Abstract

"'We don't fight for no reason': Resisting Criminalization in Southeast Washington DC"

This paper is a non-traditional ethnography, an 'ethnography from below,' that combines personal accounts and reflection on youth organizing in Southeast Washington DC with history and policy research on state and correctional institutions. This ethnography argues that youth and community organizers are aware of trends in policing and gentrification that scholars are just beginning to name. Using my own research and observations of the youth with whom I worked, I argue that gentrification and forced displacement are accelerated through aggressive policing tactics known as 'broken windows' policing, resulting in growing incarceration rates and a growing prison industrial complex in the District. The prison industrial complex (PIC) is a complex series of relationships between economic, political and social interests that drive the growth and privatization of corrections as an industry based on the criminalization and control of low income communities and communities of color. In DC, the major function of the political and economic interests of the PIC is to de-politicize the states of poverty and neglect in neighborhoods that are framed as 'crime ridden' or 'blighted' and are subsequently heavily targeted by the police. The efforts of youth and community organizers documented in this paper focus on 're-politicizing' and reframing this dominant discourse as a means to build community, identify structures of oppression, and create alternatives.

Summary of Findings

I. Forced displacement through urban removal and incarceration in DC is a part of a prison industrial complex.

-The prison industrial complex (PIC) defined in this paper is the criminalization and incarceration of low income communities of color, or the 'social removal' of these populations for the benefits of politicians seeking to politically favorable methods to control crime, developers and correctional facilities seeking profits, and media fear-mongering for a wider readership. The profits from the corrections industry are a higher priority to local and federal governments than the responsibility to provide basic human services.

-Building a culture of fear around low income neighborhoods, for outsiders as well as residents, through aggressive policing of neighborhoods contributes to both growing incarceration rates and displacement. This is also known as 'broken windows' or 'zero tolerance' policing.

-Removal of residents for the 'revitalization' of neighborhoods generates profits for the developers and the shelters and prisons (increasingly privatized) that receive the displaced.

II. The District government works to implement policies that naturalize or depoliticize rates of incarceration and crime in the District. District officials obscure the negative impacts of redevelopment policies (displacement, destruction of neighborhood social networks) by scapegoating youth and residents as the causes of crime and neighborhood decline.

-Decades of 'urban removal' have created a narrative of low income neighborhoods being the source of crime, and a history of the PIC in DC shows how since the beginnings of redevelopment in the District, the police and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office have been actively targeting and evicting low income populations of color in the District.

-Current targeting of low income neighborhoods for redevelopment is known as the 'New Communities Initiative' a local extension of HOPE VI federal policy that frames youth and residents as the root of decline in the neighborhood. Targeting of residents as the cause of neighborhood downfall is also seen in current anti-gang injunctions and loitering bills recently proposed in the City Council.

III. Neighborhood based groups work to fight back and re-politicize these trends and definitions by redefining terms, telling their own stories, and envisioning and creating alternatives.

- Groups focus on resilience and not on the oppressor, which helps to redefine the 'guilty' or 'criminal' as positive change agents in their communities.
- Youth groups in the urban Northeast have worked on redefining the terms of their displacement: redefining community, youth, and quality of life.
- Direct action has taken the form of imagining and building alternatives to incarceration and displacement at a local level.

I. Introduction

I struggle with where to begin, how to capture my days in Barry Farms. Standing on Martin Luther King Ave overlooking Anacostia to my right I can see the Capitol building hazy across the river, seeming more than miles away as we gather surveys and knock on doors, attempting to stop the advance of aggressive developers and the displacement that comes with it. I remember sitting around cold pizza with six 17 year olds talking about changes coming, trying to laugh away our fears, drawing cartoons of Mayor Adrian Fenty driving a bulldozer into the neighborhood. My commute to the neighborhood frames the struggle there better than I could with years of research. I pass first through the shockingly rapid gentrification on 14th street, dodging double parked cars in front of the newly built Target. My shoulders hunch a little more and my pedaling becomes more furious when I pass by what's left of Northwest One, the first public housing project in the nation, destroyed by developers promising it would be replaced with a 'mixed income' community. Sirens blare and lights flash constantly in this section of my commute, as police are called to protect and serve the properties of its new residents. I pass the SW waterfront, where former residents made homeless wait out the day, and the poodles and shitzus owned by new condo residents sniff at their feet as the owners walk by without seeing. Finally, crossing the Frederick Douglas bridge into Anacostia Park is like a breath of fresh air before plunging into the familiar streets of Barry Farms, clearing my head for the work that lays ahead. What I pass along the way to Barry Farms is part of what residents there are struggling against, a rapidly paced and highly policed wave of redevelopment headed across the river.

This is an *ethnography from below*, as Vincent Lyon-Callo would call it (2003). I am not trying to follow the legacy of traditional ethnography, with observations and formal interviews, instead this is an account of my experiences working alongside youth organizers from Southeast DC, and my own exploration into history and policy research for context and clarity about the struggles we faced and the challenges that lie ahead. The title comes from a conversation with a young resident, who was contesting the stereotype that all youth from this neighborhood are violent, who in her comment 'we don't fight for no reason,' points to some of the reasons for, or causes of, this violence. For youth experiencing forced displacement and police harassment with no form of recourse, violence can be an expression of resistance or a way of seeking safety. This is an attempt to re-politicize the image of 'criminal youth,' and to reveal how District and federal policies have created much of the conditions that cause crime in Anacostia and the Barry Farms housing development. Ethnography from below is an ethnography of the state, "demystifying the nature of the neoliberal state," by working to make visible the concrete programs and policies that have been used "to create a single narrative in which poverty and inequality are made to seem the natural and inevitable upshots of evolutionary process, rather than the conscious and planned outcomes of a very deliberate set of human interventions" (Lyon-Callo 2003:175). Through history and sharing stories, I would like to show how young residents are setting the debate about crime and redevelopment in DC, a reminder to academia and allies that the communities in which we work already can identify what is happening around them, and as an ally I follow their lead with history and policy research that clearly affirms their experiences. Ethnography is both history and comparison, so I will also draw on the experiences of other youth

groups fighting similar struggles to begin to answer questions of 'where do we go from here?'

I want to keep at the center of this account the stories of the youth with whom I worked, and how the individual stories we told to one another weave into this bigger story about resistance to criminalization and policing of low-income neighborhoods of color. The experiences of these youth in Southeast DC, in the crosshairs of racism, classism and structural violence, inform two things: these stories reveal the illusion of the DC government's logic (i.e. police and development make neighborhoods safer for residents), and also inform a new path of *conscientizacao*, consciousness-raising, or conscientization, building a counter-story that strengthens resistance and action. As we work towards building alternatives and reframing these policies and assumptions of criminality, how does reframing 'safety' and 'security' help contribute to justice reinvestment, or the investment in and support of basic community needs and programs as alternatives to incarceration? Particularly how does centering anti-gentrification organizing by youth of color affect the ways in which we collectively fight for justice and alternatives? Makani describes this type of sharing as "not giving people information as a key to motivating them to act, but validating their perceptions and conveying a sense that the change they dare to imagine in these private spaces is achievable and desired by a great many others" (Makani 1995). Retelling our individual stories and connecting them to structural inequalities and injustices is also called *transformative resistance*, which will be explored further in the second half of this paper. Along with these stories, I have to tell my own story- not just the self-conscious reflections of what it means to challenge concepts of safety as a white person in a low-income black neighborhood, but what it

means to be a supporter and ally to these youth, and how these stories of resistance can lend themselves to a larger movement and inform the actions of organizers and allies.

Telling our stories creates the power shift, rather than focusing or local police precincts, our stories inform action and next steps. A poor people's economic human rights group based in Baltimore called United Workers calls this the 'battle of stories" framework, or power that is "leverage through perception management," which I will discuss further in the look at reframing efforts going on across the country. Another group, called the Media Mobilizing Project based in Philadelphia, says "movements begin with the telling of untold stories" (Media Mobilizing Project). Retelling stories is the first step on a path to action: by "refashioning the ideological landscape through which particular racialized representations of "youth" are constructed and naturalized" the youth organizers can "challenging the dominant or hegemonic political discourse that has explained the abandonment of large portions of the youth population as not only justifiable but both natural and inevitable"(Ho Sang).

Allies, Amplifying Voices

I want to first clarify my role as an ally in this struggle. The struggle for Barry Farms is rooted specifically in a harsh history of forced displacement and incarceration east of the river, and by telling this story I hope to cast a light on how the struggles and histories of a particular city and neighborhood have been erased by the discourse and policy of media and politicians. I hope this ethnography will illustrate the daily acts of strength and resistance by those in the crosshairs of these policies. Because of the focus on retelling the stories told about us by others, I'd like to first tell my story of how I became involved in this community. As allies, we would be arrogant and ignorant to

assume our stories are not connected to the struggles and stories of those we fight alongside. What began for me as a short video project with several youth about the changes that were coming to their neighborhood quickly became much more. The process of developing *their* story and assisting with cameras, editing, and storyboard planning called me into a relationship with their struggle and called me to develop *my own* story about this neighborhood and my connection to its future. I remember the particular afternoon Johonna (director of Visions to Peace) asked me to join the project more formally as a volunteer staff, I said something like,"I worry a lot that I'm not a relevant mentor to these youth." "Not relevant?" she asked. "Yeah," I said. "I mean, like different life experiences and stuff…." I trailed off. "If you're trying to talk about race," Johonna said, "you might as well name it, you know? What you have that is relevant is relationships, commitment, ideas for and knowledge of organizing" (Conversation 8/08). What I learned from that conversation is that as activists and allies, we aren't here to think in terms of organizations, in terms of our role or job description, we are here to think in terms of movements. As my friend Ryan said, you can worry about your privilege and not be involved in the struggle or you can worry about it while being involved in the struggle, "we can figure it out in isolation or we can be of use" (Harvey, Ryan 2009). By doing this work I saw how sharing these stories was transformational not just in the youth around me but in me. Learning to share about my own self as a critical part of our work, and a part of coming to discussions and meetings in a whole and honest way, was very transformative. I insisted for much of the project on not leading, and not being visible. It wasn't until we were waist deep in this documentary process that someone pulled me aside and said I needed to step up my own presence as a guide and

leader, speaking from what I knew, to help the experience be empowering and to help amplify the story the youth were telling. I resisted hotly even then, until it became glaringly obvious the youth were getting frustrated by the lack of direction in the project.

Finally, I had to share my story, about why I was there and what I believed, to build the trust and relationship it took to complete our documentary project and become a team with the youth organizers of Visions to Peace (VtP)- the project will be explained further in the next section. Once I named and accepted my role as an adult ally and supporter, rather than obsessing over my white guilt to the point of self-accusation that 'you shouldn't even be here.' As an anthropologist, what this has taught me is the "the ally story" or the activist anthropologist's story must be shared. Ryan said that an ally group he was a part of also "failed at developing a story around us and about us and what we were doing- who we were and why we were involved. When you've got to mobilize other people its hard if you don't have your own identity as a group" (Harvey, Ryan 2009). But the positive effect of the presence of allies as they learned to share their stories was "that sharing those stories- it validates your struggle and validates theirs." Storytelling in movements is about recreating the connection, in this case and in my case, between folks affected by issues and those less affected. As Ryan says, "there's a ton of privileged people out there and tons of oppressed people, that's a lot of people that gotta move to the right place for change to happen…"(Harvey, Ryan 2009). This is echoed in Nancy Scheper-Hughes's assertion that the role of the anthropologist is not just 'witnessing,' but "the anthropologist [works] as *companheira* (companion), which is in the active voice, and it positions the anthropologist inside human events as a responsive, reflexive, and morally committed being, one who will take sides and make

judgments…to afflict our comfortable assumptions about what it means to be human"(Scheper-Hughes 1995). Thus storytelling is the way of weaving the fabric between groups, even if common struggles are hard to find, they are there in threads, in order to bind us together in unity and move forward into action.

