October 2017

City Planning Rhetorics and the Cultural Trope of Opportunity

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Abstract

Historians and sociologists have explored past and present processes of urban segregation, development, and displacement of minority and low income communities, and policy questions surrounding barriers to housing and the ways residents interact with community institutions. As communication scholars, we have a unique opportunity to
add critical insights regarding the cultural meaning making of urban planning discourses. This article asks: How do cultural assumptions embedded in the myth of American opportunity shape urban planning processes? I examine two city planning documents—*Detroit Future City* and *Connecting Cleveland 2020 Citywide Plan*—for the ways references to opportunity construct an optimistic understanding of urban potential while ignoring the complicated and controversial ways race is woven into urban planning and the arrangement of city spaces.
Specifically, I explore how references to the term "opportunity" appeal to cultural commonsense through associations with promise and possibility. These appeals gain persuasive traction through the term's tendency toward over-simplification, which acts conservatively to universalize the white male experience, beg questions of race and racism, and, at times, completely elide the relevance of race in urban arrangements.

Keywords
urban planning, race, antiracialism, opportunity

Introduction

American political and cultural discourses are steeped in the language of opportunity. Opportunity is the essence of the American Dream, a vision given voice in popular culture, in the speeches of well-known political figures (e.g., Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King), and through legal institutions such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Throughout history, the term "opportunity" has connoted potential and promise, and as widely available to those who work hard and play by the rules.

In contrast to this broadly accepted understanding, the history of urban development and growth underscores the ways opportunity is not in fact open but rather confined by geography.[1] Additionally, geography is mapped, in part by race, that is, segregated. Thus, we should understand the concept of opportunity as racialized; opportunity is not, as the cultural narrative goes, accessible to all, but in fact shaped by race and place.

This observation is borne out in the following: "black families making $100,000 typically live in the kinds of neighborhoods inhabited by white families making $30,000;" "whites born into affluent neighborhoods tend[] to remain in affluent neighborhoods, blacks tend[] to fall out of them;" and the single biggest determinant of one's health and mortality is one's zip code.[2] Housing policies spanning the 20th-21st century have denied Black and Latino families the opportunity to accumulate wealth through home ownership, which has played a substantial role in the present-day wealth gap between white and black families.[3]

Historians and sociologists have explored past and present processes of urban segregation, development, and displacement of minority and low-income communities, and policy questions surrounding barriers to housing and the ways

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[1] Xavier de Souza Briggs, *The Geography of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005); Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case For Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014; Gregory D. Squires and Charis E. Kubrin, *Privileged Places: Race, Residence, and the Structure of Opportunity* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006).

[2] Coates, "The Case," p. 60; M. Arrieta, H. L. White, and E. D. Crook, "Using Zip Code-Level Mortality Data as a Local Health Status Indicator in Mobile, Alabama, *American Journal of Medical Science* 335 (2008):271-274; Lorna Benson, "Income, ZIP Code, Education Are Good Indicators of Health," MPRNews, October 9, 2009. https://www.mprnews.org/story/2009/10/05/social-determinants-of-health.

[3] Coates, "The Case;" Leela Yellesetty, "The Racist Face of the Housing Crisis," *Socialist Worker*, March 12, 2013. http://socialistworker.org/2013/03/12/racist-face-of-the-housing-crisis.

residents interact with community institutions.[4] This article examines city planning documents as artifacts that may shed light on the cultural meaning making of urban planning discourses. This article asks: How do cultural assumptions embedded in the myth of American opportunity shape urban planning processes? I examine two city planning documents—*Detroit Future City* and *Connecting Cleveland 2020 Citywide Plan*—for the ways references to opportunity construct an optimistic understanding of urban potential while ignoring the complicated and controversial ways race is woven into urban planning and the arrangement of city spaces. City planning documents—not often studied by communication scholars—deserve scrutiny as sites of cultural contestation and political struggle over what a city is and it how should function.

In what follows, I begin by describing the two planning documents and reviewing scholarship on the rhetorical dimensions of urban planning and the historical connections to race and racism. I then turn to an analysis of Detroit's and Cleveland's planning documents to explore how references to the term "opportunity" appeal to cultural commonsense through associations with promise and possibility. These appeals gain persuasive traction through the term's tendency toward over-simplification, which acts conservatively to universalize the white male experience, beg questions of race and racism, and, at times, completely elide the relevance of race in urban arrangements.

Detroit Future City and Connecting Cleveland 2020

Detroit and Cleveland are similarly situated Midwestern, former industrial, majority black cities devastated by deindustrialization, automation, white flight, and the subsidizing of suburbs, processes inextricable from histories of urban racism and segregation.[5] Notably, both cities remain on the list of the nation's top ten segregated cities.[6] Given the decline of auto and steel manufacturing, Detroit

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[4] A partial list includes, Briggs, "The Geography;" John Goering, Ed., *Fragile Rights Within Cities: Government, Housing, and Fairness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007); Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, Eds., *The New African American Urban History* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[5] Daniel R. Kerr, *Derelict Paradise: Homelessness and Urban Development in Cleveland Ohio* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011); Sugrue, *The Origins*.

[6] Rebecca Baird-Remba and Gus Lubin, "21 Maps of Highly Segregated Cities in America," *Business Insider*, April 25, 2013. http://www.businessinsider.com/most-segregated-cities-census-maps-2013-4; Alexander Kent and Thomas Frohlich, "The 9 Most Segregated Cities In America," *Huffington Post*, Aug. 27, 2015.

and Cleveland have been in the midst of economic restructuring and civic rebranding to reignite their respective economies and attract residents. The urban planning documents of these two cities crafted within the last five years tap into longstanding, widely accepted cultural values and myths to create a frame for understanding the uses and users of urban spaces in ways that erase the salience of race and racism.

