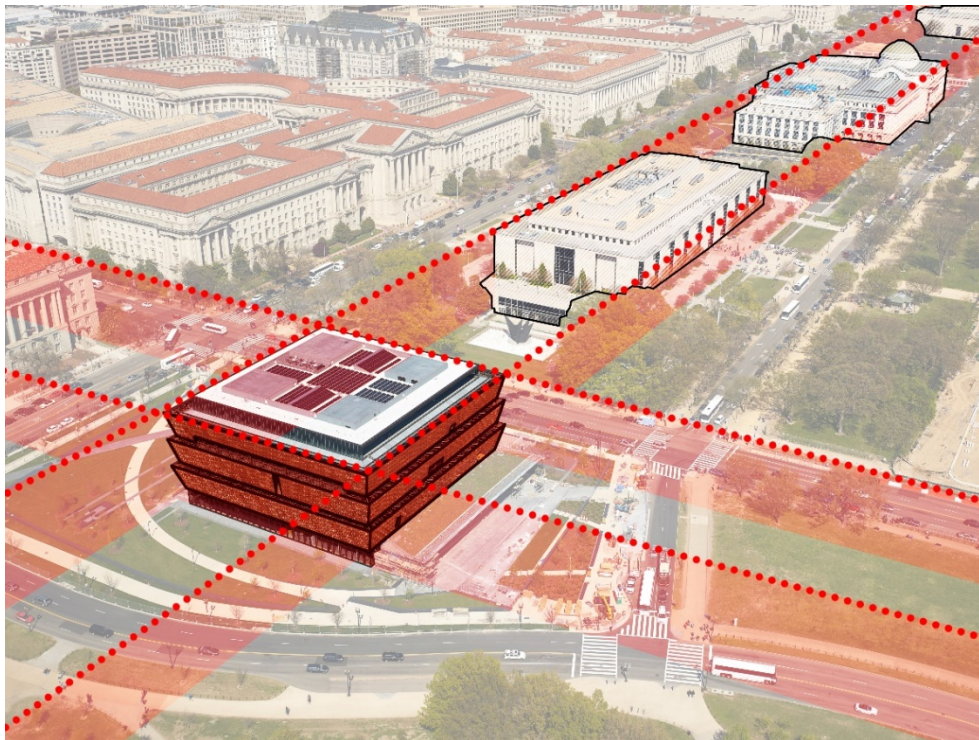

Figure 2:3 Axonometric diagram comparing the NMAAHC proportion to its surrounding context (Source: Author)

Subjectivity Constructed Through Spatial Experience

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute designed by Max Bond Jr. is an example of a cultural institution that does not rely on abstracted architectural metaphors to render black identity. Rather identity is cultivated through subjective interpretation of designed spatial experiences and proximities. Located within the civil rights district of downtown Birmingham, Alabama, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute occupies a historically prominent urban site. The institute is adjacent to the 16th Street Baptist Church, the site where a bomb killed four young girls on September 15, 1963. Directly across the street is Ingram Park, which is the location where community members gathered in large numbers to protest and mourn the lives lost due to the church bombing in 1963. These sites are synonymous with the Civil Rights Movement and are linked to vivid images of devastation, destruction, and violent clashes between protestors and the Birmingham police.

The design of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institution acknowledges these historical contexts and its spatial relationship between the 16th Street Baptist Church and Ingram Park. The edge of the building which fronts Ingram Park is pulled back from the street, thereby extending the public realm of the park and forming a cross axial relationship between the main entrance of the church and Birmingham Civil Rights Institution. Public sequence into the building begins by promenading through an exterior courtyard which leads visitors into a domed roof entrance hall. The dome above the entrance hall gives an iconic presence to the building while simultaneously emulating the neighboring churches without

overwhelming them. The sequence of spaces through the exhibits unfolds as an interactive and interpretive process that informs the user's spatial experience through the building. Within the building, views toward the surrounding context are strategically framed to remind visitors of the history deeply embedded in the site.[52]

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institution does not rely on the use of Afrocentric or cultural imagery to construct self-identity. Consequently, the discussion of race is not narrowly focused because the design does not assume a homogenous experience for all users. As stated by Victoria Gallagher "the more volatile the memory, the more difficult the task to reach a consensual vision of how the memory should be appropriately expressed." The design of the institution acknowledges the social diversity within the United States and understands that the history of civil rights is a shared history. Therefore, the design is cognizant that the use of cultural stereotypes would construct a feeling of "otherness" and the false representation that the history of civil rights is mutually exclusive. The focus on spatial experience enables the user to construct their own identity and understanding. Consequently, the complex historical and social relationship between experience and the individual users informs a relative subjectivity, thus providing a platform for contestation and/or reconciliation. [53] However, it is important to note that by creating a strong sense of place the building tends to

[52] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity*. 114-117

[53] Gallagher, Victoria. 1999. "Memory and Reconciliation in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute." *Johns Hopkins University Press*, Rhetoric & Public Affairs, 2 (2): 303–2320.

define and constrain both the tragedy of the Birmingham bombing and the African-American experience. By appropriating the spatial order of the dominant culture, the building does not show the tension and duality black experience.
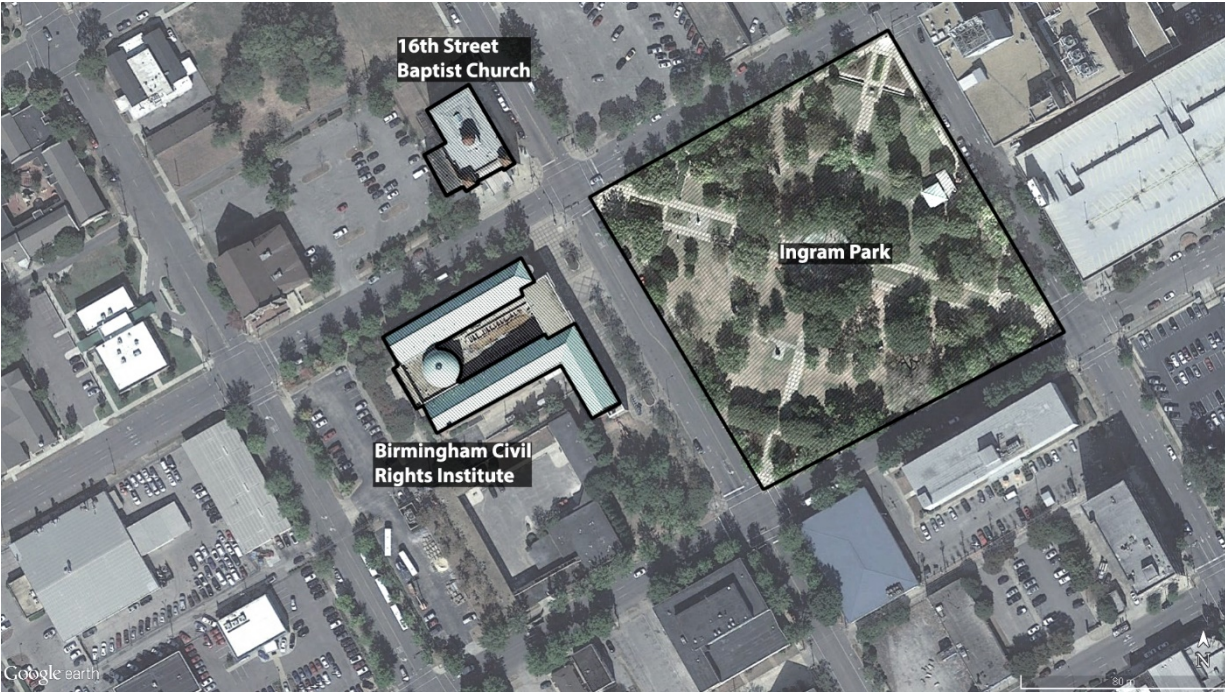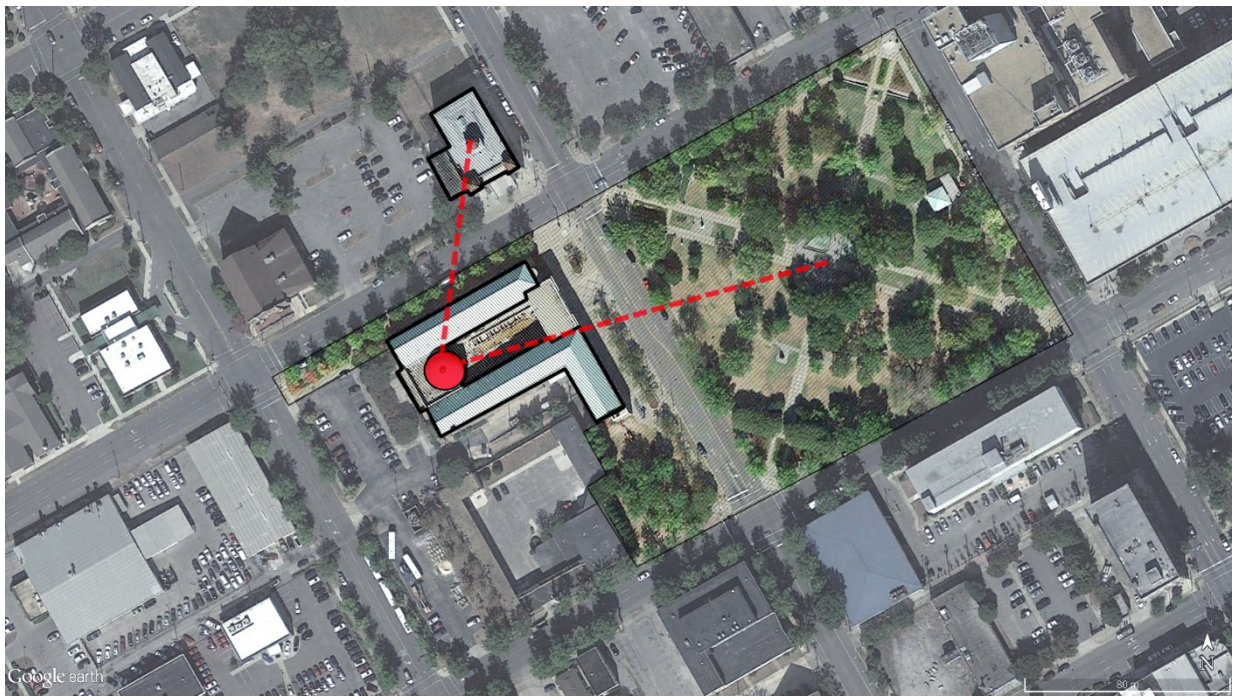

Figure 2:4 Birmingham Civil Rights Institute surrounding site context
(Source: Author via Google Maps)

