

TOWARD THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:

Development Patterns, Growth, and Inequality

in Nashville, Tennessee (1945-Present)

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In order to see where we are going, we not only must remember where we have been, but we must understand where we have been.

Ella Baker

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Table of Contents

Description of College Scholars Program: Beloved Community Development	5
Historical Context of Development at the Global and Local Scale	9
Development, Growth, and Inequality at the Global Scale	9
Development, Growth, and Inequality at the Local Scale	12
The Uneven Development of Nashville: The Growth Machine from the 1940s to Present	22
Government Restructuring and Political Capital	23
Urban “Renewal” and Economic Capital	28
Highway Construction and Cultural Capital	30
School Desegregation and Knowledge Capital	35
Reshaping the City: Development Patterns into the Present	40
Toward Beloved Community Development	43

Description of College Scholars Program: Beloved Community Development

There came a time in my first semester when my advisor told me to apply for College Scholars. Fascinated with Gloria Ladson-Billings' writings on the education debt, I knew I wanted to study education policy.¹ College Scholars was the only program that granted me the flexibility to take upper-level classes in education, political science, and sociology, and it was the only academic program that could evolve freely as my thinking did. Over the course of three and a half years, it certainly did evolve. My program began with an emphasis in "education policy" then "humanizing education and urban studies" before its final iteration, "beloved community development". As different as those programs seem, they are natural reflections of my educational journey. Here I discuss the evolution of my program and how it has shaped this thesis, beginning at Brookmeade Elementary School.

I began learning about the Civil Rights Movement in the 3rd grade. I am grateful Ms. Hayes was the teacher to introduce this subject to me. As an African American woman, she left no room for lost cause narratives. I remember sitting in class and watching chilling documentaries on chattel enslavement and the Jim Crow south. And while these lessons were framed to show our progress, I knew inequality persisted. I especially remember conversations at lunch. We had a strange arrangement where once a week a group of students took their lunch to a small room in the back of the music class. My group was about eight boys, half Black from North Nashville neighborhoods, half white from suburban West Nashville and rural Davidson County. We told stories, often exaggerated, from home and the weekend. These conversations were the first time I was introduced to "the projects" or neighborhood violence. And when I went home to tell my parents, their distorted narratives didn't square with who I understood my

¹ Ladson-Billings' "From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools" draws a compelling line from the enslavement of African Americans to modern education inequality, articulating why an enormous "education debt" is owed to America's Black students and families.

friends or their families to be. Of course, my parents never *really* met my school friends, black or white. The families we hung out with, the kids I played hockey with, almost all went to private schools, and their perceptions of public schools and their students were not based in reality.

In third grade, I also read my first book on Nazism. I was fascinated because the war is part of my family story. My Oma and Opa were teenagers in Nazi-occupied Holland.² I combined what I knew about their stories with what I was learning in school. As an eight-year-old, I noticed the word “ghetto” was a place Jewish people were forced to live and a word some of my classmates used, sometimes with pride, to describe their neighborhoods. At the time, these were no more than observations, but I was beginning to question the fairness of the world around me. I developed a fairness radar and petitioned, in the 2nd grade, to have a staff person fired over what I saw as discrimination against my friend.³

I reflect on this time because children have a beautiful innocence to them. Fairness is their prevailing ideology. No one would dare call a child communist for thinking all people should have food to eat, clothes to wear, and a roof over their head, but if those children grow up and ask these things of their society, they are labeled by many Americans as radical communists, or worse. We have a lot to learn from children. When Jesus’s disciples asked him who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he invited a child by his side and answered, ““unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”” (Matthew 18:3 NIV). This is an appropriate segue into my program emphasis of beloved community development.

² Dutch words for grandmother and grandfather

³ The friend, like everyone else, was talking at the lunch table. I remember him being the only Black student at the table, and he was the only one disciplined. I drafted the petition with help from my mom and got all of my classmates to sign it. My classroom teacher allowed me to take the petition to the office. The principal considered the petition but the staff person was not fired.