Detroit Future City (DFC) is a 300 page document published in 2012 and available online at https://detroitfuturecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/DFC_ExecutiveSummary_2ndEd.pdf . A team of city leaders and nonprofit organizations created the document with input from Detroit residents through focus groups and listening sessions. DFC is divided into sections according to "planning elements," which include economic growth, land use, city systems, neighborhoods, and land use and buildings assets. Each section is similarly organized, beginning with discussion of "transformative ideas," then moving to sections on "realities," "imperatives," and "strategies and implementation." The document relies on demographic data, statistics on vacancies and land uses, maps, and quotes from focus group participants. Each "strategies and implementation" section offers 5-7 suggestions, at varying levels of specificity, for moving forward with improvements. In 2014, the Detroit Future City Implementation Office was formed to "ensure the successful execution of the vision" of DFC. [7]

Connecting Cleveland 2020 (CC 2020) is a more abbreviated document with suggestions that remain at a more general level. Members of the city's Planning Commission, City Council, and local nonprofit organizations created CC 2020 with input from residents at community meetings between 2002-2003. The plan and related documents are available at http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/contents.html. Similar to DFC, CC 2020 is divided into sections according to key urban elements including "housing," "retail," "economic development," "recreation and open space," "community services," "safety," "transportation and infrastructure," "arts and culture," "sustainability," and "preservation." Each section begins by articulating a goal then elaborating on "issues" and "policies." A "Plan and Implementation" section appears near the beginning of the document and remains visionary in nature and less detailed than DFC. The web site for CC 2020 contains separate links to the different city districts (of which there are six) where viewers may read more detailed information on "assets," "challenges," and "visions" for distinct areas of the city.

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-9-most-segregated-cities-in-america_us_55df53e9e4b0e7117ba92d7f

[7] About DFC Implementation Office, https://detroitfuturecity.com/about/.

Despite differences in length and level of detail, both DFC and CC 2020 refer to themselves as "blueprints," both are forward-thinking and visionary in nature. As such, a study of these urban planning documents may shed light on how we come to understand urban visions that tap cultural tropes and may prompt us to ask: "The city is more beautiful, but for whom? The city is richer, but for whom? Who is the city for?"[8]

The Rhetorical Dimensions of Urban Planning: An Overview

City planning was a product of Progressive Era reform efforts of the early twentieth century; an "idealistic redefinition of the public interest in urban physical environment" initially undertaken by experts then by activists who hoped to make urban planning part of local government functioning.[9] Urban planning documents are prescriptive insofar as they suggest courses of action and policy formation for the development of an urban area; they may be also be viewed as a "form of state intervention" and supportive of a neoliberal economic and political agenda.[10] Notably, planning documents are more than simply blueprints, maps, or grids on a page; they are cultural artifacts that craft visions and create identities.[11] We may examine city plans as spatial representations, which Henri Lefebvre suggests are "filled with ideologies," as political and contested.[12] For example, Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago epitomized the efforts of what was termed the City Beautiful Movement. Burnham, a Chicago architect, developed a plan that may be viewed as a rhetorical effort to constitute a "new civic identity" and promote a vision of the city as orderly, clean, and efficient.[13] Through careful selection and

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[8] LuLu Garcia-Navarro, "As Brazil Gears Up For Olympics, Some Poor Families Get Moved Out. National Public Radio, February 27, 2014. http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/02/27/276514012/as-brazil-gears-up-for-olympics-some-poor-families-get-moved-out

[9] Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 3.

[10] Richard E. Fogelsong, *Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); Mary E. Triece, "Constructing the Antiracial City: City Planning and Antiracialism in the Twenty-First Century," *Western Journal of Communication*, forthcoming.

[11] Martha S. Cheng and Julian C. Chambliss, "The 1909 Plan of Chicago as Representative Anecdote: Constituting New Citizens For the Commercial American City," *Rhetoric Review* 35 (2016): 91-107; Margaret Garb, "Race, Housing, and Burnham's Plan: Why Is There No Housing in the 1909 Plan of Chicago?" *Journal of Planning History* 10 (2011): 99-113; Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning*; James A. Throgmorton, *Planning As Persuasive Storytelling: The Rhetorical Construction of Chicago's Electric Future* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[12] Henri Lefebvre, Reflections on the Politics of Space, *Antipode* 8 (1976): 31.

[13] Cheng and Chambliss, "The 1909 Plan."

deflection of particular urban elements, the Plan "presented a vision of the modern city that emphasized consumption over production and stressed the influence of the state over that of the family in shaping urban citizens."[14]

The plans for Detroit and Cleveland may be similarly viewed as documents crafted with a goal of prompting a renewed urban vision, and particularly in the case of DFC, generating public enthusiasm around an urban ideal. Both DFC and CC 2020 were written in lay terms, available on the Internet, and crafted with input from city residents suggesting the target audience is not only government officials, developers, and politicians, but residents as well.

Throgmorton suggests city plans are storytelling in nature shaping a common understanding of what is possible for urban spaces and residents. City plans are "persuasive efforts [that] take place in the context of a flow of utterances, replies, and counterreplies."[15] The nature of planning rhetorics hinges on the storyteller. Planning may be engaged on the part of scientists, advocates, or politicians, with each taking a different rhetorical tack. Scientific planning appears dispassionate and objective; whereas advocates rely on the language of morality, emotional appeals, and emphasize urban rights and discriminations.[16] For example, Progressive Era reformers and social activists, alarmed at the deleterious living conditions wrought by industrial capitalism, sought moral uplift, order, and beautification of city spaces through city planning.[17] And politicians, in their roles as planners, emphasize the pragmatic accomplishment of goals.[18]

Historically, urban planning discourses--exemplified not only in plans but federal policies and local ordinances on housing and development—have been sites of contestation over space and race. Redlining and other overtly racist practices are no longer legal, but segregation remains entrenched in cities like Cleveland and Detroit prompting us to explore ways that contemporary planning discourses may enable or foreclose opportunities for race equality in urban housing, employment, education, etc. Sociologists and urban studies scholars have explored the concept of opportunity as a practice, i.e., how it plays out, what bearing it has on housing, education, and employment, its ties to race, gender, and class. One observation is clear: opportunity and the associated ideas of mobility and upward advancement are not straightforward, linear, nor uncomplicated. Opportunity—in the areas of

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[14] Garb, "Race, Housing," 101.

[15] Throgmorton, *Planning As Persuasive*, 39.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Cheng and Chambliss, "The 1909 Plan;" Peterson, "The Birth;" Joel Schwartz, *The New York Approach: Robert Moses, Urban Liberals, and Redevelopment of the Inner City* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993); Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Throgmorton, *Planning As Persuasive*.