Figure 2:5 Diagram of Ingram Park public realm extension
(Source: Author via Google Maps)
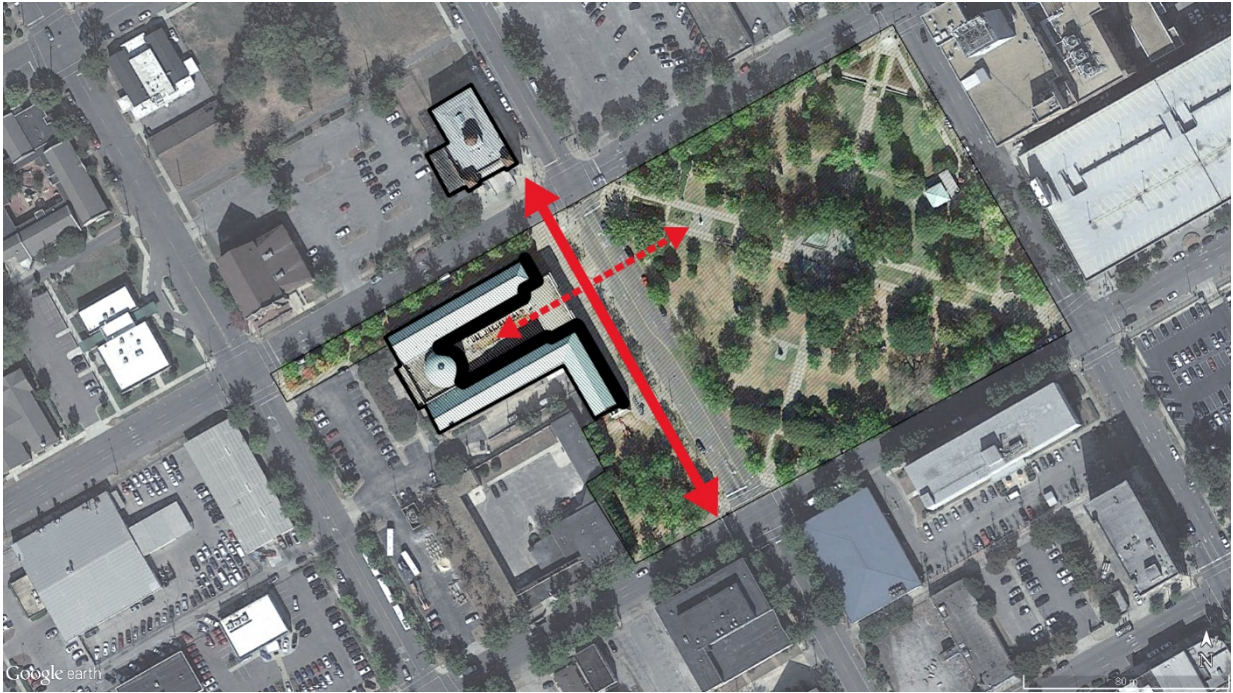
*Figure 2:4 Diagram of cross axial relationship between 16th Street Baptist Church and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute
(Source: Author via Google Maps)*

*Figure 2:5 Diagram of strategic views from the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute dome
(Source: Author via Google Maps)*

Integrating and Spatializing Politics

The Southern Poverty Law Center is the headquarters of the non-profit legal advocacy firm that specializes in civil rights and public interest litigation. Situated in Montgomery, Alabama the law center established its presence towards the end of the civil rights movement and achieved notoriety for its successful legal action against white supremacy groups and segregationist legislations. The law center is located within a cultural and historically significant landscape that includes the Alabama Supreme Court, the State Capitol building, Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, and the site of the civil rights memorial. The city of Montgomery has been labeled the "Cradle of the Confederacy" and the "Birthplace of Civil Rights," adding to its contentious layered historical and cultural significance. Consequently, because of the law center's involvement in high-profile civil rights litigation its previous headquarters, legal staff, and volunteers have been victims of numerous racially charged attacks.

The contextual awareness of the law center's design recognizes the significance of the site in relation to the work being produced by the law center. Therefore, the building seeks to use its surrounding context to reinforce the issue of civil rights and while courageously asserting the law center's socio-political presence. The building's position towards the rear of the site creates an entry plaza that is elevated along the street level in order to provide unobstructed views towards the Civil Rights Memorial and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. first began publicly preaching. The facades of the building highlight strategic

34

views from inside of the building to emphasize the building's political relationship with the surrounding context. There is no public gathering component within or outside of the building. Therefore the design engages the public in a socio-political dialogue from a distance. The south façade fronting the Civil Rights Memorial is clad with stainless steel panels to reflect the color of the sky and provide a neutral backdrop for the memorial. The southern elevation is meant to be "a closed façade, somber and reflective." The few openings along the façade are strategically positioned to frame selective views toward the memorial as a gesture of solidarity with its surrounding context. The northern elevation, however, was designed to be contrasted distinctly with its southern counterpart. The entire glass façade rises high above the surrounding buildings to be "open and lively and about the daily ongoing work of the Center."[54]

The design of the law center provides a presence in a way that conveys its political presence and cultural confidence. The design is well detailed and does not shy away from bold architectural moves to underscore the law center's mission. Within the politically contentious urban landscape of Montgomery, the design of the law center positions itself as a permanent institution that commands the resources to represent its identity, political, and cultural position through architectural design. The design of the Southern Poverty Law Center understands these positions and uses architecture to spatialize its political presence.

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[54] Findley, Lisa. 2005. "Building Presence: The Southern Poverty Law Center." *Building Change: Architecture, Politics, and Cultural Agency*, 161–191.

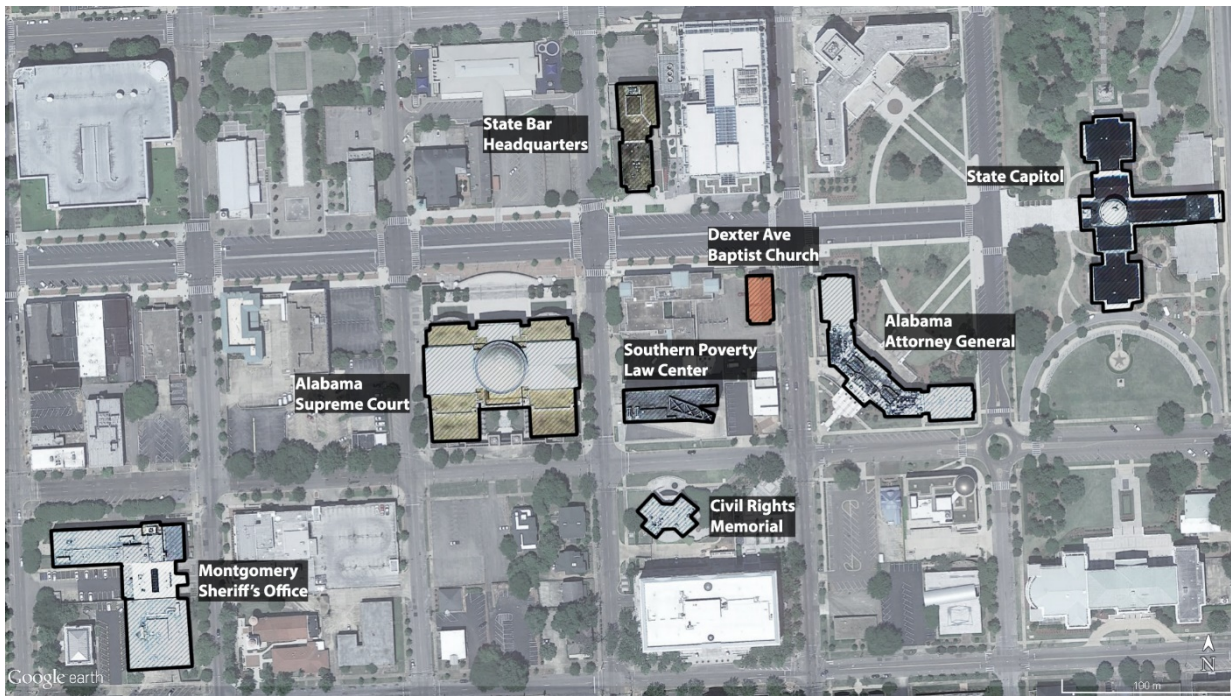*Figure 2:6 Southern Poverty Law Center site context and building adjacencies*
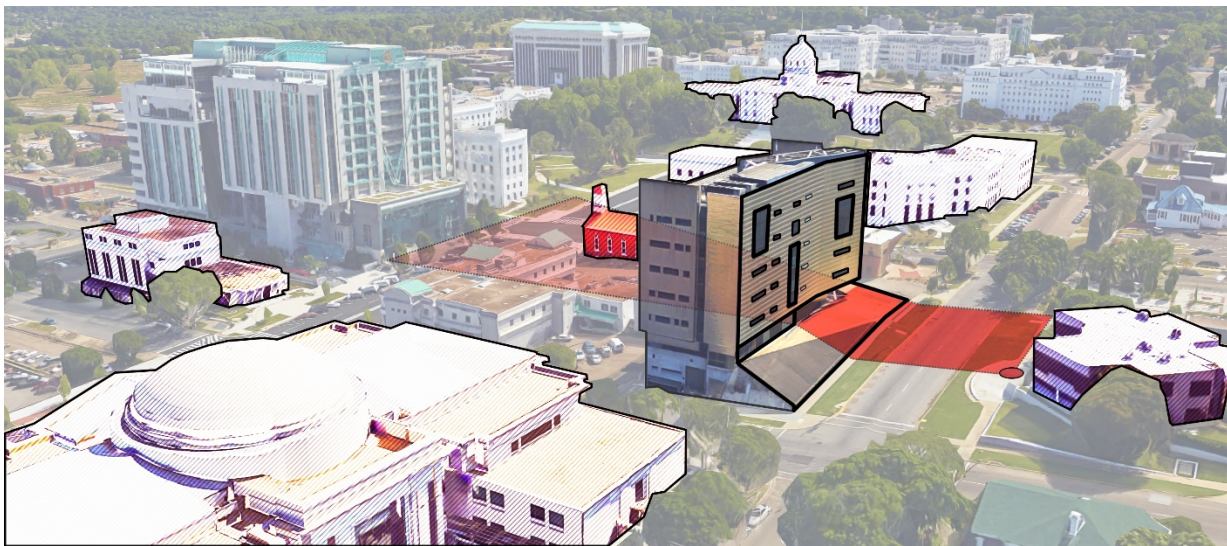*(Source: Author via Google Maps)*