The decision to focus this paper on youth resistance through storytelling and organizing comes from my experience with the youth organizers of the Barry Farms neighborhood of Anacostia. I became involved with the Barry Farms neighborhood through volunteering at a teen drop-in center as a homework tutor. The center was run by former American University students, and was well known in the neighborhood as FLY (Facilitating Leadership in Youth). The drop-in-center had evolved out of the efforts of several volunteer tutors who assisted struggling students during the school year, and ran a summer camp for these same students during the summer months. When I arrived in December 2007, the summer camp had been operating for nine years and the drop-in center for seven, and was an important fixture in the routines and development of many of the youth. As I was becoming acquainted with the youth of FLY, they were simultaneously growing in their efforts as neighborhood organizers. They had received news several months prior to my arrival about the scheduled destruction of the Barry Farms neighborhood, where most of the youth were raised or currently resided. As I began to bond particularly with the older youth in the program I became more and more interested in their activism, as the older youth led the efforts in community involvement.

The youth were building on their leadership, having just finished organizing a know-your-rights campaign which included a survey of neighborhood youth on their experiences with police harassment. Youth leaders had led a participatory research

campaign of over six months with the help of adult mentors, so the common experience in the neighborhood of police harassment was discussed openly, and the youth considered the police to be critical players in the redevelopment process as they 'cleaned up' the neighborhood for condos and higher-income residents. As a summer project that year, we began a documentary to highlight these issues as the youth were experiencing them. For confidentiality, all names of the youth have been changed in this paper. The film, entitled "Broken Promises: the Truth about New Communities," attempted to tackle the central question of the redevelopment as a solution to crime by highlighting the impact of displacement on youth. During the completion of this documentary, the youth organizing in Barry Farms became a threat to some of the organizations original funding, and co-founder and youth leadership director James Pearlstein left the organization.[1] This shift hit many of youth hard, as they had grown with Jamie's mentorship for many years. Despite this transition, a few of the youth were interested in finishing the documentary they had begun.

Following the transitions at FLY, I also left the organization to devote those hours to volunteering with Visions to Peace (VtP), another youth organization in the neighborhood, working to create safety and alternatives to police and incarceration. I was drawn to Visions to Peace through some of the youth had worked with at FLY, who interned at Visions to Peace the summer of 2008. Additionally, I was seeking a space where I could continue to discuss with the youth the issues around criminalization that were raised by their organizing efforts in Barry Farms, without our discussion or work

[1] While I don't wish to go further into internal politics of this organization, beyond that youth organizing was considered a threat to the funding for this youth development focused non-profit. I will reference those interested in further reading to The Revolution Will Not Be Funded, Paul Kivel's "Social Service vs Social Change.' See also FLY's website for list of current funders: www.flyyouth.org

being compromised by the sources of our funding. After discussing it with the six youth who wanted to finish the documentary, we decided to finish it as a side project of Visions to Peace, so we could involve more youth, continue the discussion about criminalization of the neighborhood, and also use the VtP meeting space as a place to get together to complete the video. We finished the video that winter, in time to screen it at our VtP Holiday Party, and are waiting on further action until we can make a plan to deal with high levels of opposition to this type of youth activism in the traditional leadership of the neighborhood. [2]

My methods included participant observation in meetings and social gatherings of the youth organizers. I was often considered a tutor or mentor at first based on my previous work with FLY, but as we began to discuss more deeply at VtP, we made clear we wanted adult allies and youth to participate equally while still recognizing their different needs. Most of the reflections from youth included in this paper are gathered from VtP meetings, discussions in or around the documentary itself, and the framing of/reaction to the issues by the local community. Information regarding the Barry Farms neighborhood redevelopment comes from meetings and organizing efforts led by the youth of FLY, and thus all names have been changed to protect the privacy of those youth and adult residents. I will use 'we' when referring to activities or perspectives gained collectively as a group through Visions to Peace, but 'they' or them to refer to experiences the youth relate to me about their neighborhood or life that I am not a part of. As a part of my role in this work, I'd like to add to Hyatt and Lyon-Callo's argument that the 'ethnography of the state' is not just to deconstruct the workings of state and power

[2] It is not strategic for the youth involved to enter into too much detail, but opposition by adult power structure was so difficult and heated for the kids that they didn't want to make themselves vulnerable to it again until a more strategic plan and adult resident support was in place.

on the ground but to weaken it by focusing on and amplifying the power being created by and for communities affected by these policies.

> Documenting the opposition of community activists to such practices is one important corrective to the multiplicity of portrayals of the poor and working class as passive, ineffectual, dysfunctional and incapable of acting in their best interests. Studies of local-level activism can also reveal the numerous ways in which community leaders link their neighborhoods with the state through their cooperation with, cooptation into and opposition against the agencies, non-governmental organizations and bureaucracies that are the product of shifting state policies in search of new avenues for governing and policing the poor [Lyon-Callo 2001: 79].

Many of the complexities of the neighborhood in which the youth lived had to do with leadership in the neighborhood divided in its opinion towards increasing policing and development, revealing that some "new avenues for governing the poor" (2001), came from within affected communities. The fear generated by dominant discourse demanded that someone be found guilty for the blight and crime affecting Southeast neighborhoods, and within the community people were still 'governed' by fear of being deemed responsible or bringing down the community.

Beyond documenting their activism, in 'Decolonizing Anthropology' Faye Harrison (1997) reminds us that when studying communities engaged in struggle or people whose histories have been erased, we have a particular responsibility to engage 'ethnographic subjects' as partners and collaborators as they will be bringing about not just social change and justice but new cultures and ways of being. The internal dynamic of our group and experiences together are as important as any visible change we made in the neighborhood. For this reason, this ethnography is driven by my experience alongside great youth organizers, featuring not just actions we undertook but conversations and stories we shared together. Very important to understanding the context of this organizing

and the stories from the youth would be to understand a brief history of Barry Farms and the New Communities Initiative that threatens to destroy the neighborhood.

The Battle of Stories in Barry Farms:

Barry Farms is a HUD (Housing and Urban Development) project where the majority of the youth I have worked with for the past years live. This plot of land, was acquired from white landowners by the U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (popularly known as the Freedmen's Bureau) in 1867, with a plan to sell or lease lots for black housing and use the proceeds to fund education at the same time (Cultural Tourism DC). However, during and after WW II, with the specter of urban renewal destroying housing in Southwest DC, the Barry Farms multifamily housing projects were constructed to house the displaced, along with the construction of the Anacostia Freeway and Suitland Parkway, the neighborhood and its legacy was forever changed. Former slaves face slavery again, in overcrowded housing and a reputation as a 'bad neighborhood' which brought in its wake an increasing police presence and dwindling alternatives for youth coming up in this neighborhood. With a freeway barring the way from the projects to the rest of the city, options looked bleak and infrastructure dwindled as the city turned to more profitable development projects across the river. Today this neighborhood 'east of the river' is still thought of as one of the most dangerous and neglected areas of Washington, DC. The neighborhood has been successfully cast as criminal from a historical legacy of urban renewal to recent policies from the DC Chief of Police and her staff, justifying displacement and renovation as 'uplift,' particularly "uplift of the black community" to its older residents (Conversation

with youth organizers, 8/08). According to Justice Policy Institute between 2000 and 2005 there was a 73% increase in voter concern about crime despite a 21% decrease in reported crime, indicating fear of crime may be a bigger determinant in perceptions of this neighborhood than actual crime rates (2006).

How can younger residents fight for an 'uplift' that secures them a home and a solid future? As the youth of the briefly formed 'Barry Farms Community Coalition' demanded, "we hope that many changes and improvements come to Barry Farms, we only hope that current residents will be able to enjoy and access those improvements"(Broken Promises). The New Communities Initiative is a local extension of HOPE VI, a federal redevelopment plan that claims to revitalized blighted neighborhoods through the destruction of public housing projects and replacing them with 'mixed income' housing- which breaks down to one third public housing, one third subsidized rent, and one third market rate rentals. However, this results in a net loss of affordable units, and so the high rate of displacement New Communities causes versus the much needed reinvestment in the neighborhood makes it a highly contested policy in Barry Farms.[3] In the outreach materials developed by the youth about New Communities, it was important to state that the promoters of New Communities believe that "the solution to crime unemployment and other issues is to force low-income residents to live among many high-income people" in order to refocus the debate on the root causes of crime rather than pathologizing public housing residents and youth (Barry Farms Community Coalition).

[3] For more information, see: O-Connell, Jonothan. Marion Barry Clashes with Residents Over Plans for Barry Farms. Washington Business Journal: May 30th, 2008.

One principle argument that has fueled everything from eminent domain to the concept of broken windows policing (which targets the lifestyles in poor communities as 'criminal'), is "the idea that the absence of civil society or social capital [in low income neighborhoods] is responsible for so many social ills" (Harcourt 2001: 75). By documenting the forms of resistance I have seen or supported, I will contest that assumption by featuring the 'social capital' and power of local leaders and organizers. I also hope to spark the creativity of our movements with many examples of how to re-politicize poverty and crime from an individual accusation to identifying the institutional roots.

The role of the District in the redevelopment of Southeast DC is also to highlight the lack of participation of affected communities as reasons for their displacement, depoliticizing their role as commercial developers by casting residents as apathetic rather than revealing how the loss of locally owned businesses has created economic instability that deters community mobilization. Lyon-Callo offers a reason why we don't see the same mobilizations of poor people's movements as in the 1970's, because today in an environment of rapid redevelopment and underfunded urban centers, "community organizations feel compelled to focus their energies on far more limited goals in the hopes that they can attract private investors to their neighborhoods, which is the only realistic strategy for local improvements that they can imagine" and they feel there are limited political possibilities they can envision for improvements (2003: 77). This can be attributed to disinvestment in urban centers following which some cities "sought to raise revenues by creating tax incentives for high end businesses to move in and revitalize inner city neighborhoods" (Ishihara 2007). This ethnography will first focus on revealing

the systematic destruction of low-income communities through a history of 'urban removal,' and provide a framework of why local residents often support developers and business ventures as the only available means of survival east of the river. Looking closely and critically at the redevelopment plans of the District of Columbia can reveal much about the responsibility of federal and local policies in the creation rather than reduction of crime and poverty.

Much of the rhetoric around youth and crime in SE DC focuses on keeping youth 'on the right path' or 'out of trouble,' or the hope that a few select individuals are expected to 'transcend' their circumstances for better opportunities. Rather than programs that focus on "reforming the individual at the expense of broader social concerns" we need to break up the current discourse with stories or examples that "embolden the possibilities of locally based collective mobilizations against inequities and exploitation" (Lyon-Callo 2003:79). To explore this, the second component of ethnography from below is 'studying across' rather than up, or allowing the youth to focus on their own story in order to create a shift in power. Storytelling can create power shifts by allowing a more critical understanding of how one's individual story connects to the dominant narrative, revealing paths to change and resistance to that narrative. In Lyon-Callo's work resistance university-led gentrification in Kalamazoo, critical discussion and popular education around the structural neglect of certain Kalamazoo neighborhoods created possibilities for new strategies to emerge in the work of community organizations. As a part of a comparative ethnography, I'd like to add the perspectives of other organizers that continue to work to change and challenge the dominant story of 'youth as criminal' being told in urban centers.