[18] Throgmorton, *Planning As Persuasive*, 40-42.

housing, transportation, education, lending, and labor--is heavily regulated and scripted by policies that favor well-off white residents.[19] Galster and Killen offer a multidimensional understanding of opportunity through a three part model, which includes an "opportunity structure" comprised of institutions and markets, e.g., housing, employment, schools, offering "potential means of social mobility" for residents. This structure is impacted by race, gender, income status, education, and residential location. The third level of the model includes a person's perceptions of and knowledge about the opportunity structure.[20]

The structural and policy dimensions of opportunity are important to keep in mind as we consider the *language of opportunity* in city plans. The following analysis applies ideology criticism to urban planning documents to examine how references to opportunity function hegemonically. Dominant ideologies rely on foundational myths and key terms or ideographs to gain popular support and secure race/gender/class power disparities. The term opportunity plays a key role within a larger ideology supporting a myth of autonomy (Fineman, 2004).[21] Foundational myths are stories woven into the fabric of a culture that serve a number of important ideological functions. Myths are simultaneously grounded in the present and forward-looking. They suggest appropriate behaviors and reinforce cultural morals and values even as they look to the future with a vision.[22] Rhetorically, foundational political myths are important to study for their ability to shape-shift or adjust to contextual and cultural changes while assuming the appearance of timelessness. The enduring aspect of mythical stories (e.g., narratives of hard work as in Horatio Alger or of ingenuity and exploration as in Westward Expansion) lends them an unquestioned credibility and sense of permanence. In this way foundational myths elude critical examination.[23] Foundational political myths are not unlike ideographs, words that encapsulate the political commitments of a culture. Ideographs, "function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief." Describing their persuasive capacity, McGee notes ideographs are "more pregnant than propositions could ever be," pointing to the ways a single word can carry an entire argument. Like foundational myths, ideographs vary across culture and may change with or adjust to the times.[24]

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[19] Briggs, *The Geography*; Squires and Kubrin, *Privileged Places*.

[20] George C. Galster and Sean P. Killen, "The Geography of Metropolitan Opportunity: A Reconnaissance and Conceptual Framework," *Housing Policy Debate* 6 (1995): 9.

[21] Martha Albertson Fineman, *The Autonomy Myth: A Theory of Dependency* (New York: The New Press, 2004).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), 16.

[24] Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 6, 7.

The term "opportunity" embodies assumptions of freedom and choice, calling forth the Horatio Alger or bootstraps myth wherein any person regardless of race, class, gender, or ethnicity can win success in America. In what follows, I study opportunity as an ideology that structures beliefs and feelings about urban living. "Opportunity" and terms that cluster around it frame economic urban issues---like housing, growth, city services, land use, etc.--- in culturally familiar terms that assure readers of the basic soundness and equity of the plan/policy under consideration. The ideology of opportunity sutures the economic to the common sense of culturally accepted values, and importantly, taps the American Dream to facilitate a collective forgetting of past and present injustices that relies on question-begging and erasure.

Opportunity As Cultural Common Sense

Detroit Future City and *Connecting Cleveland 2020* are replete with references to opportunity, with the term appearing throughout both documents hundreds of times. Opportunity taps the myth of the American Dream and vision of America as the "land of opportunity," originating in early American stories of westward expansion, and echoed in more contemporary legislation such as LBJ's 1964 Economic Opportunity Act and Bill Clinton's 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The prevalence of the term in these two city planning documents suggests it as a key concept for structuring an understanding of city spaces, one that is deeply embedded in the American cultural imagination.

Opportunity cues feelings of optimism and promise, suggesting an American ethos that is expansive and exploratory, as in "full of opportunity" and "vast opportunities." Both *Detroit Future City* (DFC) and *Connecting Cleveland 2020* (CC 2020) open by setting the reader on a journey that is "challenging" but full of potential. DFC positions itself as a "path forward toward realizing the aspirations of an entire city."[25] CC 2020 suggests it is a "blueprint or a roadmap for…revitalization" of Cleveland.[26] Opportunity is a recurring feature on the journey toward a more sustainable and equitable city space and is linked to elements as diverse as "assets;"[27] "economic pillars;"[28] "changing demographics and changing lifestyles;"[29] housing, shopping, land use, and jobs.

Both plans repeatedly speak to connecting people to opportunity as a way of suggesting the universal application of urban promise and potential. CC 2020

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[25] *Detroit Future City: Detroit Strategic Framework Plan*, December 2012. http://detroitfuturecity.com/framework/, 3.

[26] *Connecting Cleveland 2020 Citywide Plan*, n.d., http://planning.city.clevleand.oh.us/cwp/contents.html, 1.

[27] *Detroit Future City*, 3, 11, 37, 56, 66.

[28] Ibid, 37.

[29] *Connecting Cleveland*, 2.

opens by saying a "great city connects its citizens to great choices in housing, education, employment, services, shopping, entertainment and culture as well as to opportunities to live in neighborhoods that are safe, secure and vibrant" and repeats this observation throughout the primary as well as related planning documents.[30] In a section on "The Land Use Element," DFC devotes a section to proposing how to make Detroit a "city connecting people to opportunity."[31]

In addition to the optimistic hue of opportunity, the term suggests a larger story of potential to transform, thus indicating a redemptive or restorative element to opportunity. Each section of *Detroit Future City*'s strategic framework offers a list of "transformative ideas" for impacting the economy, land use, city systems, neighborhoods, and buildings. The plan stresses "innovative strategies;"[32] "innovative approaches;"[33] innovative landscapes;[34] "innovative…systems of infrastructure and transportation;"[35] and a "spirit of innovation."[36] *Connecting Cleveland 2020* speaks of "re-positioning" itself as a "national leader in biomedical…and information technology" and as a "pioneer" in public education.[37] Cleveland's plan also emphasizes "re-establishing the competitiveness" of the city's retail districts, [38] "re-tooling its industries," and "re-educating its workforce."[39]

The language of opportunity makes an otherwise dry discussion of land usage, typology, and economic dynamics compelling and situates the reader as a participant in city life, as an actor with choices and agency. Both plans describe residents as "resilient."[40] Cleveland is "re-invent[ing] itself."[41] Detroiters are "already working to change course of city," they are "undertak[ing] neighborhood improvements," and the "authors of their future."[42] In both plans, choice is a key term that clusters around and works in tandem with opportunity, suggesting opportunity is made possible by options and the absence of mitigating constraints.