Figure 2:8 Diagram of the law center elevated to preserve views between the Civil Rights Memorial and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
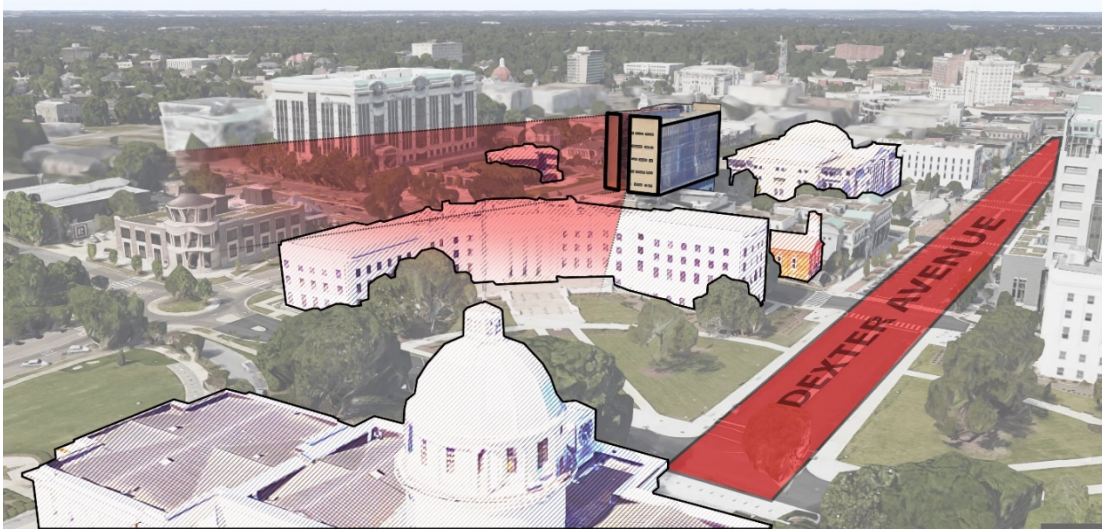*(Source: Author via Google Maps)*

Figure 2:9 Diagram of the law center's presence along Dexter Avenue
(Source: Author via Google Maps)

Conclusion

Although the design of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Southern Poverty Law Center do not necessarily rely on myths in the same way as the National Museum of African American History and Culture to construct identity, both buildings rely on a sense of place through the reference of a hegemony of order, axis, and foci. Therefore, each building's spatial definition can only be understood through the predetermined boundaries prescribed by the dominant culture. In the Southern Poverty Law Center, the symbols in the landscape is coalesced by the organization of the building attempting to construct a meaning out of the disparate parts that is a coherent whole. As a result, signification prevails over space and there is an emphasis on representation as opposed to experience.

Neither building spatializes the tension, or the divided identity of the black experience. The buildings simply attempt to organize the dynamics of the

37

surrounding context through itself by being a mere assemblage of pieces. This is not necessarily a strategy that is wrong or ineffective, however, as argued by this thesis it does not put the various pieces in a dynamic tension that is reflective of an identity that is indeterminant, divided, and therefore cannot be resolved. Instead, each building merely acknowledges its spatial relationship and proximity rather than spatializing the tension of an unresolved identity. This thesis argues that another approach, one that might more accurately reflect the complex duality of black identity is that of a spatial order which reflects the unresolved tension and indeterminant nature of the black experience.

Chapter 3: Site

Site Selection Criteria

In order to disrupt the mythological boundaries of a purified community and to explore the potential for space to be read as an expression of cultural communication, an ideal site would be between two very distinct and economically segregated communities. Additionally, selecting a site that was an urban design response to racially fueled riots will offer an opportunity to critique the economic, social, and design decisions that created the homogenous communities which oppose one another. Therefore, evaluating the site's history, existing cultural framework, and adjacency to economic diversity were the three main criteria for selecting a site for this study.
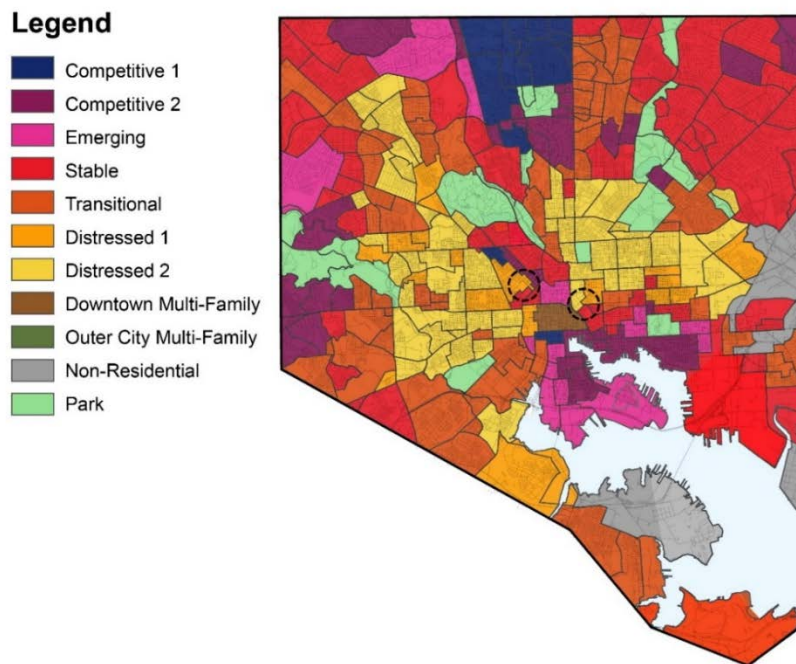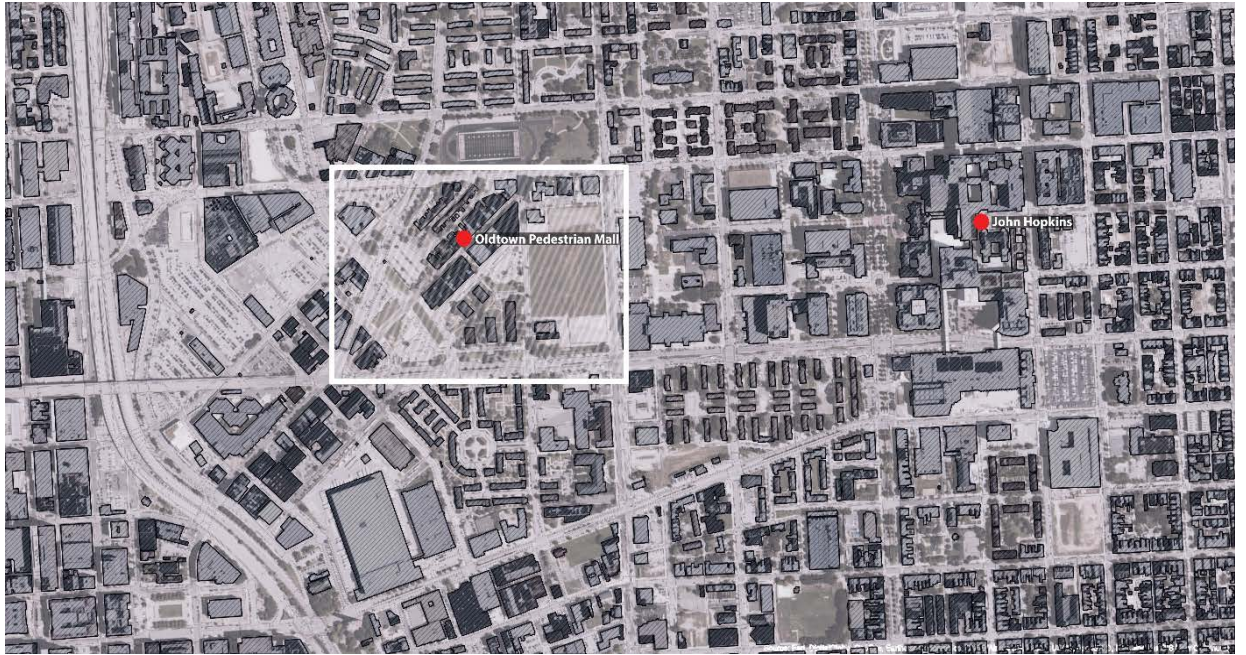

Figure 3:1 Economic Opportunity Map of Baltimore which contributed to the selection of a site with the potential for economic diversity
(Source: Image reproduced by Author via Business Insider)

Figure 3:2 Aerial image of Oldtown Baltimore
(Source: Author)

Figure 3:3 Overlay of 1880 Sanborn Map on present day Figure Ground of Baltimore
(Source: Author)

East Baltimore and The Disparity Between two Neighbors

Located east of city hall, and in between the Jones Fall Expressway and the Johns Hopkins Medical Campus, the Oldtown neighborhood of Baltimore was one of the three original settlements adjacent to the inner harbor. The early history of the neighborhood was that of a thriving urban marketplace surrounded by ethnically diverse middle-class residences. Its orientation towards the Fallsway River and proximity to downtown made it an ideal location for residents to live and work in the city. As the inner city began to decline and the notion of living in the suburbs became increasingly popular, Oldtown underwent a major shift demographically. The neighborhood transitioned from an economically diverse middle-class residential area to a majority black population, and Gay Street, a central artery through the area, became an important thoroughfare providing vehicular access between downtown and the suburban communities northeast of the city. Thus, because of this connection, Gay Street became a vibrant commercial corridor and market area supporting the surrounding black community.[55]

By 1961 Jones Falls Expressway was constructed over the Fallsway River providing faster and more direct access to the outlying suburban communities. Following the conclusion of World War II, the original urban grid was compromised and redeveloped into public housing superblocks following the urban paradigm of the time. With its large concentration of public housing and more competitive retail developments along the perimeter of the city, Gay Street was no longer a thriving shopping destination, and

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[55] The City of Baltimore Planning Department. 2010. "Oldtown Redevelopment Plan: Baltimore, Maryland.

the neighborhood rapidly declined. As an urban planning response to the riots of 1968, and in conjunction with the city's "Blight Elimination" and "Urban Renewal" projects, a portion of Gay Street was closed off to create a pedestrian mall. The newly constructed Old Town Mall was lined with brick pavers and developed to provide discount goods and services to the surrounding community and the large concentration of newly constructed public housing.

