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Annotated Bibliography: Who Can Help? A History Lesson on Urban Relations

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: WHO CAN HELP? A HISTORY LESSON ON URBAN RELATIONS

By
Daniel A. Broughton

Detroit has inspired dozens of books and hundreds of articles exploring what happened after World War II and why the Motor City has fallen victim to drastic spatial inequalities and continuing racial segregation. From Joe T. Darden to Thomas Sugrue, numerous authors have taken their shot at explaining the declining of Detroit and what factors have had similar repercussions in other parts of the United States. New literature is published every year, and each new research design comes out with the latest findings and statistics, trying to top its slightly older counterparts. As urban policy expert Angela Glover Blackwell has noted, "Fortunately, if America really wants to solve the problem of racial and ethnic inequality, it has a history of programs, strategies, and policies to build upon"(116). I argue that before we dive into the latest hardcovers on our bookstores' shelves, we must first look to the findings of past urban researchers to discover which policy schema have been tested, which have been successful, and what is still left uncovered.

The study of Detroit's urban and race relations may be my particular field of interest, but the cornucopia of urban research designs that flourished throughout the second half of the twentieth century are applicable to sociologists, lawyers, and advocates in major cities throughout the United States. Again, before diving deeper into current theoretical analyses of and policy proposals for American cities, it is important to review what older research designs suggest for the varying perceptions of today's urban crises. Through reevaluating the related literature of the past 20 years, case studies of different cities' struggles over time may provide insight on effective solutions in light of the current economic recession:

Blackwell, Angela Glover, Stewart Kwoh, and Manuel Pastor. *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America.* New York: The American Assembly, 2002.

Sifting through virtually all corners of urban America, Angela Glover Blackwell analyzes the constantly changing demographic of African Americans. With various maps and histograms complementing the text, Blackwell tackles racial tension/race relations as a challenge to the development of the United States at all levels. Her data suggest that "racial justice" is becoming increasingly ambiguous and that multiculturalism must be viewed as a competitor with traditional black-white typologies. Blackwell's examination helps to assess the national versus local responsibilities regarding urban race relations.
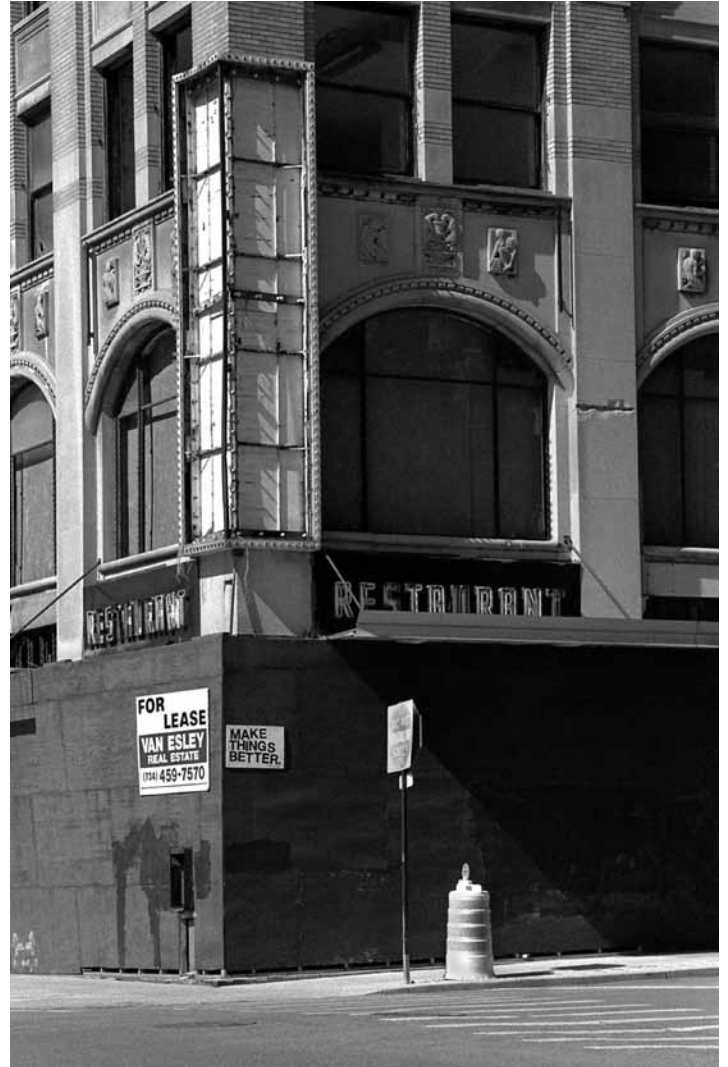

