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What's Haunting Jackson Ward? Race, Space, and Environmental Violence

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What's Haunting Jackson Ward? Race, Space, and Environmental Violence

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Acknowledgement

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List of Abbreviations

CERCLA – Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

EPA – Environmental Protection Agency

ER – Environmental Racism

FDIC – Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

GAO – General Accounting Office

GRTC – Greater Richmond Transit Company

HOLC – Home Owner's Loan Corporation

HOME – Housing Opportunities Made Equal

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NPS – National Park Service

RVA – Richmond, Virginia

UCC – United Church of Christ

U.S.– United States

VCU – Virginia Commonwealth University

VEPCO – Virginia Electric and Power Company

WPA – Works Progress Administration

Abstract

WHAT'S HAUNTING JACKSON WARD? RACE, SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE

By Rachel A. Spraker, B.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017

Major Director: Jesse A. Goldstein, Assistant Professor Sociology

This research is about examining the way in which racialized environmental violence contributes to exploitative social relations becoming embedded in the everyday world. I argue that the space of the everyday has been produced through cycles of social relations proceeding from and/or tied to racialized environmental violence. I continue the work of critical scholars in asserting that social and environmental violence is linked in the same ideological impulse which seeks to hide itself behind a variety of alienating processes. The slow way in which environmental violence works is particularly impactful in these processes because of its attritional lethality, contributing to premature death. I studied these processes by examining the histories surrounding the site of a construction day labor firm in Richmond, Virginia. My methodology includes archival research on newspapers, public documents, and secondary sources establishing that the patterned co-location of social and environmental violence does not occur by chance.

Introduction

Even on a shockingly warm and sunny Tuesday afternoon in February 2017, where the high temperature topped out at 74 degrees, the building at 501 Hospital Street, a location in Richmond, Virginia's old Jackson Ward, strikes something of a desolate impression. This characterization is not simply because the site borders the Shockhoe Hill and Hebrew Cemeteries along with the highway bridge; or because it sits steps away from a low-income public housing complex known as Gilpin Court. The building itself and the symbolism of its current occupant do enough work on their own. A low grey cinderblock industrial building sits across from a seemingly long abandoned gas station and garage[1] where the foundations on which gasoline pumps once stood can been seen among the faint hint of straw grass sprouting up out of the presumably paved and now pocketed gravel lot. As seen in Figure 1, the building at 501 Hospital Street is surrounded on all sides by a chain link fence with the addition of barbed wire running across the top of the entry gate to the property. The overall effect of the building gives one the sense they are on a carceral property and to an extent the feeling is not misplaced. The current occupant of 501 Hospital Street, a space previously owned by – among others – the E.I. Du Pont de Nemours Company of explosive and chemical fame, is a construction day labor agency known as Staff Zone. Staff Zone is operated by Harris Ventures, Inc. headquartered in Alpharetta, Georgia with branches throughout the Southeast, Texas, and Colorado (Harris Ventures, Inc., 2016). The company is one among many of its type profiled by Terry Easton in his work "Geographies of Hope and Despair: Atlanta's African American, Latino, and White Day Laborers" (2007) in which the struggle of contingent labor in a new global economy, not as I argue a necessarily new, but a recycled economic phenomena is detailed. It is an industry

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[1] Though "operated" as a Talley's Auto Service Center as recently as June 2012.

characterized by instability, unreliability, wage exploitation, risk, and a certain type of physical and psychological toxicity (Martinez, 2014). That one of the individuals interviewed by Easton (2007), Danny Solomon, should liken the jobs to "slave work" is not a wholly unfounded association despite the potential charges of many, including the business owners of these "labor pools", that the work is "consensual" and paid at least a "minimum wage".

Figure 1: Google Maps Street View of 501 Hospital Street, April 2014. Screen captured on 05-March-2017.

As suggested by the title of Easton's work, it is an industry sector which is predominantly comprised of people of color but also white workers. As a business strategy, these companies tend to locate themselves in neighborhoods and business districts with a high prevalence of poverty and access to "a constant flow of desperate men who [have] limited means of securing employment in the primary labor market" (Easton, 2007). The circumstances Easton describes are incredibly apt descriptions of the social outcomes for Black residents of old Jackson Ward and in considering the consistency with which such outcomes are experienced in this space, one is left with the questions that drive Laura Pulido's (1996; 2000; 2016) and Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2002; 2007; 2008) work to understand how these patterns became embedded in the spaces of our everyday lives. What preconditions/histories, social-physical-economic-cultural,

produce spaces such as these and what *work* do these past processes and racial projects do in the present? Both arrived at an understanding that at their roots, it is a complex dialectic of socio-spatial relations that intersect with the destructive character of capital ideological power as wielded upon people and the environment. Pulido (2000) specifically identifies processes, often overlapping and mutually constitutive, of residential segregation, industrial zoning, and systemic disinvestment as key mechanisms to understand the socio-cultural process by which White people (especially those middle and upper classed) distanced themselves from the risk of toxicity, and Black people. In the analysis that follows each of these processes will be explored in old Jackson Ward as anchored by the Staff Zone site as it sits materially and symbolically. My work also includes an exploratory analysis of the ways in which racialized environmental violence, though not the only mechanism by which these processes (segregation, zoning, etc.) are affected in everyday life, does some heavy lifting in structuring the conditions and relations upon which spaces and the people that inhabit them are made more vulnerable to specific forms of exploitation.

The continuity and persistence of this space, 501 Hospital Street, as one that is linked with racial oppression and environmental violence and toxicity is jarring and the story of why Staff Zone (which could be substituted with any number of like facilities and operations) came to be located, when and as it is in old Jackson Ward, has extensive, complex, and haunting (in Gordon's (2008; 2011) conception) roots – only a portion of which can be told here but for which the story of old Jackson Ward and its particular place in the physical and socio-political relations of Richmond is key. This place as Katherine McKittrick (2007) suggests connects time and space in a way that is open to just the type of critical engagement as is theoretically informed by racial formation, the production of space, slow violence, and the conceptual frame of

environmental racism. The socio-spatial historical case of old Jackson Ward is being presented not as a particular or unique set of processes in the broader political economy but as a local case in its particularities.

The "givenness" or taken-for-granted view of space as neutral, knowable, natural, and static - is a normative framing on which interdisciplinary scholars such as Pulido, Gilmore, and McKittrick among others, have turned their critical theoretical lenses. Their work takes the myth of space's "neutrality" and "naturalness" to task by literally "going to the ground" on the complex social relations that "make *places"* and meaning of/in the world around us. Similarly, my research seeks to draw forward new understandings of the ways in which racialized environmental violence - as it is transmitted, resisted, and transformed across generations and geographies – is both shaped by and involved in shaping the socio-spatial processes by which inequality becomes embedded at the level of the everyday. Racialized environmental violence is not the only socio-spatial practice by which the uneven nature of development and opportunity get distributed but it is important as where we live, work, and play are critical to the lives we live in terms of opportunity, health, and long term viability of our "natural" and social ecosystems. Pulido (1996; 2000; 2016), Gilmore (2002; 2007), and Nixon (2011) specifically argue that this social and environmental violence is linked in the same ideological impulse. This ideology seeks to hide itself behind a variety of alienating processes that cloud our ability to perceive the systemic ideologies at work in our everyday that deflect causality onto individual choice, biology, or supposedly neutral and rational economic processes. The slow way in which environmental violence works, in Nixon's (2011) conception, is particularly impactful in these processes because of its attritional lethality occurring over a temporal scope and at times a plane (air, wind, water and soil) that is often out of sight. Gilmore's (2002) work on fatal power

couplings leading to "premature death" helps reveal how the negative impacts of environmental violence (by perpetuating pre-conditions enhancing vulnerability to premature death) materially and symbolically structure the lived environment in ways that make it more difficult for marginalized people to access levers through which they might limit the heavy toxic burden placed upon them. Gilmore's (2002) work also suggests that understanding what social relations produced a space compels us to imagine what the space might be if it were the product of differing social relations, and if the space *were* different what other relations – non-fatal power couplings - might actually be possible. In this respect space is "haunted" in Avery Gordon's (2011) conception as an "animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" and in so doing it "alters the experience of being in linear time, alters the way we normally separate and sequence the past, the present, and the future" (p.2). This research therefore seeks the ways in which racialized environmental violences, "past" and "present" to the extent there is a delineated/isolated "past", are implicated in structuring the world around us and contributing to the conditions that facilitate the reproduction of embedded forms of social relations in the racial formation process. I argue that to the extent neighborhoods like old Jackson Ward are marked today for violence – environmental and social – it is a space which has been produced my much earlier, persistent, and repetitive racial marking for disinvestment and exploitation through preceding yet active racialized environmental violence in the everyday.

Hauntings of Jackson Ward

In examining the interplay of people, places, and power - a broad range of interdisciplinary projects are seeking to reveal and effectively visualize, through words and images, the complex and interconnected socio-cultural processes that contribute to the age old truism that "where you live makes all the difference." One's location is "a dense site where

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history and subjectivity make social life" (Gordon, 2008, p. 8). Certainly, "where you live makes all the difference" is an aphorism with which few would argue as time and again this "truth" is revealed in all manner of study linking not just where you live - but also where you learn, work, and play - with key social measures like degree attainment, income, crime, wealth, health, enfranchisement, and opportunity. Schwab (2004) argues that pervasive in violent histories, are the legacies of "ghostly hauntings by the phantoms of a silenced past" (2004, p. 181). Gordon (2011) argues that "haunting" is not the same as being exploited, traumatized or oppressed, although it usually involves these experiences" (p. 2). As Gordon (2008; 2011) uses the term and she notes there are other potential meanings and uses for it, "haunting" is an "experiential modality", it is an animated state in which "a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (2011, p. 2). For Gordon "haunting is an emergent state and is also the "critical analytic moment", the moment wherein "the repression isn't working anymore (p. 4). Haunting "raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in linear time, alters the way we normally separate and sequence the past, the present, and the future (Gordon, 2011, p. 2). It is a concept that shares critical insight with what cultural geographer Katherine McKittrick, whose diasporic work attends thematically to "ghostly hauntings", describes as the production of absence or those processes bound to capitalist value systems which seek, through socio-spatial denial and objectification, to render certain geographies - particularly Black geographies – forgettable, forgotten or misremembered, invisible and un-visible (2006, p. 33).

McKittrick's most comprehensive work to date is her book *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (2006) in which McKittrick seeks to show that racism and sexism are not simply bodily or identity based but are also spatial acts (p. xviii). McKittrick is specifically interested in demonstrating the ways in which some of the impressions of

transatlantic slavery "leak" into the future, "in essence recycling the displacement of difference" (2006, p. xvii) and utilizes Toni Morrison's book *Beloved* as tool for such analysis. Linear time, that of which "haunting" can have us waver from (Gordon, 2011, p. 5), is described as a characteristic of modern capital society. Linear time is "segmented into a succession of quantified, interchangeable moments that measure the exchange value of labor and schedule the rationalized order of capitalism (Moore, 2013, p. 68), moving apparently ever forward, and offering itself as an "innocent" *present* - deceptively portraying itself as "open" and "evident" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 22). McKittrick's (2007) specific conceptualizations in this vein engage what she names as the *historical present*, or that which considers how the past informs and shapes (is active in) the present to make otherwise hidden power relations visible. This conception challenges individuals to see broader patterns than the apparently knowable *present* of linear time and to look at time on larger scales, asserting that rather than proceeding in a linear manner that there is a cyclical time – "the succession of alternations, of differential repetitions" which suggest that there is somewhere in this *present* an order, which comes from elsewhere, which reveals itself (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 32) often through space. McKittrick, and others seeking to critique the colonization of everyday life argue that while repetition is key it is important to understand that repetition does not mean the same result or a copy of past geographies, institutions or processes. According to McKittrick (2007), the fact that racial oppression can be detected through geographies such as plantations, ghettos, or racialized workplaces is not indicative of "unchanging trans-historical spaces", but they are sites "that reveal an uncompleted, but differential, socio-spatial process" (p. 106).

Situated in space, this concept of *haunting* has broad implications for the sociological imagination as typified by Gordon's (2008) book *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the*

Sociological Imagination. Gordon argues that "the past always haunts the present", such that "sociology must imaginatively engage those apparitions, those ghosts that tie present subjects to past histories" (p. xiii) with a knowledge of the "things behind things" (p. ix). McKittrick argues that "historical structures (geographic organization, political desires, legal and administrative frameworks) as can be observed in old Jackson Ward and elsewhere are open to our critical engagement precisely because they are locations that connect time and space" (p. 106) with people and struggles. The "daily violence of environmental degradation, racism, underemployment, overwork, shrinking social wages, and the disappearance of whole ways of life *and* those who lived them" (Gilmore, 2008, p. 32) did not happen in a day and did not accumulate in particular places by chance. To the extent that 'historical alternatives' are already inscribed in space, "embedded in the practice of subversion and not hiding in some elusive or fantasmic futurity, is profoundly unsettling: this knowledge makes the present waver, makes it not quite what we thought it was" (Gordon, 2011, p. 5) and opens a vision onto the other world that might be possible if produced by other power relations. Engaging with and exploring haunting and the historical present is a way in which one can begin to investigate the present's lived structural antecedents (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16), engaging with the losses of what may have been.

The old Jackson Ward neighborhood of Richmond Virginia is one such place/alternative. "Old" because what was once defined as the boundary of the Ward has come to be narrowed to only a core sliver of a broader territory in the North of the city. Old Jackson Ward has been divided and enclosed through a variety of processes. Though there are ongoing and otherwise recent (re)development efforts on the part of long-time residents and an ever growing cadre of "gentrifiers", the social outcomes found in old Jackson Ward are discouraging. A 2013 study

from a local civil rights organization, Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), shows that

the old Jackson Ward area is among those with the lowest opportunity in terms of education,

income, access to healthcare, homeownership, and access to sufficient public transportation –

notably all circumstances of which Easton (2007) describes in "Geographies of Despair". Given

that old Jackson Ward is in the "inner" core of a Southern U.S. city, it may come as no surprise

to learn that the area is majority Black by a significant margin with some portions of old Jackson

Ward coming in at around 91% Black[2]. HOME (2013) has additionally documented that the area

comprising old Jackson Ward also stands among those with a significant portion of individuals

who are "unbanked" or "underbanked", meaning they do not have an account insured by the

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or they have an account, but supplement with

"alternative" financial services. Some of these alternatives entail high interest "car title" or "pay

day loans" long associated with the much deserved moniker "predatory lending"[3]. The irony of

these facts given old Jackson Ward's history and the way, at least in part, it became a symbol of

Black material and cultural possibilities is palpable.

Banking once played a dominant role in the life of old Jackson Ward. This area of

Richmond had long been home to a significant population of "free" Blacks in the antebellum era

who accounted for 17% of Richmond's population by 1860 (Hoffman, 2004, p. 3). The first

Black bank chartered in the United States was located on Jackson Street in Richmond's old

Jackson Ward and later moved to Second Street in an area that along with Leigh Street would

become the economic and social center of Black life in Richmond. Growing out of a Black

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[2] Percentages were calculated from the Race table of the 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, accessed via the American Fact Finder tool for Census Tract 301.

[3] Though the high risk mortgage lending patterns connected with the Great Recession and the disproportionately high rate of foreclosures among racial minorities would seem to indicate such alternatives may be "worse" only in very relative terms to the "mainstream" practices. HOME has documented at https://homeva.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/richmond-foreclosure-map.pdf.

fraternal organization, the Grand Fountain United Order of True Reformers, the True Reformers

Bank would expand to have branches as far west as Kansas before mismanagement and

embezzlement on the part of one of its officials led it to fall into receivership in 1910. The True

Reformers had also established a newspaper, a real estate agency, a retirement home and a

building and loan association (Bradley, N.D.). The St. Luke Penny Savings Bank was also

founded in old Jackson Ward and is one of the few Black banks that survived the Great

Depression operating, through a merger after 1930 with Consolidated Bank and Trust, up until

2009. The order of St. Luke, the beneficial organization from which the Penny Savings Bank

originated, like the True Reformers would also operate other social services through a domestic

goods store in the old Jackson Ward community and by publishing a regular newsletter. Many

other fraternal and beneficial organizations would be chartered in Richmond with a growing

Black civic elite being located in old Jackson Ward. While many of these groups were

independent organizations others were connected with the Black religious organizations of the

area including First African Baptist (which at one time boasted the largest Black congregation in

the country), Ebenezer Baptist, Fifth Street Baptist, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist, and others. Old

Jackson Ward was a mixed income Black community into the 1930s with a dense web of Black

social support organizations, a necessity given the near abandonment experience the Black

community would encounter with formal government processes, institutions, and organizations

of the White socio-economic and political establishment.