The Oldtown Mall development received high praise from the news media and government officials across the country. One newspaper article stated, "good things are happening in Oldtown…as business activities increase, so may upward mobility."[56] For a period of approximately 10 years, the Oldtown Mall became a center of activity and commerce for the surrounding community. However, the high unemployment rate persisted as did the large concentration of poverty in the area. Therefore, the community was unable to support the local businesses, and the mall fell into disrepair. As described by Paul Jargowsky, public policy and urban design solutions that responded to the blight of the inner city neglected to acknowledge the underlying circumstances by which such neighborhoods conditions are created. "Policies such as empowerment zones and community economic development are based on the premise that something is wrong with individual neighborhoods." Thus, these neighborhood-level interventions although well intended are misunderstood as the "fix" to the

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[56] Hubert-Allen, Olivia. 2012. "Nothing New with Old Town Mall." *The Baltimore Sun*, September 27.

problem. When in reality urban renewal projects, such as the Oldtown Mall perpetrate economically segregated communities that result in fragmented urban blocks. [57]

Disconnected Grid

The Oldtown Mall is situated in an urban valley between an elevated freeway to the east and a global institution to the west. Oldtown was one of the original settlements along the Fallsway River, and its orientation toward the river, contributes to its unique orientation and grid structure. Before the construction of the elevated freeway, Gay Street, which ran diagonally through the neighborhood served as the main artery feeding vehicular traffic from downtown to the outlying suburban communities on the edge of the city. The construction of the Jones Fall Expressway (I-83) and a large concentration of public housing disrupted the original urban framework of the neighborhood. The development of the Oldtown Pedestrian Mall further disconnected the neighborhood from downtown by closing Gay Street to traffic. The Jones Fall Expressway diverted vehicular traffic and commercial activity from the area. Additionally, the elevated freeway served as a physical barrier dividing Oldtown from downtown and prominent Baltimore neighborhoods such as Mount Vernon. In addition, the expressway became an effective barrier and limited vehicular and pedestrian access to Oldtown, further isolating the area.

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[57] Rowman & Littlefield, *Locked in the Poorhouse, 91-92*

Directly to the east of the Jones Fall Expressway are properties zoned for light industrial use. Therefore, the parcels in between the Oldtown Mall and the Jones Fall Expressway are large lots with impervious surfaces containing light industrial uses. The large industrial complexes further disrupt the original urban framework that connected Oldtown to the Fallsway River and downtown. The big box industrial complexes create a kind of no man's land between downtown and the Oldtown Mall reinforcing the barrier of the Jones Fall Expressway
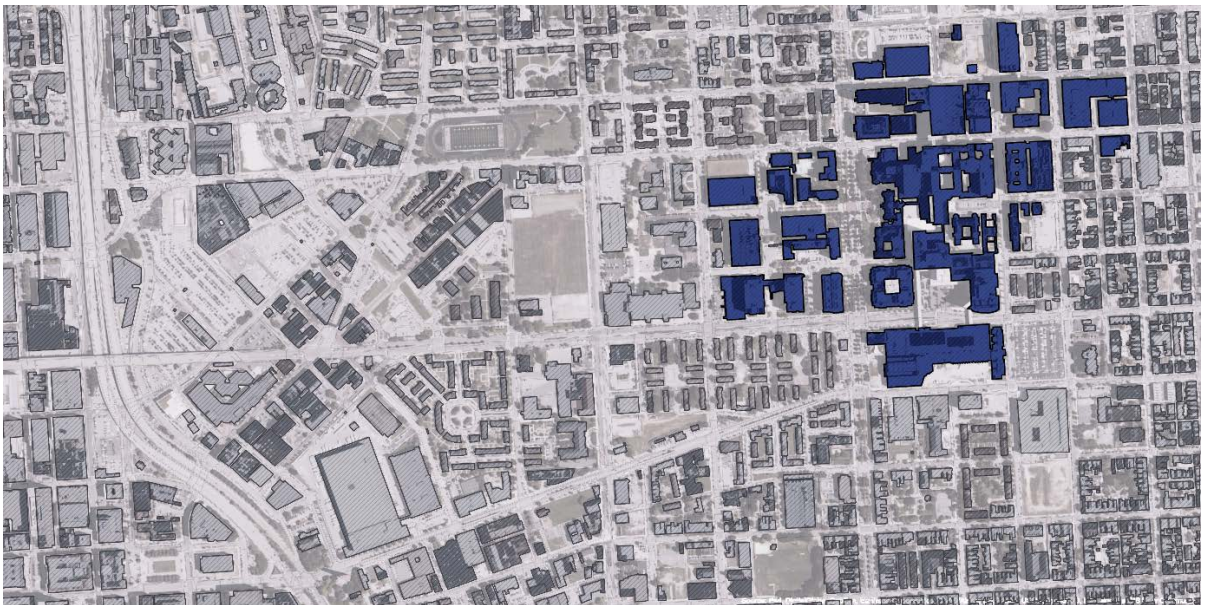

Figure 3:4 Diagram highlighting Johns Hopkins
(Source: Author)

Figure 3:5 Diagram highlighting Jones Falls Expressway
(Source: Author)

Figure 3:6 Diagram highlighting disconnected North/South street grids
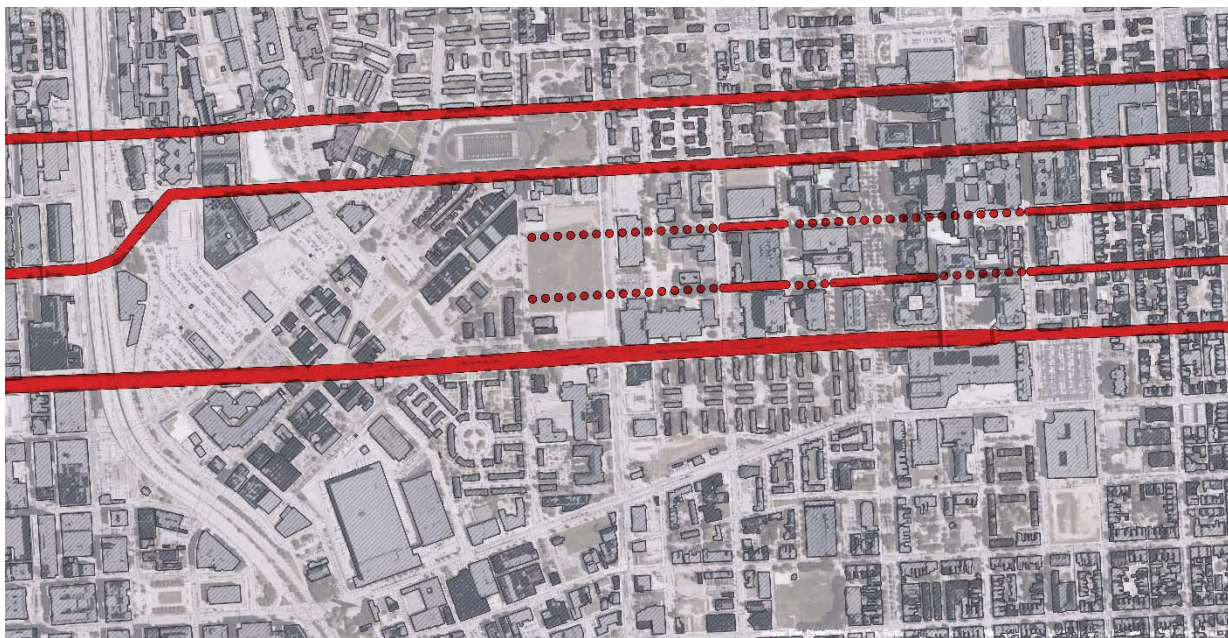(Source: Author)

Figure 3:7 Diagram highlighting disconnected East/West street grids
(Source: Author)

The Duality between a Global Institution and its Neighbors

The Oldtown neighborhood sits in the shadow of the Johns Hopkins Medical Institution situated directly east of the site. Johns Hopkins is one of the state's largest employers and an economic powerhouse for the city of Baltimore. However, the development of what is now the Hopkins campus has created a boundary around the perimeter of the campus separating its campus from the Oldtown community, particularly on Orleans Street (Rt. 40). Orleans Street is the main thoroughfare that crosses over the Jones Falls Expressway in the east-west direction separating Douglas Homes, and Pleasant View Gardens, public housing, and a Hope IV redeveloped community, from the medical campus. Aside from the hospital, none of the buildings on the Johns Hopkins Campus entrances open up onto Orleans Street. Instead, the buildings appear to neglect their adjacency to a main arterial street treating Orleans Street as a service corridor. Therefore, in order to enter into these buildings, individuals are directed into the interior of the campus, its buildings acting as walls seemingly erected to separate Hopkins from

46

the surrounding community. As suggested by Marisela Gomez, Johns Hopkins created a perception of separation between its institution and the surrounding community. Justifying its separation by "setting up" the surrounding community to appear as evildoers, and itself as the saviors increasing the separation between its neighbors. [58]
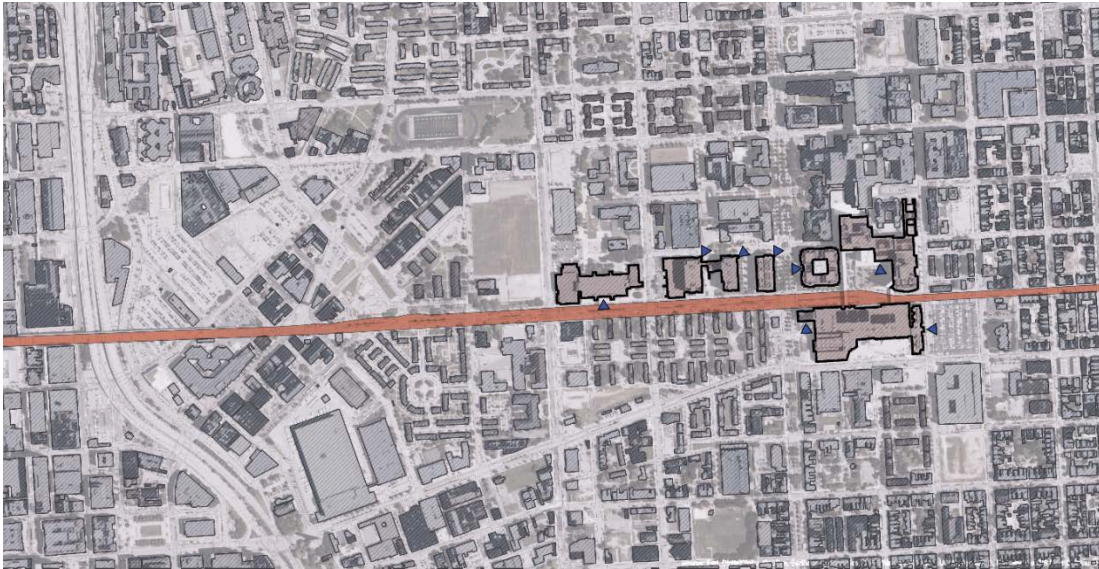