Photo by: Christa Broughton

DeParle, Jason. *American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids, and a Nation's Drive to End Welfare.* New York: Penguin Group, 2004.

Jason DeParle's *American Dream* uses a narrative style, yet is lined with accurate depictions of the welfare state as they intersect with specific events in his story. The book reads as an oral history, capturing the conversation and tension of those dealing with welfare while maintaining households in present-day Milwaukee. This micro-level chronicle allows readers to learn of personal disparities that may lead to poverty and how welfare policies contain clauses that often discriminate against the impoverished who are the most dependent on them

Fortune. The Negro and the City. New York: Time, 1968.

This book presents a contextual perspective of American business in the fight against racism in cities. Set in the late 1960s, *The Negro and the City* was published by Fortune magazine and was devoted to corporate America's search for a solution to the urban crisis. The project surveys African Americans as its central methodology, asking them to comment on inner-city conditions and their ability to find stable employment. In its conclusion, the book suggests that a constructive future lies not in new laws but in better attitudes supporting "colorblind" practices.

Gans, Herbert, et al. "Viewing the 'Underclass' and Ghetto from the Top Down." *Journal of Urban History*. 25.4, 1999: 583-593.

This review essay draws parallels and similarities among five contemporary pieces on the urban poor of America. As the title suggests, the articles in this journal approach the American city from the top down, looking the intellectual and social contexts within minority factions that have been stigmatized by outside perspectives. Gans' article, in particular, attacks the current modes of urban planning, arguing that the working-class subculture cannot be neglected in today's social policy considerations.

Gilbert, Dennis. *The American Class Structure: In an Age of Growing Inequality*. 6th ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2003.

Dennis Gilbert's textbook is a good reference for the application of social theory to datasets and case studies. In particular, Gilbert introduces Karl Marx's "class consciousness" and Maximiliam Carl Weber's "status considerations" and integrates these principles into various American models and typologies of social hierarchy. Most importantly, Gilbert explains the implicit costs of class consciousness, such as prestige and association, and how these outside pressures can be used to further define status boundaries.

Jennings, James, ed. *Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Urban America*. Westport, Connecticut: Preager, 1994.

Blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Urban America examines the formation of ghettos in American cities, questioning how enclaves of ethnic minorities relate to one another politically. In considering social and fiscal monopolies in urban centers, Jennings describes how different power struggles can encourage ethnocentrism in minority communities, provoking rivalries among racial groups. The book appeals to an achievable "social justice," yet it recognizes the functional steps of ethnic identity and acceptance.

Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the making of the Underclass*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

American Apartheid takes a public policy approach to examining the dynamics of private ghettoization of urban United States and the public regulation that legally advocated the segregation of cities. The Fair Housing Act presents a number of problems with law enforcement, including poor funding and narrow objectives. The book also takes a sociological stance, researching the isolating effects of the ghetto and how, as an urban microcosm, it is contained by both inside and outside pressures.

Mohl, Raymond A. "The Second Ghetto Thesis and the Power of History." *Journal of Urban History*, 29.3, 2003: 243-256.

The Second Ghetto Thesis looks at the roles of government and public policy in housing projects and other forms of urban renewal. As new resources and public housing communities are constructed, they take on the demographics of previous residential options. Efforts to renovate the American city are hollowed out by the incapability to mobilize the urban racial composition. Mohl concludes that the model of a "second ghetto" movement should have a strong influence on today's civil rights legislation.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 1994.