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[30] Ibid, 1. References to "connections" and "connecting" appear in the "Summary Document" and a related text called "Plan." Both of these are available on the City of Cleveland's Planning Commission home page.

[31] *Detroit Future City*, 95.

[32] Ibid, 6.

[33] Ibid, 8, 10.

[34] Ibid, 18.

[35] Ibid, 31.

[36] Ibid, 13.

[37] *Connecting Cleveland*, 7.

[38] Ibid, 15.

[39] Ibid, 17.

[40] Ibid, 2; *Detroit Future City*, 1.

[41] *Connecting Cleveland*, 2.

[42] *Detroit Future City*, 1, 67, 213.

Detroit seeks to be a "city of neighborhood choices;" quality of life is defined as offering "residential and employment choices." [43]   Cleveland seeks to create "communities of choice," "neighborhoods of choice," and "education options."[44] Both plans give a nod to the fact that some residents have "few[er] choices" or in the past had "no choices" thus acknowledging that choice has been applied unevenly.[45] The solution is to provide a "broader range of choices," or a "diversity of housing types."[46]

It may seem unremarkable that two urban planning documents use a language of opportunity, and suggest resident agency and choice availability in their visions. The unarguable or commonsense nature of the language--Who doesn't want opportunity and choice?—makes it worthy of deeper consideration. In the next section I show how the culturally resonant language of opportunity, particularly when tied to the value of "diversity," enables slippage into question begging and facilitates cultural forgetting.

Opportunity as Question-Begging or Failing to Contextualize

The foundational political myth of meritocracy--the idea that hard work and honesty are enough to win success and well-being—is deeply engrained and widely embraced in American culture. Foundational myths and cultural tropes (e.g., opportunity) work rhetorically through lack of evidence, or by begging larger questions that, if asked, may rend the tightly woven fabric of American cultural identity. The notion of opportunity forecloses critical thinking and prompts an "Of course!" sort of reaction that leaves no room for the more complicated process of contextualization.

Of interest in Detroit's and Cleveland's urban plans is the way the language of opportunity is revitalized and situated in a post-race landscape of a diverse America, a vision that depicts race without racists or racism.[47] Opportunity is tied to antiracialism, a set of discourses and ideas that promote a post-race belief that racism is "obsolete" and remains "an unfortunate historical fact that now has no bearing on contemporary society."[48] This ability to conform to cultural/political changes—e.g., an expanding minority population and publicized pushes for racial justice--is a fundamental quality of political myths and gives them an enduring

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[43] Ibid, 16, 20, 208, 94.

[44] *Connecting Cleveland*, 8, 12, 17, 24.

[45] Ibid, 8, 11.

[46] *Detroit Future City*, 13; *Connecting Cleveland*, 12.

[47] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006).

[48] Henry Giroux, "Spectacles of Race and Pedagogies of Denial: Anti-Black Racist Pedagogy Under the Reign of Neoliberalism," *Communication Education* 52 (2003): 192.

quality while maintaining cultural resonance.[49] Rhetorically, antiracialism allows a way to talk about race while eliding racism. In this sense, antiracialism is question-begging as it thwarts a careful and detailed contextualization that may recognize the complicated ways racism and white privilege are experienced/lived and the ways both are reflected in US policies, past and present.

Both *Detroit Future City* and *Connecting Cleveland 2020* stress the importance of supporting diversity in the urban environment. In the following examples, references to "diversity" and "minority" (as in "minority business enterprises") provide a way for urban planning discourses to broaden the application of opportunity to seemingly envelop race. For instance, CC 2020 envisions the city as a "community where racial, ethnic and social diversity is not simply tolerated but is embraced and celebrated in every neighborhood as one of Cleveland's greatest assets." The document suggests "embracing and celebrating diversity in people, housing and opportunities" and in the arts. The section on retail also draws on the celebratory spirit of diversity with a vision of transforming "selected retail districts into regional attractions by clustering stores around common themes—including arts and culture, ethnic identities, antiques, and recreation and scenic resources."[50]

This move to spread the idea of diversity across spheres is illustrated on a PowerPoint slide titled, "DIVERSITY celebrating Cleveland's diversity"--part of a slide presentation available to viewers who visit the *Connecting Cleveland* website--which offers six images depicting "Diverse Housing," "Diverse Shopping," "Diverse Recreation" "Diverse People," "Diverse Jobs," and "Diverse Events."[51] The juxtaposition of the six images suggests diversity as the presence of options, as *variety* in opportunities of shopping, recreation, housing, etc. In a related planning document, "Land Use and Zoning," diversity is cast in commercialized terms while racial diversity become parenthetical: "The plan recognizes diversity in development (and in people!) as an asset that can give Cleveland and its neighborhoods a meaningful advantage in the competition for residents, shoppers, visitors, and businesses."[52] DFC mentions "diversity" only three times in the 347 page document, similarly associating the concept with options as when it noted, "Thriving contemporary cities are hallmarks of diversity, including employment options, income, ethnicity, social interests, and individual expertise."[53]

By placing race and ethnic diversity on par with diversity in consumer options, the plans recast "diversity" as a synonym for "options" and the associated

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[49] Fineman, *The Autonomy*.

[50] *Connecting Cleveland*, 7, 8, 31, 15.

[51] Powerpoint Presentations, n.d., http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/flash/ppoint.php

[52] Land Use and Zoning, n.d., http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/landuse.html

[53] *Detroit Future City*, 112.

notion of "opportunity." Highlighting diversity reinforces the idea that opportunity is universally applicable rather than politically and economic structured and provides a culturally conservative way to discuss *race as difference*, begging questions concerning structural constraints and collectively experienced injustices that may disrupt the fundamental narrative of opportunity woven throughout. Celebrations of diversity nestle into the larger cultural narrative of opportunity, thus begging questions concerning how racism continues to operate as a significant category of discrimination and isolation in the layout of urban spaces. "Diversity"—particularly when associated with "opportunity" and "choice"-- parades as an antidote to systemic racism without discussion of the complexities of contemporary systemic racism.