In the above quote, Jesus references the “kingdom of heaven”. Modern Christians often limit this future state to the afterlife. Jesus did not. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus vocalizes “thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven”. Thus, the gospel of Jesus is not a token to get into heaven but a tool for building the kin*dom on Earth.⁴ During the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. King built upon this idea. Following the lead of philosopher Josiah Royce, King reframed the kin*dom of heaven into the “beloved community”. For King, “The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of the Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony. Rather, The Beloved Community was for him a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence” (King Philosophy 2021). In other words, Dr. King’s vision of the beloved community is more in-line with Jesus’s vision of the kin*dom of heaven than predominant protestant thought. For Jesus, achieving the kin*dom required his followers to see the world like children. To expect youthful visions of fairness and justice be achieved.

The evolution of my program rests on this understanding. Beloved community development combines King’s vision for the beloved community with the practice of community development, defined by the International Association for Community Development as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities”. Beloved

⁴ Pastor Paul Perdue of Belmont UMC (Nashville) refers to the kingdom of heaven, recognizing the ultimate goal of kinship through the good news of Jesus Christ. Tweaking this, I write kin*dom with an asterisk to acknowledge the role the church has played, and continues to play, in systems of oppression. When Jesus spoke the Lord’s Prayer, he was contrasting the kin*dom with the Roman Empire and all kings/emperors on Earth. I believe Jesus’s gospel remains a powerful alternative to evil systems in the modern world.

community development is more than a major. With College Scholars, I have crafted a personal philosophy and practice, a framework for my life's work.

The program's shift away from education policy and urban studies coincided with the coronavirus pandemic. I was overwhelmed with my sociology and education classes when the pandemic began. I was also humbled by how quickly our world shut down. Together, these factors made me value and cherish simplicity like never before. In this time, I discovered the potential of a place-based approach in justice work. Since then my program has taken a more human geography focus, understanding how neighborhoods and communities are shaped by, and shape, people. I now believe that beloved community development happens at the neighborhood scale. We are forced to rely on neighborhoods, even when the world seems to stop. It is at this scale that democracy is tangible, agency feels real, and people can come together in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, many decision makers do not value people or place. That is the focus of this thesis: how inequality is made and remade, and how oppressive patterns can be reversed and leveraged for the beloved community.

The first step in imagining a better world is understanding the historical context of development at the global and local scale. Further, it is important to apply these lessons to a specific place. The following sections analyze the historical context and apply that knowledge to development patterns in the city of Nashville from 1945 to the present. The literature for each topic discussed in this paper is exhaustive. This is not a comprehensive study but rather a review paper that contextualizes and analyzes issues fundamental to the development of Nashville following World War II.

Historical Context of Development at the Global and Local Scale

Development, Growth, and Inequality at the Global Scale

Today's economic system has evolved from colonial capitalism. A process which, over 500 years, has fundamentally restructured human life. Humans did not always work for wages. Income inequality was not always so extreme. The processes unique to colonial capitalism are continuously shaping and re-shaping the global economy, but they are not inevitable. This section discusses the roots of colonial capitalism, the origins of global development after World War II, and the evolution of neoliberal globalization since the 1980s. Only in understanding these processes is there hope for reshaping them toward humane and sustainable outcomes.

Interestingly, global inequality did not largely exist pre-colonialism. Life expectancy was similar between continents. If anything, Europe was underdeveloped compared to Asia and South America. Colonial capitalism, with its reliance on continuous expansion and extraction, would create a new world order, with inequality its natural product. Colonial capitalism relies on cheap labor and cheap land. Bluntly, colonial capitalism relies on the wrongful enslavement of human beings and the violent theft of land and resources.

The African slave trade began in the 1400s and colonialism in around 1500. The processes are inseparable. Once the Portuguese began using enslaved laborers, other colonial powers followed. The new economic order rationalized human suffering in the name of economic profit. Speaking on the slave trade, a Dutch governor in Northern Brazil explained, “it is not possible to accomplish anything in Brazil without slaves” (Coates 120). In other words, transportation costs and demand made human enslavement the only profitable labor option, especially since other powers were using it. This rationale for human suffering continues, from the United States' constitutional convention, to the executive suites of today's multinational

corporations. Six hundred years later, the world's powerful countries were, and are, developed by the theft of labor, land, and resources.