The comparative work in this ethnography from below has a specific use as Ginwright says moving organizing "towards a politics of relevance" for black urban youth. Urban ethnographer Steven Gregory warns that descriptions of African American youth and their communities "as socially isolated and institutionally disabled by joblessness and by the exodus of the middle classes, has . . . obscured the struggles that black urbanites have continued to wage against racial injustices" (Gregory 1998: 10).This ethnography will highlight *transformative resistance*, where youth organizers work to "produce and practice alternative frameworks of meaning, social relations, and collective identity below the horizon of established or officially recognized institutions" (Ginwright 2006). While youth (under the ages of 18) cannot vote, have little institutional power to change policies and laws, and limited access to institutional politics, transformative resistance is often spawned through attempts to confront personal challenges in their lives. Unlike oppositional resistance, which views resistance as contributing to educational failure and a host of youth problems, Ginwrights concept of transformative resistance is linked to social change and allows black youth to reject self-blame for personal problems and fosters a critical worldview that is informed by their particular social, economic and political position. Sharing stories and forms of resistance is a critical part of contributing to and strengthening the larger movement against policing and gentrification. This 'ethnography from below' is a call for redefinitions. Lorna Rhodes' work 'Towards an Anthropology of Prisons,' cautions us on engaging closely with the discourses created by the state, she warns us not to 'fall into the rhetoric we are trying to pierce'(Rhodes 2001: 65). The youth with whom I worked found it difficult not to reinforce ideas of morality, and 'good youth' versus 'bad youth' when trying to resist

the dominant discourse of criminalization and describe their own experiences. In order to imagine alternatives, they needed to entirely redefine safety and community. The District police deliver *their* version of safety in targeted neighborhood crime sweeps and military checkpoints called 'Neighborhood Safety Zones,' and we must articulate *our own* visions of safety in response, such as safe employment, safe housing, and safe streets. Telling their own stories in the media work we did in Barry Farms was an act of great bravery and resistance in face of substantial opposition from the neighborhood, who had consumed and believed much of the rhetoric inspired by the 'broken windows' model of policing and the PIC.

II. De-politicizing Crime and Poverty in DC: A Short History

If Washington, DC were a state, it would have the highest per capita incarceration rate in the country, and also, the highest per capita police force of any jurisdiction in the country (Justice Policy Institute 2006). We must investigate the histories of 'urban renewal'[4] in DC, and concepts of crime, blight, and 'danger' has been fueling displacement and growing incarceration rates for the last 50 years. This history will look critically at how the 'controlling image' of the dangerous black neighborhood has been created to hide the structural causes of crime (Hill Collins 1990: 221). As Frank Harcourt says in his book on broken windows policing, the effectiveness of these kinds of targeting for removal of low income communities of color comes from the rhetorical technique of 'turn to harm' or "making them [neighborhood residents] the agents of crime and neighborhood decline" (Harcourt 2001). Because this controlling image exists, the communities around and affected by the prison are the most important sites of resistance to growing incarceration rates, as but one of many forms of forced displacement occurring around the District. Much of the efficacy of these images and pervasive beliefs is due to complex relationships of police, developers, media, profit-seeking corrections corporations and politicians which has become known as the prison industrial complex, or a "complicated system situated at the intersection of governmental and private interests that uses prisons as a solution to social, political, and economic problems" (Davis 2003). Defining the PIC in DC means revealing the process of criminalization of low income communities of color in DC through broken windows policing and also revealing the profits made from the displacement and incarceration of these populations.

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[4] This is a highly contested term, used as the ideological justification for razing large areas of public housing in the interested of investment and profit, urban and housing activists often contest it using the substitute term 'urban removal.'

Tensions between old and new residents of DC neighborhoods and demands for safety by new residents has brought the hard hand of 'preemptive' policing in response, through aggressive policies known nationally as 'broken windows policing.' Broken windows policing is characterized by profiling of "certain areas where some form of crime is said to be endemic," where aggressive policing is instituted in response to minor criminal violations and non criminal activities such as panhandling, littering, and street vending. (Incite! 2004: 19). A youth project in New York, the Audre Lorde Project, has a strong critique of broken windows policing:

> This devaluing of certain communities paves the way for socially destructive and dangerous policies such as the 'quality of life' ordinance which allows communities whose very existence is tenuous to be disenfranchised and brutalized at even greater levels. As a result, the presence and actions of women and transpeople of color, and particularly youth, sex workers, and homeless people are always likely to be deemed disorderly, causing quality of life policing to curb our freedom of movement and legitimate and even facilitate police violence towards us [Incite! 2004: 39]

The PIC in DC is characterized by this 'security by force' approach, driven by profits to be made not only off the land and the additional benefit for a deficit District budget of getting people off benefits, out of public housing, and into prisons. To explore this, defining the PIC in DC will require examining current trends of investments in police and other forms of 'security by force' exceeding those of human security or public services, and looking at a history of removal of low income populations for 'renewal' or private profit.

The most stark piece of evidence to demonstrate these policies is the extreme economic and racial segregation of the District. Wards 2 and 3, located in upper NW DC, are 61 and 80% white respectively, while Wards 7, and 8, located SE of the Anacostia River, are 97, and 93% black respectively. These racial divisions also reflect class stratification as average family income in Wards 2 and 3 are $130 and $180 thousand, as

compared to Wards 7 and 8 which average $45 and $35 thousand per year (NeighborhoodInfo DC). Police districts 5, 6 and 7, Northeast and Southeast represent nearly 70 percent of the violent crime arrest (Justice Policy Institute 2006). According to the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, DC has the largest income gap of any major U.S. city; just another symptom of the vast structural inequality. In the District, this segregation causes populations of specific neighborhoods to disappear into the prisons driven by underfunded public schools, unemployment, failed policies of the war on drugs, and massive urban renewal.

I have heard echoed up and down the streets of these targeted areas, characterized 'crime 'hot spots' around the district, that high police activity and arrest rates are used to 'clean out' these neighborhoods for redevelopment. This process of gentrification is driven by the loss of domestic manufacture that caused budget shortfalls across US cities in the 1980's, and now require urban centers to attract investors through 'revitalization' to attract higher income residents and displace low income populations. When visiting a NE neighborhood in DC after military-style checkpoints were installed,[5] residents at first surprised me with their observation, "we knew this was coming…when they put that Safeway in down the way." Residents experiences provide the expertise to describe the shape of the encroaching threat: the economic engine that drives these types of quality of life policing is linked to the changing demographics and services that come with gentrification. To these long-time residents, the Safeway marked more services being demanded by new, higher-income residents that were moving in to the long neglected,

[5] Police Chief Cathy Lanier's checkpoints or 'Neighborhood Safety Zones are described as 'authoritarian,' demanding ID and refusing admittance to certain neighborhoods to those that lack a 'legitimate reason' for being there. Lanier describes them herself as "to help residents reclaim their communities."-Mathis, Sommer. Police to Seal Off DC Neighborhoods. DCist: June 4th 2008.

low-serviced area. As we will explore in the definition of the PIC, locking people behind bars is one of many forms of forced displacement in this city fueled by these same economic engines.

Using the lens of displacement to understand incarceration in DC, it is useful to compare increasing police activity to the disappearing units of affordable housing in targeted neighborhoods. Ward 8 holds the majority of the affordable housing units in the city, with 11,000 it still holds twice as many as Ward 7, the ward with the next highest concentration of units. Additionally, the largest concentration of these units are public housing (8,000 of the units, which are at the center of the criminalization debate as they are often deemed crime-ridden or blighted.) While currently there are 35,000 units of affordable housing in DC and 9,772 housing choice vouchers available for families to subsidize their rentals- the waiting list for these vouchers is around 27,000 while those on the waiting list for public housing numbers 57,000 (Woodle 2008: B04). DC has lost 1,995 units of public housing since June 2007 and 15% of its public housing stock overall since 2000 (Woodle 2008: B04). Meanwhile these same neighborhoods experience increasing private investment and police presence, such as the Safeway and police checkpoints in Trinidad, big box stores and anti-loitering bills in Columbia Heights, and 'no tolerance' policies and new condos in SE. Disappearing affordable housing and increasing privatization throughout the city, is bringing housing organizers, youth leaders, and neighbors together against these 'quality of life' policing policies, to identify the role this criminalization plays in the removal of families and residents from their homes. Chief of Police Cathy Lanier has unveiled the 'Focused Neighborhood Improvement Act,' focused on the poorest neighborhoods of DC, Wards 7 and 8. This

plan will feature a "tailored policing plan to each neighborhood, to change the culture of the MPD from reacting to crime into working towards building and sustaining safe neighborhoods"(Metropolitan Police Department). However the police departments definition results in increased incarceration rates in these targeted areas.

Incarceration rates indicate an increased targeting of these communities by a racial and class disparity in incarceration rates. DC ranks fourth in the nation for incarceration rates, with the majority being homeless, mentally ill, and youth. Only Philadelphia and two Tennessee counties lock up residents at a higher rate. In our nation's capital, we also claim the highest black to white ratio of incarceration as compared to ANY state in our nation, at 19 to one, with the next highest rate held in Iowa at 13 to one, and the national rate being 5.6 to one (Pierre 2008: DZ07). These trends surrounding race and incarceration are bigger than just the District. At the beginning of last year, our country reached a new level of infamy- the highest incarceration rate in the world, with 1 in 100 US Adults behind bars. These rates reflect a critical racial disparity, for while 1 in 30 adult men between 20-34 are locked up, that figure for black men in the same age gap is 1 in 9 (Pew Center on the States). The intersections of demographics of those incarcerated show us there are structural indicators for incarceration beyond just 'criminal' and demands we examine the root causes of crime. As we look to the communities outside the prisons, and the structural violence affecting them, we see that these growing numbers of prisoners represent not just numbers of bodies inside, but losses outside- such as emptying neighborhoods, schools and homes. Seeking alternatives to incarceration must begin here, in the communities around the prison and the imprisoned. To explore this, defining the PIC in DC will require examining current trends

of investments in police and other forms of 'security by force' exceeding those of human security or public services, and looking at a history of removal of low income populations for 'reinvestment' or private profit (Mauer 2007).

Increasingly aggressive policing is being discussed by police chief Cathy Lanier as 'community policing,' which is a term usually used to contrast more aggressive policing styles with community based solutions, but in this case the term itself is being misused to promote zero-tolerance, broken windows policing, such as aggressive 'no loitering' zones.[6] Marketed as a response to perceived social disorder, police intervene for more minor 'quality of life offenses,' and while some neighbors applaud the increasing police presence as a sign of increased security, already climbing rates of incarceration have jumped since this policing theory was introduced in 1982 (Harcourt 2001). What this indicates is a criminalization of low income and neighborhoods and communities of color, as what have been called 'crimes of poverty' such as public urination, vagrancy, etc, are the central targets. This is also reflected in the over-representation of low income folks in the prison system, as surveys of federal and state prisoners shows that inmates average less than eleven years of schooling, and a third were not working at the time of their incarceration (Westerm 2007:21). A consistent history and relationship between unemployment and incarceration from 1930 to 1980 also verify that trend (Harnett 1998). To understand how economic interests fuel aggressive policing, forced displacement, and growing incarceration rates it is helpful to define the prison industrial complex.