The educational entities for Black children and young adults in the form of primary

schools, seminaries and universities would grow from the philanthropic endeavors of these Black

civic and religious organizations during the Reconstruction period and into the 1920s. Through

these opportunities, those like them in other areas of the South, and those that were available in

the North - a growing population of professionals (teachers, lawyers, nurses, bankers, storeowners, and doctors) would build alongside the skilled crafts workers, and laborers (manufacturing, domestic/laundry, agricultural, and construction). "Race pride" was strong in old Jackson Ward (Alexander, 2002) as there were calls to "buy Black" (NPS Video, viewed 1/31/17) and the area would be the site for Emancipation Day celebrations attended by thousands of Black Richmonders[4], parades from the Black fraternal orders and mutual aid societies, and religious gatherings/revivals that would include participation from Black leaders and citizens from around the country (Richmond Planet). The Hippodrome and Empire theaters located in the neighborhood would serve host to some of the biggest names in Black entertainment over the course of their own histories. Old Jackson Ward would also host members of the Black intelligentsia such as W.E.B. Du Bois whose work with the Virginia Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and friendships with Jackson Ward residents such as John Mitchell, Jr (editor of the Richmond Planet, member of the Knights of Pythias, and president of Mechanic's Savings Bank) and Maggie Lena Walker (Order of St. Luke, President of St. Luke Penny Savings Bank). The Maggie Walker house, whose namesake was the first Black woman to be a bank president in the U.S., has subsequently been named a National Historic Site and old Jackson Ward itself (at least a portion of it) is now a historic district. A portrait of Du Bois looms large in the Walker house's library space and the Park Rangers leading tours of the house highlight the significance of the symbolism of wealth, status, and pride this portrait; the library; and other pieces in the house make considering the era in which Walker accumulated them. When considering the work of preserving memories of the lives people lived in the neighborhood, and the social outcomes of old Jackson Ward today,

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[4] Given the persistent fear of "race wars" on the part of the White Civic/Political elite - one has to wonder the impact and symbolism of such events in the community's collective race consciousness.

another painful transformation lays at, and just below, the surface of the Ward. Staff from the National Park Service (NPS) highlighted the efforts of one community organizer working to clean and preserve the memories found in the historically Black cemeteries of Evergreen and East End. While both sites have suffered from severe neglect the cleanup has included managing not only overgrown brush and bees, but also illegal dumping[5]. That the resting site of many old Jackson Ward residents should come to be burdened by neglect and waste holds a revealing symmetry with broader processes associated with the Ward over the course of its life. While I do not intend to assert that old Jackson Ward was perfect, some type of "utopia", it most certainly held the promise of a once lived and now historic alternative to the current everyday experience of the Ward.

Going Beyond Environmental Racism in the Ward

In the so-called modern era, beginning in the late 18th century with the industrial revolution, many spaces – especially but certainly not limited to those found in the oldest portions of cities - bear a risk and toxicity directly related to industrial capitalist infrastructure, processes, and wastes. This is the case for Richmond, and by extension, for old Jackson Ward. While groups such as the NPS claim that the "town spread out over a series of hills and beyond along both sides of the [James] river naturally evolving as a center for trade and commerce with the location of its commercial and residential districts, public buildings, and industrial areas shaped by *topography* [emphasis added]" (National Park Service, N.D.) there are others, like the critical scholars whose work I detail, who would claim this development is anything but "neutral" or "natural" on the basis of the land rather than the relations of its people. The social

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[5] Ranger Ben Anderson made these comments in relation to his conversations with John Shuck who organizes volunteers to clean and care for the Evergreen and East End cemeteries. The comment arose after asking if I was a student and what I was studying. My response of yes and "environmental racism" prompted him to note that it was interesting to think about that in Jackson Ward as he had heard about the dumping at the cemeteries.

phenomenon of the disparate risk and toxic burden born by communities of color in these processes has come to be identified as *Environmental Racism* or ER (Bullard, 1983; U.S. GAO, 1983; Chavis and Lee, 1987; Bullard et al., 2007). That environmental violence should center on race is not a forgone conclusion, or an uncontested assertion (Friedman, 1998). Building in part from William Julius Wilson's work *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978), however rightly or wrongly in a debate that will not here be taken up, some researchers have countered that this violence is certainly now less about race and more about class, citing the prevalence of polluting industries and a lack of public services not only among Black, Hispanic, and Native American populations, but also among rural or poor White populations (Anderton, 1994; Heiman, 1996) - therefore suggesting that class is the guiltier culprit. And yet the assertion is one that perhaps for many, will seem entirely obvious as the social construction of race is understood along the lines of, and in production of, power differentials which have consequently structured rural-urban/center-periphery divides and geographic particularities.

In the 1970s and early 1980s these disparate "environmental" burdens faced by communities of color became an object of study that many academics and social activists would pursue to understand, and to change. Through much of the work on ER, the "environment" of interest has largely been associated with the elements of air, water, and land as well as industrial locations engaged in production, resource extraction, and waste disposal processes. These are often referred to as "point sources". A report published by the United Church of Christ's (UCC) Commission for Racial Justice, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* (Chavis and Lee, 1987)*,* is often cited as the primary starting line for ER research. The UCC report actually built upon earlier research by Robert Bullard and research undertaken at the behest of the United States General Accounting Office (GAO). The initial GAO study was tasked with examining the

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citing of hazardous waste landfills (U.S. GAO, 1983) after an incident in Warren County, North

Carolina where the "problem" of illegal dumping was "solved" by the controversial siting of a

toxic waste landfill in a poor Black area (UCC, 2007, p. 7). Each, in part due to their study

locations in the U.S. South, found a pattern of hazardous waste siting in spaces predominantly

populated by Blacks.

For much of its history ER research - whether academic, regulatory, or activist in nature -

has largely centered on studies of demographic or population characteristics that set out the grim

statistical realities disproportionately faced by communities of color with, as mentioned, a large

focus on "point sources" – a single identifiable and localized "something". If not a single point

source, or system of point sources, the research would be focused on a variety of diffuse sources,

often characterized in "non-point source" terms. Some examples of this type of research are the

1999 study where researchers connected with the Harvard Center for risk analysis (Graham,

Beaulieu, Sussman, et al.) found that the census tracts near coke plants have a disproportionate

share of poor and "non-white" residents. A 2002 (Keating and Davis) special report from a

coalition of the Black Leadership Forum, Clear the Air, and the Georgia Coalition for the

People's agenda found that 71% of Blacks live in counties that violate federal air pollution

compared to 58% of whites. They (Keating and Davis, 2002) also found that Blacks account for

17% of the population living within five miles of a power plant waste site (p.4). In 2014, the key

findings of a group (Orum, Moore, Roberts, et al.) examining the characteristics of populations

living within the "vulnerability zones" of chemical disaster were alarming. Residents of these

zones have average household incomes 22% below the national average, the percentage of

Blacks was 75% greater and the percentage of Latinos was 60% greater than for the U.S. as a

whole (p. 9). A Greenpeace report from 1991(Angel) documented the growing threat to

Indian/Tribal lands from the siting of large waste disposal facilities. The report detailed the staggering number of proposals for large waste facilities on Indian lands across the country (almost 100 at the time). Many of the proposals were actively resisted by the tribal communities but not all of this resistance would succeed. The possible listing of ER based research is substantial and diverse in so much as the range of toxic outcomes to be discovered and studied are limited only by the so-called technological advances from which they portent.

Few studies in Richmond have sought to place specific environmental violence in conversation with the ER literature but importantly, there are a couple of studies that establish such patterns exist in Richmond. HOME's (2013) spatial analysis included a limited exploration of what their researchers termed as "environmental exclusion" in connection with residential segregation on the basis of race (p. 18-19). HOME researchers investigated the proximity of segregated communities, predominantly Black, to things such as Solid Waste Management Facilities (includes landfills, incinerators, waste treatment plants and transfer stations) as well as point source water and air pollution sites, brownfields, and superfund sites[6]. HOME found that "in total 32% of minorities in segregated minority communities live in close proximity to an environmental hazard compared to just 4% of Whites living in segregated White communities" of Richmond (p. 18).

While recognizing and investigating these general patterns, in Richmond and elsewhere, is important in the face of studies which seek to refute or significantly diminish the perceived

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[6] A "brownfield" as defined by the EPA is "a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. It is estimated that there are more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S. and this in all likelihood is a low estimate. The "Superfund" is an outgrowth of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) passed by the U.S. Congress in 1980 after a series of toxic disasters in the 1970s including the Love Canal and the fire at a toxic waste facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey that spread smoke and ash over a 15-mile area, among other disasters. CERCLA has been criticized by many including Fox (2012) who argues that as an institutional control CERCLA has and will continue to fail in many ways to provide intended protections.

impact and origins of such hazards (Anderton, et al., 1994; Friedman, 1998), it is equally important to understand that these pointed *outcomes* alone do not and cannot tell all there is to be told about "Environmental Racism". It is a reduction and a narrow, if not convenient, way to view environmental violence/issues as imminently identifiable and manageable as well as fundamentally "environmental" and "technical" as opposed to social. The field of ER has been evolving and within the field, often among the sociological literature, there are several researchers who have now moved "beyond the question of who lives beside what facilities...seeking therefore to explain why patterns of environmental racism exist and persist" (Taylor, 2014, p. 26). Taylor (2014) has done some comprehensive summarizing work which traces out many of the arguments or theories that have been engaged to understand these patterns, which have included things such as a lack of values within communities of color, race-neutral market practices related to land purchases and tax structures, and job "black mail" or the concession to site a noxious facility for the promise of stable and gainful employment in communities where jobs have been in short supply[7]. All of these types of explanations, many of which move somewhat beyond the incomplete statistical analysis on demographic and particulate characteristics, still leave major issues at work in environmentally and socially degrading practices unchallenged or unnoticed and reflect the individualized moral/behavioral rather than systemic focus.

Racial Formation, Racial Projects, and Subalternity

In 1996, Laura Pulido's book *Environmentalism and Economic Justice* became one of the first to examine ER not as a racial *outcome* but as a phenomenon linked with racial *formation*.

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[7] Notably, Taylor's research details how the jobs identified in these bargains rarely materialize.

Channeling Omi & Winant (1986), Pulido (2000) argues that racism is the product of relationships between places and people. Racism is therefore a material/discursive formation, a construction, which exists in various realms with racial meaning embedded in our language, psyche, and social structures (p. 13). While not the only, or even necessarily the earliest[8], to posit that race is a social construction, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's racial formation theory has become a standard bearer in sociological literature seeking to explore the contested origin and meaning of race and racism in a variety of contexts. For Omi & Winant the meaning of race is contested and unstable with the making and remaking – *racial formation* – proceeding from "historically specific political, social, and cultural developments" –*racial projects* – which shape and direct the process (Hosang, LaBennett, & Pulido, 2012, p. 91). Operating at multiple levels/scales, racial projects seek to both represent and explain the meaning of racial dynamics as well as organize and distribute resources on the basis of race. Racism is defined by Omi & Winant as a "racial project that combines essentialist representation of race (stereotyping, xenophobia, aversion, etc.) with patterns of domination (violence, hierarchy, super-exploitation, etc.). Racism marks certain visible characteristics of the human body for purposes of domination. It naturalizes and reifies these instrumental distinctions" (Omi & Winant, 2013, p. 963). Omi & Winant further argue that "racism" is a foundational and continuous part of U.S. history, and "indeed modern world history" (2013, p. 961). Omi & Winant distinguish the concept of race from racism arguing that race is so "profoundly a lived-in and lived-out part of both social structure and identity, that it exceeds and transcends racism - thereby allowing for resistance to racism" (2013, p. 964). This element of Omi & Winant's theory is what places racial formation theory on a separate footing to alternatives such as *structural racism* or the *White racial frame*

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[8] Omi and Winant (2013) place themselves (p. 962) in the black radical tradition of W.E.B DuBois and C.L.R James whose work was early in situating race as socially constructed rather than biologically determined.

for instance of Feagin and Elias (2013) which would appear to exclude such considerations of productive resistance on the premise that White racism usurps and monopolizes all political space (Omi & Winant, 2013, p. 961). My research has therefore included where possible, references to the ceaseless subtle and direct ways Black residents of old Jackson Ward have engaged in resistance to the equally ceaseless oppressions directed at the Ward and its people.

More than a "process of domination" as seemingly politely described by Omi & Winant, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, whose work is expansive but often focused on the economic and political forces implicated in carceral geographies, asserts that "racism is a practice of abstraction, a *death dealing* [emphasis added] displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations"…functioning as "a limiting force that pushes disproportionate costs of participating in an increasingly monetized and profit-driven world onto those who…cannot reach the variable levers of power that might relieve them of those costs" (2002, p. 16). Such is the case with the perpetuation and potential resistance of environmental violence. The economic and social marginality of *the subaltern* – the socio-culturally marginalized or those at the bottom of the hierarchy - means that environmental issues are encountered within the context of domination such that "environmental struggles are not strictly environmental" (p. 191) - certainly not in the way mainstream or normative approaches might wish for such things to be understood. Premature death has been on the table in old Jackson Ward for most of its history through a combination of environmental exposures, hazardous work, and political neglect. Gilmore and McKittrick have engaged deeply and directly with Pulido's work in ER with implications in the myriad "fatal couplings" or applications of violence through a vicious cycle of political power through the state contributing to premature death (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16). The cyclical nature of these processes, as described by Gilmore and McKittrick, has grounded the search for such

relations in the case of old Jackson Ward. Pulido, Gilmore, and McKittrick each attend to the multi-scalar nature of these processes to understand that while they may be "local", they are "hardly a local project" (p. 193) such that the work of these scholars tends to place their case studies within the broader context of the national and international historical political economy.

Political Processes and the State

Pulido's article (2000) "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California" provided another critical opportunity to problematize the concept of racism commonly engaged in ER studies. Pulido specifically criticizes the narrow view of ER literature that focuses on malicious individual (discrete) acts – a view that does not recognize or deeply question the structural and hegemonic forms of racism contributing to such inequalities. "Rethinking Environmental Racism" specifically asks "how did whites distance themselves from both industrial pollution and nonwhites?" (2000, p. 14). Pulido (2000) moves to answer this question with an approach that examines the larger socio-spatial processes of inequality with an understanding that "space is essential to the (re)production of a particular racial formation" (p. 19). Pulido argues that all of these spaces need to be understood as functionally linked because they do not exist in a vacuum, exhibiting relationships between racism and the production of industrial zones, pollution, and residential areas, etc. While some may argue these issues are more about class than race, Pulido challenges us once again to see the way in which racism is complicit in the formation of a particular class structure, while class structure and exploitation reproduce racism (1996, p. 195). In arguing that we need to better understand White privilege to understand ER, Pulido is arguing that the social construction of "whiteness" as a social status - and the fault lines that get more sharply drawn as one drifts away or is cast out, through specific socio-spatial practices like environmental violence, of the

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ideological concept of whiteness, therefore becoming "non-white" - is part of a valuation process that is operating among what otherwise may be seen as class distinctions.