Notably, CC 2020 details the "assets," "challenges," and "vision" for specific neighborhoods across the city's six districts. [54] In districts with predominantly African American residents (e.g., Hough, Buckeye-Shaker, Kinsman), the visions suggested infrastructure and housing improvements including offering "housing options of all types and price points;" "strategic development of education and job training centers;" and "development of an African-American Museum Complex, the little Africa development, and a monument remembering the Hough riots." [55] The Kinsman Neighborhood Plan Summary mentions the construction of Opportunity Corridor, a planned boulevard under construction as of this writing, that runs through the predominantly African American east side of Cleveland from E. 55th St. to E. 105th St. The controversial project, which has garnered criticism from affected residents, would displace 65 families and 13 businesses. [56] The project's name connotes the confidence associated with "opportunity," effectively begging the larger question: Opportunity

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[54] This information is available at separate links for each district, which are listed as "chapters" on the "Plan Narrative" page (http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/planIntro.php).

[55] Buckeye-Shaker Neighborhood Plan Summary, http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/districts.php?dt=dist5&dn=bskr; Hough Neighborhood Plan Summary, http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/districts.php?dt=dist5&dn=hough; South Collinwood Neighborhood Plan Summary, http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us/cwp/districts.php?dt=dist6&dn=sclln.

[56] Marie Kittredge, "Often Asked Questions About Cleveland's New Roadway," http://www.cose.org/fileuploader/webfiles/OC%20FAQs.pdf. See Steven Litt, "Cleveland To Roll Out Opportunity Corridor Plans Showing How Neighborhoods Could Benefit," *Plain Dealer*, July 3, 2017, http://www.cleveland.com/architecture/index.ssf/2017/07/cleveland_to_roll_out_opportu n.html for a background on the corridor and what critics have to say about the project.

for whom and at what cost?[57] The answer to this question may have been inadvertently suggested when a tour guide for the Cleveland Clinic (Cleveland's world renowned hospital, whose expansive campus sits in the heart of the city's poorest neighborhoods where the Corridor is being built) stated the purpose of Opportunity Corridor was to go "'through neighborhoods that people don't want to go through' and…help staff and patients get to the hospital faster."[58]

DFC similarly spoke to the needs of African American residents through reference to minority business enterprises (MBEs) noting they hold "great potential" but face challenges.[59] Discussion of MBEs is couched in the broader language of opportunity. The plan emphasizes the need to "expand opportunities" for MBEs[60] and notes that "minority-owned enterprises…are so important to Detroit" because they are "more likely to hire minority employees and utilize minority suppliers, thus increasing opportunity for a large number of Detroiters." The plan suggests "strengthening the city's minority business community through expanded opportunities for business ownership and growth," "low[ering] capital requirements" and creating a "specific toolbox to help MBEs to address financing and business development challenges."[61]

DFC also provides statistics comparing white- vs. minority-owned businesses, pointing out white-owned businesses bring in twice the revenue and are more likely to have employees. The plan suggests the reason for these gaps is because "MBEs [minority owned enterprises]… tend to select less capital-intensive industries." The plan further explains, "MBEs often select these industries because of their own work and business experience, but also because of lower levels of personal wealth than their white counterparts"[62]

DFC's discussion of MBEs begs larger questions regarding why or within what context differences arise between minority- and white-owned businesses.

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[57] A more thorough analysis of the planning rhetorics surrounding Opportunity Corridor is certainly warranted but beyond the scope of this article. See "A Few More Thoughts On the Opportunity Corridor and Cleveland Clinic," Eat Righteous, July 18, 2017, http://eatrighteous.org/clevelandclinic/ for contextualization of the project, including a recent history of land seizure on the part of white city leaders from a Black real estate developer, Winston Willis. See also, Coates, "The Case," for more on the theft of land owned by Black residents.

[58] Dan Diamond, "How the Cleveland Clinic Grows Healthier While Its Neighbors Stay Sick," *Politico*, July 17, 2017, http://www.politico.com/interactives/2017/obamacare-cleveland-clinic-non-profit-hospital-taxes/.

[59] *Detroit Future City*, 44, 80.

[60] Ibid, 79. See also 52, 80.

[61] Ibid, 41, 49, 79.

[62] Ibid, 44, 45.

Question-begging facilitates the "possessive investment in whiteness"[63] wherein whiteness is the unmarked category, white privilege goes unexamined, and problems are grafted onto minority-owned businesses that require a "toolbox" to assist them with challenges. Noting MBEs "*select* less capital-intensive industries" and white –owned businesses "*bring in*" more revenue (emphases mine) presumes agency, a key element that attunes readers to the idea of choice availability without constraints. References to "diversity" and "minority-owned businesses" expand and update the cultural narrative of urban opportunity, a narrative that works, rhetorically speaking, precisely by overlooking—begging questions regarding— the structured, scripted, and mapped nature of opportunity. Further, acknowledging "diversity" suggests the postrace, culturally ennobling idea that America is inclusive and forward-thinking, while ignoring reasons underlying persistent and significant racial wealth gaps; eliding the history of white violence and segregation shaping black communities and their businesses; and over and covert racism that continues to structure the Black urban experience today.[64]

To undo or challenge the "possessive investment in whiteness" requires contextualization, a detailed study of entrenched structures and systems, both past and present, that have shaped the contours of opportunity, to whom it is/has been available, and under what social and political conditions. The segregated pattern of American cities—including Detroit and Cleveland—is/was not a product of preference, but is the direct and indirect result of local, state, and federal policies that "shape land use, real estate practices, and lending" in ways that are "unevenly regulated" and "subsidized" in favor of privileged groups.[65] Segregation is not the "value-free outcome of the impartial workings of the housing market…[but is] the inevitable and predictable consequences of deliberate policy choices."[66] Nor is segregation a thing of the past; in Detroit, areas of concentrated poverty more than tripled in the first decade of the twenty-first century and spread to inner ring suburbs.[67] Absent a deeper exploration of structures and systems, "opportunity" may continue to appear as up for grabs, accessible, a matter of preference as opposed to orchestrated, engineered, structured.[68]

Contextualization prompts us to explore reasons underlying racialized,

[63] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
[64] See Coates, "The Case."
[65] Briggs, *The Geography*, 18.
[66] Paul A. Jargowsky, Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy, Century Foundation, August 2015. https://tcf.org/assets/downloads/Jargowsky_ArchitectureofSegregation.pdf
[67] Ibid, 2.
[68] See Coates, "The Case," 66, who points out that "white flight" is a "triumph of social engineering" and "orchestrated," not a matter of preference in residential location.