In *Racial Formation in the United States*, Michael Omi and Howard Winant explore the aspects of nation and hegemony that encourage the collection of a common lifestyle and, consequently, a definition of deviance. Hegemony promotes group mentalities, such as morality-based conservatism, that must maintain a system of ideas and practices; it advocates a "common sense." The authors present five paradigms to answer how racism in America has changed and survived, stressing the fluid influences of class and gender interactions during different time periods.

Reed, Adolph. ed. *Without Justice for All: The New Liberalism and Our Retreat from Racial Equality*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1999.

With a unique and crucial study, Adolph Reed challenges the abilities and integrities of America's progressive politics. Specifically critiquing the Democratic Party, this book explains the successes of Reaganism and social hegemony in the midst of a crumbling liberal movement. As progressivism opens its doors to a wide spectrum of issues, its strength is dispersed, and it loses power against a strong Republican coalition. African-American advancement is especially vulnerable as it juggles the included obstacles of political and gender relations.

Stokes, Curtis and Theresa Meléndez. eds. *Racial Liberalism and the Politics of Urban America*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 2003.

In this collaboration, Stokes and Meléndez offer a set of scholarly essays to explore contemporary systems of privilege and oppression in America's urban centers through socioeconomic and political typologies. The essays concentrate on the entrapment of multicultural identity in the city, posing that factors of a "universal" social citizenship often conflict with "group

differentiated" citizenship, resulting, historically, in an American caste system. The essays also look at specific case studies, Detroit among them, to express the polarizing effects of metropolitan politics.

Street, Paul. "Urban Race Relations: 'Everything Changed?'" Hidden Continuities of Urban Racial Inequality Before and After 9/11." *Dissident Voice.* September 18, 2003.

Sociologist Paul Street views the domestic racializing effects of 9/11 and how the downturns of the nation's economy and the semi-permanent war on terror have shifted America's policy focus to a hegemonic agenda. The article provides statistics of incarceration rates and annual incomes by race in light of the 2001 terrorist attacks. Stree aims to expose the magnitude of contemporary urban race relations, exemplified by the economic recession felt after 9/11 that left many African Americans locked out of the workforce.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. New Jersey: Princeton, 1996.

Thomas Sugrue questions the conventional theories of twentieth-century urban racism by looking at the racial violence that flourished at the end of World War II, instead of attacking the welfare reform and social programs of the 1960s. Like Detroit, other major cities of the "rust belt" have also experienced postwar conflict, and Sugrue concentrates on spatial and social structures to explain the economic and racial disparities that limit the freedom and mobility of urban minorities.

Taylor, Henry Louis and Walter Hill. eds. *Historical Roots of the Urban Crisis: African Americans in the Industrial City, 1900-1950*. New York: Garland, 2000.

Historical Roots of the Urban Crisis very specifically exposes the history of the industrial city to explain modern urban dilemmas. As American cities enter a more information-based economy, African Americans need to play "catch up" in order to compete with the new market. The authors assembled a team of junior and senior colleagues to research different facets of African Amerincans' dependence on the industrial city and how internal conflicts add to more widespread racism in preventing class mobility.

Wright, Nathan. *Black Power and Urban Unrest: Creative Possibilities*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967.

In *Black Power and Urban Unrest*, Nathan Wright analyses the Civil Rights movement shortly after its "completion." He gives specific anecdotes and presents group dynamics of only a few years earlier, describing the Black Power struggle that chose to form in the cities. Black Power, Wright argues, was perceived as a new effort to "regain" a liberal democracy in the United States. The conclusions in this 1967 book take a more liberal stance than many of today's platform: Black Power needs to support African American self-development and social citizenship.

Claudio Grossman—Dean, American University Washington College of Law

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(*from left to right*) Leslye E. Orloff—Vice President and Director, Immigrant Women Program, Legal Momentum and Shiwali Patel—Senior Staff Editor, *The Modern American*

(*from left to right*) Elizabeth Keyes—WCL Practitioner-in-Residence with the International Human Rights Law Clinic and Amy Myers—Director of the WCL Domestic Violence Clinic