Figure 3:8 Diagram highlighting major building entrances along Orleans Street (Rt. 40)
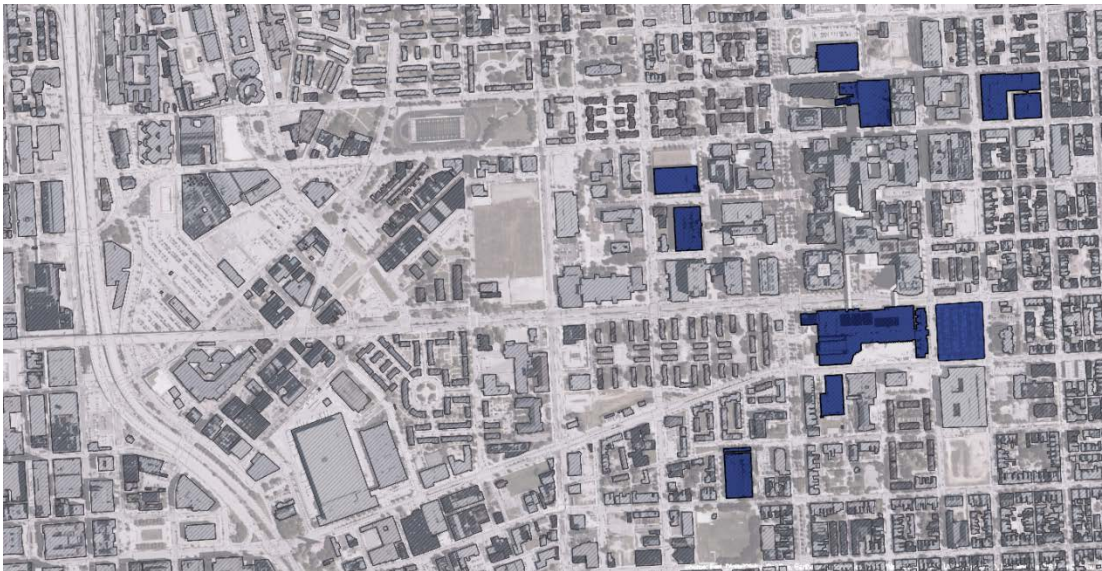(Source: Author)

Figure 3:9 Diagram highlighting area parking garages
(Source: Author)

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[58] Gomez, Marisela B.. Race, Class, Power, and Organizing in East Baltimore: Rebuilding Abandoned Communities in America. Blue Ridge Summit, US: Lexington Books, 2012, 15

Reinforcing the boundary around the perimeter of the campus, Johns Hopkins situated parking garages, often in pairs along the edges. These large structures do not engage the street, and they act as large urban walls disrupting sightlines and pedestrian access to the center of campus. Once on the campus of Johns Hopkins, pedestrians are not encouraged to circulate outside of the perimeter walls. Visitors to the campus often arrive by vehicle, park at one of the parking garages along the edge of campus, and only circulate within the campus throughout the duration of their stay. Those who arrive by foot, are overwhelmingly students who usually originates from the neighborhoods to the west or south of campus. These neighborhoods have more cohesive, walkable urban fabrics and lower poverty rates than Oldtown.
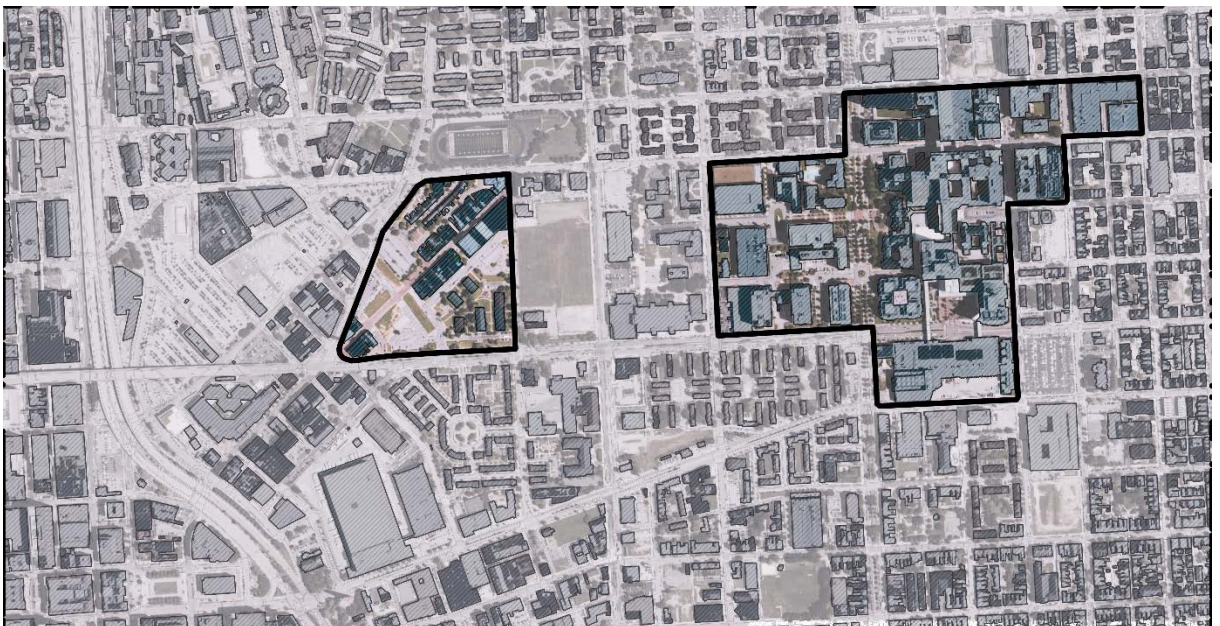

Figure 3:10 Diagram highlighting the two divided areas of Oldtown and Johns Hopkins
(Source: Author)

History of a Divided City: Two Worlds Separate and Unequal

The findings of a 1968 study by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders titled the Kerner Commission stated, "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal."[59] Baltimore is a city that is not an exception to the stark findings of the Kerner Commission. In fact, Baltimore's history of dividing neighborhoods along the color line is extensive and was pioneered through the implementation of policy and legal instruments to create two contrasting and completely separate worlds.

Throughout the duration of the Civil War, Maryland was considered to be a border state between the Union and the Confederacy. Although Maryland opted for allegiance with the Union, the state's ideologies were much more in line with that of the Confederate states. Many Maryland voters urged the state's legislators to declare secession from the Union. However, the governor was reluctant to convene the General Assembly. Maryland's compromised geographic position relative to its proximity to Washington D.C. heightened the increased presence of Union soldiers in Baltimore with their cannons aimed towards city hall from the top of Federal Hill. Consequently, the General Assembly eventually organized to vote against secession. The Union's victory in the Civil War ended slavery but did very little to change Maryland's empathy or enmity towards former slaves. A position best exemplified in 1899 when Baltimore

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[59] Rowman & Littlefield, *Locked in the Poorhouse, 1*

Democrats ushered in a political campaign under the slogan "This is a white man's city."[60]

At the conclusion of the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War a demographic shift occurred dramatically changing the racial landscape of Northern American cities. The Great Migration was the mass exodus of black Americans from the rural south to dense urban cities in the north in search of economic opportunity and relief from the racial tensions of former slaveholding states. Particularly in Baltimore, a major shipping, and manufacturing city during the 19th century, the population increased significantly due to the Great Migration. Between 1880 and 1910, Baltimore's population nearly doubled in size to 558,485 residents, 88,065 of whom were black. *The Baltimore Sun,* a prominent and highly influential newspaper printed a warning that the city was under a "negro invasion."[61]

Living Along the Color Line

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 declared that anyone born in the United States was to be considered citizens without regard to race, color, whether previously enslaved or free. This made it unconstitutional to deny blacks the same property rights enjoyed by white citizens. However, the 1896 Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* made it legal to separate citizens based on race under the doctrine "separate but equal." That

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[60] Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood*. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee., 26-27
[61] Pietila, Antero. *Not in My Neighborhood, 6-9*

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landmark ruling gave birth to legal segregation, and for Baltimore, this became an instrument by which to maintain a racially separated city. On December 9, 1910, Baltimore's City Council introduced the Residential Segregation Bill. The drafters of the Bill concluded that the presence of African Americans in white neighborhoods compromised stability and property values. Prior to Baltimore's innovative use of government legislation, blacks were expelled from all white neighborhoods through the use of force and violence. Baltimore's Residential Segregation Bill achieved systematic neighborhood segregation setting a new precedent that other municipalities later followed.[62]

Although in 1917 the Supreme Court case *Buchanan v. Warley* held that government ordinances that prohibit the sale of property based on race violated the Fourteenth Amendment, Baltimore neighborhood division along the color line had already been established. As articulated by Antero Pietila, Fulton Avenue had existed as the city's racial demarcating line for approximately 30 years after the Supreme Court's ruling that found it unconstitutional to establish legal doctrine prohibiting the transaction of real estate to black residents. Fulton Avenue was originally designed as a romantic boulevard with a central manicured linear green space, lined with prestigious Victorian style rowhomes along the street edge. For nearly three decades black families lived on the east side of Fulton Avenue, and white families resided on the west side. It was not until 1944 that the "color line" had finally been broken when a black family purchased a rowhome on the west side of Fulton Avenue. However, Fulton Avenue serves as a

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[62] Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood, 21-23*

prime example of the highly divided, and racially segregated neighborhoods of Baltimore prompted by the short-lived, but highly effective Residential Segregation Bill of 1910.[63]

Economic Segregation

In 1945 the Supreme Court ruling in Shelly v. Kraemer found it unconstitutional to deny real estate transactions based on race, in which they ruled that separate was not equal and barred the use of legal instruments that promoted the racial segregation of neighborhoods. Legal efforts to actively deny blacks the right to access all white neighborhoods were thwarted in court. However, while these actions were being played out on a national stage, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) was initiating a process that furthered the divide between black and white spaces at a physical and economic level.

In 1937 while the country was in the midst of the Great Depression, HOLC began the process of mapping the investment potential of 239 cities. The "Residential Security Maps" divided neighborhoods into various categories classifying the investment risk of each neighborhood with the intention of uncovering high-risk areas that could potentially expose the federal government as well as other lending institutions to risky loans. The various categories were primarily based on existing housing conditions. However, race, class, ethnicity, religion and the homogeneity of the neighbors were

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[63] Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood, 89-90*

highly influential considerations in the categorization process. Neighborhoods outlined in red were deemed to be hazardous with a low investment opportunity. The consequence was to prevent lending institutions from issuing mortgages within the neighborhood boundaries unless accompanied by astronomically high-interest rates and fees. This mapping process became known as redlining and was conducted with little to no public knowledge and added a new dimension to racial segregation and economic discrimination.[64]

In Baltimore, HOLC 1937 Residential Security Map of the city denoted the areas to the east, west, and south of downtown as being low-grade high-risk investment areas. As a result, communities in east and west Baltimore were denied neighborhood services and became increasingly disinvested with a high concentration of poverty and public housing. Although, prior to the redlining maps financial intuitions already used discriminatory lending practices, HOLC efforts institutionalized economic segregation by "categorizing mortgages according to their risk levels and encouraging private lenders who wanted insurance for their mortgages to do the same."[65]

Reminiscent of HOLC 1937 Neighborhood Security Maps, a 2012 analysis conducted by The Reinvestment Fund in the city of Baltimore concluded that, as opposed to government allocating funds to reinvest in deprived neighborhoods, the market should do a lot of the "heavy lifting." The study produced a map that identified the markets

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[64] Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood, 61-62*
[65] Pietila, Antero. 2010. *Not in My Neighborhood, 73*

with the best investment opportunities. Therefore, developers could identify neighborhoods with the most potential to avoid throwing "a bunch of money right into the middle of a war zone."[66] A conclusion that is problematic, in particular for Oldtown, because despite its adjacency to Johns Hopkins and proximity to downtown, it has been identified as a neighborhood that is "distressed." Consequently, despite the city's effort for more than a decade it has failed to attract a major grocery store and major investors into the area to address the issue of poor walkability and limited access to fresh foods.[67] The maps and commentary drawn from the analysis conducted by The Reinvestment Fund perpetuate attitudes towards neighborhood investment that create disinvestment and economic disparity influenced by the process of "redlining," increasing the socioeconomic instability of communities such as Oldtown Baltimore.