Pulido and several other researchers have spent a significant amount of time exploring the role of "redlining" as a specific socio-spatial practice with implications in ER and other processes of domination. *Redlining* is the common term by which the systemic devaluation of minority neighborhoods was geographically incorporated into systems of lending and (dis)investment by U.S. government agencies in the 1930s. It was a practice aligned with what Gilmore (2008) describes as "the abandonment characteristic of contemporary capitalist and neoliberal state reorganization" to benefit from the "enormous disorder that 'organized abandonment' both creates and exploits" (p. 31). To the extent that neighborhoods, like old Jackson Ward, in the 1930s could be "redlined" for limited or no federal support of mortgage financing[9] I argue that they were already products of much earlier racial marking for disinvestment and exploitation on the basis of preceding racial projects of varying types but specifically racialized environmental violence. The existence of these earlier processes is very apparent in the old Jackson Ward case based in part on Richmond's particular history in the racial formation of the U.S. But it was not just the state or even corporate market actors at work on these racial projects, Pulido's research also provides information on the cultural practices engaged by White-controlled housing associations that drew up legal covenants to restrict homeownership in certain communities on the basis of race or other characteristics, further contributing to the perpetuation of the process and the ongoing acceptance of the disinvestment in Black or other minority communities.

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[9] The University of Richmond's Digital Scholars lab includes a series of data linked with the 1937 "Residential Security Map" of Richmond from the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) which can be found at http://dsl.richmond.edu/holc/.

In outlining the political processes such as redlining, and the (despite multiple court

challenges some extending well beyond the Fair Housing Act in the 1960s when they became

largely unenforceable and should have been removed[10]) use of racialized housing covenants

privileging "Whiteness", Pulido is locating many ER issues and processes into a complex

network of institutions facilitated by a state apparatus that is and was a direct or complicit actor

in racialized projects. In this sense racialized environmental violence and other such social

processes can be seen as a type of socio-cultural/political repetition. Throughout these cycles

Pulido, Gilmore, McKittrick and others who practice engaged scholarship, are seeking to locate

the leverage points by which the subaltern, in this case those experiencing racial oppression, can

effectively struggle and resist exploitive relations with the potential for influencing alternative

relations which result in "non-fatal" power couplings (Gilmore, 2002, p. 16). Through examining

a number of different cases, Pulido et al. (2016) argue that a significant portion of the barrier to

progress in finding or accessing these levers lies with activists' and academics' overreliance on

state action or intervention in environmental issues generally, and with minority communities

specifically. Pulido et al. assert that while the state has been a key to many strategies combatting

ER, real change has been stymied by the state as it has functioned largely to channel and

misdirect activists and communities into dispute resolution and compromise on terms that

preserve and reproduce the same conditions. Pulido (2016) goes far beyond simply arguing that

trust in the state is misplaced and makes a case - which unites many critical analyses - by arguing

that ER is constituent of racial capitalism and a state-sanctioned violence. In short, the state is an

instrument and a primary actor in these socio-spatial practices and processes. By insisting that

we place contemporary forms of racial inequality in a materialist, ideological and historical

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[10] See Rich, 2005 which covers these covenant arrangements and their legal challenges in Richmond, Va into the 2000s.

framework, Pulido invites insight into the ways in which the *legacies* of these processes are still active in everyday life (2016, p. 4) and as such, the value of understanding *racial capitalism* is its reframing of how the problems of ER are conceptualized and how political strategies are designed to combat a fundamentally non-democratic ideology, capital.

Slow Violence and Critical Spatio-Temporal Understandings

To understand the ways in which racialized environmental violence becomes important to the process of embedding racially based practices of domination across social institutions and locations as Pulido and Pellow (2007), another critical ER researcher, suggest it is necessary to critically understand the temporality of such projects. Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) is an expansive work as it spans multiple disciplines, geographical and socio-economic scales, and much like the writer activists he profiles - his is a deeply woven story that is at once compelling and alarming. Nixon's work builds "from below" (subalternity) or certainly from the margins, and is an endeavor to draw out the often unrecognized link between environmental projects and disasters with new forms of Western imperialism. Much like Pulido asks that the reader reject the hegemonic narrowing of ER as isolated and intentional acts, Nixon argues that the conception of "violence" must be broadened both spatially and temporally to better understand the lethality of environmental issues, fast and slow. Nixon defines "slow violence" as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that typically is not viewed as violence at all" (2011, p. 2), at least not anymore. In old Jackson Ward and other communities this is particularly relevant because the past violence structures (physically and symbolically) and at times permanently renders unusable, the territory on which lives, and ways of life, can be lived. In taking issue with the spectacle of violence as portrayed in

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media, political, and other informational venues and its reification when eruptive and acute, Nixon is in a conversation of a kind with the theoretical frames of theorists such as Guy Debord and the Situationists, among others. Nixon critiques "spectacles" and the way their symbolism and portrayals detach the human experience of events from true reality, the way they alienate. This is done by drawing a hyper-focus on an isolated moment without regard to the way in which these moments are connected across much broader social, temporal, and spatial scales. In examining the unthinking way in which the "fallout" of things such as nuclear and industrial accidents, oil spills, resource extraction, industrial toxin releases, fertilizer and pesticide use, and the environmental and health consequences of war are understood – Nixon invites the reader to recognize that the unequal burden of violence born by those on the margins – the subaltern - is not isolated to the moment or location of spectacle rather it is *ever* present, and at times predictable, on the basis of the violent and oppressive socio-political relations constituent of the "ordinary" moments of everyday life. Nixon's work draws out the difficulty of sustained engagement with what is ideologically rendered as "acute" or narrow violence even as the environmental and social ripples of a violent past do active work on a day to day basis in ways that are both predictable and unpredictable, visible and unvisible in Gordon's (2008) description. Nixon's work furthermore highlights the ideological challenges to "remediation" of environmental violence which structures not only current but future possibilities of space at the temporal scale of centuries and beyond rather than the years or decades by which policies and practices are engaged for the supposed abatement and prevention of such violence.

Pulido, Gilmore, Pellow, and Nixon collectively draw together on an important and vast array of critical scholarship which contributes meaningfully to how ER is conceptualized and as a concept which opens a path for critical vision onto what it means for potentially emancipatory

projects on the local and global scales. As each utilizes historically situated cases to trace

dynamic socio-political and economic flows, their work calls into question the way in which

hegemonic narratives permeate all scales of social relations. Each ultimately engages in a

dialectical analysis and while not always Marxist per se, are largely engaged in fundamentally

Marxist projects. But theirs is not necessarily a traditional, dogmatic, or wholly structurally

deterministic view as can sometimes be the case in Marxist informed research, perhaps in part

due to the inflection of theories of racial formation and subalternity, but also through the

incorporation of critical spatial theory which, just as with questions of race and racism, seeks to

articulate the way space is socially produced through and for the very power differentials

implicated in many forms of domination and struggle.

The contributions of Pulido, Gilmore, and McKittrick in coupling these interdisciplinary

theories and complex temporalities and socio-spatial processes are heavily influenced by theories

of the production of space by attending to several theoretical concepts that have been infused

into the ER conceptual consciousness via the incorporation of critical human geography. This

has happened via direct lines and references to the works of David Harvey, Neil Smith, and

Edward Soja. While the value of such work in its own right and home discipline is immense, its

philosophical and cultural character has allowed for significant cross-cutting, with valuable

effect in sociological and political discourses. This may be due, at least in small part, to the fact

that within the foundational elements of the work of Harvey, Smith, and Soja are the insights and

many theoretical impulses of a French Marxist sociologist and philosopher of space, Henri

Lefebvre. While Lefebvre was an amazingly prolific writer during his long career, only a portion

of his work has been translated into English such that in the U.S. he is best known for just a few

of his works. First among these is *La Production de l'espace* (*The Production of Space*) which

was published in 1974 but was not translated and published in English until 1991, the year of Lefebvre's death. *The Production of Space* was an influential text which some say facilitated the "spatial turn in social and cultural theory by introducing space, as an interpretative concept, into sociological, political, economic, historical and cultural analysis" (Stanek, 2007, p. 461). Soja (2009) uses the term "transdisciplinary" to describe Lefebvre's critical theories and approach, and Lefebvre does tend to fall into what one might consider the "meta-theoretical". It is Lefebvre's work on modernity, the way in which everyday life has been "colonized", and his emancipatory concepts of the "Right to the City" and the "Right to Difference" in his work the *The Urban Revolution* with which Smith (2003) would engage and develop into broader criticisms in the field which have been used to analyze critical ER issues such as gentrification (Pellow, 2007, p. 34) and grassroots activism.

For Lefebvre (2009) the production of space enacts a logic of homogeneity and a strategy of the repetitive (p. 189), further arguing that "space is not a scientific object removed from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic". "If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents (people)...it is precisely because this space has already been occupied and planned, already the focus of past strategies, of which we cannot always find traces. Space is a historical social product"…"It is a product literally occupied with ideologies" (2009, p. 170-176) and this places space at the center of ideological struggle. Rather than analyzing and focusing solely by the particular function of a space, Lefebvre the sociologist suggested reasoning in terms of representations, uses, practices, and appropriation of the space (Busquet, 2012). This is why studies such as Pulido's (1996; 2000;2016) and Gilmore's (2007) dig so deeply into the past of particular spaces and processes to reveal the ways in which these past racial strategies/projects continue to make meaning in contemporary spaces where liberal

capitalist ideology seeks *blindness* to these past projects or what McKittrick described as absented presence – the work of capitalist ideology in ensuring certain geographies (Black geographies in McKittrick's work) are forgettable and forgotten to produce exploitable places and populations – populations and places, as each marks the other. These understandings are echoed prominently in Gilmore's observation that there is a hidden continuity to the "daily violence of environmental degradation, racism, underemployment, overwork, shrinking social wages, and the disappearance of whole ways of life *and* those who lived them" (2008, p. 32).

Research Methodology

This research draws primarily from a blending of the mixed-methods models of Gilmore (2002; 2007; 2008) and Pulido (1996; 2000; 2006) which have generally sought to understand how race and racism operate in conjunction with a particular political-economic system through describing a complex set of interactions as viewed from a critical lens. Through these explorations, each has engaged deeply with historical socio-spatial practices and the through-line these practices secret in critically examining the work of "past" racial projects on current spaces and social relations. Though not comparative in the way Pulido tends to examine social movements, this research does access Pulido's methods of examining textual archives from governmental and organizational media. The research is thematically organized around the socio-spatial practices Pulido associates with environmental racism as previously detailed (residential segregation, industrial zoning, disinvestment, etc.) and engages with the "possibilities" Gilmore and McKittrick seek through critical analysis and storytelling to find "non-fatal couplings" through the gaps revealed when the repression of "fatal couplings" isn't working anymore, when there is a "specter". By perceiving racialized environmental violence as a moment of critical analysis, Gordon's conception of "haunting" is also used as an analytic device in this socio-

historical research case. The case is expressed through a deeply woven narrative including some maps and images, and focuses on old Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia.

The selection of Jackson Ward as a site for investigation came in several parts and as a point of authenticity; I must state that I am an outsider on multiple accounts of this story not having lived in Richmond and as a white woman. My initial interest in the project stemmed from earlier work focused on suburbanization as a capitalist inspired discriminatory racial formation which functions as a primary mechanism of environmental racism in the U.S. context. Exploratory research revealed that Richmond, Virginia had a unique history in this process boasting one of the first commercial electric street car systems in the United States, establishing the context for one of the first clear examples of "white flight" in America. Though much of the literature reviewed at the time was focused on the post-World War II era there were hints in the work of Laura Pulido, David Harvey, and Henri Lefebvre to a much more complex and persistent set of social relations at issue leading to related literature (primarily via Lefebvre's influence) in colonial imperialism, studies in the realm of cultural geography (ex. Gilmore, McKittrick) and others. In this initial research, references and information surfaced related to the old Jackson Ward neighborhood in Richmond. Traveling to and from Richmond for course work was facilitated by Interstate 64 with the primary on and off ramp being accessed from Belvidere street in Richmond. On frequent occasions I noticed the existence of a road-side historical marker labeled "Jackson Ward", shown in Figure 2 but had not pursued its meaning.

Figure 2: Google Maps Street View screen capture. N Belvidere Street and W Marshall Street Intersection. Last accessed 05-March-2017.

At one time old Jackson Ward bore the description, and cultural and economic symbolism, of "Harlem of the South" (Jackson Ward Historic Association, N.D.) and "Black Wall Street" (Campbell, 2016). Yet there was another "Wall Street" in Richmond, not far to the southeast from what would become old Jackson Ward. It was a space McInnis (2013) describes as tucked away and almost hidden, surrounded by the network of businesses that supported the slave trade. Richmond began as a center for trade and commerce in large part due to its location in the mid-Atlantic and to its geographical features, including its port. While agricultural products, coal, and timber (Mooney, 2015) would be its first primary commodities the slave trade itself would come to drive its growth, particularly after the land use practices of the region decimated growing capacity through overuse and the international slave trade was banned. These forces comingled in pushing this human trafficking almost exclusively to an interregional, "internal", trade in the U.S. which resulted in the redistribution of slaves, largely from the "upper" South (of which Virginia is a part), to the "deep" South and the growing West. These processes, sometimes referred to as the "Second Middle Passage" (Gates, Jr., N.D.), were fueled

by shifts in the political economy of the South on the basis of, at least in no small part, ruined landscapes; shifts from tobacco[11] to cotton; and changing modes of production through the industrial manufacturing taking off in the North. This view offered a glimpse into the nexus of environmental and social violence and the economy as key mechanisms for reproducing "a particular racial formation" (Pulido, 2000, p. 19) that in turn – as Pulido and Gilmore argue - is "complicit in the formation of a particular class structure, while that class structure and exploitation reproduce racism" (Pulido,1996, p. 195).

Seeking additional generative examples, I conducted exploratory research to locate prior work or references to issues falling within the environmental racism conceptual frame (broadly conceptualized by Pulido, Taylor, and Gilmore as interwoven socio-political spatial relations and power differentials) in contemporary and historical sources. I utilized newspaper and magazine sources from Richmond during this phase. This produced a vast array of research leads on relevant moments/episodes and sites specific to Richmond and old Jackson Ward, but also aligned with broader political eras such as Reconstruction, Redemption, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Neo-liberalism on the basis of the governmental/state and social movement focus of those influenced by Omi & Winant, David Harvey, and Neil Smith. Subsequent and formal archival data collection included a variety of sources but was largely focused on media coverage of particular events and processes. Two archival newspaper sources, "The Richmond Times Dispatch" and "The Richmond Planet" were selected as primary in this effort due to their continuity, availability, and "searchability" over the extended time period of the research. The "Richmond Times Dispatch" database is available through the Library of Virginia in a

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[11] Tobacco has played a huge role in the economy of Richmond, Virginia. Richmond became one of the primary agricultural grading centers in the state and region. Profits from this industry fueled the "Byrd Machine" which was a southern Democratic political party structure that would dominate Richmond and Virginia politics for decades. The factories and material moving processes also required extensive use of slave labor and upon emancipation the systemic activities to secure a consistent source of cheap labor primarily in the form of Black labor.

searchable format, on the basis of optical character recognition, extending into 1903. I utilized a key word search on the term "Jackson Ward" for any resultant coverage during 1903, 1904, 1913, 1914, 1955, 1956, 1978, and 1979. As noted, I selected the dates on the basis of the exploratory research identifying instances of the nexus of environmental and social violence. This method resulted in a total of 734 results for all years combined which were reviewed, with the exclusion of any event announcements or property sales.

The "Richmond Planet" was first published in 1882 and was founded by 13 former slaves and merged with the "Richmond Afro-American" in 1938 (Library of Virginia, 2014). The "Richmond Afro-American" and "Richmond Planet" were therefore available from 1888-1996 and were used for data collection. The "Richmond Planet" was available digitally from the Library of Virginia's Chronicle of Virginia digital scholarship project until 1922 and available via microfilm at the Library of Virginia in its successor publication the "Richmond Afro-American". Neither of these formats were searchable on the basis of character strings such that the front page of each available issue, both were published on a weekly basis on Saturdays, were reviewed for the years identified resulting in 364 front pages due to some issues being unavailable from the digital collection. The intent of using both the "Richmond Times Dispatch" and the "Richmond Planet/Afro-American" was to gain perspective on the variety of interrelated issues from normative and oppositional frames, from the research it also became clear that the editors and authors of the two publications responded to the work of the other on several occasions with more direct engagement being evidenced in the "Richmond Planet's" response to coverage of the Black community in the "Richmond Times Dispatch".