After World War II colonialism, as the world knew it, largely ended. The colonial powers of old were decimated. The United States was not and became a global superpower. With greater influence and moral high ground, President Truman laid the foundation of America's imperial machine. Different in tone and appearance from its colonial predecessors, Truman embarked on "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas". In his inaugural address Truman began, in his eyes, a "worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom," (Hickel 2017, 8). This was colonialism by a new name, American imperialism. Importantly, America became the largest player in global "development" under this new order.

This new era ignored, or intentionally replicated, the processes that first created global inequality. In fact, the power relations from colonialism were replicated. The aggressive Marshall Plan rebuilt Europe. Rich nations set the terms for development, robbing poor nations the opportunity of becoming economic, self-sustaining, equals. As the colonial era before it, poor countries, and the toils of their labor, financed rich countries' development after World War II. Still, it took some time for the new world order to materialize. From the 1950s to 1980s, the gap between rich and poor nations shrunk. Europeans were leveraging the war's destruction to create social democracies, demanding better healthcare and education from their governments. Democracy was also spreading. More poor nations were electing their leaders. Many countries were doing development on their own terms. A more equal world was possible. Then, the rich nations discovered the most powerful tools in their neocolonial arsenal: aid and debt.

With the global south gaining power and legitimacy in the United Nations, the northern nations subverted the democratic world order, forcing economic restructuring under World Bank and IMF development plans. While Europe was largely rebuilt by the Marshall Plan, powerful countries denied poor countries the successful development strategies used by the new social democracies of Europe. Poor nations lost protection for domestic industry, privatized utilities and social programs, and were forced into trade with unfit partners looking to profit off cheap labor. The whole world was affected by neoliberalism, but developed nations with social democracies were more resilient to the effects of this era.

Beyond economic intervention, the United States subverted democracy within nations. Backing coups and opposition leaders, the U.S. created the prerequisite political instability that re-established the south's economic dependence on the north. In exchange, leaders backed by the U.S. were promised aid. Any gains made from 1950 to 1980 were largely erased. Once again, the development of poor nations was out of their control, and aid subtly worked to maintain the dependent power relations of old.

Importantly, the global economy is still shaped by the World Bank and IMF's power. Inequality remains high and growing. The GINI index, a measure of inequality between countries, has decreased between 1960 and 2013 (Hikcel 51). If, however, you take China out of the formula, inequality has increased. Critically, "China and East Asia are some of the only places where structural adjustment was not imposed by Washington. Instead of being forced to adopt a one-size-fits-all blueprint for free market capitalism, China relied on state-led development policies and gradually liberalised its economy on its own terms" (52). Comparing the United States to regions around the world, inequality has increased dramatically since 1960. The gap in GDP per capita has grown 207 percent between the U.S. and sub-Saharan Africa, 206

percent between the U.S. and Latin America, 196 percent between the U.S. and South Asia, and 154 percent between the U.S. and Middle East/North Africa (53). Using the United States as a benchmark for the powerful nations, these rising gaps tell the true story of global inequality between regions.

In summation, the global economy has evolved from centuries of colonial capitalism. Generally, this process is exploitative, dehumanizing, and unsustainable. Social evolutions have made things like chattel slavery unacceptable, but the motivations of colonial capitalism have not changed. The economy is still driven by capitalism's need for the cheapest labor and cheapest land available.