concentrated poverty that characterizes many African American and Hispanic neighborhoods in the twenty-first century and suggests the need to scrutinize urban plans and policies for the ways culturally taken-for-granted ideals and values mask white privilege and racist structures. Historically, racist zoning, restrictive covenants, government subsidies given to white housing developments, and denial of municipal services to black neighborhoods are a few of the ways governments have enforced systemic segregation.[69] More recently, studies conducted by the Department of Justice and the Center For Responsible Lending show the 2009 housing crisis and the disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic families was not accidental. These studies revealed that banks steered Black and Latino individuals into subprime loans, and charged these borrowers significantly more in brokerage fees and higher interest rates than they did white borrowers.[70] Notably Black and Latino borrowers were nearly twice as likely as white borrowers to lose their homes to foreclosure, even when controlling for income differences.[71]

Further underscoring the way housing is implicated in structural racism, evidence shows home ownership has historically—and still today—stands at the center of the race wealth gap.[72] Discriminatory housing practices throughout the 20th-21st centuries have denied Black and Latino families the opportunity to accumulate wealth through home ownership. A study done by the Institute on Assets and Social Policy shows the "wealth gap between white and African American families has nearly tripled between 1984 and 2009. More than 25 percent of the gap is directly attributable to home ownership and other policies associated with housing."[73]

In contrast to the opportunity-filled urban landscapes depicted in DFC and CC 2020, high-end development in the downtown areas of major urban hubs have upended longtime minority residents and have forced longstanding black

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[69] Richard Rothstein, The Making of Ferguson: Public Policies At the Root of Its Troubles. (Washington, D. C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2014). http://www.epi.org/files/2014/making-of-ferguson-final.pdf; Sugrue, The Origins.

[70] Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, and Keith S. Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity: The Demographics of a Crisis," Center For Responsible Lending, June 2010, http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/foreclosures-by-race-and-ethnicity.pdf ; Yellesetty, "The Racist Face."

[71] Bocian, Li, and Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race," 2.

[72] Laura Sullivan, Tatjana Meschede, Lars Dietrich, Thomas Shapiro, Amy Traub, Catherine Ruetschlin, and Tamara Draut, The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters, *Demos*, 2015. http://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RacialWealthGap_1.pdf

[73] Yellesetty, "The Racist Face."

businesses to close due to cancelled leases, rent spikes, and evictions.[74] One Detroit business owner, Darnell Small, who waged a legal battle for damages due to a cancelled lease, asserted "It seems like we [black residents] can spend our money, but we don't have a right to be there….Blacks do not have a level playing field anymore. Certain opportunities are not there for us."[75] Small's comments give lie to the cultural trope of opportunity.

Opportunity as Strategic Forgetting or Failing to Historicize

The universal application of opportunity is also supported by strategic forgetting[76] or selective amnesia,[77] concepts that refer to popular public memory as hegemonic, that is, contested, socially constructed, partial, and biased. Hegemonic memory facilitates the "rhetorical silence" of whiteness[78] by omitting key histories that bear on the present. Like antiracialism, hegemonic memory asks residents to "give up on race before and without addressing the legacy, the roots, and scars of racisms' histories, the weights of race" and suggests "forgetting, getting over, moving on, wiping away the terms of reference….the very vocabulary necessary to recall and recollect, to make a case, to make a claim."[79] This process of "racial evaporation"[80] underwrites the theme of universal opportunity and choice, terms that work to disappear the constraints imposed by entrenched structures and processes such as those described above. Urban planning's emphasis on freedom—scripted as opportunity to shop, to "achieve…personal fulfillment"[81] --relies on a race-neutral past that denies possibilities for discussion of and intervention in racist practices and policies.

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[74] Melanie Eversley, "Protecting Black History From Gentrification," *USA Today*, Feb. 2, 2016. http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/02/02/black-history-gentrification-new-york-brooklyn/78685354/; Kimberly Hayes Taylor, "Gentrification of Detroit Leaves Black-Owned Businesses Behind, NBC News, Nov. 1, 2015; Mary E. Triece, *Urban Renewal and Resistance: Race, Space, and the City in the Late Twentieth to Early Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

[75] Taylor, "Gentrification of Detroit."

[76] Marouf Hasian and Robert E. Frank, "Rhetoric, History, and Collective Memory: Decoding the Goldhagen Debates," *Western Journal of Communication* 63 (1999): 95-114; Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, and AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[77] Kristen Hoerl, "Selective Amnesia and Racial Transcendence in New Coverage of President Obama's Inauguration," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 (2012): 178-202.

[78] Carrie Crenshaw, "Resisting Whiteness' Rhetorical Silence," *Western Journal of Communication* 61 (1997): 253-278.

[79] David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 21.

[80] Ibid, 30.

[81] *Connecting Cleveland*, 23.

Both *Detroit Future City* and *Connecting Cleveland 2020* evoke urban memories through mention of population loss, urban sprawl, unemployment, and contaminated brownfields but do so in race neutral terms, in essence "forgetting" the role systemic racism played in shaping each city's landscape. For instance, CC 2020 explains the flight of manufacturing in the mid-twentieth century "left behind a host of problems including…unemployment and contaminated land;" and that the loss of residents "left a legacy of abandoned houses, particularly in near east side and near west side neighborhoods."[82] DFC likewise gives a nod to "planning fatigue and lack of trust…after years of promises and plans" that have had little tangible impact on resident quality of life and concerns that "families might be forced to move from their homes (as in the days of urban renewal)."[83] Yet, both plans selectively "forget" or omit racist and profit-driven processes that created the city landscape residents see in the twenty-first century.[84] References to population loss are unhinged from the history of racist white flight; "urban renewal" is detached from its racist underpinnings; and land contamination is severed from widely documented racist toxic dumping.[85]

The plans could be specifically antiracist (as opposed to antiracialist) by shedding light on the unspoken history lurking behind the mention of deteriorated and vacant housing; vacant industrial buildings; and industrial brownfield sites. Acknowledging the racist underpinnings of urban ills like segregation and unemployment would require historicization, or an in-depth analysis of the ways past racist practices were and continue to be racialized problems rooted in capital mobility. Deliberate decision-making supported by federal, state, and local policies led to urban deindustrialization, suburbanization, and residential segregation and displacement for Cleveland's African American residents. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation, formed in 1933, sanctioned redlining and other discriminatory

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[82] Ibid, 2, 5.