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[66] Yeebo, Yepoka. 2012. "Baltimore Decides Some Neighborhoods Just Aren't Worth Saving." *Business Insider*, January 24. http://www.businessinsider.com/baltimore-has-decided-some-neighborhoods-just-arent-worth-savin

[67] Hubert-Allen, Olivia. 2012. "Nothing New with Old Town Mall."

Chapter 4: Proposed Community Programs

Thus far this thesis has identified the creation of clearly defined boundaries separating the Johns Hopkins Medical campus from the surrounding neighborhood. The establishment of these boundaries has created two distinct and economically separated communities. This thesis argues that in order to establish continuity between the two divided spaces, it is essential to dissolve the perceived boundaries through a heightened sense of ambiguity, distilling the perceived confines separating "us" from "them" by inserting a spatial uncertainty so significant that simple differences is thwarted. Therefore, in order to achieve the stated objective, this thesis has identified several potential programs for the site which can be read as space traditionally "belonging" to the medical campus, or spaces that have historical had cultural significance within the black community. This thesis argues that by creating continuity between these distinct spaces, it will increase the sense of continuity between two opposing communities while spatializing political, socioeconomic, and historical relationships as instruments of subjectiveness.

HopkinsLocal

The 2015 death of Freddie Grey and the subsequent violent protest highlighted the economic disparities between divided communities in Baltimore. The HopkinsLocal initiative, which was established in response to the riots will seek to enhance local economic growth and employment opportunities. As the city of Baltimore's largest private anchor institution, the Johns Hopkins initiative is a commitment to invest in the

economic and social health of its surrounding community.[68] This thesis argues that historically, the reinforced boundary between Johns Hopkins and the surrounding community has worked to divide and separate the neighborhood of Oldtown from the Johns Hopkins medical campus both economically and socially. Therefore, the HopkinsLocal initiative is a commitment to leverage the institution's economic power to expand opportunities for local minority-owned businesses, create construction opportunities, and expand job training programs for local residents. This thesis will adapt and mold the existing HopkinsLocal initiative to suggest investment opportunities for the surrounding community and dissolve the clearly defined boundaries surrounding the medical campus. By inserting programmatic elements from both communities into a new space that disrupts divisions through the construction of orchestrated ambiguity – a continuous threshold condition will be constructed that does not resolve the dichotomies that all meaning, including community identity, are predicated upon.

Social Determinants of Health: Rethinking the Healthcare Citadel

Aside from capitalizing on Johns Hopkins' economic stature, this thesis advocates that by decentralizing the Johns Hopkins medical campus and introducing affiliated healthcare facilities into the surrounding neighborhood, new opportunities to rethink the traditional healthcare citadel will be created. A 2012 study by the Johns Hopkins

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[68]Sherman, Natalie. 2015. "Hopkins Announces Local 'Build, Hire and Buy' Initiative." *The Baltimore Sun*, September 30.

Urban Institute of Health (JHU) has found that one of the most significant health trends in Baltimore over the last three decades has been the city's declining population and the impact the decline has had on the social infrastructure of Baltimore's neighborhoods. The same study cites the World Health Organization in stating that "health is more than the absence of illness," recognizing that issues related to the health and well-being of residents extend beyond the availability and effectiveness of healthcare providers, and considers the effects of social determinants of health to the communities overall well-being.[69]

Efforts to improve the health of a community have traditionally emphasized the importance of the effectiveness of the healthcare system as the key driver of health outcomes. However, Ivan Illiach argues the contrary, "for more than a century, analysis of disease trends has shown that the environment is the primary determinant of the state of general health of any population." Illiach further claims that access to healthy foods, fresh water, and fresh air in relationship to sociopolitical equality and cultural mechanisms are fundamental to maintaining a healthy population.[70] Emphasis on social determinants of health considers the community's relationship to "place," and the impact of "place" on health. In particular, it gives emphasis to preventative health measures by understanding a community's social welfare, access to education, access

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[69] Leaf, Philip. 2012. "Health & Well Being of Baltimore's Children, Youth and Families." Johns Hopkins UrbanHealth Institute

[70] Illich, Ivan. 1976. *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health.* New York, NY: Random House Inc.

to economic opportunities, availability of healthy foods, and opportunities to engage in healthy lifestyle activities.

Culturally Significant Spaces that Exhibit Timelessness: The Barbershop

Craig Barton argued that essential to the construction of identity in historically black communities was the visible and invisible boundaries which reinforced the division between black and white spaces. The navigation of these boundaries created politically and culturally significant spaces that enabled marginalized black communities to process the complex social and cultural geography of a divided American landscape. In which barbershops within black communities have remained uniquely fundamental to the development of black economic and political thought.[71]

Over the centuries, barbershops have evolved into spaces of free political thought, fellowship, and comradery. Although initially barred from serving black patrons, black barbers have been historically viewed as "political resources to black communities." Despite only engaging in business with white consumers throughout much of the 19th century, black barbers were thought to be important political avenues for the black community and equally vital to white politicians and public figures. As black-owned barbershops transitioned to being understood as "exclusively" black spaces,

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[71] Barton, Craig. 2001. *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*. 2-3

barbershops have become a symbol of African American entrepreneurship and cultural identity.[72]

In order to develop a project that can be read as a form of cultural communication and spatial expression devoid of reliance on "Africanism" abstractions, it is vital to understand the role of barbershops beyond the capitalistic exchange of goods and services. In her book *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET,* Melissa Harris-Lacewell describes barbershops as a community of choice, a place in which "black men can retreat into a racialized and gendered world where they are not the other." Therefore, barbershops functions as a space to proclaim an essentialized cultural identity, inherently ingrained in the production of black cultural identity and political thought. [73]

Cultural Recreation Center

The process of cultural communication is one that is not exclusively dependent to take place within a political context. This thesis argues that culture divides space and time as a means to communicate to others within society what is important, significant, and "natural." A process that depicts how differing cultural backgrounds communicate in ways that are similar and different, and the process of connecting across differing cultural boundaries. Mario Gooden argues that culture exists within the backdrop of historical and social contexts. Which, he adds, cannot be easily separated from

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[72] Oatman-Stanford. 2014. "Straight Razors and Social Justice: The Empowering Evolution of Black Barbershops." *Collectors Weekly*, May 30.

[73] Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. 2004. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press., 169-70

geography and time. Therefore the understanding of culture is synonymous with, or at least strongly related to, comprehending one's relationship to a particular place and time. Thus concluding culture cannot be essentialized to ethnic identity.[74]

However, it can be argued that within the process of cultural exchange, the concept of race is a major contributor. Melissa Harris-Lacewell describes race as a "social construct that adjusts through time and space." In particular, the definition of blackness in America is subject to constant redefinition by those who consider themselves to be within and outside of "black culture." Harris-Lacewell further argues that popular culture in the form of music, media, entertainment, and one can argue athletic performance, is a process that black Americans (among others) go through to create and define blackness. [75] The construction of cultural relationships is the amalgamation of the subjective experience and the objective intellectual product such as visual arts and music.[76] These forms of art are a production of synthesized subjectiveness, place, and time that facilitate cultural exchange and representation. Additionally, athletic achievements have historically created opportunities for racial inclusion and diverse cultural discourse. These are examples that, challenging the social construct of race by destroying the boundaries that reinforced myths of racial identity and cultural stereotypes.

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[74] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* New York, NY: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City. 12
[75] Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. 2004. *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET. 9-10*
[76] Gooden, Mario. 2016. *Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity.* 13

Chapter 5: The Project

The project for this thesis is not concerned with deploying superficial aesthetics to convey a sense of identity. This thesis argues that black identity in America is more sophisticated and complex. Therefore, this thesis wrestles with spatializing the duality of a divided identity, which as articulated by DuBois cannot be easily reconciled. Through architecture and urban design solutions, this thesis articulates the perceived simultaneity of space to create a sense of identity that is indeterminate. The first step in the design process was to interrogate the existing condition of the community to develop an urban design that responded to the needs of the community while spatializing the tensions of an unresolved identity. In doing so, this thesis analyzes the site at three different scales, the scale of the neighborhood, the intermediate scale of the spaces created through the urban design, and finally at the scale of the individual housing units.

Constructing Identity at the Scale of the Neighborhood

The urban design strategy was very careful in addressing the scale and density of the proposed buildings. Large-scale perimeter block development that resembled that of Johns Hopkins did not fit with the existing neighborhood economics and character of the community. The urban design plan is complete with low-rise multi-family residential housing, single-family row housing, duplex row housing, and a new community wellness center that is connected with Johns Hopkins that emphasize healthy lifestyle choices. Connected to the community wellness center

is an urban garden and community kitchen that fronts active green open spaces that serves as an amenity for the new and existing residents.

The first step in addressing the urban design strategy for the neighborhood was to remove existing buildings on site that were being underutilized and prevented east-west connections back towards Johns Hopkins. The second site strategy involved simplifying the existing road network, reintroducing vehicular traffic through Gay street, and reconnecting the street grid to Johns Hopkins.