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[6] The 'anti-loitering' bill, being introduced to City Council by Councilmember Mendelson at the time of this paper, includes a $300 fine or 180 days in jail for violators found congregating in groups larger than two people in declared 'anti-loitering zones.'

The Prison Industrial Complex Defined

Mike Davis coined the term prison industrial complex in an article in the Nation entitled "Hell Factories in the Field: a Prison Industrial Complex" (Davis 1995). Davis was commenting on the shifting economic context of corrections in California, and naming a larger trend as he noted that prisons were beginning to rival the agricultural industry that had fueled California's economy for decades, saying the "emergent prison industrial complex rivals agribusiness as the force of life in rural California and completes with land developers as the chief seducer of legislators in California" (Davis 1995: 229). Davis was naming the visible symptoms of economic shifts within California and the nation in which failing agricultural and other domestic industry were being replaced with the next lucrative 'buffer' economy, the prison. Corporations and politicians relied on the thinly veiled industry of 'corrections' and created more profits by demanding more aggressive proactive policing to fill these new jails with 'criminal' bodies.

Angela Davis and others pick up on this structural argument, stating that locating the prison industrial complex historically within US economic development is a critical part of its definition and social legacy. The PIC emerged to fill a necessary 'gap' as a response to economic restructuring in the South (following the abolition of slavery and the need for free labor to drive the agricultural economy). Today prison labor[7] continues to serve a role in the globalized economy similar to that of slave labor, in Angela Davis'

[7] The need for cheap labor following reconstruction was filled many argue with the 13th Amendement, which abolishes slavery for all except prisoners. Across the country, more than 80,000 inmates are working for governments or private companies and earning 25 cents to $7 an hour. The private sector programs, which exist in 36 states and employ 3,500, have doubled in size since 1995. While business interests advocate a flexible and dependable workforce, prison labor is exploitative, with the potential for human rights abuses.

words "both systems generate huge profits from processes of social destruction" (Davis 2003: 228). Davis is able to explicate the larger project of the PIC, a justification and ideological enforcement of growing incarceration rates and their racial disparities. She asserts that the term has been used by activists/prison abolitionists to "contest the prevailing beliefs that increased levels of crime were the root cause of mounting prison populations. Instead they argued, prison construction and the attendant drive to fill these new structures with human bodies have been driven by ideologies of racism and the pursuit of profit" (Davis 1998: 23) The profits of the prison system are evident as some have called the corrections the 'fastest (or only) growing industry in the US.' The 'economic gap' is filled by private and state prison industries, which "employed 56,000 people in prison in 1999 and, according to research published in *Labor Studies Journal* in 2002, generated $3 billion in sales and $67 million in profits for the states" (Walsh 2008: 12). In Are Prisons Obsolete? Davis traces the growing numbers of incarcerated people alongside stagnant crime rates, and to show the stark racial profiling of criminals, such as the disparities of those incarcerated for drug use,[8] "colored bodies constitute the main human raw material in this vast experiment to disappear the major social problems of our time" (Davis 1998: 26). What she calls 'racialized assumptions of criminality' are synonymous with these 'major social problems of our time': welfare mothers, homeless men, drug pushing youth and gun wielding teenagers; these images have been built through our history to become uncontested truths about who is a criminal.

Several other scholars, of which Julia Sudbury is just one, trace the PIC to in social changes around the late 1960's. Sudbury says to understand increasingly profitable

[8] For more information see The Sentencing Project's Disparity by Geography: The War on Drugs in America's Cities report, which finds that since 1980, the rate of drug arrests in American cities for African Americans increased by 225%, compared to 70% among whites.

corrections industry domestically and internationally we must "pay attention to the spaces of confinement that warehouse those who are surplus or resistant to the new world order" (Sudbury 2005: 11). Christian Parenti elaborates on this concept of surplus population in relation to the PIC, as the surplus is managed by prisons and incarceration. He echoes others in linking the need for management to crisis that was both social and economic, an economic crisis that first appeared in the mid sixties- to restore profits the welfare of working people was sacrificed through the decimation of various state social welfare programs, and then to manage skyrocketing inequality and disenfranchised or 'surplus' populations had to be locked up to prevent major social unrest. Both Parenti and Ruth Wilson Gilmore link this shift to the year 1968, with the commentary that Johnson's crime bill marked the invocation of street crime and political chaos as "thinly veiled code for the race problem namely African American migration and the political demolition of US Apartheid" (Parenti 2000: 33). While Goldwater and then Nixon had used this to fuel their campaigns in years prior, by the time Johnson's bill passed it was clear that "the fear of crime became all-American, law and order were emerging as the new political currency with which to unite disparate white voters"(Parenti 2000: 12). The uses of criminality as a continued project are critically important to understanding the PIC, echoed in Eric Schlosser's definition of the PIC that it is a "state of mind" as profits replace any original intention of public service held by the criminal justice system (Schlosser 1998: 21). This state of mind emerges from a state of economy and politics, and is developed through media scare tactics and enforced by both the profits behind and the images of increasing numbers of incarcerated brown bodies.

The political gains of this definition of 'safety and security' is further expanded by Leith Mullings' discussion (2002) of the prison's use for disenfranchisement, and how mass incarceration supports political representation for special interests through the disenfranchisement of felons (often Black and Latino voters) which enhances conservative voter blocks. Mullings says,

> conservative vision is also protected by society's treatment of crime as it 'nudges middle Americans toward a *conservative* defense of . . . large disparities of wealth, power and opportunity.' By fomenting mainstream discontent toward the poor, it obscures how the middle class is injured by "acts of the affluent," deflecting a "progressive demand for . . . an equitable distribution of wealth and power [Mullings 2002]**.**

The result is the years of racialization of crime and latent racism are central in maintaining a common belief in the necessity of the PIC and in undermining our ability to create a popular critical discourse which would contest the PIC.

The uses of the prison for social control is expanded by Ruth Wilson Gilmore and supported by Davis. Davis says the prison has become the universal solution for a variety of social problems from poverty to homelessness to drug addiction, structural problems which are conveniently grouped together under the label of 'crime' and the automatic attribution of criminal behavior to people of color. Social problems and their root causes disappear from view when the people contenting with them are put in cages, thus the prison "performs a feat of magic, or rather the people who tacitly assent to a proliferating network of prisons and jails have been tricked into believing in the magic of imprisonment"(Davis 2003: 34). Ruth Wilson Gilmore looks from the prison outward to expand the definition of the PIC to include the space that prisons are taking up in the social landscape of our country, replacing public welfare, as their increased funding (as

the central 'solution') cuts funds for other solutions such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) or other social securities.

Both inside and outside the prison, then, we can understand the final element of the PIC to be used for the suppression of dissent. Within the prison it is important to understand the emergence of recent phenomenon such as the maximum security units or 'prison within a prison' used for solitary conferment and punishment of organizers and social movement leaders with in the prison. The critical resistance prison abolitionist handbook links the 'prison construction boom' to "the repression of radical movements by people of color for self-determination, and the anti-imperialist struggles of the 60s, 70s, and 80s," by noting the increased construction and use of maximum security units during that time (Critical Resistance 2003). Critical resistance activists situate the war on drugs within national and local efforts to destroy radical political movements through increased policing in communities of color and poor communities and increased surveillance through program such as COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program), used to target Black Panther and Young Lords leadership from the inside in the 1970's and 1980's.

In DC, I define the prison industrial complex (PIC) by its result in forced displacement on a variety of levels, from forced displacement by redevelopment to incarceration. The PIC in DC can be characterized by an extreme regulation of space through police ordinances or criminalization of certain populations, defined by Christian Parenti as 'social removal,' and Davis terms 'social destruction' (Parenti 2000: 23). This definition helps to identify the structural forces that determine the incarceration of certain residents and communities in the District. This removal can also be seen in the historical

legacy of DC, a city designed to serve the federal government and its employees not low-income residents, and the legacy of urban renewal as structural violence directed at low income areas of the District.

Foundations of the 'Broken Windows' Ideology in DC

First looking at the legacy of criminalization in DC preceding the racially charged rebellions of 1968, this investigation will reveal the foundations of the broken windows ideology. A key characteristic of the PIC in DC is the criminalization and incarceration of low income communities of color, or the 'social removal' of these populations for the benefits of politicians seeking to control crime, developers and correctional facilities seeking profits, and media generating fear campaigns for social control. The profits from the corrections industry are a higher priority to local and federal governments than the responsibility to provide basic human services. This phenomenon is not recent but dates back to urban removal from as early as the 1930's which served to remove indigenous residents of DC to transform it into a 'federal city' for the service of the federal government.

Beginning with urban renewal in the 1930s cutting public resources and expanding the private sector, a process called 'urban renewal' by policy makers and 'urban *removal'* by those bearing the brunt of the policies, mainly low income families and youth of color who are warehoused into shelters and prisons as public space and housing is destroyed. Unique from other cities in the Northeast, DC has a tiny industrial base, with the largest employer being the federal government (over 350,000 jobs) and the second largest is the DC local government (Ishihara 2007). The significance of this fact for residents and youth organizers alike is that public services were never highly

developed as the District was designed to support a professional class. With 437,000 non-residents working in Washington, and a Congressional ruling prohibiting the District from taxing these commuters, this policy only deepens the District budget deficit and its disenfranchisement.

Historians Kenneth Bowling and Bob Arnebeck tell of the bitter struggle around the creation of the District of Columbia, the result Bowling calls "a major compromise between a slavery-based agrarian South and the commercial capitalism of the Eastern seaboard"(Bowling 1993).[9] This legacy of slave exploitation and capitalist interests is a critical framework for the geographies of urban removal and incarceration that characterize DC today. When slavery was abolished in the District, became a popular destination for African Americans migrating from the south post-Emancipation, and because of the construction of the nation's first public housing complex introduced in 1930 it was an even more accessible option, in 1960 boasting the largest concentration of African Americans in the nation (Ishihara 2007). An unintended benefit of segregation which continued into the 1950's was the strong development of African American schools, neighborhoods and their local economies and culture, such as the U street area. However, following the 1968 riots following Martin Luther King's assassination, many of these areas were destroyed and remained blighted for decades. The 'revitalization' of these areas starting in the 1980's resulted in the displacement of low-income residents and communities of color due to the increasing property values associated with the redevelopment and gentrification by higher income residents. Relating this gentrification to incarceration rates, we are reminded of the subjectivity of 'criminal' and 'blighted,'

[9] For more information read either this reference or for a more politicized account of this same history, read Bob Arnebeck's Through A Fiery Trial.

and of their political usage in urban policy. Scholars of gentrification echo that this trend is tied to the PIC, often through these ideas of revitalization and uplift. Mike Davis and David Harvey call this 'neoliberal urbanism,' an echo of the urban renewal of the 1930's which destroyed huge complexes of affordable housing as an effort at uplift and 'slum clearance' of certain areas, which resulted in the reduction of available affordable housing, and increasing private investment. These policies depended on the justification of *eminent domain*, or the ability of the government to seize private property for 'civic use' or economic development. This is often but not always justified by declaring the building or property 'condemned' due to a zoning or health code violation.