[83] *Detroit Future City*, 6, 10.

[84] Goings and Mohl, *The New African-American*; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford Press, 1985); Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; Sugrue, *The Origins*.

[85] Jillian Baez and Mari Castaneda, "Two Sides of the Same Story: Media Narratives of Latinos and the Subprime Mortgage Crisis," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31 (2014): 27-41; Robert D. Bullard, Paul Mohai, Robin Saha, and Beverly Wright, "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: Why Race Still Matters After All These Years," *Environmental Law* 38 (2008); Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment*; Jacob S. Rugh and Douglas S. Massey, "Racial Segregation and the American Foreclosure Crisis," *American Sociological Review* 75 (2010): 629-651.

lending practices that continued in different forms throughout the twentieth century.[86]

Title I of the Federal Housing Act funded urban renewal programs that facilitated "slum removal" resulting in displacement of specifically Black neighborhoods and overcrowded, run down "replacement" housing often miles from their original homes and communities.[87] Over 60 percent of families displaced by renewal projects in the 1950s-60s were nonwhite and, importantly, less than 2 percent of new housing built between 1934 and 1962 was made available to minority residents. [88] In the early 1930s the homes in a Black Cleveland neighborhood between East 40th and East 50th were demolished and replaced with more expensive housing and a host of restrictions on tenants (e.g., income requirements, prohibitions against boarders, etc.) that resulted in a markedly middle class residential make up.[89]

Federally subsidized highway construction facilitated the growth of Cleveland's and Detroit's suburbs, which were preserved as white havens through racist restrictive covenants, neighborhood associations, and real estate practices that limited the mobility of black residents.[90] In Cleveland, the development of the Inner Belt Freeway in the 1940s was designed to cut through primarily black neighborhoods on the east side which had the effect of demolishing black communities and "severing the black residential areas in Cedar-Central from the business district."[91] The highway also served to protect "downtown property values from the surrounding black neighborhoods" deemed "blighted."[92] In Detroit, construction of the Oakland-Hastings Freeway demolished primarily black

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[86] Coates, "The Case;" Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Nancy Kleniewksi, "From Industrial to Corporate City: The Role of Urban Renewal," in *Marxism and the Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy,* eds. William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[87] Harold Norris, "Dislocation Without Relocation," in *Detroit Perspectives: Crossroads and Turning Points*, ed. Wilma Wood Henrickson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991); Sugrue, *The Origins*.

[88] Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment*, 6.

[89] Kerr, *Derelict Paradise*, 99-101.

[90] Raymond A. Mohl, "Race and Space in the Modern City: Interstate-95 and the Black Community in Miami," in *Urban Policy in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press), 100-158; Sugrue, *The Origins*.

[91] Kerr, *Derelict Paradise*, 136.

[92] Ibid, 107, 108.

neighborhoods and business districts such as Paradise Valley, the Lower East Side, and Hastings Street.[93]

All of these discriminatory processes, combined with the usual swings in the larger economy, directly and disproportionately impacted Black residents' abilities to obtain and hold onto jobs. Black workers were/are "more likely than whites to lose their jobs as a result of economic restructuring," which was the case repeatedly throughout the twentieth century.[94] When auto and steel plants relocated to the suburbs, the nonunionized South, or overseas, Black workers were the first to lose their jobs. Throughout the 1950s-60s, the unemployment rate for Black residents that was double, sometimes quadruple, that of white workers in Cleveland.[95] Since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, the black unemployment rate is still twice that of white workers.[96] Selective forgetting is not simply failing to remember; it is an exercise of power that fosters a colorblind or antiracialized rendition of a city's past. A partially constructed version of urban history whitewashes the ways past racist practices continue to enable present-day white privilege and promotes a seamless story of opportunity. Like question-begging, selective forgetting elides complicated analyses of structures and systems. Together, they support the trope of opportunity, a term that favors the individual over the structural and a present unhinged from the past. The important point relevant to the discussion of urban planning is that the political/economic history of city development has shaped the city's present day environment and availability of opportunity and thus should not be forgotten.

Contextualization and historicization of racism may at once temper blanket celebrations of urban opportunity and steer policy conversations in the direction of two important racialized issues delimiting opportunity in city spaces: exclusionary zoning and housing discrimination. Exclusionary zoning consists of policies that designate housing type, lot, and structure size for given districts of a city. Communities used exclusionary or "economic-based zoning" to replace racial zoning practices outlawed by the Supreme Court in 1917. Still widely used, especially in northeastern metropolitan areas including Cleveland and Detroit, exclusionary zoning acts as de facto economic (and hence racialized) zoning insofar as it limits where multi-unit structures (e.g., apartment buildings, public housing) can be situated. As Richard Kahlenberg notes, this form of zoning "effectively designate[s] the economic wherewithal of the families living in each residential

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[93] Sugrue, *The Origins*.

[94] Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, 26.

[95] Kerr, *Derelict Paradise*, 146.

[96] Olivera Perkins, "Black Unemployment Race Has Decreased, But Still More Than Double That of Whites," *Plain Dealer*, Aug. 12, 2015.

neighborhood."[97] Exclusionary zoning leads to concentrations of poverty, which has numerous deleterious affects on the Black and Latino communities that are disproportionately affected.[98] In contrast, urban planning documents can explicitly recommend inclusionary zoning—or variations such as "fair share intervention" and "anti-snob" zoning laws—that attempt to intervene in the concentration of poverty, have shown to provide wider access to strong schools traditionally available only to children living in (exclusively zoned) middle and high income communities, and, ideally, would ensure the availability of low income housing in areas where public transportation and economic viability is present.[99]

Additionally, situating urban development in a broader present day and historical context of racist urban development practices forces recognition of the ways opportunity has been unevenly channeled to white city residents through the accumulation of wealth associated with homeownership. A long history of "theft of black-owned land" coupled with present-day discriminatory lending practices has contributed a growing wealth gap between black and white families directly related to homeownership.[100] Certainly, recognizing racist disparities does not guarantee more just planning proposals or outcomes, but it may be a necessary first step to ensure discussions are not blinded by cultural tropes such as "opportunity" that are question begging in nature. Ta-Nehisi Coates provides a strong argument— grounded in the history and present day context of racism—for reparations, explaining the "wealth gap merely puts a number on something we feel but cannot say—that American prosperity was ill-gotten and selective in its distribution."[101] References to deeply resonant and widely embraced terms like "opportunity" elide the "selective" nature of wealth, opportunity, and urban well being.