The next site strategy required re-establishing the figural quality of Gay street and introducing low-rise residential buildings and a 36,000-square foot grocery which serves to re-energize Gay street. The next strategy took advantage of an existing vacant lot along Gay street to create an urban "seam" that would connect pedestrians from the newly proposed active green spaces and community gardens directly to Gay street. The new pedestrian connection would serve as connective tissue and programmable open space such as a pop-up farmers market. The proposed urban design was also very careful about the specific placement of certain programs and its ability to activate its adjacent open spaces such as placing the barbershop and convenience store across from the wellness center and the community garden plaza.
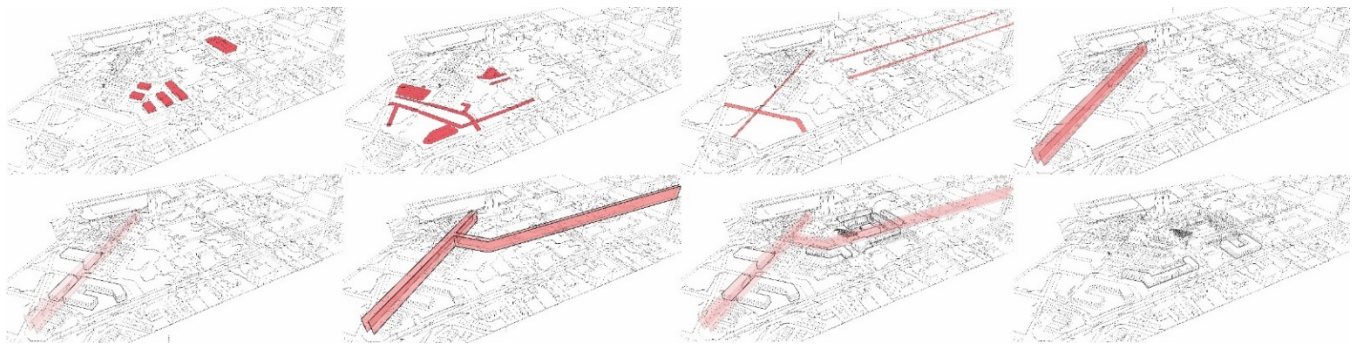
5:1 Site Strategy Diagrams illustrating the urban design decisions used to inform the proposed urban scheme
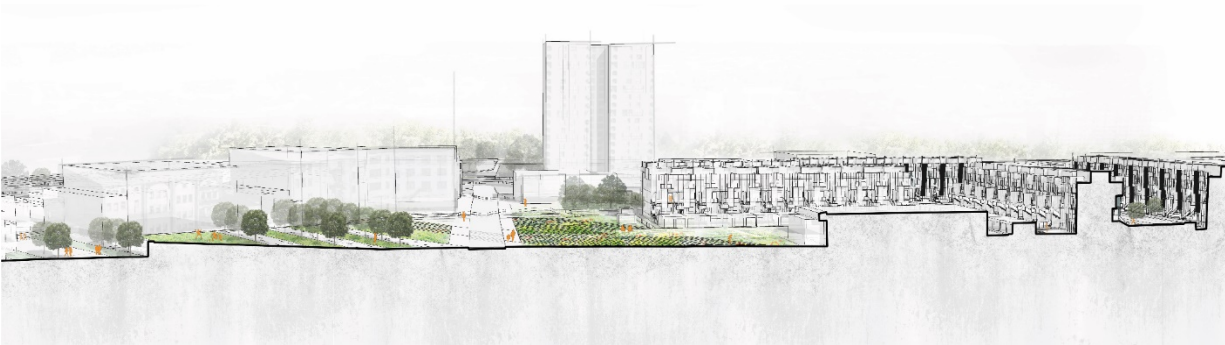
(Source: Author)
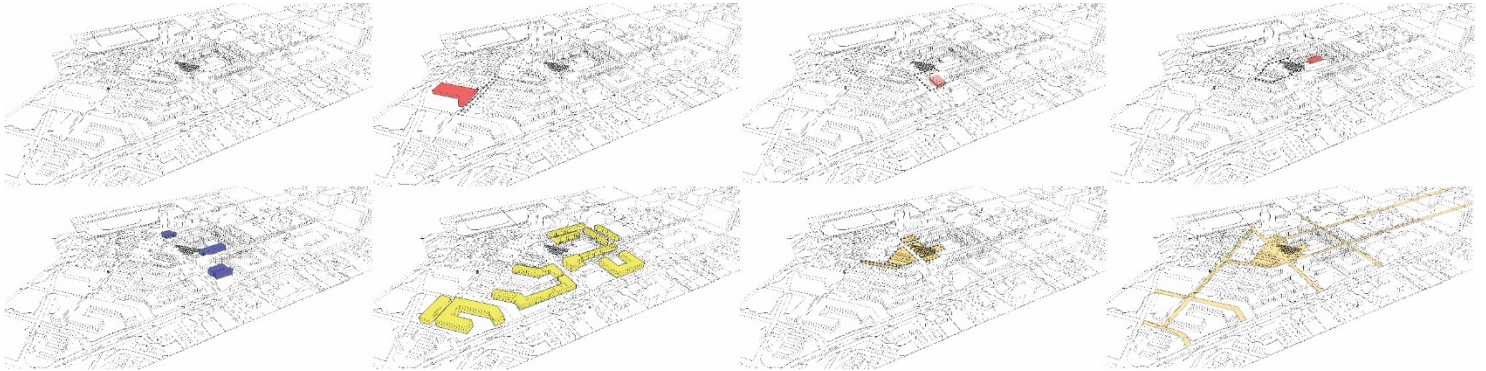
5:2 Urban Design diagram that highlights the strategic placement of programs to activate and connect the open spaces

(Source: Author)

5:3 Aerial showing the proposed site design overlooking the community garden and pedestrian alley emphasizing the continuation of the rotated grid of Gay street in the configuration of the trees and planting beds spatializing a unique urban grid that cannot be resolved such as an unresolved divided identity
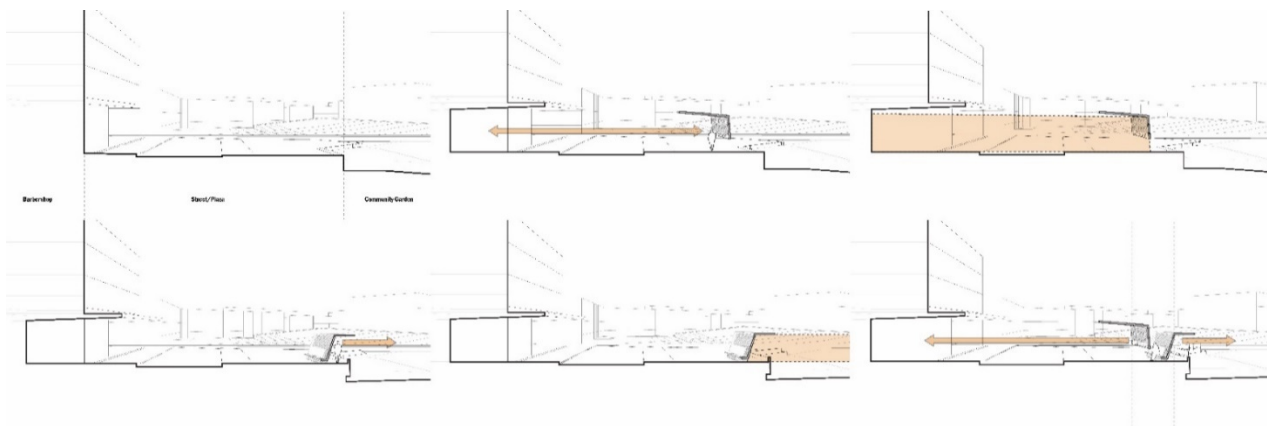
(Source: Author)

5:4 Site section through the community green space down toward the community gardens and community wellness center

(Source: Author)

The Intermediate Spaces: The Barbershop Plaza

The design of the barbershop plaza serves as a model that would inform the rest of the designed "moments" within the urban design scheme. The design of the plaza spatializes the sense of simultaneous relationships which references the complex duality of a divided identity as suggested by this thesis. The first step in the design process was to create a canopy over the plaza and the storefront of the barbershop. This canopy would serve as a shading device, but more importantly create a spatial relationship between the barbershop and the plaza. Thereby, creating a spatial


5:5 Diagram illustrating the process of creating a simultaneous spatial relationship between the barbershop, plaza, and community garden
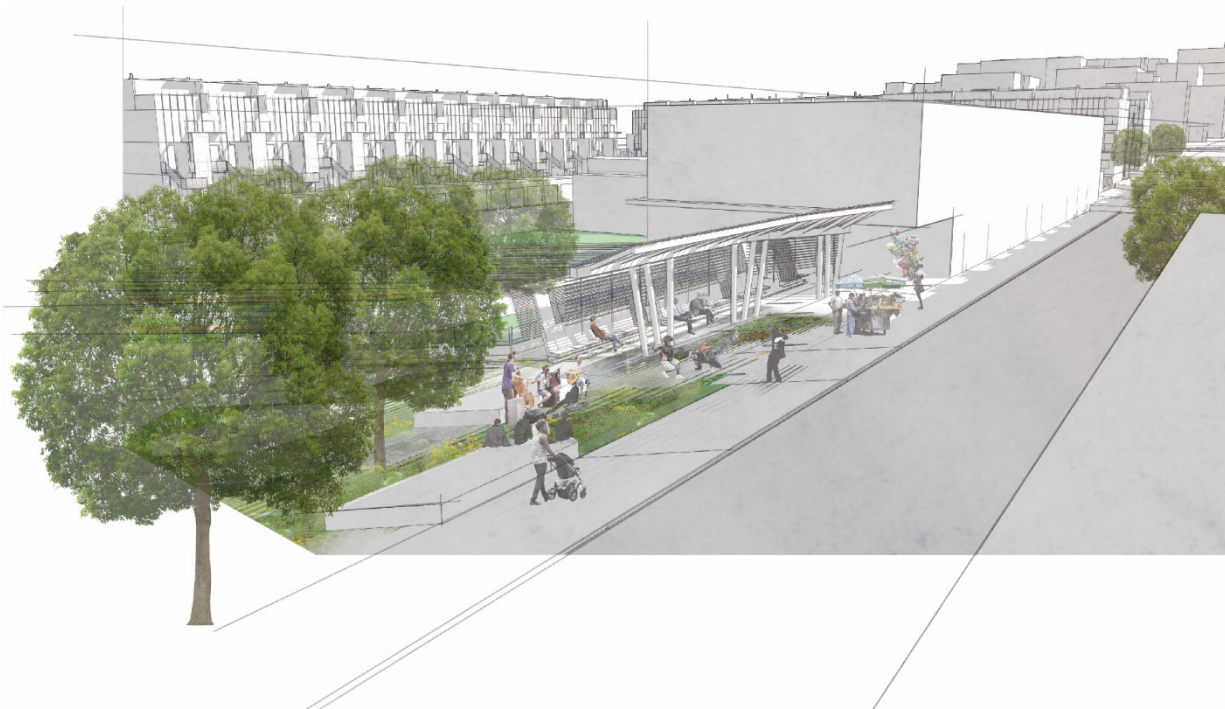
(Source: Author)

64

connection and relationship with the inhabitants of both the barbershop and the plaza across the street. The next step was to create a secondary shading device at a smaller scale that covers a walkway behind the plaza, which is adjacent to the community garden, while also folding down to create seating for the plaza. In doing so, a spatial relationship is created between the plaza and the community garden in a similar way the primary shading device creates a spatial relationship between the barbershop.