Development, Growth, and Inequality at the Local Scale

As complex as the global economy seems, its processes filter down to the local scale. Simply put, the world economy is an agglomeration of all local economies. Cities are home to markets. From small rural farms to large urban tech firms, all business passes through cities. When cities are framed as pieces of the global economic puzzle, the picture comes in to focus. It is difficult to comprehend all the players on the world stage. It is easier to understand a local economy. People have intimate knowledge of their home, where they live and work. Often, they have less knowledge of the historical context which shapes modern patterns of growth, development, and inequality in their city. This section will discuss two articles in-depth, "The City as a Growth Machine" and "Gentrification and Uneven Development". Together, the articles provide a framework for understanding the power dynamics and processes of uneven development that shape a city. Hopefully, understanding these pieces will expand the readers' imagination of what the city is and what it can be.

The articles discussed in this section are, at the same time, foundational and antiquated. They are worth discussing because of their foundational nature to their respective disciplines and to the author's coursework as a student. The specifics of each article have changed in the last half century. Still, there are valuable takeaways, especially considering the bulk of the case study reflects on a period in which these writings were especially relevant. To the author, these articles should not be taken as truth. They are, however, a helpful way to begin thinking about city issues. The city is interested in growth. Specific growth coalitions and their motivations may have shifted, along with trends toward neoliberalism and globalization. Still, the city is greatly interested in growth. Fundamentally, growth reveals itself through uneven development. The writing of Smith remains helpful in the contemporary phase of gentrification and urban restructuring.

On the City as a Growth Machine

To understand uneven development, it is necessary to understand the social, economic, and political forces that enable and sustain it. At the global scale, uneven development is driven by the power relations, and processes related to colonial capitalism. At the local scale, these power dynamics and processes create the conditions of local economies. In his seminal work, "The City as a Growth Machine", Harvey Molotch reframes urban geography, thinking of maps not "merely as a demarcation of legal, political, or topographical features, but as a mosaic of competing land interests capable of strategic coalition and action" (Molotch 1976, 311). In other words, all cities are shaped by the interest of land-based elites, who profit off the intensification of land. These elite land interests compete with each other but form a great alliance around growth, an alliance Molotch labels the "growth machine". The growth machine determines the expansion and accumulation of capital in cities. The growth machine is enabled and sustained by

three major factors: the power and ubiquity of its membership, the powerful and convincing myths about growth, and the consent of everyday residents.

The growth machine encompasses business leaders, local politicians, local media, plus schools and universities. The machine is ubiquitous. The growth machine is so powerful that, “conditions of community life are largely a consequence of the social, economic, and political forces embodied in this growth machine” (Molotch 309). Molotch’s theory says growth is the primary function of local government. By no means is growth the only thing local governments do, but it is the basis of their legitimacy. The growth machine sets the terms for local governing, while sports teams and schools build the “acceptance of growth” from an early age (315). Growth enthusiasm would exist without the growth machine, the machine simply mobilizes “what is there, legitimizes and sustains it, and channels it as a political force into particular kinds of policy decisions (315). An illustrative example is the media’s role in growth. Local media is responsible for informing the public on local issues. General news, local politics, weather, and sports are the backbone of local news outlets. Most outlets also have an investigative division to study corruption, scandals, and powerful players in the city. These investigations challenge members of the growth machine. They do not challenge growth itself, precisely because news outlets also benefit from growth. The larger the market, the more potential revenue. Imagine the similar role universities and sports teams play, not to mention politicians. While some politicians enter the arena to fight symbolic wrongs, their validity as a candidate is tied to non-symbolic money interests, interests deeply embedded in the growth machine (318). In fact, endorsing growth is a prerequisite for local political success. Thus, everything from who becomes mayor, to where schools are built, are largely dictated by the powerful and ubiquitous growth machine.

The power and ubiquity of the growth machine is strengthened by widely-accepted myths about growth. The first myth is that by embracing growth, localities can create jobs. City growth does not create jobs. It distributes them. Aggregate employment is unaffected by city growth. A mayor that lures Amazon to their city did not create the conditions for a new Amazon headquarters, they simply ensured those jobs would be located in their city, often at a cost to taxpayers. Fundamentally, the conditions for aggregate growth are decided by federal interest rates, global economic conditions, and other factors outside local control. Importantly, this myth legitimizes the growth machine to the city's working residents, which will be discussed later in this section.