Conclusion

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[97] Richard D. Kahlenberg, *An Economic Fair Housing Act*, The Century Foundation, 2017. https://tcf.org/content/report/economic-fair-housing-act/.

[98] Jargowsky, *Architecture of Segregation*; Kahlenberg, *An Economic Fair Housing Act*.

[99] Kahlenberg, *An Economic Fair Housing Act*; "The Walls We Won't Tear Down," *New York Times*, August 3, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/03/opinion/sunday/zoning-laws-segregation-income.html.

[100] Leela Yellesetty, "The Racist Face"

[101] Coates, "The Case," p. 70. In 2017, Charlottesville, Virginia, city council agreed to establish an "equity fund" for black residents of that city, see "Ta-Nehisi Coates on How Cities and Municipalities Are Winning Reparations for Slavery at Local Level," Democracy NOW!, August 15, 2017, https://www.democracynow.org/2017/8/15/ta_nehisi_coates_on_how_cities?utm_source =Democracy+Now%21&utm_campaign=bef7669824-Daily_Digest&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_fa2346a853-bef7669824-190184841.

The term "opportunity" is distinctly American, resonant of a bootstraps mentality and the idea that American cities offer promise and potential thus making the language of opportunity an effective framework for garnering public support of an urban vision. This article explored how the term becomes a springboard for public policy that may exacerbate racial inequalities in the city. The analysis of the urban plans of two similarly situated Midwestern cities shows how the language of opportunity relies on question-begging and selective amnesia to provide a simplistic and optimistic urban vision that fails to account for the ways institutional racism continues to shape the lives of black and Hispanic urban residents and for the ways present day urban landscapes bear a racist lineage.

There is ample evidence pointing to the ways opportunity is delimited, circumscribed, or structured along the lines of race.[102] Numerous studies underscore how "spatial and racial inequalities" impact the ability to obtain resources basic to living a decent life, e.g., housing, education, health care, employment, or to seize opportunities that appear, at least on the surface, widely available.[103] The ideals of choice and opportunity crumble under the weight of urban policies and intractable racism that operate as barriers to minority residents seeking housing and employment. For instance, poor black residents are less likely to be able to work their way out of low income neighborhoods,[104] and even for wealthy black families, opportunity is limited as "discrimination follows blacks no matter where they want to live and no matter how much they earn."[105] In a 2008 study of race and hiring practices, Princeton University professor Devah Pager found that white applicants with a felony fared just as well as black applicants with a clean record. Being white afforded applicants greater opportunity or, put differently, "being black in America today is just about the same as having a felony conviction in terms of one's chances of find a job."[106]

To craft urban planning documents that may create more just urban spaces, city planners must resist reliance on familiar cultural tropes that historically have operated to mask white privilege, elide the influence of structures that delimit

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[102] Briggs, *The Geography*; Goering, *Fragile Rights*; Squires and Kubrin, *Privileged Places*.

[103] Rugh and Massey, "Racial Segregation;" Squires and Kubrin, *Privileged Places*; Margery Austin Turner, Todd M. Richardson, and Stephen Ross, "Housing Discrimination in Metropolitan America: Unequal Treatment of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans," in F*ragile Rights Within Cities: Government, Housing, and Fairness*, ed. John Goering (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

[104] Coates, "The Case," 60.

[105] Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*, 20.

[106] Devah Pager, "Study: Black Man and White Felon—Same Chances For Hire," 2008. http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2008/08/09/study-black-man-and-white-felon-same-chances-for-hire/?hpt=ac_mid

individuals, and sever past policies from present landscapes. Michael Eric Dyson notes "one of the most powerful ways of challenging and ultimately destroying the …myth of white superiority is to unearth sites of resistive memory, history, and practice."[107] Toward this end, future studies may explore how residents deploy "black critical memory" in order to challenge official public memory particularly in collective efforts to resist gentrification and displacement resulting—often unintentionally—from city renewal/redevelopment plans.[108] Likewise, we may draw on "conscious remembering" to resist the contextual and historical vacuum engendered by references to opportunity. Conscious remembering refers to the ways residents may re-collect or re-call the "role of capitalist processes and systemic racism" in urban history… "in essence forcing the past onto the present" in order to foster a more robust discussion of problems and solutions facing cities today.[109]

The sociologist Douglas Massey has noted, "Papering over the issue of race makes for bad… public policy," and I add, attenuated urban planning.[110] As communication scholars, we are well-situated to provide critical examination of the ways public policies perpetuate discrimination, exclusion, and urban isolation through commonsense ideals and tropes that often escape notice, much less careful examination. To challenge what Giroux has aptly coined the "American disimagination machine,"[111] we must insist public policy debates are informed by what I am calling critical-cultural-civic literacy, a set of knowledges that envelops concepts from the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition—e.g., sound argumentation, avoidance of fallacies, etc.-- in addition to anti-racist (as opposed to antiracialist) and feminist frameworks and histories adept at providing counterhegemonic suggestions for policy, organization, and urban development. In this way we might begin the process of challenging cultural tropes that "feed[] neoliberalism's ahistorical claim to power and the continuity of its claims to common sense."[112]

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[107] Michael Eric Dyson, *Open Mike: Reflections on Philosophy, Race, Sex, Culture and Religion* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003), 119.

[108] G. Mitchell Reyes, *Public Memory, Race, and Ethnicity* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).

[109] Mary E. Triece, *Urban Renewal and Resistance*, 47.

[110] Massey is quoted in Erin Tolley, *Framed: Media and the Coverage of Race in Canadian Politics* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 186.

[111] Henry Giroux, *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America's Disimagination Machine* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2014), 58.

[112] Giroux, "Spectacles of Race," 207.

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