Since its founding in1871, District land has been used for suppression of dissent and surplus populations. Following the Civil War, an attempt to 'revitalize' areas where newly emancipated freedmen lived, the City Beautiful movement was intended to build *civic virtue* into poor neighborhoods through important, monumental architecture, known in DC as the McMillan plan (Gillette 1995: 15). Encroaching redevelopment would continue to be a theme in the segregated geography of DC, as black enclaves were continually redistributed and destroyed in the 'civic interest.' The built environment of our nation's capitol was always shaped by federal pressures, from its inception as a as a 'free' state during reconstruction to today's continued disenfranchisement of the democratic black vote which holds strong in the District, shows that "a long view of relations between the capitol and the city suggest a more disturbing revelation: what happened in Washington DC was what the nation wanted. The cause of the urban policy that left parts of Washington with neither safe streets nor a livable environment lies not in local circumstances but national choices" (Gillette 1995: 24). Called a city of

'magnificent intentions' by the League of Women Voters in their report on the District, a discussion of the lost battle for home rule has a particular "affect on the political character of a place" (League of Women Voters 1965). The lack of self governance many argue played a deliberate role in "inhibiting a sense of community in Washington" and depoliticizing the populations as differences "that are now suppressed, muted, or obscured might develop and be contested openly" (LWV 1965). Activists then and today (DC Vote) use the language of colonization to describe this, not only to represent the literal lack of resprentation, but racialized dynamics as well, as some call it a colony because it is "ultimately controlled by white lawmakers in Congress and the local white business elite" (Gillette 1995: 35). Being aware of the race and representational dynamics of national politics and its import to DC helps to illuminate the justifications for the policing and regulation of this plot of land and its people.

In DC, this is commonly referred to as 'The Plan' or "a plan on the books that they are going to displace black people and push enough people out so pretty soon the city's only 25% black" (Jeter 2009). Local economic development has been strangled, and federal government jobs are currently the only sector of job growth in the nation. In contrast to the popular projects about DC being 'recession proof', local DC residents are suffering high unemployment rates, a 2.3% increase in unemployment, which is the 12th worst in the nation, counting all 50 states plus D.C (Bubble Meter 2009). Since the 1950 Comprehensive Plan which proposed no industrial growth for the District; concern has been instead for the housing and transportation needs of the growing federal sector. The strangling of the local economy for federal interests is linked to the displacement of many low income communities of color, in SE Anacostia 250 acres of land are rezoned from

single family dwellings to apartment use as 50,000 more federal workers are moved to DC with the redevelopment of the SW/SE area (Crossing the River 2009). The number of black residents has decreased from 67% to 54% in the last ten years, as the interviewee on NPR states. the "net effect to move black people out… you don't have to believe anything I say just look around- the plan has worked" (Jeter 2009). As Natalie Avery, a co-founder of YARG (Youth Action Research Group), one of the District's first youth organizing groups, says, "the people who control DC don't live here… Washington DC has always felt like a city that has ignored its local residents" (Ishihara 2007). Forced displacement by redevelopment and incarceration in DC occurs in several forms in its history and present struggles; urban removal and 'renewal' through aggressive policing, and the displacement of communities of resistance, or as Gilmore says the "disappearing" of vulnerable populations.

Broken Policing Today

The state goes to great lengths to 'naturalize' the relationship between certain neighborhoods and the prison, so familiar the prison is just referred to as '1901 D' by many in the neighborhood. Comparing these trends in the policing and war on drugs to Puerto Rico, Marianna da Cuhna reminds us that in both cases more aggressive drug policies searching for culprits were not based on not actual statistics but on the profiling of certain neighborhoods as 'blighted' and 'drug ridden.' These are reasons for forming our study of resistance within the context of specific neighborhoods, their histories and legacies of strength and organizing, these are reasons to study the neighborhood as a way to understand how the PIC works and represses. In response to the discourses of 'the drug

war,' zero tolerance and gang injunction policies emerged especially to target young people and specific neighborhoods. "As law enforcement became increasingly proactive instead of reactive, so did the potential for selectivity and bias….interventions aimed more than ever at specific poor urban neighborhoods, which have become the collective targets of surveillance and of routine indiscriminate sweeps" (da Cuhna 2005: 155). Da Cuhna says "the geography of imprisonment has begun to be extraordinarily predictable" due to this type of profiling. Important for the context of SE DC where this paper focuses, "reported drug trafficking networks [neighborhoods] frequently have in fact little sociological consistency and are no more than the artificial outcome of the way individual cases are dealt with and juxtaposed by the criminal justice system" (da Cuhna 2005: 156). So in addition to creating a false sense of fear, "imprisoned networks of kin and neighbors are a central feature" of new policies, writing into law "processes that systemically link prisons to a small number of neighborhoods"(da Cuhna 159). This should challenge the way we think about criminality and certain prisons rather than the way we consider the guilt of a 'criminal.' By looking at the geography on which incarceration unfolds, we can flip the focus from the individual prisoner to the structural causes at play.

In urban centers across the country, de-industrialization of the 1970's and 80's, and the economic recession of the 1990's forced drastic cuts in public services, the brunt of which was borne by youth and low-income families who were forced to relocate from these urban areas for the 'revitalization' and re-investment of the private sector. This marked a rise in reactionary conservative politics such as the 'War on Drugs,' making urban youth the scapegoat for root causes of crime. We see skyrocketing youth

incarceration rates through 'zero tolerance' policies in schools, and forming of anti-gang injunctions in many US cities to track and restrict youth movement. Despite a 30% drop in juvenile violent crime between the years of 1994-8, all 50 states adopted laws that allowed juveniles to be tried as adults (Ishihara 2007). These trends indicate the increasing targeting of youth and creation of 'crisis' as a justification for conservative urban policy, a critical component of how the PIC is experienced in urban centers. Racially charged definitions of ""crime," "delinquency," and "rebellion," which creates a culture of fear in which it continues to be acceptable and desirable response to lock people up in the interest of public safety (primarily people of color, youth, and poor people). These tensions between neighborhoods[10] and demands for safety by new residents has brought the hard hand of 'preemptive' policing in response, through aggressive policies known nationally as 'broken windows policing.'

After earning notoriety as the "murder capital of the world" in 1993, DC's elected officials struggled to maintain the cities image as the seat of a thriving democracy. The riots following Martin Luther King's assassination and white flight had left areas of the city underserviced and disenfranchised, disinvestment that can still be seen today. The declaration of the 'war on drugs' in the 1980's had a direct link with the destruction of previously economically thriving communities, and accelerated aggressive policing and displacement. The term 'war on drugs' has come to refer to a specific set of policies including "interdiction (stopping and searching people who fit the 'profile of a drug user or courier)…saturation of particular neighborhoods with law enforcement officers charged with finding drugs of any quantity through widespread stop and frisk

[10] An interesting map showing conflict occurring at the points of intersection between affluent and neglected neighborhoods (the terrain currently being gentrified) can be found at www.radicalcartography.net under Projects: DC: Crimes of Property.

activities…as well as mass incarceration of drug users and putative measures aimed at individuals with drug convictions" (Incite! 2004: 29). The racial profiling of these policies is widely documented, such as the fact that women of color have been the fastest growing population imprisoned for drug offences since 1986 (800% increase) versus only 400% increase of other women, that does not correspond to an increase in drug use by women of color (Lapudis 2005).

> The great epidemics of drug addiction, the collapse of the black family, and the rise of incarceration of black men- all of these catastrophes followed the civil rights movements, they did not precede it. Though there are a number of causes of this dysfunction that cannot be disputed- the current situation of Black America cannot be understood without a full and complete accounting of the social, economic, cultural, political, and emotional losses that followed the bulldozing of 1,600 neighborhoods [Fullilove 2004].

The discourses around crime and blight in DC distort root causes in order to normalize these neighborhoods as without history but constantly blighted… The continued justification and collective acceptance of these policies was achieved through threatening social images of "the young black male gangsta and his counterpart the welfare queen," characters who were used by Goldwater, Nixon and Bush as " the primary vehicles for selling the American public on the need to dismantle the welfare state, ushering in an era of unprecedented deregulation, downsizing, privatization, and regressive taxation" (Giroux 2006). This shift in urban policy has also been called 'third wave gentrification' by Neil Smith, and is based off the assumption that by the pressure that its most important to attract middle income folks and their investment in neighborhood." Investment, achieved through the attraction of outsiders to the neighborhood appears to be "a possible way out of the morass of concentrated poverty, economically devastated inner city neighborhoods, dysfunctional public housing, and failing public schools that have become iconic for urban poverty in the USA," and

intentionally neglected in the District (Giroux 2006). Controlling images were used to manage fears of slave uprising and revolt, manifesting itself today in the next generation of images that describe African Americans as lazy and or dangerous. Controlling images are supported by discourse and text, and under David Ley's 'new urbanism' likely 'frontier heroes' and other "rhetorical attempts to naturalize certain sets of social values and to define the social processes that produce place as either good or bad, moral or immoral, appropriate or inappropriate, worthy or unworthy, and so on" (McCann: 2002). Confrontations with 'indigenous' populations of the city was understood through the concept of 'conquest,' rationalizing "social differentiation and exclusion as natural, inevitable…[low-income people] are defined as uncivil" a language which can be translated almost immediately into police control. These controlling images, and dominant vocabulary that help DC residents to understand a growing police presence as natural and necessary, or that revitalization through policing and redevelopment has "a new sanitizing theme" that wins approval within and outside targeted communities (Lipman 2008: 12).

Davis calls this a "systematic assault on public space" and says that "increased police presence is deeply tied to concepts of 'new' urban safety and security through image enhancing strategies of gentrification…. Moreover, the neo-military syntax of contemporary architecture insinuates violence and conjures imaginary dangers', while being "full of invisible signs warning off the underclass 'Other'" or much of the fear is achieved and created by police presence (Davis 1992). Davis argues that a built environment of fear is created which reflects and enhances the classist and racist assumptions that go along with these ideas of uplift. Setha Low, another scholar of urban

security and policing, says these discourses of fear "encode other social concerns including class, race, and ethnic exclusivity including gender…[this discourse] reinforces the visual landscape of fear. Social groups, in turn, imprint themselves physically on the urban structure through the formation of communities, competition for territory, and segregation—in other words, through clustering, the erection of boundaries and establishing distance" (Low 2001). This is evident in DC where despite the MPD's reporting of a steady crime decrease since 2001, some neighborhoods are being labeled 'crime hot spots,' continuing the legacy of urban renewal through the destruction of affordable housing complexes as a 'crime reduction measure' through the New communities program (MPD 2005). New communities is a local replication of HOPE VI, a much criticized federal housing program to replace affordable units with 'mixed income' housing as an effort at revitalization. In NE and SE, the deceptive name of 'Neighborhood Safety Zone' is used to explain military-style deployments and checkpoints are used to police these areas for coming redevelopment.

Class stratification and targeted policing show us "the stigma that used to be associated with imprisonment is now instituted well before detention, one may say 'upstream' by the very fact of belonging to certain neighborhoods," or guilt by race, class, geography rather than evidence. For those living within it, "the prison is already a reality embodied in the daily life of the same urban territories, where it has become an ordinary element of many biographies, a banal destiny"(Da Cuhna 2005: 162). Fighting this 'banal destiny' is why we begin our work at the neighborhood level, to fight what might otherwise become accepted as inevitable. One clear and current example of this is the anti-loitering bill introduced recently to the City Council by Councilmember Jim

Graham. This bill is intended to create no-loitering zones in which the police will have the power and discretion to move people off the streets, just for being out in groups of two or more, and in order to arrest or disperse people under this bill the police do not have to suspect that a crime is imminent, probable, or even possible. This gives the police too much power and discretion considering the history and current trends of racial profiling in policing, as well as targeting of low income communities. In this country, anti-loitering laws have their roots in the post-slavery south when they were used to sweep up freed African-Americans.