Both the "Richmond Times Dispatch" and the "Richmond Planet/Afro-American included frequent coverage of Richmond City Council proceedings, the activities of social and

civic organizations in Richmond, and made connections to related regional or national trends and implications for local activities. Given the limited time and resources for conducting this research the newspaper coverage was further utilized as a proxy for group and organizational discourse on the purpose and nature of events, structures, and discourses as they unfolded. The research could have benefited from access and review of the organizational records of Richmond churches, housing associations, and court briefings and documents for a variety of the events and thematic issues implicated but time and resources were a limitation. This is separate from the anticipated challenges and likely limited availability of detailed documentation from association groups.

The newspaper coverage was also used as a proxy for "eye-witness" and direct informational accounts from potential interviews that might be found with individuals in Richmond generally, and old Jackson Ward specifically. Each of the newspapers is limited to the extent that the viewpoints discussed tend to represent "the better class" or upper class view of each respective readership, as frequently cited by the "Richmond Planet" which was published by Black business leaders. Furthermore, both publications until much more recent history were written almost exclusively by men. The Order of St. Luke in Richmond was for a period of time led by a woman, Maggie Walker, who published a newsletter. Attempts were made to locate copies of that publication but were unsuccessful based on the limited time frame and resources for this study. Based on time, resources, and the historic temporal scope of the research direct interviews were not utilized though it is recognized that for additional coverage of the topic such interviews would be valuable. The mixed methods approaches of Pulido and Gilmore use such interviewing to valuable effect such that two sources outside of the newspapers were used in an attempt to approximate the inclusion of individual voices in the lived experience of old Jackson

Ward. The Voices of Freedom digital scholarship effort at the Virginia Commonwealth University which included review of five interviews with local civil rights leaders active in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Additionally, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) "Life Histories" projects, with "interviews" of Richmond residents were reviewed. The WPA life histories are available online through the Library of Virginia. A total of 65 "Life Histories" were reviewed on the basis of searching for "Richmond" in the metadata available for each catalog entry from a larger pool of 1350 histories. While this effort yielded information of interest, the "Life Histories" do not represent the voice or experience of the individuals "interviewed" in a way that faithfully reflects the views of Black citizens of Richmond and provides more insight into the ideological viewpoints of the primarily White interviewers and writers engaged by the WPA.

The newspaper sources and other secondary historical resources were utilized to establish context, and the digital mapping effort of the Virginia Memory project – "Mapping Inequality" - were used as a historical cartographic base and to identify Richmond City Council documents, related studies, and ordinances of interest - given the theory informed focus on state and political activities. As mentioned, the theoretical and socio-historic case work of Pulido - through the concept of environmental racism - also helped to center the archival research on hazardous siting, zoning, disinvestment, and toxic fallout as slow violence. These reviews included Richmond City Planning Commission documents from 1946, 1950, and 1951 as well as zoning and land use information from 1937, 1951, and 2016; property data at the parcel level[12] available

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[12] This research was unable to establish a continuous property chain for the parcel on which Staff Zone sits as building shifts over time, particularly the highway, made it difficult to locate a unifying identifier to track the property. Microfilm of property records from 1936 – 1947 were reviewed at the Library of Virginia to establish the DuPont Chemical connection. More recent property records dating to 1998 are available from the Richmond Assessor's Office online database. The physical building was constructed in 1958 and appears to have been used for a variety of industrial uses. Building uses in the surrounding area suggest a connection to auto repair and wrecker services. The occupant immediately prior to Staff Zone, with a period of vacancy, was the Richmond Spay and Neuter clinic.

via microfilm from the Library of Virginia for 1934-1956 and online from the Richmond Assessor's office for 2008 forward; special reports from the Richmond Water commission in 1904; as well as demographic survey data and reports from 1913 and 1929 specifically connected to "the negro" population's housing, economic, and educational conditions. The research also included review of Environmental Protection Agency data on brownfields, toxic release inventories, and other environmental concerns from the old "Jackson Ward" census tracts and a review of data prepared by a Richmond Civil Rights organization –Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) - on what they termed "environmental exclusion". Finally, the research incorporated limited but valuable field work which included driving and walking tours of old Jackson Ward as well as site visits to the Maggie Lena Walker Historic Site and the Richmond Black History Museum in February and March of 2017.

Through a standpoint theoretically grounded by racial formation, the production of space, slow violence, and the conceptual frame of environmental racism this research seeks to draw forward the ways in which racialized environmental violence is both shaped by and shaping of the social relations implicated in the processes by which inequality becomes embedded at the level of the everyday in service to exploitative ideology but also, in the resultant struggle, that which holds potential for imagining the possible. In so doing, this research seeks to bring forward the "ghosts" of that which is very much alive ("doing work") and present but has been concealed and repeated in the spaces of the everyday.

<center>**Data Analysis**</center>

Staff Zone

According to the Richmond Assessor's office records many of the properties near Staff

Zone, 501 Hospital Street, are "Industrial Vacant Land (501)" with the notable exception of the

large facility at 710 Hospital Street operated as Reco Biotechnology, the trade name for Aqua

Clean Environmental of Virginia, LLC. Reco Biotechnology is a treatment, recycling, and

disposal facility for processing of soil (particularly petroleum contaminant for reuse as fill when

remediated below "regulatory levels") and related debris, liquids, sludges, semi solids and

viscous materials with "*commodities*[13] [emphasis added]…transported and received in bulk, tote,

and drum quantities" (Aqua Clean Environmental of Virginia, LLC., 2013). Figure 3 provides a

past-present view to help locate these spaces in the discussion that will follow. The base map for

this figure was drawn by F.W. Beers in 1876 and shows the outline of the Richmond City Wards

in yellow and the border of the city in purple. Shockoe Hill and Hebrew cemeteries provide

useful anchor points for calibrating one's bearings in this *historical present* (McKittrick, 2007).

The superimposed image is from Google Maps (Last accessed 3/30/2017) where Staff Zone is

identified next to the Reco Biotechnology facility. The rectangular enclosure roughly captures

the current location of the low-income housing complex Gilpin Court, and another space – the

City Crematory – which will be a point of reference of some significance. The area was also the

location for the "Colored Alms House" or that early ancestral symbol of the concentrated area of

poverty Easton (2007) identifies as favored by labor pools such as Staff Zone. To say that day

labor of the variety offered through Staff Zone is not new for African Americans in Southern

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[13] The fact that such by-products of industry could be in themselves viewed as marketable is fodder for an entire stream of critiques also bound up in the techno-managerial fallacy of neo-liberalism and is part of Pellow's (2007) work Resisting Global Toxics. While relevant this will not be the focus of this critique.

communities is something of an understatement. Survey data from 1927 suggests that almost 74% of Black men from the neighborhood in which 501 Hospital Street now resides, old Jackson Ward, were exactly such laborers. Steven Hoffman (2004) writes that "concentrated as laborers, teamsters, deliverymen…Richmond's African-Americans consistently performed the lowest paid and least skilled jobs in the city" (p. 13).

Figure 3: "Outline Map of Cities in Richmond and Manchester and Vicinity", F.W. Beers, 1876. Google Maps inset.
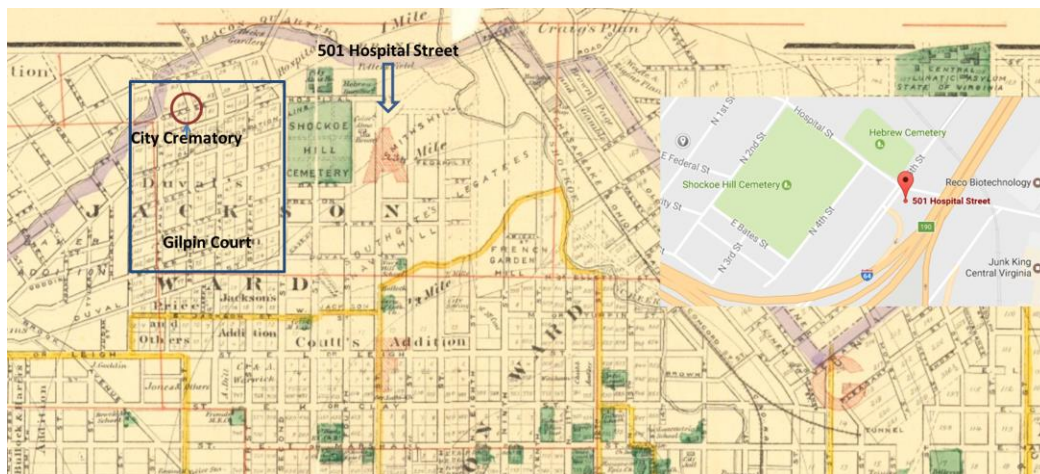
Built By Blacks

The American South was quite literally "built by Blacks" more than any other region of the country. The business of slavery was "big business" (Heier, 2010) not only from the actual commodity exchange in humans but from all the industries built up around facilitating the trade and from the value extracted from slave labor. The business of slavery was especially crucial to the Richmond, Virginia economy. Richmond was the second largest slave trading market in the U.S. (Moeser, 2000, p. 36) eclipsed only by New Orleans in this repulsive accolade. Slave labor was used in the physical construction of a majority of the Richmond cityscape in the antebellum period and beyond not to mention the early agrarian and resource extraction industries of

tobacco, coal, and timber that would solidify Richmond's place as an economic power in the "upper South". Richmond's physical location on the Eastern seaboard also made it a crucial trading town. In the post emancipation and Civil War period a great migration of Black people moved from the farms and plantations throughout their states into urban areas and into the North. During this period Richmond and other cities in the "New South" were quite concerned not only with the specter of "race riots" but with the challenge of securing a stable supply of cheap Black labor (Massey, 1990; Myers & Massey, 1991) upon which profits could continue to be extracted. These economic forces intertwined with the complex socio-cultural infrastructure to produce a broad array of mechanisms and practices by which the White civic elites of Richmond and other Southern cities in the post-emancipation world attempted to reproduce the power relations and exploitation of the slave-based economy that had been so profitable. These issues are important to understand if, as does Pulido (2016) in channeling Cedric Robinson's "racial capitalism" and Omi & Winant's "racial formation", we recognize the essential processes of slavery and imperialism that shaped the modern world and to trace from McKittrick's standpoint how they "leak into the future". It was also a deeply held fear of "the danger of Negro domination" according to Mr. A.B. Williams of the Citizens Union (Richmond Times Dispatch, September 22, 1903) – ostensibly a "good government" political watchdog group of the late 19th and early 20th century - and other like organizations along with bodies such as the Richmond Chamber of Commerce that would push for the exploration of practices that would preserve the privileged place of White Richmonders in the New (post-emancipation) South. Old Jackson Ward was one such production that would facilitate these processes to an extent but that would also have unintended and consistently disruptive consequences to the racial projects of the White elites by

establishing the pre-conditions for an alternate set of power relations, a world with hints of the possible for the Black citizens of Richmond.

Jackson Ward as a Political Space

To understand how Jackson Ward is haunted by the possibility of a historical alternative (Gordon, 2007), and therefore allows for the imagining of a present alternative, one must first understand how Jackson Ward came to be "politically" and what it came to mean for Black Richmonders and for Black America. Though old Jackson Ward now lies in the heart of the City of Richmond it was once a location on the margins of the city as evidenced in the F.W. Beer map of 1876 [Figure 3] where the northern boundary of the city served a porous border for the community which would later be extended through several rounds of annexation[14]. Like many "fall line" cities up and down the East coast, Richmond came to be on the basis of its position at the last navigable point on what both the Native Americans of the Powhatan Confederacy and the English invaders called the "King's River"; certainly differing in regard to which "king" (Potterfield, 2009, p. 15). The impact of the James River has been immense for the life of Richmond and profoundly marked the geography of the area with a collection of deep ravines, steep hills, and many streams/creeks that permeated the would be built environment. It was an economic engine on multiple accounts with a small port (used heavily until shipping technology grew the vessels to an extent the river bed could no longer be sufficiently "improved" –

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[14] Annexation has played a part in the physical and political developments of Richmond. It was a common practice across the United States to grow communities, expand the tax base, and facilitate a planned economy for the region. It was also used in several instances to dilute the power of the Black vote, a battle taken up in Richmond several times with the annexation of Manchester and Chesterfield (which occurred as late as the 1970s). The practice would be halted but when coupled with other trends of White flight and the concentration of low-income and low-opportunity and job out-migration in the City, it has made it more difficult to expand in ways that could stabilize the availability of public services for more in the community.

deepened – to allow navigation), providing hydro power for early industry, and as a fishery until industrial pollution sources ended this possibility as early as 1900 (Potterfield, 2009, p. 33).

Jackson Ward, like Richmond itself, began at least in part due to the path and cut of the James River and its tributaries. Though many Black, and some White, workers have now filled in the deep ravines and worked at topographical leveling across the city, it was on the most dramatic and difficult terrains of Richmond that the recent immigrants (many Jewish), freed Blacks, and the urban and corporate enslaved were cast to build their homes, make their lives, and bury their dead. This was Shockoe Ravine, Bacon's Quarter Branch, and the various hills (Smith and Navy in particular) that would come to comprise old Jackson Ward, what was then known as "little Africa" before its official naming (Winthrop, 1978, p. 13). Jackson Ward was "officially" established as a political ward of Richmond in 1871. The new ward cut across the tops of three existing wards with a symmetry described as a "rail fence hit by lightning" giving rise to one of its nicknames, "the shoe string ward" (Hoffman, 2004, p. 118). Its boundaries, a clearer view of which can be seen in Figure 4 than in the F.W. Beers 1876 map, were intentionally drawn to enclose the Black population, specifically as many ex-slaves as possible, into a single voting ward rather than allowing them to be dispersed with varying strength throughout all of the voting wards of the City. While intended to limit Black participation, such zoning in Richmond and other communities across Virginia and the South made it such that for a period of time it was almost guaranteed that at least one representative, if not many more, in city, state, and national politics would be Black. It was not the first, nor would it be the last time, Blacks in Richmond would be politically, socially, physically, and economically zoned. But this isolation also established the conditions that would allow for significant Black achievement. Black businesses grew up in the Ward to serve the various needs of the community. Black

churches and civic organizations as well as mutual insurance groups also arose as a necessity given the absence and neglect of the formal state apparatus in the community except to periodically police the area. Though there were still apparent class divides in the mixed-income community that would develop in the Ward it is clear that a supportive, inclusive, and engaged community existed where long lines on election day with neighbors providing good cheer and food to those waiting in line to vote according to the editor of the "Richmond Planet".

Figure 4: Map of Jackson Ward's political boundaries in the 1890s as published in *Race Man* (Alexander, 2002, p. 75).
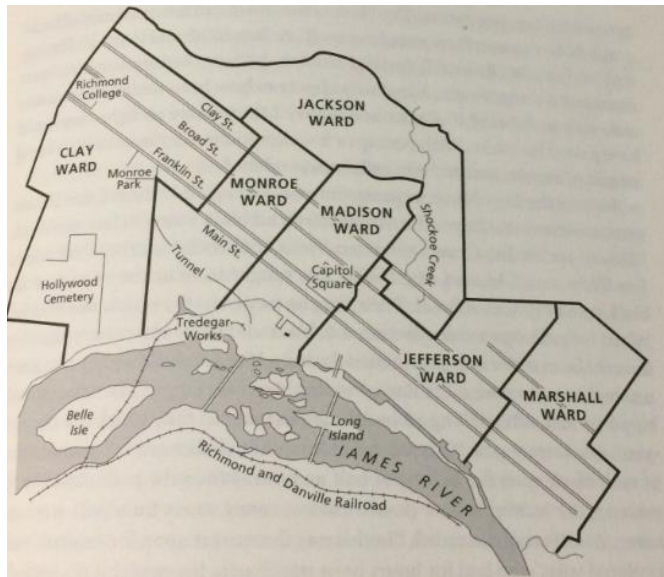
In the approximately 30 years of its existence as a political ward and in its prior history as a location inhabited by the surprisingly large free Black population of Richmond in the antebellum period, old Jackson Ward had become a ghost in Gordon's conception – "that which is not the invisible or some ineffable excess…but that which has a real presence and demands its due, your attention" (2008, p. xvi). The space had become a place, it had meaning; it had life; it was the symbol of Black possibilities and Black entrepreneurship in Richmond and beyond. It was therefore squarely set as a site of the material and symbolic race struggles and achievements

of the city in the minds of both Black and White Richmonders. The political voice possible from having at least one Ward where the Black population was represented is one of those potential "levers" Gilmore (2002, p. 16) suggests as often being beyond the reach of the marginalized and exploited populations least able to sustain or counteract the risk and toxicity of environmental violence.