Another misleading myth regarding growth is the common adage of “a rising tide lifts all boats”. The cliché statement itself is true. It is, however, an inappropriate analogy for growth. When cities grow, they do not grow evenly. There are growing pains, tangible costs associated with the growth machine. The brunt of these costs fall on the general public, while the land-based elite see greater profit. Molotch cites research to support this from the time of his research (Livingston and Blayney 1971, Appelbaum et al. 1974, Ann Arbor City Planning Department 1972). Simply, growth costs taxpayers more. Continuing the Amazon example, many “new jobs” require people to relocate. They are not necessarily designed for the people already living in a city. Bringing in more “good jobs” to “increase the tax base” has tangible consequences on existing residents. In growing cities, people are priced out of their neighborhoods. Property tax increases are especially brutal for elderly homeowners on a fixed income. Renters feel the brunt of property tax increases through higher rents. In places like Nashville, gentrification and growth are pushing long-time residents to the margins, making way for transplants and in-city migrants. A large problem is predatory buying, where developers and

real estate agents offer prices that would have been fantastic 20 years ago but are highway robbery by today's market standards. Approached with these offers, a significant number of sellers believe they can buy a home in their neighborhood with plenty to spare (Hightower and Fraser 2020). This is not the case. Many homeowners are forced from city neighborhoods with access to transportation, grocery, and retail, to more distant suburbs. In other words, the "increased tax base" becomes a necessity as more working and middle class folks are pushed to the suburbs where resources, transportation, and social services are decentralized. By endorsing unconditional growth, cities are endorsing a rise in inequality. Almost always, growth benefits a handful of land-based elite at the expense of the city and its residents. Just as "poor" nations develop "rich" nations at the global scale, "poor" city residents develop "rich" residents at the metropolitan scale. Forced through tax burdens or predatory buying to sell, the average resident profits far less than private developers. Residents impacted less by the housing market *are* impacted by the burden placed on infrastructure through growth. The rising tide of growth lifts some boats and capsizes the rest.

The third myth is that there is "freedom of choice" in this arena. In the city, participation cannot be confused with endorsement, nor conflated with choice. The car-oriented development that has driven American society in the postwar era has led to "growth" at a great social and personal cost to the average American. Take, for example, the cost of car ownership in Knox County, Tennessee. In 2015, the average annual cost of owning and maintaining a car in Knox County was \$8,700, or 16% of the county's median income. In Knoxville, only 0.5% of residents used public transportation.⁵ Unfortunately, Americans have little choice to participate in such a system, outside the few metros with sufficient density and support for comprehensive public transit. Car-oriented growth has a great private cost compared to the streetcar era which preceded

⁵ From: Knoxville Metropolitan Planning Commission Technical Report Series on Workforce Housing (2017)

it. Again, “conditions of community life are largely a consequence of the social, economic, and political forces embodied in [the] growth machine” (Molotch 309). Employee mobility, gentrification, and suburbanization occur despite residents’ values, not because of them. City growth occurs despite residents’ values, not because of them. The growth machine effectively leverages the myth of choice to maintain its power.

The final factor supporting the growth machine is the consent of everyday residents. The growth machine’s influence, combined with convincing growth myths, leave residents little choice but to support the growth machine. Growth is often associated with progress. Regarding employment, however, “there is no tendency for either larger places or more rapidly growing ones to have lower unemployment rates than other kinds of urban areas. In fact, the tendency is for rapid growth to be associated with higher rates of unemployment” (Molotch 321). Sadly, the uncertainty of employment forces the average worker to endorse the growth agenda. Many workers are consensual actors in the redistribution of wealth from their hands to sectors of the elite, supporting “land-use politics, taxation programs, and anti pollution nonenforcement” that go against their interests (325). Fundamentally, “growth is a liability financially and in quality of life for the majority of local residents. Under such circumstances, local growth is a transfer of quality of life and wealth from the local general public to a certain segment of the local elite” (320). The passive and active consent of everyday residents strengthens the growth machine.