The racialized definition of crime is seen clearly in the disparities of incarceration rates under the 'zero tolerance' and 'broken windows' policies. In the nation's largest cities, drug arrests for African Americans rose at three times the rate for whites from 1980 to 2003, 225% compared to 70%. This disparity is not explained by corresponding changes in rates of drug use (King 2003). In 1997 in the nation's capital 98.6% of those imprisoned were African American (Justice Policy Institute 2006). Profiling by zero tolerance was just the beginning, under Guliani's 1994 'order maintenance' policing tactics, proactive enforcement of minor offenses served to control populations by "changing the social meaning of practices such as gang membership or gun ownership"(Harcourt 2001: 12). Changing social meaning by force and deterrence came out of an economic context, linking policing and revitalization. 'Quality of life' policing uses increased police activity to affect popular opinion about neighborhood safety. Politicians may call them risky or dangerous, demand an increased police presence, which makes the city 'safe' for capital investment. Increased police presence and property values result in the removal of low income and working poor residents, through

incarceration or eviction. However, the displaced are mostly women and families, and elderly, rarely the 'dangerous' characters that local news, city council members, or the MPD would like us to believe.[11] Communities and residents are fighting not just displacement but the misrepresentation of their communities as blighted or crime-ridden. The complex series of relationships that create privatization, increasing incarceration, and the prison's footprint expanding into surrounding communities and neighborhoods through police 'sweeps' of crime 'hot spots is a crucial part of the PIC. These 'hot spots' feed off of an environment of emergency, in which policy solutions are quickly declared but their damages not quickly undone. For example, Mayor Fenty has currently before the council a bill on gang injunctions, which are civil suits that can restrict alleged gang members from being in certain areas or with certain people, even if a crime hasn't been committed. They dictate who has access to public spaces and movement through those spaces and they use the vague language of "public nuisance" to move people out of certain areas of town and to impose curfews and other restrictions.

Looking at the DC Fiscal Budget investigation of 2010 budget proposal prepared by the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, we can trace the recent forms of this disinvestment. The proposed local budget for affordable housing in FY 2010 is $79 million - a cut of more than one-third from the $124 million in the initial FY 2009 budget (Kerstetter 2009). Projections for 2010 show proposed local budget for affordable housing in FY 2010 is $79 million - a cut of more than one-third from the $124 million in the initial FY 2009 budget. The same budget proposal reports that Bowen Elementary School will be

[11] According to the District report on the *Redevelopment Plan for Public Housing in Barry Farms/Wade Road*, the neighborhood is primarily single female heads of households, mostly renters, making a median of $28,000 per year, and with proportionally more youth and families than more affluent areas- the median age in Barry Farms is 28 as compared to the District's 35 years. For more information, see http://www.planning.dc.gov under 'Barry Farms Redevelopment Plan.'

closed to house the offices of the Violent Crimes Branch and First District Headquarters of the MPD. The budget summary calculates this creates $11 million in savings for the MPD and DOC, in addition to growing the police force by 100 officers and providing the department with $3.6 million to "implement emergency service reforms" in populations that 'chronically' use these 'services'(Kerstetter 2009). This funding promotes 'security by force' in the removal of human services (education) in favor of correctional profits (the $11 million in savings and additional budget allocation). The majority of those increased allocations for MPD funding will be spent in Wards 7 and 8, according to the Chief of Police's recent strategy of the 'Hot Spot Initiative,' "an innovative and aggressive program to combat crime and rebuild some of the District of Columbia's most troubled neighborhoods" (MPD 2006). Seven of the eleven 'hot spots' are located in NE or SE DC. Evidence of this race-based criminalization can be seen in incarceration rates as well. In DC blacks are incarcerated at a rate of nineteen times that of whites and the 'criminal population' of the US is also 70% people of color (Mauer and King 2007).

The other impact of these targeted policing efforts is the displacement and suppression of resistance, as Angela Davis explains in her definition of the PIC. While incarcerations rates in DC are marked by shocking racial disparities and the highest per capita incarceration rate in the country, in some ways the tragedy of incarceration is still kept invisible in these figures as they don't include the nearly 7,000 inmates from the city being held in federal prisons as part of a deal with Congress in the 1997 Revitalization Act which closed the Lorton facility and began shipping DC inmates nationwide also required that half these prisoners be housed in private facilities. DC inmates in federal facilities did not qualify for drug treatment programs until last year, where 2/3 of District

residents released from prison have abused drugs (Pierre 2008: B04). District prisoners are spread across 75 institutions in 33 states, effectively rendering the needs of DC inmates invisible in statistical analysis, particularly concerning when DC recidivism rate is 65% versus 40% for the rest of the Bureau of Prisons system (Mauer and King 2007). Given the lack of home rule over budget or representation in Congress, the outright sale of DC prisoners to private corporations is particularly egregious. Right after the closing of Lorton, 15% of DC inmates when immediately to a facility being operated by GEO corporation, one of the leaders in prison privatization (Pierre 2008: B04).

Fitting in Parenti's explanation of the PIC as necessary for controlling disenfranchised or 'surplus' populations, we must consider how the removal of family members and community members criminalized for poverty and efforts at survival contributes to the perception that the problem is individual and not structural, managing the 'crisis' by preventing community mobilization. Davis's definition that the PIC exists to "disappear the major social problems of our time" rings true here, as evidence of poverty, homelessness, and violence and the people of color that represent them are shipped away from the District. The adverse effects of this policy has been debated widely, by breaking up families and communities in deliberate social removal, breaking the ties between a community and their loved ones who are incarcerated by hundreds to thousands of miles, communication is limited and re-entry more difficult, increasing rates of recidivism and profits for the prison. Additionally, with the 'morality' of imprisonment encoded on the neighborhood through police activity and perceptions of criminality, critical voices within the neighborhood are often silenced as well. Leith Mullings includes this in her argument that the PIC is used for disenfranchisement, and by

targeting mainstream discontentment towards poor criminals is able to deflect the demand for social change. The morality plays tied to gentrification and redevelopment are reinforced by the profiling of who is incarcerated and where in DC. Davis emphasizes the controlling images here are 'racialized assumptions of criminality,' and that the evidence in necessary to continue the justification and cultivation of this assumption and the profits to be found from it.

III. Reframing and Resilience: re-politicizing images

Many groups find strength and express resistance by re-framing identities that are projected onto them as inevitable. Re-politicizing the images of youth of color means rejecting the labels applied to them, and revealing instead some of the root causes of what drives youth to become 'thugs' or 'criminals.' In Beth Richie's 'Queering the Anti Prison Project,' Richie describes organizing against prisons as "a project attempting to look critically at how deviance, and by extension, criminalization have been socially constructed to serve people in power," and defines queering anti-prison work as "look[ing] strategically at how mass incarceration affects the most marginalized groups in order to build an effective praxis of resistance" (Richie 2003: 82). Working alongside young organizers facing the hostility of their own neighbors, I am re-educated everyday in my practice and vision of organizing against prisons and police. Our practice of resistance becomes more effective when it includes, for instance, the self-care needed to survive criticism by an entire community, or when we imagine how we might offer safety to our neighbors without relying on the police. In this and other ways we form our work together around the complexities of their experiences and identities.

The youth see a clear need to speak back to the inaccurate portrayals of their lives and culture. "Many youth see media portrayals of 'youth issues' as misguided and the focus on direct violence and youth as a smokescreen that keep the real conversation at bay" (Ardizzone 2007). By centralizing the experiences of youth, the future of the neighborhood, we can see the design being laid in the minds of the District police and government to create prisoners and condos. What we can also see is strategies of resistance that might have been invisible before. As Richie centralizes her work around

young queer black women, she says the strategies to both maintain community membership and resist become clear, or "how even though she and her peers are stigmatized and labeled as outsiders, they still turn to their community because they share a race and class identity with those that isolate them. [Here] we might be in a better position to understand their agency as well as their vulnerability to the label of 'deviant' and their subsequent criminalization" (Richie 2003: 83). Within the experience of one youth organizer, we can find contradicting means of resilience, and see contrasting views of the state and its role in displacement, which hones our praxis of resistance well.

We have seen recent victories in the area of reframing issues, especially if we consider the discourse of the drug war to be one of the central controlling images we are fighting. The repeal of the Rockafeller drug laws this March reflect a critical look at the criminalization of low income youth and adults involved in drug use or trade as the mandatory minimum sentences[12] have been repealed, leaving room for individuals to seek treatment and receive shorter sentences (Peters 2009: AI). While some estimated these laws would affect as many as half of those locked up on drug charges, it does not repeal the basic structure of the law, or the class B felonies, which in New York are the largest group doing time for a drug offense. Class B felonies are given for selling any small amount of drugs, and applies equally to first time offenders (Gonnerman 2009). In other words, the repeal decriminalizes small recreational use of the drug, but mandatory minimums still apply for those trying to survive or feed families and children on the drug

[12] Mandatory minimums forced judges to deliver certain sentences based for drug convictions based on the type of drug, amount being handled, and prior convictions. Sentences are higher for crack than cocaine, even though crack is a cheaper and more recreationally used drug, its prevalence in urban African American communities cause people to question the purpose of mandatory minimums. In 1986, the year Congress enacted federal mandatory drug sentences, the average federal drug sentence for African Americans was 11 percent higher than for whites (Families Against Mandatory Minimums www.famm.org)

economy. This repeal reflects a critical look at criminalization of drug use, but does not examine the class disparities within it that are such central determinants in incarceration. Other more direct practices of reframing, such as those used by Mothers ROC, may be useful in continued activism around these drug policies.

The group Mothers Recovering Our Children (Mother's ROC) in South Central LA utilizes the label of mother to further their organizing efforts. Mothers ROC works to unite activists through the common identity of motherhood, to make huge moves in the neighborhood towards gang truces and other demands. In LA, where gangs were kin, mothers were also central familial figures, so they were an acceptable form from whom to accept care and leadership. Out of respect to these mothers and the influence they hold in the community, the men agreed to redirect gang power into community policing. Gilmore says this kind of practice is important because it "renovates and makes critical already-existing activities of both action and analysis to build a movement" (Gilmore 2004: 252). There are strategies of resistance that mothers, neighborhoods, and youth are already using and it is from here that we must begin our work. As Richie would say by queering anti-prison work we are able to work with already-existing strategies and identities to mobilize them collectively. Focusing on the stories and experiences of youth in our work allow us to make visible these understandings of self and resilience that are already being used for collective strength as 'youth' and to "organize collectively under a politicized 'youth of color' identity" (Kwon 2004).