It was only one year prior to the "creation" of Jackson Ward in 1871 that Virginia, ever the champion of mass resistance with what would become a long "love affair with Jim Crow" (Moeser, 2000, p. 36), had been readmitted to the Union - ending its period of military administration and coinciding with the ending period of the Freedmen's Bureau which had worked in the intervening period to establish schools, banks, and social welfare programs as well as attempt to redress discrimination against Blacks as it occurred, often through court proceedings. During this period the White civic elite had cause for some concern as the constitutional convention processes around the readmission included discussions and movements toward disfranchising individuals who had taken part in the government and armed forces of the Confederacy and would have reinstated the voting rights of those convicted of petty crimes[15] which had during the latter part of the century become "a popular method that White supremacists adopted to disfranchise African Americans on the presumption that they were more likely than White men to commit crimes" (Tarter and the Dictionary of Virginia Biography, 2015). With the work of "veteran" White Virginia politicians neither of these things happened and though Black men "got the vote" it was just a few years later that the possibility of "Reconstruction" was ended with the "Redemption" of the White south, whereby the Democratic

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[15] Underwood Constitution of 1867-68, orchestrated by a delegation of radical republicans that included many Blacks and led by Judge John Underwood who had been an antislavery activist in Virginia in the lead up to the Civil War.

political machines worked in earnest by fraud (in the form of fake ballots, stuffing boxes, stealing boxes, or limiting polling stations), poll taxes, literacy tests, and the first wave of racial gerrymandering or zoning that would set the stage for the new form and new battle lines of exploitive relations to come in the U.S.

The pattern of disfranchisement of the Black population is not new and is well documented in works much more thorough than what can be examined here, but understanding that the political process and representation is deeply tied to the instrumentality of the state in perpetrating violence, particularly the way in which larger pressures interplay with environmental violence at the local level as demonstrated in Gilmore's (2007) work on carceral geographies in California, Pulido's (2000)work in industrialized Los Angeles, and in Nixon's (2011) global work covering sites in less developed countries – it is important to understand the tableau that would be set for Richmond's Black population and old Jackson Ward specifically, as the area that was and remains the home for many Black families extending into our current moment. Establishing processes which maintained the vulnerability of the recently emancipated and previously free Black population would transform the physical, social, and political structures of the South. One of the earliest of these battles would come in 1891.

"No More Objectionable than on Ordinary Factory"

Though not limited to siting alone, as shown by Pulido (2000; 2006), the process by which certain spaces become vulnerable to the specific siting of an environmentally violent point source is important to understanding why there exists a pattern of such siting, ER, in communities which share common demographic and socio-economic characteristics. These often include processes of disinvestment which Gilmore (2008) echoes in large part with her

understanding of the "abandonment" characteristic of contemporary capitalism. The siting

decision for Richmond's first waste incinerator in 1891 would be early among many in a cycle

played out in old Jackson Ward for decades. Richmond "suffered" from what many other in-land

cities did, which was they did not have the "convenience" of simply dumping their waste into the

ocean (Alexander, 2002, p. 80). The trash of the city had for some time been transported to

various portions of the "countryside" and therefore the county surrounding Richmond but had

also come to pile up in a variety of locations within the city. The idea for the incinerator had

been conceived after the president of the Richmond Public Health Board had traveled north to

see how other communities were handling such issues. When he returned it was proposed to City

Council that the "crematory" "could be erected in the city limits and would be "no more

objectionable than any ordinary factory" (Hoffman, 2004, p. 82). The decision to appropriate

funds for building the incinerator facility through Eagle Sanitary and Cremation Company of

New York was made in 1891 and an initial site was selected on Buchanan and Williams Streets

in a sparsely populated section in the northeast of town. It was an undeveloped area that *adjoined*

a community with vocal White property owners who lodged a sufficient number of complaints

that the Council had to reconsider the siting even though construction had begun. The

councilmen were surprised by the debate and at one point it appears the mayor at the time

jokingly suggested it be placed in Monroe Park, the showpiece of Richmond's park system. The

eventual site was moved from a sparsely populated area adjoining a White community into "a

thickly-settled part of the African American community in Jackson Ward" (Hoffman, 2004, p.

123), specifically on St. Paul Street between Bacon and Orange, an area known as

"Apostletown" or "'Postletown" for short (Alexander, 2002, p. 80) based on the Saints names

used for streets in the area. At the time Jackson Ward still existed as a political unit and John

Mitchell Jr., the "Richmond Planet" editor and one of the councilmen from the Ward, fought

hard. In the end even three Democrats, largely the political enemy of Black Rights in the

Reconstruction era, joined Mitchell in the vote against the incinerator's placement but it wasn't

enough. Councilmen from old Jackson Ward had been fighting for appropriations from the city

for many years for street improvements, sewerage, and other infrastructure for public services in

the Ward. Documentation from both the "Richmond Planet" and the "Richmond Times

Dispatch" shows that at every turn the Ward, though it was the most densely populated received

the smallest portion of available funding, and in some instances no funding, on an annual basis

for such work. But economics alone, meaning the ability to now acquire the land for the

incinerator site cheaply, was not the only driver given the fact that the initial

incinerator/crematory site had been selected for elsewhere and on the basis of the documented

sentiments of the City officials responsible for its final resting place. During a Richmond City

Council proceeding after its initial construction that would propose controversial costs of

expansion to the City crematory located in old Jackson Ward's 'Postletown, a city official noted

they had seen "negroes from the county eating garbage at the crematory" such that the City

Attorney Pollard joked that if you could "get enough negroes from the county… you could do

away with the crematory" (Richmond Times Dispatch, February 4, 1906). Keeping the Black

community in its place and establishing that place as one in which they were both proximate to

waste, as shown in Figure 5 which shows the landfill operation that grew up in the heavily

populated area around the crematory[16], and considered a type of waste themselves by many of

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[16] I could not locate a photo of the crematory through articles and public documents accessed during this research. Given the state of disrepair detailed through researching its life and death, it appears likely that in the unlikely event the building was still standing in the 1940s it was demolished with the building of Gilpin Court and/or the interstate but I was unable to verify.

the White civic elites would no doubt perpetuate symbolic violence alongside the actual violence to short and long term public health.

Figure 5: "Types of Negro Houses in Old Jackson Ward. Row of houses owning up to the dump. (N.D.)" The Jackson Davis Collection of African American Photographs. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va. Retrieval ID 0570.

The incinerator would open for "business" on a February morning in 1892 to the fanfare of a visit from many councilmembers who "could not detect much of a smell" from the 85 foot tower processing a load of sample waste. The situation would soon deteriorate as the weather warmed and garbage from all around the city came to rest in Jackson Ward's 'Postletown. The deliveries included household trash and biological wastes of all kinds, including "fetid animal matter". In the summer the smell from the incinerator stack and the massive piles of wastes were "nauseating" (Alexander, 2002, p. 82) and Black residents led by "Richmond Planet" editor and councilmen John Mitchell, Jr. tried every tactic possible through the City Council to suspend its activities, including appealing to property values generally and among the White landlords who had a vested interest but did not live in the community. In detailing the scene, Hoffman (2004) notes that the president of the Public Health Board, in the Richmond Department of Health's

1893 annual report, called the crematory "Africa's pet abomination" (p. 123). The incinerator

was the first but not the last for the Richmond community and even after being noted as "a

menace to life and limb" on the basis of the disrepair into which the buildings had fallen,

Richmond City officials would continue to use the facility at least until the 1920s[17].

Though there were homes of varying quality in this area of old Jackson Ward like those

seen in Figure 5, the location of the city crematory, the city dump, and the other disinvestments

in the area made the site vulnerable to the "renewal" forces at work in the two post-world war

periods during which the foundations for the future physical and social relations of communities

were laid. Where the incinerator once stood is still a "thickly-settled community", three blocks

West of Reco Biotechnologies and Staff Zone's 501 Hospital Street. It is the site of Richmond's

public housing complex, built in the national era of "slum clearance" in the immediate post

World War II period, known as Gilpin Court. Though incinerator ash has now been shown to

produce persistent organic pollutants such as dioxins, PCBs, and hexachlorobenzene – all of

which are hazardous to health over the long term based on their persistence in the air, water, and

food products – some groups found the ash to be useful as fill dirt and fertilizer. A 1913 article in

the "Richmond Times Dispatch", after learning of a similar practice in Spokane, Washington,

noted that ash from the Richmond City Crematory might also be available to be sold to local

home owners and farmers (Richmond Times Dispatch, May 22, 1913). The poured concrete

yards as shown in Figure 6, an architectural feature added to several areas of the Gilpin complex

in the 1970s (O'Keefe, 2016), though rather grim and unsightly may be a blessing in disguise to

help shield residents from the long term contamination of the site. Capping, which is a

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[17] A Richmond Times Dispatch article from August of 1922 notes that after a flood wiped out large residential sections the debris was taken to the city crematory for disposal. A series of articles describes the political saga by which the city government sought to build new facilities, ending up with one further West at "Marshall and 15th Streets" according to a March 1917 article which describes the facility at St. Paul and Orange in old Jackson Ward's 'Postletown as the crematory and this new facility as an incinerator.

"remediation"[18] process that holds contaminants in place and shields humans and animals from coming into contact with the pollutants, as well as attempts to prevent rain and runoff from steeping into the water tables, has been used in a variety of Richmond areas - explaining in some cases the apparently random abandoned parking lot in the middle of an otherwise "developing" area.

There have been other so-called remediation methods engaged in the Richmond area. For example the Gilpin Court complex, in addition to its proximity to the Staff Zone labor pool, now also abuts a 9-hole municipal golf course (Longenderfer, 2000) as the soil at this brownfield site that was once the city dump, thanks to companies like Gilpin's friendly neighbor Reco Biotechnology (pictured in Figure 7 with a large pile of just such soil on the right and a tanker with the next load of some toxic commodity entering the property), has been "remediated" and therefore "reclaimed". The site now hosts Richmond's "First Tee" a non-profit recreational group which encourages local children, many of them Black, to take up that elite White bastion of sport - golf. That the spaces made for Black children to play should be riddled with White normative values expressed through recreation (Stormann, 1991) - rather than say access to jobs and hospitals - as well as with environmental toxicity is somewhat surprisingly, perhaps not, a recurring theme in Richmond.

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[18] In all of these cases where "remediation" and "reclaiming" occurs it should be understood that such projects lend to the perception that these instances of environmental violence are manageable after the fact and that damage can be "undone". While it is true that damage can be mitigated in some, but not all, cases it is also true that most of the environmental violence will outlast the containment and remediation processes designed to manage them. The barrier layers at landfills fail and the concrete cracks such that these fixes are actually often simply delays. The belief that technology will keep up with contamination and make continuing on the path as has always been done possible is a falsehood explored in other critical environmental literature like that of Nixon.

Figure 6: Gilpin Court exterior from Grant Martin's blog "Overlooked RVA" article on Gilpin Court October 16, 2014. https://overlookedrva.com/tag/gilpin-court/

Figure 7: Google Maps Street View of 710 Hospital Street, April 2014. Reco BioTechnologies – "Non-Hazardous Waste Specialist". Screen captured 05-March-2017.

Room to Breathe

The overall scene found around 501 Hospital Street in old Jackson Ward where Reco

Biotechnology and Staff Zone sit is one that is possibly expected in urban industrial zones across

the United States and elsewhere. The fact that it could be "expected" is owed in no small part to

the fact that cities across the country have come to "zone" property for particular uses in a way that gives the neutral appearance of reason and logic and yet as Pulido (1996; 2000; 2006) and Gilmore (2002; 2007) demonstrate, this supposition belies a much more deeply rooted impulse and ideology than that which appears on its visible surface. Long before this area of Richmond was officially "zoned" for the likes of these "light", and sometimes "heavy", industrial facilities, the area was part of a larger collection of parcels approved for the "Colored Section to Have a New Park", roughly at a location "between Seventh, Fifth, Hospital, and Federal Streets" (Richmond Times Dispatch, 1913, October 22, p. 3). At the time the location was seen as particularly objectionable to the 200 Black citizens who petitioned and protested, through the speech at City Council meetings of their elected religious leader, Dr. Stokes of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. Ebenezer Baptist was one of the many socially cohesive institutions operating as a result of old Jackson Ward's social possibility. The Black residents were decidedly against the location of a park at this site around modern day 501 Hospital Street. The effort was opposed not only because of their objection to the park as a "link in the chain of segregation" - as other parks were technically available though often unused by Black residents due in part to cultural customs held over from the slave codes[19] - but also according to Dr. Stokes "because of the open sewer of Shockoe Creek, the adjacent city dumps, and the smoke from the Locomotive works" (Richmond Times Dispatch, 1913, October 22, p. 3). Figure 8, taken from a 1913 study by Gustavus Weber on the housing and living conditions in the "neglected section of Richmond" – largely poor and mostly Black – shows this conflagration of toxicity of which Dr. Stokes spoke and even Weber's description alluded to the danger of the waste, at least in part on account of its likely noxious

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[19] As enshrined in1859 City "Ordinance Concerning Negroes" as reprinted in Duke (1993, which was enacted after the John Brown Raid and statedthat Blacks, free or slave, could not enter public spaces unless in the service or care of a White person/master.

smell, as demonstrated in the original caption also included in Figure 8, which describes a "green

scum" with "foul odors"…"within a stone's throw of negro habitations".

Figure 8: From "The Report on Housing and Living Conditions in the Neglected Section of Richmond, Virginia" by Gustavus Weber, commissioned by the Society for the Betterment of Housing and Living Conditions in Richmond (1913, p. 54).
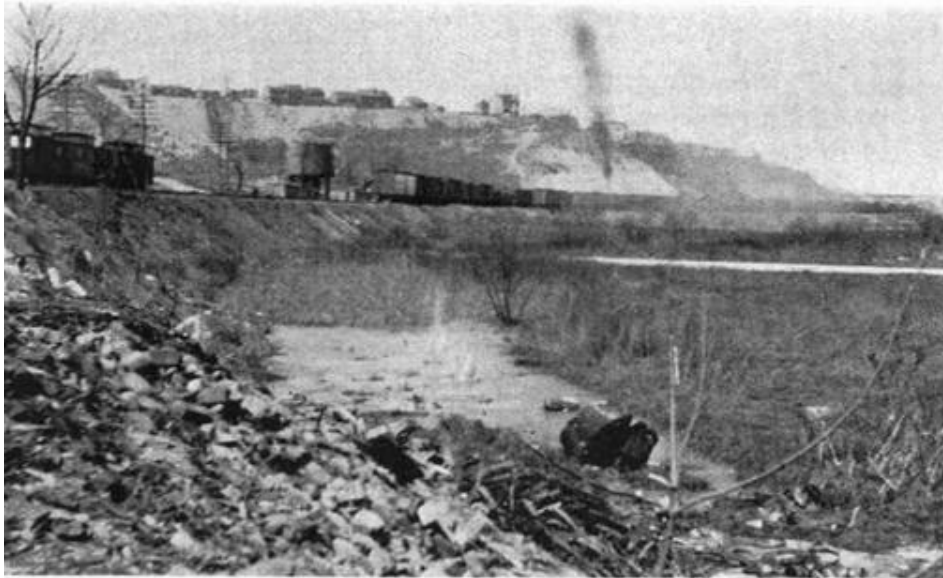
This picture shows a pool of stagnant water, the overflow from the open sewer, Shockoe Creek. This pool is usually covered with a green scum and emits foul odors. It is within one-third of a mile of the State Capitol and within a stone's throw of negro habitations.