Together, the power and ubiquity of the growth machine, convincing myths about growth, and consent of everyday residents, legitimizes the growth machine. The growth machine prevents discussion of distributive politics in its most appropriate venue, local government. Instead, discussion hinges on the best way *to* grow. The merit of growth itself is unquestioned, ignoring evidence that growth contributes to inequality and of poverty in the city. Development,

growth, affluence, and poverty, are not coincidental, they are shaped by profit motives. The growth machine builds an alliance around “growth” in the name of “progress”, lining the pockets of land-based elites and contributing to their ever-growing growth machine.

On Gentrification and Uneven Development

Now that the power relations of urban economies are understood, it is important to discuss how the growth machine leverages its power. In his seminal work, “Gentrification and Uneven Development,” Neil Smith makes two major points. First, gentrification is not a new nor isolated phenomenon. Instead, Smith frames gentrification as the “leading edge” of uneven development in the city. Specifically, the leading edge of three processes of uneven development. These processes are: tendencies toward differentiation and equalization, the valorization and devalorization of built environmental capital, and reinvestment and the rhythm of unevenness. Together, these processes explain uneven development at the local scale. The growth machine is the driver, and uneven development the vehicle, of inequality at the local scale.

To understand uneven development, gentrification must first be discussed. Gentrification is reshaping urban areas across the world. In name, it is a process many people are familiar with. It is a quite visible process, that has become a boogeyman in conversations of cities, race, and housing. While critical, gentrification gets too much credit for inequality. First, gentrification has a terminology problem. The term “gentrification” refers to England’s gentry class and has little practical application in the United States. A more appropriate term would be “middle class-ification”. Understandably, that does not have the same ring to it. By definition, gentrification is the process of adapting existing buildings to middle class tastes. Think house-flipping and HGTV. This is the second reason gentrification gets too much credit: it is easily confused with development and redevelopment. If an apartment complex is built where

dilapidated houses once stood, this is development, not gentrification. This leads to the most important reason gentrification gets too much credit for inequality: it is ingrained in a larger process of uneven development within the city.

The first process Smith defines in uneven development are tendencies toward differentiation and equalization. Smith explains that capitalism works, on one hand, toward “the equalization of conditions and levels of development and, on the other, their differentiation” (Smith 1982, 143). Capitalism’s need for expansion creates the conditions for equalization. Once land and labor has sufficiently been extracted from one area, capitalism requires expansion into other areas. This leads to the equalization of capital. From a development perspective, there will always be relatively “less developed” places. These places become subject to development, as an economic decision. In this sense, capitalism works toward equalization.

Differentiation, on the other hand, is not founded in capitalist economics but natural geography. Before colonialism, local economies were bound by where livestock could be raised and what natural resources were available. While trade existed, differentiation was largely a product of the natural environment. In the modern economy, differentiation is equally a product of uneven development, as differences in the natural environment. This evolution is tied to accumulation and expansion. Thus, differentiation becomes the rationale for relative investment decisions.

At the local scale, differentiation is made concrete. In cities, the main pattern of uneven development is the relationship between the inner-city and the suburbs, where differentiation can be understood through ground rent. Of course, “ground rent is not in itself the origin of differentiation. Rather, the ground rent surface translates into a quantitative measure [of] the

actual forces tending toward differentiation in the urban landscape” (Smith 145). Analyzing ground rent over time shows trends in the development of the city.

Car-centric design exaggerates the modern relationship between the inner-city and the suburbs. When the car was relatively new and the infrastructure for it was underdeveloped, there was great differentiation between the city and suburbs. Using the ground rent example, rent would be high in the cities and low outside the city because there was not housing or highways to make suburban life practical for most people. This changed in the postwar era. The federal government subsidized mortgages and built highways, making the suburbs a lucrative investment opportunity for developers and a rational choice for homebuyers. When the subsidized loans dried up and traffic congestion increased, the suburbs became less lucrative. Generally speaking, urban areas followed the opposite trends. As suburban areas became more enticing, urban areas became less, and vice versa.