Organizing against the PIC is as much about building something as it is about fighting what is destroying our communities. According to Critical Resistance, a nationwide abolitionist organizing project, "our organizing is also an ongoing effort to

create alternatives, not only to imprisonment, but to the culture of punishment with which we've become familiar" (Critical Resistance Toolkit n/d). Creating cultural change requires putting forth and building alternatives that can be lived and shared, one of the hardest projects for the abolitionist the challenge to offer up those alternatives. As Rhodes says when "making proposals for change, critics are drawn into inevitable relationship with the rhetoric they hope to pierce" (Rhodes 2001). We struggle to talk about who should and shouldn't be locked up, who the 'good criminals' are, who deserves alternative sentencing. What that has shown us is that we must reframe the way we talk about this entirely. We have to completely reject the moral arguments ascribed to 'criminals' and reinvent what we see as 'good' engaged citizenship not as just 'staying out of trouble,' but working for change. Telling stories is a part of contesting the depoliticized or 'normalized' view of youth and communities of color as criminal by demonstrating a different story, as one of the youth I work with repeated many times, "we're showing them that not all kids want to stand on the corner with the stuff we are doing" (Conversation with youth organizer, 8/08). The power of reframing by and for youth can be seen in three tactics embraced by youth organizing projects around the country: storytelling as a means of sharing strategies of resilience (building identity around those most affected), as a means of conscientizao (ex: redefining key terms), and as a means of imagining and implementing alternatives. I will tell the story of how reframing affected our work with Visions to Peace, and compare tactics from other youth organizing projects.

Storytelling for Resilience

Youth led organizations can serve as 'counter publics' where youth are valued as effective citizens and where they can see their ability to affect change (Ardizzone 2007). A part of our work in Barry Farms was to challenge the perceptions of youth in that neighborhood. In the Mayor's office discussion of the youth's perception and opinion on the redevelopment is centered on what outsiders and residents describe as 'misinformed' youth, for whom "gentrification is a real fear… they question whether they will be allowed or welcome to stay in the New Community…neighborhood youth are extremely committed to their community and its identity" (DMPED 2006). The Mayor's office could not ignore their activism and cast them off as apathetic youth, and the youth were able to get to the root of the label of 'misinformed' by pointing out the ways in which New Communities developers intentionally 'misinformed' the whole community. In response, they organized a 'Truth About Vouchers' information session to point out the governments lack of information while simultaneously strengthening the community through provision of information. The Mayor's office could not ignore the issues of police harassment of youth in the neighborhood, and reported "a significant (41%) proportion do not feel the police care about their community….Residents feel that the police unnecessarily harass neighborhood youth and assume that everyone in the neighborhood is a thief or drug user" (DMPED). Working to deconstruct these perceptions of urban youth was extremely important as youth attempted to fight back and build unity in the neighborhood by providing information and calling on common experiences in the neighborhood such as interactions with aggressive law enforcement.

The opposition the youth faced in raising their voices against this redevelopment was heated and complex, but my story would not be complete without briefly referencing it here. The cooperations between HUD, the operators of federal public housing and aggressive policing tactics run deep, especially since the 1996 'One Strike and You're Out' policy which gives local Housing Authorities (HA's) the right to evict a tenant based on criminal or drug activity by themselves or anyone residing in the home. "One Strike" sends the message that "if you mess up your community, you have to turn in your key; if you insist on abusing or intimidating or hurting other people you'll have to live somewhere else," President Clinton said when he introduced the bill, perfectly illustrating Harcourt's (2001) concept of 'turn to harm,' or framing the individual as responsible for structural violence and decline in urban neighborhoods, especially public housing (National Drug Strategy Network). In Barry Farms there is a real fear of violence, not just from the police, that relates a very conservative attitude towards crime. By coming out against the re-entry guidelines for the neighborhood that would exclude many of the youth organizers and family members who had a history of police interactions[13], we were perceived as a threat to community safety and 'uplift.' I'm sure the fact that the main allies of the youth were white and non-residents of the neighborhood did not help that perception.[14] In a community survey we did, 70% of residents surveyed felt that those who returned to the 'New Community' had to pass a criminal background check (Barry Farms Community Coalition). It was a particularly difficult for some of the youth to work

[13] I deliberately do not use the language of 'criminal record' because these histories were often due to unprovoked harassment or profiling by the policing not because of personal involvement in criminal behavior by the youth or their families.

[14] Due to external and time limitations I was not able to provide a space for reflection on the racial tensions surrounding my involvement as an adult ally. To contact me about further reflections on this issue, please email lauragtaylor@gmail.com

for months on a community survey, and upon calculating the results receive a message that they were not welcome in the community they were fighting for.

The decision to make our video came at about this time, as the youth struggled to articulate themselves openly in the face of pressure and hostility, they decided they wanted to make a short film that would speak their message for them. It also became increasingly important that they speak out in affirmation of their membership in and loyalty to the community, based on the reactions they were getting from traditional leadership in the neighborhood. It is a common tactic of the 'power structure' to accuse community organizers of being outsiders, as the youth were accused of "not really being from the Farms" when they spoke out in opposition (Conversation, 8/08). Si Kahn explains this reaction as,

> "Power structures have generally accepted the same paternalistic doctrine hey have attempted to teach poor people, that poor people are incapable of acting on their own behalf. Consequently, when poor people in the community do begin to think freely, talk openly, and active decisively, the power structure psychologically rejects the idea that they are doing this on their own. Conditioned by years of manipulation poor people themselves, they assume that the poor people are now being manipulated by someone else…they look for the 'agitator,' 'outsider,' or 'troublemaker' who is 'stirring up poor folks' and try to neutralize or eliminate her" [Kahn 47].

The creative outlet of making a short video provided the youth a relief from this high pressure environment and also an alternative way of responding to these pressures. The video was made over a period of several months, in which myself and two of the youth leaders facilitated meetings to create a storyboard, message, and to shoot the scenes. I did the editing for them on university equipment because we did not have our own to use, and I worked according to specifications they had outlined for me in our meetings. As a

white adult and outsider, I could not provide much support in the community discussions that were taking place around and about the youth, but worked to provide support for their voices and vision in the creation of this film. It was also extremely important to us, based on the accusations made that the youth were outsiders, that the youth we featured in the film were those among everyone that had been living in Barry Farms the longest, so youth who had for instance lived in the Farms but moved away agreed to take a less visible role in the film.

Allowing the youth to reframe the experiences of their day as we sat around sharing our visions for this film, or tell a story about what they'd been through that day, allowed us a space to speak back to the stories that were constantly being told around us, the story told by the cop that follow youth through the neighborhood, or by what gets said about 'kids on the corner' at community meetings.[15] These conversations pointed out the flaws in the current system and marked paths for the ways forward in future activism so clearly. Soo Ah Kwon's article describes how Reagan administration's cutting of social services for low income communities of the 1980's and 1990's was attempting to shift the blame for poverty onto the breakdown of poor minority families, and how "from this perspective, youth itself became a pejorative identity, emblematic of the failure of family, values, and nation" (Kwon 2004 : 19). Juvenile hall construction boom paralleled higher

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[15] Shawn Ginwright's Politics of Relevance explains intergenerational conflict in African-American youth activism: "Since 1965, the mass exodus of blue collar jobs, increased surveillance of urban schools, coercive military-like policing practices in black communities, corporate deception like the Enron scandal have all made black youth suspicious of both powerful institutions and institutional politics." African American adults from the civil rights generation often cannot understand this disillusionment, and Ginwright notes that the older generation's views of poverty, unemployment, and limited job options, "exacerbate tensions between black youth and black adults because older black adults view poverty as simply something many of them overcame. As a result, many adults take the position of 'why can't your generation do the same? Or why does your generation use poverty as an excuse?'" (See http://ya.ssrc.org/african/Ginwright/)

arrest rates, while spending on education, school scholarships and child protection services declined (Kwon 2004: 19). The political identity of youth of color is a re-articulation of negative images of youth of color into a positive identity. Kwon offers the example of Asian youth as 'model minority,' whose identities have been apoliticized and thought to be unaffected by juvenile justice system, and how an important part of re-politicizing their identity for these youth was to communicate this experience with the criminal justice system to their community and beyond as well.

Our documentary and discussions that took place around it offered a lot of space for reframing, especially around building a 'counter' identity to the one presented by the media, one as Christy said, "where youth can do good things too" (Conversation with youth organizer, 9/08). The stated objective of this video came in the face of opposition from older, traditional leadership in the neighborhood, we said "young people need to be heard too, its not just about older people making all the decisions" (Conversation with youth organizer, 8/08). Originally we had hoped to distribute this video among neighborhood youth to raise awareness and consciousness in the youth identity as a means of mobilizing people to action, but held off upon meeting such opposition. In this way, reframing the story of Barry Farms was about reframing the youth identity and building up a culture of youth resistance. As Tina said, "five youth are better than 20 adults because they have more energy and can do more. And what's more, look at how the adults feel when they see young people out there doing work- like they better get out there too" (Conversation, 8/08). Through our documentary and the presentation the youth developed around it, they were able to develop the identity as resistant youth, 'gadfly' who express their commitment to the community by fighting for it. In the face of so much

imagery of apathetic and violent youth this was a controversial argument to make. This often required the youth to take the more apolitical stance of 'we are just trying to help, to give people information so they can make better choices,' in an effort to make sure the information got out at all. In discussions amongst the youth themselves however, it was clear that an important part of this identity was resistance or opposition to the traditional leadership. As Jared said, "we are trying to tell the truth cause everybody is getting mixed signals about what's been going on- its not right cause you've got government officials telling us lies when you gotta think you can believe in them" (Conversation, 9/08).

To return to our working definition of the PIC for ways to fight it, I think focusing on resilience is am important part of strategy as a counter to the fear that would inspire what Mullings calls 'a conservative defense of disparities' seen in communities that benefit from as well as those affected by the prison. Parenti says to pay attention ot the spaces of confinement for what is deemed 'surplus' or a 'threat to the new world order' can tell you a lot. I think this can be a great source of strength and common identity to note what you find yourselves in opposition to, but it is ultimately the culture of resilience that we build together that sustains the fight that we have ahead. One exciting example comes from the Young Women's Empowerment Project**,** a youth-led organization of young women working in and affected by street economies based in Chicago. Recently, YWEP has shifted their focus to developing those stories and points of common identity that build power. "When we focus on resistance, we often focus on the police and the prison, or resistance to ___. What get's ignored in this process is methods of survival, resilience and resistance" (Black 2008). YWEP is currently creating a 'Girls Fight Back' journal in a 'zine format full of contributions from all the young

women in the project. The best kind of documentation, they say, is documenting the ways of resistance and resilience (they define the difference as resistance is fighting back and organizing, and resilience is the self care and support needed to deal with systems everyday). With this focus…"we're not just beating our heads against the state" (Black 2008). This kind of storytelling shares strategies and strength to build identity and unity in movements that focus on our everyday strengths and practices instead of on the opposition.

Storytelling for conscientization and new definitions

Reframing the story of the redevelopment of Barry Farms also required redefining key terms that were being used to set the discussion. The word community was used frequently, usually invoked with the assurance that the community would get input in development decisions, the community would be allowed to return, and the community's ideas would be respected. However, as is read in the title of the initiative, 'New Communities' the redevelopment was never intended for its original residents or current community to return to. Rates of return in HOPE VI projects around the country are extremely low, with usually "only 11.4 percent of former residents overall have returned or are expected to return to HOPE VI sites" contrary to the impressions given by HUD (National Housing Law Project 2002). It was important that we redefined community then as made up of people, not a place or site that could be rebuilt. As one adult resident said in response to our question of who will be allowed to come back at a community meeting, 'once its gone, its gone.' Part of this meant illustrating what the community meant to them, as Diane said, "the thing I will miss most is the people…who knows

where everyone will end up and who will be allowed to come back" (Conversation, 10/08). Before funding was pulled from our project, we intended to document stories from youth and adults of what the community meant to them as a means of resistance as well.