The park for the "colored section" meant a park for Jackson Ward with "the Ward" being

synonymous with "Black Richmond" (Silver & Moeser, 1995, p. 24). Richmond's White

population, along with a wave of others in American cities, had lately seen a need for "breathing

spaces" as a way to escape the physical congestion of city life as well as the heavy air associated

with industrial enterprise and to enjoy the spring waters to be found in many such spaces in

Richmond rather than the turbid water from the James River that was and is the basis for the

city's water (Potterfield, 2009, p. 57). On its face it may have seemed hard to argue with the

logic of a park given that in some extreme instances Black children of the community were

"playing", sometimes scavenging based on need (a practice not uncommon during the period for the poor of all races and in some senses an ancestor of the recycling process), within the city dumps as shown in Figure 9. Even so and in connection with Weber's (1913) description of the area as "neglected" or for our purposes suffering from the characteristic disinvestment of capital ideology; rather than a park the Black citizens who had protested wanted street improvements (to the extent dirt roads and alleyways were prominent in the area), sewerage, public baths, and "tuberculosis camps". These were requests that would go largely unanswered until the World War II era as a result of a much larger infrastructure boom quite apart from the demands of Richmond's Black citizens. A park for the "colored section", though it had come up several times (Hoffman, 2004, p. 123) before and would initially be approved for action in this case, was never implemented at the site which is now home to Staff Zone and Reco Biotechnology.

Figure 9: "Children Playing in a Shockoe Valley Dump around 1911". Special Collections and Archives VCU Libraries.

Though the Richmond Parks and Recreation office today uses the term "acquired" to talk about the way in which property came to be part of the system's facilities (Richmond

Department of Parks and Recreations, accessed 10/14/2016) it was actually by process of "condemnation" that the property in old Jackson Ward was to be "acquired" for the park. Condemnation is a term associated with eminent domain and though it gives the sense that something is bad or "blighted" about the space it simply means that the government has a proceeding for "condemning" private property for the so-called "public" use as long as it pays "fair" market-value. For the would-be park in old Jackson Ward it was this initial cost, based on the businesses and residential properties (many of them owned by Blacks) located in the section, as well as the potential cost of maintaining the park, and not the protests of the community it was to "benefit", that stopped its progress. The commission that had been established by the Richmond City Council to begin the "condemnation" proceedings with an estimate of the cost noted that the site was undesirable because it overlooks "unsightly dumps and unattractive manufacturing plants, which emit a black and dirty smoke, which often envelops the surrounding territory…the descent is so precipitous from its southern and western lines that it will be practically impossible to keep it in fair order. The many deep gulches now there are evidence of what may be expected after every rain" (Richmond Times Dispatch, June 9, 1914). The commission further noted that the sum to be expended for purchase of the property, $56,611 (not an insignificant amount of money at the time), would be better spent on "covering Shockoe Creek", that open sewer protested by Dr. Stokes and the Black residents. The city dumps and the geographic terrain played a large role in the story of this would-be park and through processes of zoning that will be explored in more depth, but the story is also connected with another push for "room to breathe" - not from actual toxicity but from the perceived socio-cultural toxicity of Black residents in and of themselves, for which White residents would avail themselves of all means possible to insert distance.

Street Cars – Black Labor - White Flight

An era of the political battle in Virginia in the post-civil war period culminated in 1902 when the "unconstitutional" constitutional convention, as it would come to be called by the Black community (Richmond Planet, 1903), enacted changes that would result in the Richmond city-wide Black electorate being reduced by 88% (Alexander, 2002, p. 115) and the White vote (mostly poor) by almost a third with the lasting impact that until 1940 only 10% of Virginians over the age of twenty-one could exercise their "right to vote" (Kollatz, 2007, p. 83). Based on the success of these larger disfranchisement efforts, the need for Jackson Ward as a political entity to limit "Negro power" had ended such that Richmond City Council took up a charge for redistricting. The guidance suggested to the City Council by an unknown "Richmond Times Dispatch" reporter on September 30, 1903 must be quoted at length to give a full sense of the ways in which the White community was fully aware of what was happening such that one can clearly see that these processes, now attributed to a variety of supposed "race-neutral" rationales/logics, are in fact very much and explicitly connected to racial projects designed for repression under a sheet thin façade of that which is in the "public interest":

> "The creation of Jackson Ward was a political necessity. The majority of the Negro voters were *corralled* [emphasis added] there, in order to keep the control of the city government safely in the hands of the whites...The demand of public policy for its obliteration is now quite as strong as it ever cold have been for its formation. One of the chief reasons which induced the people of Virginia to go to the trouble and expense of holding a constitutional convention was that the electorate should be so restricted as to make it unnecessary to resort to any "short cuts" in order to keep the control of the government in the hands of the white people. We have a *restricted and much improved* [emphasis added] electorate now, and the argument once made in favor of Jackson Ward's lines no longer exists….It is out of the question to suppose that the mass of the people of Richmond are going to be content with the ward divisions, nearly all of which were made on the heel of reconstruction times and before the community had had any opportunity to judge by experience what they might expect from the newly enfranchised voter. So we say to City Council and to its committee go ahead and redivide the city and give us the best ward divisions you possibly can, considering only the public good. Be sure that no personal or individual interest is made superior to the public interest."

While Jackson Ward gained a new name, news reports, property advertisements, and Richmond City Council discussions of the area or the "colored section" consistently used the phrasing "old Jackson Ward" and the name persists as part of this area has now been made a national historic district. As detailed in the introduction to this work, the space had taken on a meaning in the act of living everyday such that even though it had been designed to "corral" or "enclose" the Black population for the purpose of managing their socio-political impact it had the unintended consequence of setting up the pre-conditions for a cohesive and alternate structure for the Black residents of Richmond that could organize and stand in the struggle against the will of the White civic elite. This White elite would have seen its utter destruction except for the need to access the labor of its community as the South struggled to establish itself on economic terms outside of its self-perception as a "colony of the North" due to its lack of access to capital from the war period (Hoffman, 2004, p. 10), its overreliance on resource extraction, and still largely agrarian based commodity exchange.

On several accounts - other than the official enactment of Jackson Ward's political dissolution - 1904 was an important year for the complex interplay of environmental, socio-economic, and political conditions of Richmond. At the heart of these issues was Richmond's electric street car system. Richmond was one of the early testing grounds for the economic viability of the electric street car as introduced by engineer Frank Sprague in 1888. Within two years of its success, more than 100 electric railroads were operating or under construction. In the U.S., private companies engaged in significant competition through city and state legislative bodies sometimes using bribery, as was suggested in Richmond (Richmond Times Dispatch, September 26, 1903) to gain property or access rights to operate choice trolley lines (Kollatz, 2007, p. 68) many of which proceeded through the "condemnation" process. Though

infrequently willing to invest their own money the White Civic-Business elite, of Richmond and other cities, were quite willing to burden the city's population with the costs and risks of hosting this new and as of yet, largely untried technology. This process once again would involve making private land and right of ways available to corporations.

The street car lines, largely built by Blacks, facilitated the first era of "White flight", which for so long has been almost exclusively attributed to the highway system and processes of disinvestment of "inner cities" in the literature on the environmental and social impact of suburban sprawl (Wilson & Chackraborty, 2013). That the use of exploitive labor practices could be so tied to the infrastructure processes that facilitated varying types of social distance and disinvestment could be an entire research effort in and of itself but merits at least a brief mention here. As noted, a large majority of the construction for the trolley lines which would facilitate the social distancing in which White populations engaged to give themselves "room to breathe" from the toxicity of industrialization and also from the Black population as a type of socio-cultural toxicity resulted from Black labor as seen in Figure 10 where Black men work at digging up the cobble stone for laying the initial trolley car lines. This ancestral day labor work holds a similarity to the likely use of such temporary construction labor, as could be provided by Staff Zone's workers pictured in Figure 11, connected to the rapid bus transit construction now currently underway on Richmond's Broad Street[20]. Now the spatial dynamic is slightly turned where rather than attempting to move people, facilities, and jobs away from the city a rapid bus transit system that sits atop historic trolley lines has begun to allow for easier transportation from the outskirts of Richmond and its Westerly re-development into the city where new financial, technology, and education spaces have facilitated a partial resurgence in the Richmond economy.

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[20] See GRTC Pulse website for more information at http://www.ridegrtc.com/brt.

One could come to believe that the introduction of this system may also have potential to help

the day laborers employed by Staff Zone who now receive incentive pay - according to the

advertisement in Figure 11 - for providing transportation to their co-workers because of the

generally insufficient nature of public transportation in the city and the reliance on this public

service for so many in areas of concentrated poverty (Power, 2012). Perhaps these new efforts

will help but the limited nature of the potential improvement the Broad street rapid transit lane

will provide largely misses connectivity to the types of jobs workers of Staff Zone and similar

organizations are securing as the inner city served by Broad Street becomes concentrated with

technology and financial management of the New Economy and the manufacturing, material

moving, and other labor endeavors into which Black labor has been corralled now exist quite

outside the city limits with a few exceptions near the Richmond port area. The infrastructure

would need to focus on a variety of locations radiating out, not in to the center city.

Figure 10: Black laborers plowing cobblestone for construction of the new trolley line. (From the Valentine Richmond History Center as published in Race, Class and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920, p. 66)

Figure 11: A Staff Zone job advertisement highlighting "Work Daily and Get Paid Daily", "Competitive Wages", "Incentives for employees willing to transport coworkers". Screen captured at staffzone.com, 14-Oct.-2016.

While highways and automotive technology would increase the net environmental impact (in terms of volume, miles, and environmental impact - through development and emissions) of these socio-spatial processes given the short-hand of "white flight" by Pulido and others, they are an extension and a type of repetition in McKittrick's temporal conceptions, on new technological terms and relations, of what the street cars had already begun to facilitate in earnest. A group of these early "White flight" participants would actually join the fight of their Black neighbors in 1913 against the "colored" park at our 501 Hospital street location but not because the area desperately needed infrastructure, through the previously mentioned process of "neglect" and disinvestment so crucial to these power relations, and therefore for the benefit of public health. Nor was the protest because these White citizens also wanted to avoid another link in the "chain of segregation". Their interests "converged", to the extent that you could frame it as such, with their Black neighbors on entirely different and largely stereotypical racial terms, they focused on establishing that social distance from the "Black other" so crucial to the environmental and social violence nexus conceptualized in environmental racism. W.C. Carpenter, representing the Highland Park Citizen's Association opposed the placing of a "colored park" in the locality, on the ground that it would "congest the 7th street car line and make travel inconvenient for

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residents of northern White suburbs" (Richmond Times Dispatch, October 22, 1913). He specifically noted that the potential presence of individuals of an undesirable character - as only the less-industrious of the [Black] race would use the space - so near the White women and children traveling to and from their homes, was a near non-starter.

The era of the street car in Richmond also provides an opportunity to explore the power and possibility afforded by the social organizations and the resultant civic engagement that grew from old Jackson Ward. This struggle and agency of Black residents demonstrates the way in which Omi & Winant's theorization of racial formation stands at odds with the "systemic racism" or "White racial frame" (Feagin & Elias, 2013). The struggle also highlights the exploration of "subaltern" agency informed in Pulido, Gilmore, and McKittrick's works by Omi & Winant as well as Cedric Robinson and C.L.R. James. For this exploration we can turn to the 1904 street car boycott that was staged by Black Richmonders of old Jackson Ward and other communities.

With the introduction of the first "Jim Crow" law regulating the railroad cars, or partitions of such, in which White and Black passengers should ride in 1900 - following the U.S. Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson decision a few years earlier - the door was opened to the Richmond City Council in 1904 to enact an ordinance that while not requiring segregation, permitted it to the local street car operators. The Virginia Passenger and Power Company (an early ancestor of the now "Dominion Power" - a utility monopoly and frequent polluter headquartered in Richmond, Virginia) chose to implement "in car" partition and segregation, empowering street car conductors to enforce the divisions on the basis of the car's racial composition as it traveled throughout various parts of the city. Such racial balances would often be quite uneven based on the previously imposed residential and business corralling (at times by

geographical circumstance, sometimes by ordinance and processes of residency certification, and then by socially enforced customs through a variety of legal and other mechanisms). The Black community would vociferously resist the practice of street car segregation through a city-wide boycott, led by old Jackson Ward's established Black business leaders and encouraged or cajoled by the "Richmond Planet's" editor John Mitchell, Jr. through extensive coverage and editorials like the one shown in Figure 12 which frames by opposition the treatment of various riders to expose the ludicrous assertion made by City officials that the process was neutral and affected all riders equally. Support for the boycott came in from around the country based on the national readership of the "Richmond Planet" – due in no small part to old Jackson Ward's cultural status in Black America - and the Black community organized ride sharing and other tactics under the call that simply stated "we must walk" and "stay off the cars". The boycott continued for almost 9 months and, coupled with other developments like a worker strike in the company, the Virginia Passenger and Power Company went into receivership a couple of years later to be consolidated with other lines and electric business interests. It was a victory however temporary as the onslaught of Jim Crow had only just begun in Richmond.

Figure 12: Richmond Planet, 20-August-1904. Screen captured from the Virginia Chronicle Digital Collection, February 2017.

Jim Crow Residential and Industrial Zoning

While much of the prior work on the nexus of race, space, and environmental violence has focused on World War II era processes such as "redlining" and "industrial zoning", this research has attempted to complicate the temporal scope to reveal the cyclical character of these socio-spatial practices and their interconnectedness with a particular racial formation that operates in part through environmental violence to embed the preconditions for a consistently repressive reproduction of social relations that are anything but "neutral" and "natural. The focus of many scholars on the Second World War and its preceding Great Depression era of the late 1920s and the 1930s, is not misplaced per se, as the era set out on a global scale the rebuilding of myriad social, political, physical, and economic relations on partially new terms, and new technologies. By the end of the war in 1945, so many people had been killed or otherwise dispossessed of their resources for life; so many places had entire towns, sometimes cities wiped off the map; and in terms of global nation-state relations it was a new era in nation building and military maneuvering that would lead to decades of ongoing conflicts and its own environmental destruction. In U.S. landscapes, the pace of life changed dramatically and the "old" was made to literally make way for the new, but this "new" was only partial, this "new" was built upon capital ideological foundations that experienced a "doubling down" in terms of the world order and a type of "doubling back" as the "old" exploits in terms of social identity-class making were to be the best "new" exploits in the commodity chain.

In the U.S., local practices of zoning, or marking, particular land/spaces for particular uses/destruction became legally codified in the late 1920s following the Standard State Zoning

Enabling Act of 1924[21]. Cities and counties across the country adopted zoning ordinances under the police power of the states and local governments. Richmond's first official zoning ordinances seem to have been issued in 1937 on the basis of available research. Building codes were in place in Richmond much earlier but were not specific to the use of land though crucially in the Jim Crow era some ordinances had been specific as to its occupants. In 1911, Richmond was second in the nation for implementing a specific racial zoning ordinance following the lead of its near-North neighbor Baltimore who had passed an ordinance in 1910 on which Richmond sought to join and "improve" its supposed legal foundations. The title read "An ordinance (approved April 19, 1911) to secure for white and colored people, respectively, the separate location of residences for each race".

The ordinance was intended as a freeze of existing residential circumstances on the basis of race and established that no White person could move into a neighborhood that was majority Black and no Black person could move into a neighborhood that was majority White. Jackson Ward, in the heart of the "old city" was fertile ground for conflict and confusion as its residential borders were blended in many areas, mostly with poor Whites working in polluting manufacturing areas nearby. The "Richmond Planet", as was its general practice, would detail the fight of the Black population as the ordinance was opposed in court by both Black and White claimants. The fight would last many years and multiple attempts from the Richmond government to find a "solution", meaning one that allowed racial zoning that could be upheld under Federal Constitutional scrutiny, through the 1930s. The March 27, 1915 issue of the "Richmond Planet" and a series from that period included publication of the legal briefings made

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[21] Silver (1997) argues that the landmark zoning process in New York that would be upheld at the level of the Supreme Court and therefore pave the way for Congressional codification in the form of this act, was in part informed by a Richmond, VA building code of 1908.

in court proceedings, and specifically the position statements of Richmond's City Attorney Pollard with accompanying editorials. It will be remembered and noted from our City Crematory episode that this was the same City Attorney who had effectively suggested that the Black citizens of Richmond should consume the waste of the city to alleviate the cost burden of the incinerator it had sited in old Jackson Ward.