The ground rent landscape both represents and predicts the second aspect of uneven development: valorization and devalorization of built environmental capital. The differentiation of urban and suburban space creates a “locational seesaw”, where land is constantly valorized or devalorized in a cyclical fashion.

The investment of capital in the central and inner city caused a physical and economic barrier to further investment in that space. The movement of capital into suburban development led to a systematic devalorization of inner and central city capital, and this, in turn, with the development of the rent gap, led to the creation of new investment opportunities in the inner city precisely because an effective barrier to new investment had previously operated there (Smith 149).

Therefore, it is helpful to think of suburbanization and gentrification, not as independent patterns, but as opposite sides of the same coin. Generally the suburbs *or* inner-city are more lucrative at any given time, but there is nuance here. Urban and suburban land can simultaneously be valorized, while other parts of either section are devalorized. For example,

urbanization and suburban sprawl can occur simultaneously since the inner city and edge of the city are both economical investments at the present time. This is happening in many American cities. Gentrification and development are occurring in the city-center *while* the suburbs are expanding. Both lead to the intensification of land at the metropolitan scale. This can happen at the scale of cities and at the smaller scale of neighborhoods, blocks, and individual streets. If an area is being heavily invested in, it is being valorized. The opportunity cost of valorization in one area is the devalorization of other areas in the city. For that reason, valorization and devalorization are inevitable pieces of uneven development.

The third aspect of uneven development at the metropolitan scale is reinvestment and the rhythm of unevenness. For example, reinvestment in the inner-city happens precisely because the rhythm of investment previously prioritized suburban space. The valorization of the suburbs and devalorization of the inner-city allows for reinvestment in inner-city space. This becomes possible because of economic crises. Economic crises are inevitable in capitalist economies. This section has discussed the patterns impacting investment in built environmental capital, or property. Property booms occur when profits are falling in industrial sectors. Property booms signal a looming economic crisis. These crises necessitate a restructuring of the economy (Smith 150). Considered holistically, the process of uneven development predicts how the economy will be restructured during crises and creates the conditions for future economic crises. For example, the urban “renewal”⁶ projects of the 20th century laid the groundwork for this current phase of urban development (150), as disinvestment in city neighborhoods laid the groundwork for urban “renewal” in the first place. In both cases, land was devalorized only to be valorized later by public and private actors. By doing so, economic “growth” could occur amidst economic crises,

⁶ The word “renewal” will be placed in quotations throughout this paper as urban “renewal” projects did not renew the areas they targeted.

even if this “growth” is only a simple change in relative investment decisions. In other words, these cycles of destruction, displacement, and poverty, are not only a product of growth and city capitalism, but fundamental to this mode of development. Developing a deeper understanding of uneven development requires a thorough look at a local case study.

The Uneven Development of Nashville: The Growth Machine from the 1940s to Present

Nashville is a place like so many others. Inequality has been at once deeply embedded and difficult to fully identify. Making visible its full scope and the broad range of those invested in it is, even today, the first step to challenge it (Erickson 2017, 4).

Today’s Nashville is decades in the making. Labeled America’s “It City” in the *New York Times*, Nashville is an important case study for development in the 21st century.⁷ The city is driven by a growth machine that shapes the city through uneven development. Specifically, the growth machine has deepened inequality through government restructuring, urban “renewal”, highway construction, and school desegregation decisions. These efforts have robbed many Nashvillians, especially Black Nashvillians, of economic, social, political, and knowledge capital. This capital is increasingly concentrated in the hands of Nashville’s elite. This phase of uneven development began in the postwar era and continues today. Modern Nashville is more diverse, and the lessons from the postwar era are a powerful example of how growth coalitions have racial and socioeconomic implications. Many Nashvillians have become skeptical of growth but lack the historical context for a holistic critique. Thus, this research is a critical tool for Nashvillians interested in reshaping development standards toward more equitable outcomes. This section illustrates growth’s role in deepening inequality in Nashville, from the 1940s to the present.