As a result, the point in which these two surfaces interact with one another is the point in which they share a simultaneous spatial relationship. In other words, the point of simultaneity is the point in which inhabitants in the plaza are simultaneously connected to the barbershop and the community gardens, but physically existing in neither. This spatial condition can be compared to the dual occupation of an American identity and black identity which many black American have equal access to but often feel divided between. Thus, the design of the plaza is spatializing the complex duality and dividedness of the black experience.
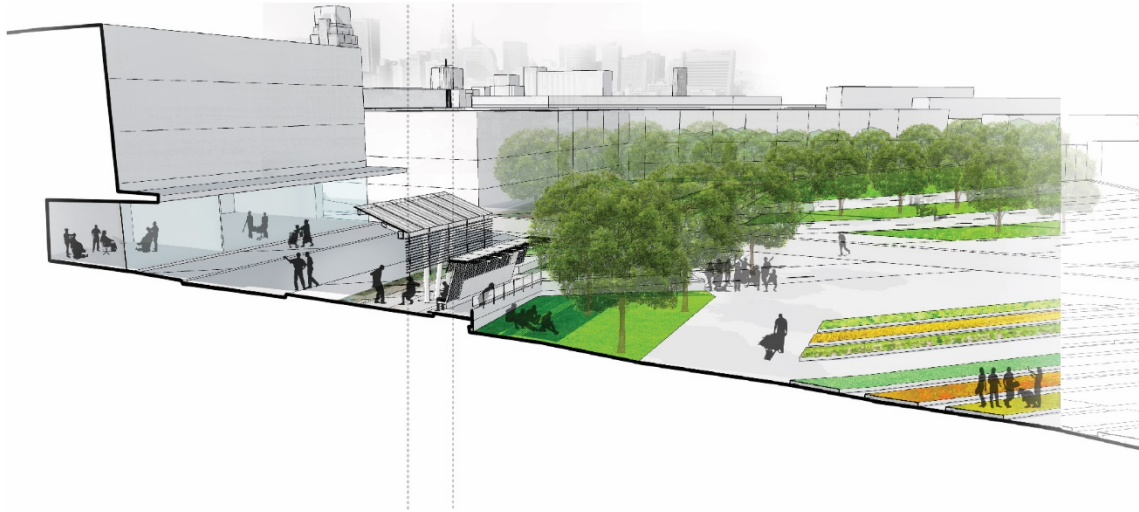
5:6 Section perspective illustrating the point of simultaneity between the barbershop and community garden

(Source: Author)


5:7 Aerial overlooking the Barbershop plaza

(Source: Author)

Constructing Identity at the Scale of the Row Home

Similar to the design of the plaza, the design of the duplex row home units also employed elements that spatialize the complexities and tensions of an identity that is divided. The initial approach to the row house design studied the basic anatomy of a row home to create a two-story unit that is functional and efficient regarding spatial configuration. The next step was to vertically duplicate the unit design to create a four-story duplex unit. Conscious of the height and scale of the urban design, all of the row homes are depressed four feet below grade creating the opportunity to design a stoop that provided access to both the upper unit and lower unit.

The stoop also provided an opportunity to design an ambiguous spatial relationship between neighboring residents and the public realm. The stairs leading to the upper unit is open to allow light and air to the lower entry court, while also emphasizing the spatial connection between the two units. The first step on the stair leading up is a landing which also becomes a bench for the sidewalk and entry court leading to the lower unit. This ambiguous relationship between the public and private realm is further heightened by the condition of the stoop that cannot. Does the first stair of the stoop function as vertical circulation space or a bench, and if it is a bench for seating which realm does the bench exist within, the public or private realm? It is

a spatial condition that is indeterminant and cannot be easily reconciled, which as argued by this thesis is a condition that defines black identity in America.
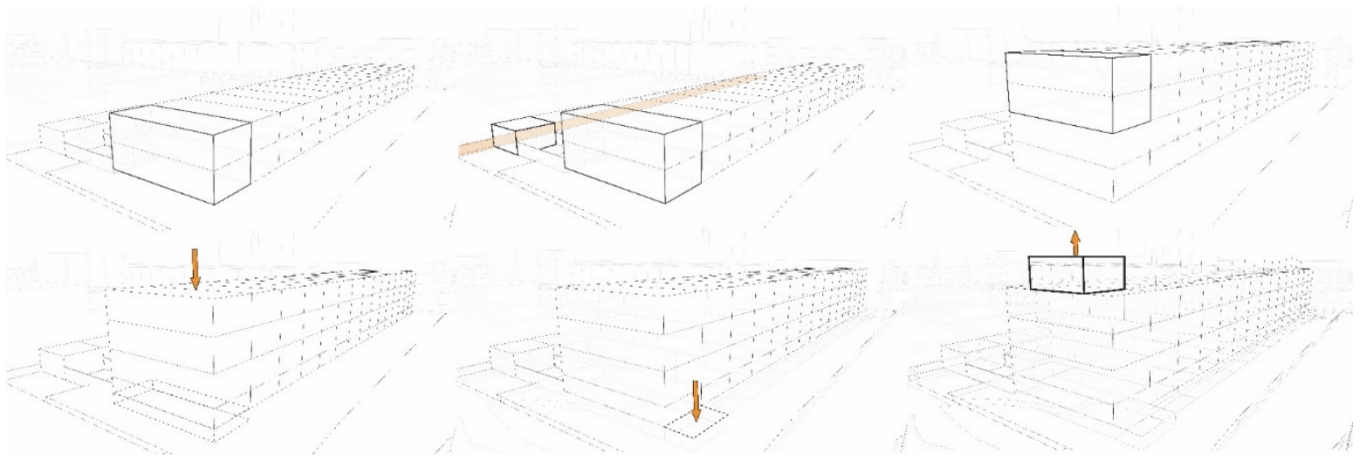

5:8 Diagram illustrating the basic anatomy of the row house design

(Source: Author)

The façade of the row house also served as an important design element that creates a sense of ambiguity between the public and private realm. The design of the façade emphasizes a visual connection to the exterior to maximize the amount of natural light received in the interior living spaces. Specific moments within the façade projects the private living spaces over the public realm, which functions to create moments of visual connections between the interior and exterior spaces. Other moments within the façade extrudes surfaces inward to carve out space to create a covered balcony that amplifies the ambiguous separation between the interior and exterior living spaces. Finally, the façade is enhanced through a series of layers that create depth in the façade while distorting the visual connection between the public and private spaces. Hence, the tension of a divided identity becomes spatialized

68

through the design of the row house which emphasizes the duality and dividedness between the public and private realm.
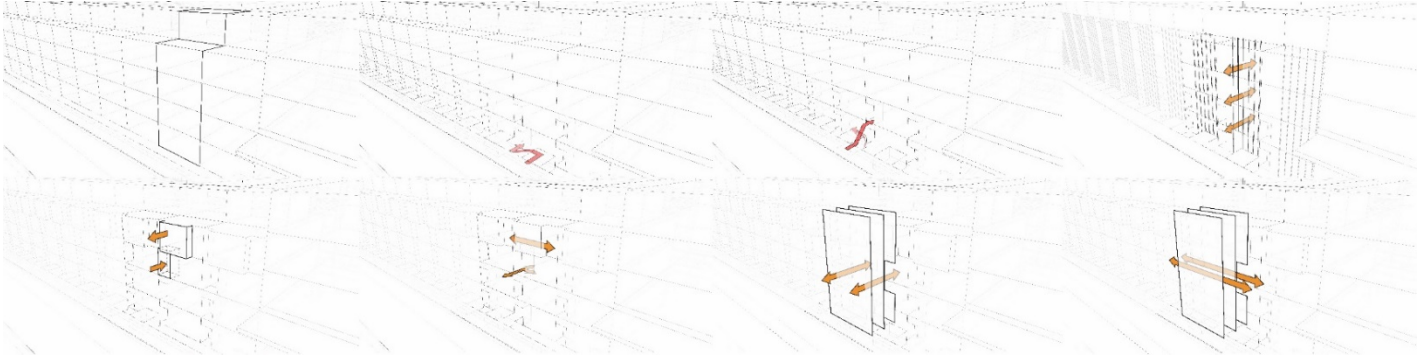
5:9 Diagram illustrating the process behind the design of the row house façade

(Source: Author)

5:10 Image illustrating the design of the row house stoops

(Source: Author)

5:11 Elevation of row house façade's

Source: Author

5:12 Longitudinal section through row house

Source: Author

5:13 Longitudinal section through row house

Source: Author

Chapter 6: Afterward

This thesis was initially conceived while reacting to the events of the Baltimore uprising unfold on tv before me. During this time, I had already applied and been accepted into graduate school for architecture. However, I was unsure whether I still wanted to pursue a career in architecture. My uncertainty did not stem from a lack of passion or motivation to further my architectural education. At that particular point in time, I would argue that I was more passionate about the field of architecture than I had ever been, but yet I was still unsure if I wanted to be an architect.

My uncertainty was rooted in the fact that I was facing my own identity crisis and internal struggle of what it meant for me to be a black architect. As an aspiring black architect, I could not comprehend what it meant for me to further my pursuit in a profession, that in many ways had been a contributor to the very conditions that Baltimore and Ferguson revolted against. I could not reconcile what it meant to be a black architect in the context of Baltimore, Ferguson, the death of Travon Martin, and many other similar occurrences. I was divided, and my dividedness prevented me from understanding my position within the field of architecture.

What this thesis has revealed to me is that the dividedness I experienced is just a product of being black in America, and because of the veil that exists I will most likely always be divided. However, this thesis has taught me that the dividedness I

feel is, in fact, okay and it does not devalue me as a person or an aspiring architect. In fact, this dividedness that I feel every day is empowering. It is empowering because the same dividedness and inability to reconcile a unified understanding of self, fueled the creation of jazz music, hip-hop culture, great works of literature, and art that transcended culture. Therefore, the same dividedness that I experienced which gave rise to the conception of this thesis, will also empower me to create great works of architecture. Architecture is more than form giving and space making, it has the ability to shape society and reposition one's understanding of self in relationship to place. This thesis has revealed to me a new understanding of what it means to be a black architect in America. It cannot be easily reconciled; it is that of someone who has a divided identity, but yet, it is also a source of great power.

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    Saving." *Business Insider*, http://www.businessinsider.com/baltimore-has-
    decided-some-neighborhoods-just-arent-worth-savin (accessed January 24,
    2017)