In attempting to argue that the ordinance was legal on the basis that "its object was to promote the peace, good order, morals, and general welfare of the community"; "that the separation of the races in places where they are likely to come in contact has been held by the Supreme Court of the United States to be a reasonable exercise of the police power"; and "the ordinance expressly and in terms denies to the White race what it denies to the Black race, and permits to the black race what it permits to the white race". It was race-neutral/blind and according to the Richmond City attorney it was a practical way to designate space "where *natural processes* [emphasis added] have effectuated separate domiciliary locations for each race" and would have the effect of pushing development to "unoccupied space" and not where areas had already been populated in ways that "would endanger the peace, good order, and quiet of the community" ("Richmond Planet", March 27, 1915).

Silver (1997) argues that "racial zoning in Southern cities was as much a foundation for overall land use regulations as were regulation of the garment industry in New York City or encroaching industrial uses in Los Angeles". When the continued efforts to find a legal method for explicitly racial residential zoning was exhausted, Silver (1997) notes that Yale Robin contends many cities turned to "expulsive zoning", which permitted "the intrusion into Black neighborhoods of disruptive incompatible uses that have diminished the quality and undermined the stability of those neighborhoods" (p. 2). The series of master plans engaged by Richmond

beginning with its first in 1946 and followed in 1950 and on many cycles yet to come, evidences

these practices. The text of Richmond's early land use zoning ordinances (Richmond City

Council, 1951) set out that "non-conforming use can continue where it already exists…if no

structural alterations are made it can be used for a more restricted use" after that it could not be

switched to a less restricted use. On its face this would seem reasonable because of the damage

likely to occur in spaces of "ammonia" and "chlorine" manufacture, of "fertilizer" and

"fireworks" manufacture, of "coke oven use" and "*incineration, reduction or dumping of offal,*

dead animals, garbage or refuse on a commercial basis [emphasis added]" (p. 18-20) - exactly

that which was processed at the City Crematory in 'Postletown, now Gilpin Court. If the use of a

building was discontinued for a period of two years or more the new use would have to

"conform" to whatever was zoned for the area meaning though there had previously been

residents the area must in the future become industrial if it was zoned for such and once

industrial it could never go back, or only on an exceptional basis. To rationalize these processes

the 1950 Master Plan for the City of Richmond used 1940 census data to show the age, value,

condition, and other factors, of all residential buildings. It sought to show the areas which fell

into the "blighted category" [Figure 13], a close mapping of the locations identified as "negro

dwellings" [Figure 14] noting that:

> "Wherever possible, therefore, the expressways and other new thoroughfares proposed
> herein are routed through or bordering the areas of the poorest housing, where they may
> be provided in conjunction with possible slum clearance and redevelopment projects.
> Sound housing facilities in the city – as well as business development along existing
> major streets – can thus be preserved (Segoe & De Leuw, 1950, p. 8)".

Figure 13: Segoe and De Leuw. (1950). Transportation: A Master Plan Study. Richmond, VA: Richmond City Planning Commission. Plate 25.
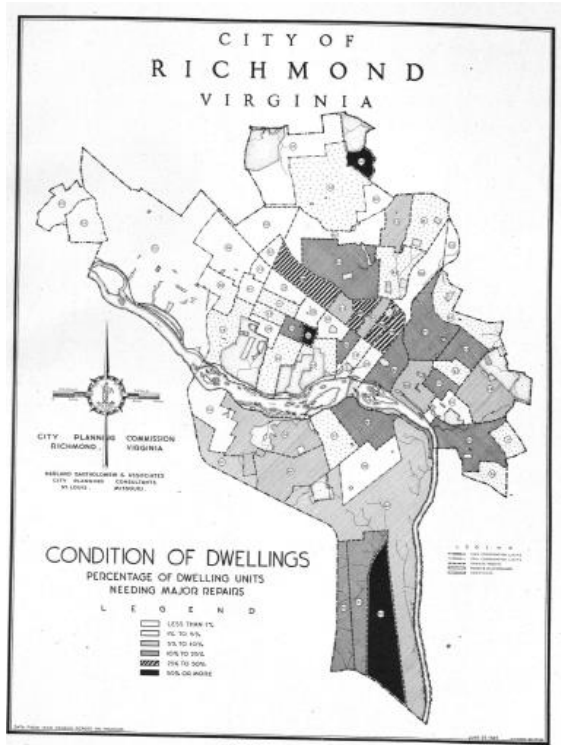

Figure 14: Segoe and De Leuw. (1950). Transportation: A Master Plan Study. Richmond, VA: Richmond City Planning Commission. Plate 27.

While critiques of "redlining" often site the lending risk maps created for the Home

Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) as to where federally secured mortgages could be made as

an input that would be determinative of disinvestment, this was only one small part of a larger

story, a story deeply connected to setting out spaces for environmental and social destruction that

was well underway. The condition of these "blighted" and "negro" areas had been subjected to

close development in many areas, with little adherence to building codes. In areas like old

Jackson Ward which predominates the "blighted" and "negro" mappings used for planning

purposes, had been long afflicted with absentee landlords, mostly White (Richmond Council of

Social Agencies, 1929, p. 6) who modified structures in order to establish as many potential

dwellings as possible. In 1929, the data showed that 88% of the population rented their home

(Richmond Council of Social Agencies, 1929, p. 71) a value that has changed only somewhat

standing at approximately 70% of the population of Jackson Ward today a number that is

complicated by the fact that were you to include the public housing facilities like Gilpin Court,

now counted outside of the census tract that has subsequently been established for the Ward[22],

the number would be much lower (Koziol, 2012, p. 17). Furthermore, even up until the 1940s

and 1950s many homes in Jackson Ward burned coal for heating and cooking. The interior of

homes in the Ward were described as being covered in thick black soot (Sully, 1940, p. 8). These

conditions were attributed not to the structure and relations between Black renters and White

landlords but to the lack of morality and pride of Black residents in maintaining "their homes"

Similarly, it was the opinion of the Public Board of Health's leadership that the Black

community had so many health issues based on their "ignorance" in seeking medical care

(Hoffman, 2004, p. 92) rather than the lack of availability. This seems a rather unlikely

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[22] Confirming Pulido's (2000) assertion that these seemingly objective measurement areas used in the ER research, like Census tracts, are themselves products of the social relations and destructive patterns upon which they are deployed to investigate.

assumption given that when protesting the siting of the "colored park" it was access to proper healthcare and facilities to treat the disproportionate number of tuberculosis cases in the Black population of old Jackson Ward and other areas of the city that were requested by its Black citizen groups.

The Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike

All of these past socio-spatial practices and relations would pave the way for the one of the most devastating racial projects in old Jackson Ward since its political dissolution - the construction of the interstate as was alluded to in the 1950 master plan. Those spaces with the "poorest housing", the "oldest housing", those of the least value – those of the Black community – made possible a siting that would avoid impacting "sound" housing facilities and businesses which meant White housing and business. As acutely evidenced in Figure 15 which is identified as the place where "the first steel for the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike" (later Interstate 95) would be placed in the city at Duval and Baker Streets. The highway quite literally divided old Jackson Ward in two (sometimes more) pieces.

Figure 15: First Steel. (1954). Retrieved from http://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/collection_60afa544-e850-11e4-a597-17ec292dd45a.html#6

This space in old Jackson Ward had been marked, had been cyclically produced, since the infrastructure of slavery was put in place. The "Richmond Afro American"[23] and the "Richmond Times Dispatch" detailed the highway's construction process and in 1955 the "Afro American" noted 1954 as a historic year for Richmond not only for the significance of the Brown v. Board decision it had been closely reporting upon, another struggle with Jim Crow that would continue for a generation in Richmond and elsewhere, but "locally" for the "demolition of 1,500 housing structures" associated with the construction of the highway system. This caused an acute housing shortage further concentrating the Black population into higher density residential situations and increasing reliance on the various public housing elements available as well as pushing some

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[23] The updated name of "The Richmond Planet" after the death of John Mitchell, Jr. and its new ownership in 1922.

who had previously been "home-owners" into the ever growing ranks of "renters" in the area[24].

As with other "slum clearance" and "redevelopment" (of which Richmond's Fulton

Neighborhood[25] is a sterling example that cannot be covered here), the "expulsive" process

which promised a "planned" re-development would rarely materialize comparable or sufficient

housing for the mostly Black residents that were impacted. Not since the burning of Richmond

by the retreating Confederate Army in 1865 had so much of the city, so many blocks, and so

many homes, been burned/razed to the ground. But in reading this episode it is also important to

remember McKittrick's (2006) concept of producing absence in a space. To the extent that old

Jackson Ward stands/stood it has potential to call to memory the historic alternative it held and

holds. While Richmond has taken great care to memorialize the Confederacy[26], actions such as

the highway contribute to the processes and value systems that make certain spaces, particularly

those that operate in opposition to the norm, un-visible – quite literally paved over.

Highways and interstates like I-95 - a portion of which can be seen from most sides of the

Staff Zone property at 501 Hospital street and through which industrial jobs were outsourced to

the suburbs and away from systems of public transportation - also hold a particular place in

environmental literature as to their profound toxic impact (Jones & Kammen, 2014; Kahn, 2000;

Mothorpe, Hanson, & Schnier, 2013). The presence of the highways through large swathes of the

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[24] An interesting study that could not be taken up here are the variable "fair" market values prices paid to White and Black homeowners in this process and large-scale condemnation/eminent domain process. One presumes the White landlords were compensated disproportionate to quality/value in comparison to Black owners but an exploration of the data would be needed to confirm or deny.

[25] Some boundary maps reviewed suggest portions of Fulton may have been enclosed in the political boundaries of Jackson Ward as produced in the 1871-1903 period but additional period mapping to verify this fact on the basis of geo-referencing could not be completed.

[26] So much more could be said in this vein and a wave a literature around memorialization has begun in recent years. A review of McInnis' Slate article (2015) "Richmond Reoccupied by Men Who Wore the Gray" details some of the meaning making from this process.
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/07/confederate_flag_it_s_not_a_symbol_of_southern _heritage_it_has_always_been.html

inner portions of Richmond, large sections of which are predominantly Black like old Jackson

Ward, which hosts a major series of interchanges between connecting highways systems near the

501 Hospital Street site as evidenced in Figure 3, and the slow environmental violence of its

industrial manufacturing history previously detailed, contribute to significantly higher health

risks on many fronts but distinctly upon cancer risks. The persistence of the risk pattern (highest

cancer risk is denoted by darkest shade of blue in Figure 16) around these wastelands and the

"fatal power couplings" (Gilmore, 2002) they secret, which will shortly be reviewed as key to

the nexus of social and environmental violence, as evidenced by an examination of 2016 data

from the Environmental Protection Agency[27]. The mapping of this risk as shown in Figure 16

bears consistent resemblance to the map of "blighted" dwellings and the "negro population" ,

Figures 13 and 14 respectively, as well as those that would be identified in the City's 1950

master plan to be set out for "industrial zoning" as shown in Figure 17. Not unsurprisingly given

the connection between corporations and the state as detailed by Pulido (1996; 2000, 2016) and

Nixon (2011), when the 1950 planning for where industrial zoning would go, the study authors

thanked the Virginia Electric and Power Company (VEPCO[28]) which had "kindly provided" a

map and study it – the corporation - had done for the purpose of designating the best potential

industrial areas (Ladislas, Segoe, & Associates, 1951, p. 36).

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[27] Note the screen capture from October 2016 cannot currently be reproduced as the cancer risk data layer has been
updated as of March 2017 on the EPA website and does not provide as discrete information as it once did with
regard to the focus of the risk in areas associated with black residential areas and the various racial-spatial projects
detailed in this work.

[28] The company whose ancestor included the Virginia Passenger and Power Company – of segregation and boycott
fame (also a water supply issue in 1904 due to stray current from trolley car lines) and whose polluting legacy is
now Dominion Power.

Figure 16: Select Risk Layers from EPA data visualization, "MyMaps". Captured October 2016. Legend identifies point source and brownfield areas.
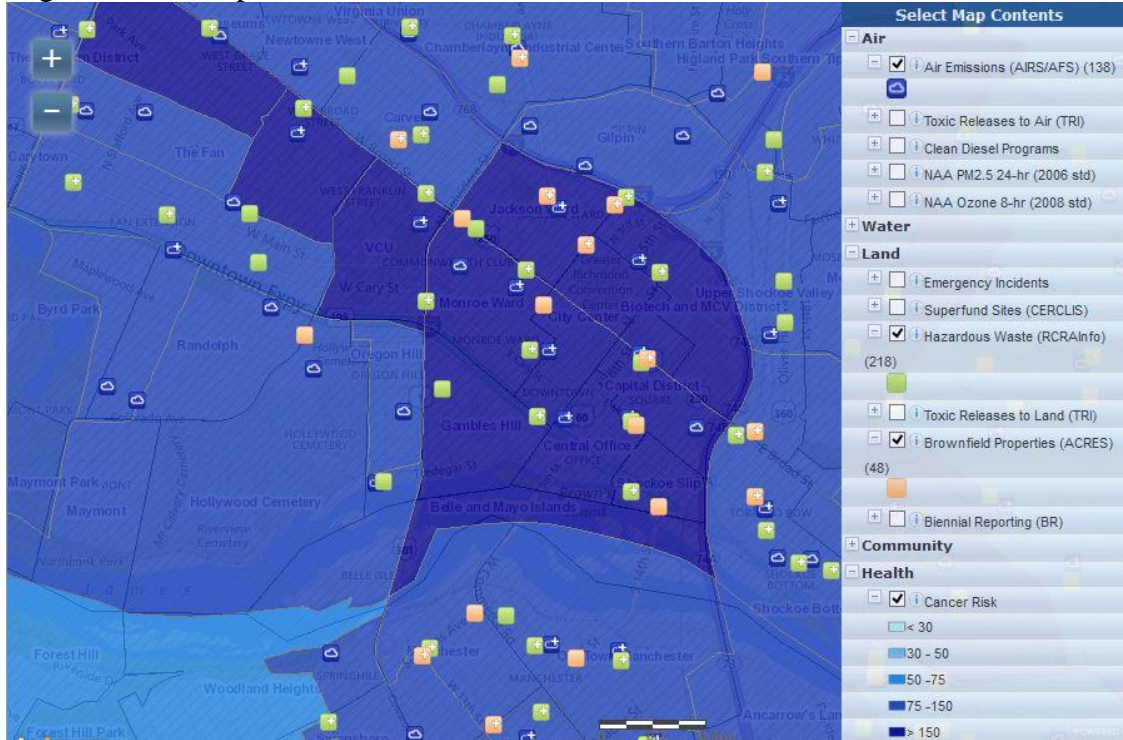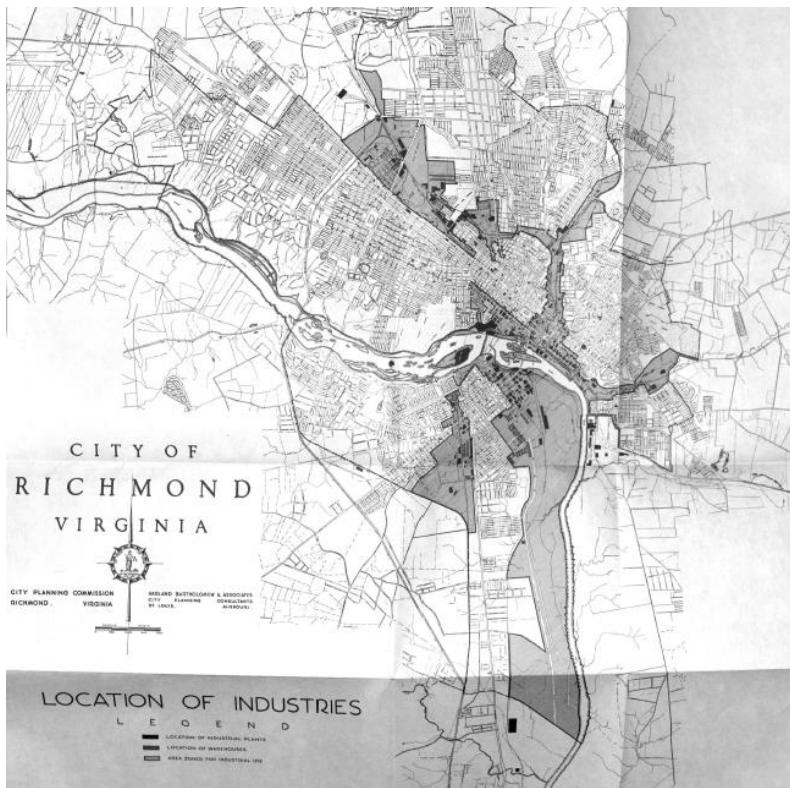

Figure 17: Segoe and De Leuw. (1950). Transportation: A Master Plan Study. Richmond, VA: Richmond City Planning Commission. Plate 47.