Another way we emphasized connections and relationships in the community was by trying to demonstrate or define the way that people took care of each other in the community. Panning the camera around youth playing and adults watching on, Roneka's narration in the documentary asks "See doesn't this look like a community already? Why do we need a new one?" Statistics about Hope VI sites show a dismal amount of research about what happens to residents who are forced to move, but the destruction of other pubic housing communities in DC has resulted in the death of elderly residents according to community members. Also "a disturbing number of the residents who are officially relocated are "lost" along the way, meaning that they no longer receive housing assistance" according to the False Hope report, resulting in anything from homelessness to incarceration (National Housing Project 2002). As Jared redefined community, "they are destroying the community for those who need it most, "just because you aren't there yet, doesn't mean this is not the place for you to get there- just cause we don't have that yet, this is the place for you to get there. that's what I want my community to be, that's the whole point of a community, to make it" (Conversation 10/08).

A huge part of the discussion around redefining community focused on the city's response to crime, and dispelling the myth that the destruction of public housing was a solution to crime. In fact, as the youth tell it, it actually makes crime worse and fuels the PIC. Breaking up neighborhoods contributes to 'beefing' or fighting between

neighborhoods that many of the youth are a part of, so after worsening the violence by throwing together youth from opposing communities, the police respond with more aggressive policing, and in recent 'gang injunction' policies in DC, explicitly target youth and youth culture. The DC government says these 'hot spots' they are razing are responsible for 1 in 6 homicides in the District, but the perspectives in a recent article in the Atlantic make it clear there are other factors at fault. In the last 10 years, Rosin explains how homicide rates are increasing alongside the destruction of large sections of public housing, displacing residents into unfamiliar territory. When comparing a map of relocated public housing residents and areas of 'new crime' in Atlanta, the high crime areas where the same places where former public housing residents were displaced to, as destruction of community fabric and support left residents more desperate and vulnerable and thus more likely to be involved in criminal activity. This evidence "reaches beyond [surface indicators of] crime and implicates one of the most ambitious antipoverty programs of recent decades [HOPE VI]" (Rosin 2008). As Jared says, while the stated purpose of destroying public housing is "cleansing or purifying, destroying a building won't make a difference"(Conversation, 10/08). In fact, destroying the building displaces residents into places of more danger and often makes things worse. Diane quickly backs him up saying, "Yeah I think the government knows but is not gonna take responsibility cause 9/10ths of the kids will be relocated to communities where they were just beefing with yesterday" (Conversation, 10/08). Referencing 'beefing' or neighborhood rivalries, Diane also attempts to reject the superficial explanations for crime by quickly saying, "the kids don't fight for no reason, they aren't evil" going on to list some of the real

reasons for fighting, like not being able to land a job, things going bad at home, or bad experiences at their schools.

The youth fight the terms of their criminalization by redefining the terms used to define them. Talking back about what forms of resilience we use inspires political education and conscientization about what are these structural forces that drive us together. Eric Schlosser says the PIC is a state of mind in which profits have replaced any original stated intent of rehabilitation or care. Conscientization is necessary to recognize this as a state of mind, which is changeable and transformable- only through recognizing it can you start to change it. In exciting strategies I have seen, FIERCE (Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment) a group of GLBTQ youth of color from New York, uses conscientization to challenge definitions of criminal, and challenge what (and who) gets criminalized. That has required redefining 'quality of life' and shifting the terms of that debate to focus on the experiences, needs, and struggles of the young people who are drawn to the West Village, and their quality of life concerns. In the summer of 2000, FIERCE members began organizing a response to increased policing and mass arrests of youth of color on the Christopher Street Pier. When NYS and NYC closed the Pier for construction in 2001, many West Village merchants, residents and political leaders expressed that they hoped the re-development of the Pier and the beefed-up police presence in the area would improve their quality of life. FIERCE's position, however, is that this concept of quality of life not only ignores, but adversely affects the quality of life of LGBTQ youth, especially those who are of color. Indeed, the youth who make use of the pier as a public space have reported sharp increases in police harassment, false arrest and racial and gender profiling-usually for just

being in the neighborhood. "This emphasis on policing drew massive resources from other social services and education that have the potential to actually address poverty. In fact, under Giuliani and continuing with current Mayor Bloomberg, the only public service to receive increased funding has been criminal justice"(FIERCE n/d). FIERCE has been able to change the terms of the public debate about quality of life and public safety in the West Village so that the voices of merchants and residents, politicians and police, are not the only ones that are heard. Related exciting redefinitions of the terms around aggressive policing and gentrification include the way Right to the City Alliance has expanded the debate around displacement and gentrification.

> Gentrification transforms much more than just housing; it also reshapes public space, undermines locally owned businesses and increases repressive policing…..(of organizations in the Alliance) none of these organizations organize narrowly on housing issues. They are also incorporate work to preserve and expand the community-based businesses and cultural institutions that are crucial to the survival of their communities…to defend community access to public space and to work against the role that repressive policing plays in gentrifying communities. This expansive approach to anti-gentrification organizing reflects the Right the City Alliance's movement-building orientation [Gihan 2008]

The alliance is not interested in a narrow definition of the issue; instead they want to foster a resistance that is as complex and wide-ranging as the process of gentrification itself. These redefinitions help us to express ourselves and to be ourselves in the spaces we create, based on our cultural values and lived experiences, we set the terms and the future of the movement.

Telling stories for creating and living alternatives

Finally, the stories youth tell can serve to demonstrate the alternatives we wish to see. A common response to youth crime from adults and non-residents is 'why are you

fighting for what you don't even own?' (referring to public housing). Daniel's response to this was,

> "We've already heard that you know, fighting over land that aint yours. I think we gotta switch it up, like people already know that. Instead we gotta show places like this, places like FLY, where people are doing things different. And on the screen, you know, we gotta show people doing it not just talking about doing it- that's where its at"(Conversation with youth organizer, 3/09).

His brother goes on, explaining the root cause of 'beefing' in terms of the need for a direct solution: something to belong to. "Its not really about turf its like who you belong to" we talked about how it meant having people to look up to and a sense of belonging, not offered anywhere else due to the city environment because the police make them feel like "they aren't allowed out" and like just being on the corner is against the law (Conversation 3/09). Both agree that we can't just talk about alternatives anymore because people need to see the alternatives in order to imagine they are possible.

The Encyclopedia of crime and punishment says abolitionists "face the challenge of filling out a still sketchy outline of what a 'future without prisons' would look like in practice" (Levinson 2002). By beginning this practice, we fight the belief that there is no alternative, fighting what Gilmore calls the 'magic' feat of disappearing 'problems' into prisons. Sista II Sista in NY, a group of young women of color resisting police violence and working towards healing and leadership amongst young women, define themselves as "committed to creating alternatives" (Sista II Sista Website). In focusing on resilience they decided to, "divest entirely from focusing on the 83rd precinct, and said instead this is a Sista II Sista liberated ground," and for a period of several months were able to demonstrate an alternative to calling the police that was "doable and also brought to scale [of the community]"(Black 2008). Inspired by models outside the US, Sista II Sista uses

empowerment circles and safety planning to allow women to demand there will be no violence against women and no calling the police within these designated lines of the liberated ground.

In an interview about the work of Sista II Sista, one participant said "the battleground of the struggle is in how we live, how we survive, and how we sustain our lives" and that we must ground the political in our everyday work and have it be guided by the survival needs of ourselves and our communities. Inspired by Chilean and Latin American popular movements which "organize to address such aspects of everyday life as housing, nutrition, childcare, education, and productive work" and that just by existing as an alternative "these institutions constitute a powerful challenge to the core values of neoliberalism" (Incite! 2004: 42). The day to day challenge of fighting the PIC begins with creating a holistic space that "would support sistas in their efforts at challenging the larger societal structures imposed on their lives [and is] rooted in the principle of self determination- that all groups are able to identify and work towards solving their own problems" (Black 2008). The contractors and politicians that drive the PIC attempt to globalize a certain "set of social relations and logic" to ensure their profits, and so we must globalize our resistances and draw on many movements and models to create these alternatives.

Reframing for What?

These specific stories of reframing and resistance offer just a first step into how we can fight the PIC and discourses of broken windows policing in urban communities around the country. In DC, we recognize we are fighting not just a current discourse, but

one that is deeply imbedded in the history of this place. The responses that we are growing and creating at Visions to Peace are based in telling the stories of our own histories, and how they are connected to the structures enforced upon us by the legacies of slavery, incarceration and displacement in the District. Building and recognizing a definition of the PIC that is particular to DC helps strengthen group identity as youth resisting the PIC, raises consciousness about current and future experiences, and helps us focus on creating alternatives that lie outside that system. The youth fight to represent themselves as agents of positive change as a direct challenge to the images of youth of color projected by the media, and of 'kids on the corner' held by the neighborhood.

Resistance to broken windows policing and the PIC in DC starts with a rejection of the characters and definitions on which the story of the 'broken window' begins, and retelling a story of a future without prisons. All of these reframing call for alternatives to prisons, which has been called *justice reinvestment*, or an investment in public safety by reallocating money spent on corrections to refinance education, housing, healthcare, and jobs (Tucker 2003). The $54 billion spent on prisons can be reallocated by contesting the images and assumptions of criminality, and by telling stories of what our communities need to be safe outside of the prison system. Using the justice reinvestment framework, the recommended 'steps' to transforming the criminal justice system are to "analyze the prison population and spending in the communities to which people in prison often return and then provide policymakers with options to generate savings and increase public safety" (Tucker 2003). Using the stories of youth is Southeast DC, we can draw significant amounts of information about where District money is being spent and how that affects the prison population.

We see that our elected officials invest in police to patrol and make way for new developments and private properties, and often must make the federal interests priority over District residents. As youth and families are removed from their neighborhoods by forced displacement and incarceration, DC prisoners are shipped directly into the federal prison system which is largely privatized, fueling the cycle of displacement. The severe budget shortfalls of this economic crisis may have created powerful and unlikely allies in the fight against prison expansion. Around the country, elected officials chose to slow down, stop, or even reverse expansion plans so they could close state budget gaps. Surprisingly, this happened more frequently in more conservative states where elected officials had strong "tough on crime" credentials, were unfriendly to organized labor, and wanted to cut social spending. Now "under the guise of 'fiscal responsibility,' political leaders who weren't comfortable enough, politically, to do it before, can now" (Sugura 2009). If our federal government had any direct accountability to the residents of the land which it colonizes for its base of operations, DC residents would demand that their loved ones not be sold to the 'last profitable industry' inside the US, and their homes not be destroyed for government employees or a façade of safer streets. Instead money should be reinvested in the institutions that support a thriving capital city such as education, affordable housing, and services to engage the community.

We must fight these trends, and often fight first by contesting the terms of criminalization on which these policies rely. It is this link, between specific Southeast neighborhoods and the prison, which can be utilized and redefined as a jumping off point for collective action. From here, residents can talk back and share their own stories for resilience, resistance, and to shape what alternatives for the neighborhood might look

like. Starting from this common experience, residents can work to de-legitimate the prison as a solution to all social problems in their community, and especially contest its 'inevitable' link to the communities east of the river. Our hopes for prison reform and abolition do not end with telling stories but start here, by reframing the impact of the prison on our communities, we reveal root causes and can re-imagine actions and alternatives.

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