The 1950 Master Plan took care when suggesting areas for industry and manufacturing to make estimations based on the current prevalence of industry sectors as to how much land might be "marked" or set aside for manufacturing use, noting that while it currently accounted for only 16% of the total land use (Ladislas Segoe & Associates, 1951, p. 9) much more would be needed to encourage the growth of industrial facilities whose "modern plant requirements" needed "elbow room on open upland sites" (p. 26). By 1980 it was projected that the "negro population" of Richmond would decline to approximately 25-23% of the total population and that with manufacturing accounting for the largest percentage of employment and the projection for this to continue into 1980 that sufficient land should be set aside for its use.

As we now know, international capital pressures of the global economy, war, and technological innovations would make mockeries of the 1950 predictions for 1980. A December 1979 article from the "Richmond Times Dispatch", commenting on what to expect at the precipice of the 1980s and a retrospective on the "progress" of Blacks in the 1970s would turn to what was described as "a black University of Chicago economist" (Richmond Times Dispatch, December 30, 1979), William Julius Wilson whose then recent book *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978) was just settling into the consciousness of many Americans in and outside of the inner city that had been decimated by the flight of most Whites and many middle class Blacks to suburbia where there was "room to breathe" and "elbow room" for "modern" manufacturing facilities. It was the beginning period for a concentration of Black populations in a concomitance with poverty reminiscent of the Redemption period but carrying the badge of a neo-liberal order. With racial formation type considerations more deeply nuanced than the title of Wilson's work may imply, it is a critical and pioneering (along with Massey and Denton's American Apartheid of 1993) work that helps contextualize the ways in which contingent and exploitative labor

epitomized by the likes of Staff Zone in Richmond and elsewhere, came to be further

concentrated for Black populations across the country and how the "inner city" came to be

synonymous with "Black", "moral vice", inequality, and poverty. As industries pushed out of the

inner cities, in part due to the highway transportation infrastructure, access to jobs and economic

growth went with them. Areas already experiencing poverty and racial residential segregation

experienced even more concentrated poverty (Massey, 1990). Those middle-working-class Black

families that had served to connect and stabilize the Black community of old Jackson Ward

would also leave according to Wilson's logic. This round of "flight" left the remaining

population – now almost exclusively Black in this particular area of Richmond- in a situation

where public services were of great need but the City was left with a marginal tax base and

declining industry to provide for such services. Where annexation had previously been used to

expand the boundaries of the City and compel surrounding areas to cooperate on the basis that

they too received benefits from the City infrastructure and business district (to the extent it still

existed) governments now would make it more difficult for the cities with concentrated poverty

and Black populations to take action to improve or expand in ways that would alleviate the

"blood-letting". The circumstances would contribute to the "geographies of despair" Easton

(2007) so thoroughly described in understanding why construction day labor pools could crop up

all over the South and Southwest to capitalize on high poverty communities with little

opportunity to access jobs in the main-stream economy. These connections matter because as this

research attempts to show racialized environmental violence, though not the only mechanism, is

a primary socio-spatial practice by which inequality and repressive racial relations become

embedded. By exercising power relations that make daily life quite literally a struggle for life

you inhibit the ability of subaltern groups to effectively organize and protest against the

repression. You also "naturalize" the association of these environmentally violent practices with marginalized communities even as they are quite clearly the result of a series, a cycle, of socio-spatial productions that are not neutral but designed to be both biologically and symbolically fatal. This is where Gilmore's theorizations and conceptualizations become a joining element for such socio-spatial readings as have been attempted in this research.

Premature Death

Throughout its history, social agencies and the Richmond government have been presented with a variable onslaught of health crises. Early in its history these included several outbreaks of typhoid fever, largely in the Black sections of town like old Jackson Ward. The reports which resulted from studies of these crises rarely ever noted the presence and danger of industrial facilities as a potential contributor to this risk. The "dark pall of coal smoke was a sign of prosperity [not danger] to the business leaders of Richmond, and they filled economic development literature with lithographs of factories belching dark plumes of smoke" (Potterfield, 2009, p. 54). Nor did these studies and reports, or only in limited circumstances, explicitly recognize that it was the White civic elite's withholding of public services such as sewerage in these communities, a structural rather than personal issue, which were contributing to a broad smattering of negative health outcomes. For instance, a significant portion of Blacks accessed drinking water from a single community well and the predominant use of "dry" closets (colloquially phrased in this region as "out houses") in old Jackson Ward which extended well into the 1950s would, based in part on topography, contaminate many of the drinking wells within the city. Unfortunately for Black Richmonders bad water resulting from racialized environmental violence was not the limit of the circumstances leading to premature death in Richmond.

In seeking to understand exactly why it was that the Black population was dying at rates much faster than any group of its White citizens much of the "scientific" study would cite moral issues in the Black community, inferior biology, and still some the childlike and ignorant nature of the Black population in seeking medical care (Bureau of Municipal Research, 1917, p. 535). The death rate figures were in fact quite embarrassing and bad for business over several eras of Richmond's economic development as indices about the health and welfare of communities began to be collected and used by people and businesses planning personal relocation, corporate growth and economic development. Table 1, taken from the report "The Negro in Richmond" (1929, p. 47) shows various statistics about the Black and White community in the post-World War I period and the supposedly roaring 1920s in which so much urban growth would occur.

Table 1: Table of various health statistics for the White and Black community of Richmond in 1927 as published in the report "The Negro in Richmond Virginia", Richmond Council of Social Agencies, 1929.

	White	Negro
Birth rate per 1,000 of population	18.12	24.11
Death rate per 1,000 of population	11.54	20.43
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	59.	113.
Death rate under 1 year, per 1,000 of population	1.06	2.73
Tuberculosis of lungs, death rate per 100,000	49.2	147.2
Syphilis, death rate per 100,000	7.3	43.1
Undefined causes of death per 100,000	8.1	80.8
Average age of death, in years	52.1	37.2

While the table in Figure 13 shows many staggering differences of note, such as the overall death rate and the 15 year difference in the average age of death, it is the percentage with tuberculosis of the lungs that stands out. Coordinated abandonment and disinvestment in the production of old Jackson Ward, where the 1927 study was focused, as well as the dangerous working conditions of the tobacco and other factories contributed to early health epidemics such

as tuberculosis[29], to the "premature death" of Black people in these "fatal power couplings" (Gilmore, 2002). Though the prevalence of tuberculosis among Blacks was two to three times that of Whites when "Pine Camp" was built as a tuberculosis hospital, it was only available to Whites (Hoffman, 2004, p. 106). When confronted with the tuberculosis deaths, rather than trying to help Blacks get services, Richmond's mayor and public health officials cautioned White residents to carefully select their employees and where they had their clothes laundered as many Black women were primarily employed as laundresses (Hoffman, 2004, p. 108). Once again the social relations attempted to shift recognition of the structural and environmental issues to the personal level. While many of the heaviest polluting industries have long since left the city based on a variety of other economic factors at the regional, national, and international scales - their impact hangs in the soil and water tables, if not in the air, in the slow way environmental violence (Nixon, 2011) operates for generations and beyond.

Richmond Planet editor and former Richmond City councilman John Mitchell, Jr. said in the early 1900s though it is still apt today that: "if you wish to understand the effect of colored folks *retiring* [emphasis added] from politics walk around in old Jackson Ward and then walk over[to]...the western sections of the city. You will be astounded to see the difference" (Alexander, 2002, p. 171). Editor Mitchell was speaking of the infrastructures of opportunity for the community through public services and the living conditions produced by want of opportunity. Richmond City Health officials warned of the dangers of disease located in the body and habits of Black citizens, while in the Richmond Planet and among Black community

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[29] I see this type of epidemic and cancer rates in such areas as similar. The production of "Cancer Alley" in Louisiana and prior eras of particular production that caused varying other health crises of which tuberculosis was one, hold a continuity with what is seen today.

protests, the Black population described the city's disinvestment in the community as the culprit by noting dusty alleys, cesspools of filth, industries and crowded houses without running water.

In the 1970s after a long Civil Rights battle both nationally and locally, by organizations like Richmond's HOME, neighborhoods were more open to integration in terms of the availability of mortgage lending and removal of certain legal barriers to residential integration. Through court cases that made racial gerrymandering illegal and placed new terms on the management of local elections throughout the South, Black politicians began again to have a voice. In Richmond the 1970s brought a Black mayor and predominantly Black city council by moving away from the use of voting districts and making elections city-wide for the first time since the ante-bellum period. But the Richmond inherited by these individuals and to which a variety of social programs would be applied for the potential betterment of the population as a whole, but especially the Black population, had been gutted of large portions of its middle and upper class populations and had been shorn of many of its social connections that helped support the health and welfare of communities like old Jackson Ward such that they are still trying to recover into our current moment. These social connections were often broken through the racial-environmental projects spoiling the landscape like siting noxious facilities, transportation infrastructure, and the destruction of residential areas causing acute affordable housing shortages and therefore also impacting the potential economic base for locally focused businesses. A 2011 article from "Richmond Magazine" noted that while "wandering through Jackson Ward, visitors still see many blighted buildings, seedy rental properties and the boarded-up shells of once-proud homes" (Dovi, 2011). Through the cycles of socially and environmentally entwined spatial practices, again not in isolation but of decidedly significant impact, these processes continue to produce staggeringly unequal socio-economic and health outcomes contributing to the premature

death of the Black population. While areas of old Jackson Ward have poverty rates as high as

70% (Griego, 2014) a 2016 health equity study from the Virginia Commonwealth University's

Center on Society and Health also notes that even today there is a life expectancy difference of

up to 20 years across census tracts of the City of Richmond (as shown in Figure 18). The life

expectancy being lowest, meaning the production of premature death, has been identified with

staggering consistency in old Jackson Ward and the other predominantly Black communities

located so closely with the industrial infrastructure, denial of public services, and residential

segregation of prior eras.

Figure 18: "Map 12, Life Expectancy at Birth, Richmond City" as published in "Health Equity in
Richmond Virginia" (2016) p. 24.
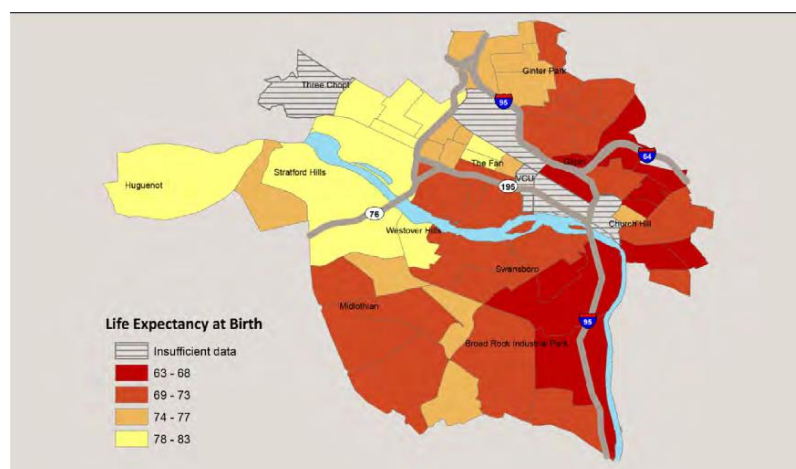
Conclusion and Implications

Where you live matters. In understanding *why* it matters, scholars such as Pulido,

Gilmore, McKittrick and others suggest that we must recognize that where we live is a social

production. My research, which builds upon the theoretical underpinnings of racial formation,

the production of space, and slow violence asserts that Environmental Racism, or racialized

environmental violence contributing to premature death, can be used conceptually as an

analytical doorway, a hint at something more, to be learned/revealed about how the lived environment has been structured on the basis of past projects, particularly racial environmental projects. This work also has potential to impact future work using Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence by giving the human experiences connected to the environmental violence a deeper history.

Examining environmental violence as a socio-spatial practice we find that such violence does crucial work, almost automatic work once set in motion given its temporal and territorial scope, in (re)producing the material and symbolic conditions necessary to sustain a ceaselessly repressive ideology. It does this by making the living of everyday life in and of itself a struggle thereby making it more difficult to engage in revolutionary acts across the intersecting fields of social relations which embed the particular and unequal world order of our current moment. This violence is however, and can only be, partial in its determinative capacity as it is met with resistance and struggle from those upon which it is directed, namely the subaltern and frequently therefore in the U.S., racial minorities. These practices are connected over time and space in a cycle of relations which seek to repeat the repression of prior eras that allow for limited interruptions to the cycle of capital accumulation. Though generated from the same ideological impulse each repetition in this cycle will take on different shapes, variable effects, and provide varying opportunities for additional resistance because they are enacted upon a terrain that has already been the subject of previous racial projects. As Omi & Winant define them these racial projects are historically specific political, social, and cultural developments that direct the process of making and remaking the meaning of race as it is contested. In examining the particular case of old Jackson Ward we have seen in episodic detail how this violence, environmental and social, is transmitted and transformed from the struggles of normative and

oppositional forces. Understanding these processes in the local context of old Jackson Ward,

based on the historic alternative (however imperfect) it embodies compared with the social

outcomes of the community today, allows for an imagining of the ways in which other social

relations could be possible. There are many spaces in the everyday worlds we inhabit that can be

examined under these processes and the framework utilized in this research which seeks, as does

the work McKittrick and Gordon, to locate the "things behind things". In her conception of

"haunting" which stands in for the process by which the possibilities of old Jackson Ward and

other potential spaces can be imagined, Gordon highlights the ways in which organized forces

and systemic structures that appear removed from us make their impact felt in everyday life in a

way that confounds our analytic separations and confounds the social separations themselves

(2008, p. 24). This work attempts to convey a type of social totality that defies easy expression

and yet stated simply suggests that the "past is not dead, it is not even past". The economically

advantageous power relations of Black slavery are a direct ancestor of the power relations by

which construction day-labor pools like Staff Zone exist and operate. These fatal power

couplings and others of similar ideological ilk, the alienation from self and others they bring

through a complex bulwark of socio-cultural fragmentation, and such divisions specifically on

race – these are all in one time and in space as it is produced. Each socio-spatial act and process

of environmental violence has held potential not only in terms of possibly making it easier to

exploit socially constructed racial differences for the next capital gain but also for an opportunity

to analyze – to read – the practice in ways that reveal the racialized ideological subterfuge at

work, that which tries to hide its true purpose and inhuman character, in such processes. The

challenge "to be done" of Gordon - in imaging from the gaps, from the margins, from the bottom

or from the other side of history as such - is that we have to be willing to perceive that which

asks to go misremembered, invisible, and unvisible and pursue truth where it may lead. We must see this environmental and social violence as two sides of the same coin (Gilmore, 2002), a simultaneity but from which environmental spoliation makes it that much easier every time, to hide the role of race in the production of space, the production of difference, and the reproduction of capitalism. These critical understandings have broad implications across a wide variety of disciplines and specific research endeavors because it speaks on a fundamental level to how and why where you live matters and in examining the uneven nature of the social, geographic, economic, and cultural world it implies that a different space is possible and a different space must be produced through revolutionary practices – through non-fatal power couplings.

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