⁷ The “It City” label was used in one *Times* article but became a rallying cry for Nashville’s growth-minded elites and a source of pride for some as it differentiated Nashville from other mid-sized cities.

In the sections below, the forms of capital analyzed are intersectional. The point of organizing the section this way is to categorize the restructuring of urban life in a way that is comprehensible and demonstrates the scope of these changes. Between government restructuring, urban “renewal”, highway construction, and school desegregation, city life has transformed since the 1940s. Importantly, this transformation was based in growth motivations, for the benefit of a few Nashvillians and to the detriment of many. It is important to note that during this time Nashville was a key player in the Civil Rights Movement. Diane Nash, James Lawson, C.T. Vivian, John Lewis, and others, organized the community and won the desegregation of Nashville lunch counters. Their success is not the subject of this research. It is, however, inextricably linked to the findings of this research. Nashville is where the beloved community’s longest and loudest champion, Congressman John Lewis, studied and fought his first battles in a lifelong struggle for justice. The lunch counters that civil rights leaders worked tirelessly to integrate would close in the following decades. Downtown business, white and black, moved out due to the development patterns discussed below. Largely, the gains of the civil rights movement were diluted by a comprehensive restructuring of urban space that further privileged white Nashvillians and resegregated urban space. This process was partly made possible by the consolidation of Metro Nashville, discussed below

Government Restructuring and Political Capital

In 1962 Nashville and Davidson County combined to form the Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County. Metro Nashville became the first consolidated city-county government in the country. Nashville and Davidson County would now share one mayor, one tax base, one planning commission, and one Metro Council. The unique structure of metro

government changed racial power dynamics and influenced federal funding for urban “renewal” and development projects.

Consolidation and the Dilution of Black Political Influence

To illustrate the political impact of consolidation, look to the political coalitions of Nashville’s last mayor, Ben West, and Metro’s first mayor, Beverly Briley. As mayor, Ben West grew the city by annexing parts of Davidson County. He struggled, however, to provide services to all city residents. Many county residents feared the city’s power and felt consolidation would increase it. As a county judge, Beverly Briley calmed these fears, seeing consolidation as, “a shift of power to the county structure” (Erickson 52). At the time, many saw suburbanites as “tax dodgers” or “refugees from reality”, but not Briley. In fact, “Briley praised those who had moved to the suburbs,” because, “the city offered them only ‘substandard housing,’ ‘poverty,’ and ‘the political rule of the city machine made up of a snarling hodgepodge of minorities’ who were ‘united only by the relief check’...” (53). To be clear, Briley is referencing the city he would soon become mayor of under a new consolidated city-county government.

While, “West had often angered black residents by failing to deliver on promises, he nonetheless considered black voters important to his governing coalition” (Erickson 58). Briley did not. Estimating the black vote as 13 to 17 percent of the voting population, Briley doubled-down on appealing to mostly white, mostly suburban Nashvillians. This was a dramatic shift in political power for Nashville’s black and urban populations. The former city was around 30 percent Black. The consolidated county was around 5 percent Black. Under Briley, white suburbanites became, and would remain, the city’s chief constituency. Moreover, candidates for county office, including the mayor, did not need the support of the city’s Black population. The city charter setup a strong mayor system and one of the largest city councils in the country.

Adding to the white majority's power, 5 of the 40 council members would be elected at-large, further diluting the power of Black districts on council.

This political shift damaged the Black community's best defense against urban "renewal" and highway construction. In this era, local money went to suburban schools and development projects. Federal money was leveraged to uproot the urban landscape and replace it with utopian visions for the city (Erickson 121). Nashville's white leaders rationalized their plans on the promise of growth. Z. Alexander Lobby, a lawyer and one of two Black members of city council originally opposed consolidation but changed his mind.⁸ Growth advocates linked consolidation to Nashville's survival and framed Lobby's decision as a "stark choice: he could support consolidation, or be the first black mayor of the 'dying city' of Nashville" (53). In essence, Black leaders were told to join in the growth machine or lose their seat at the table entirely.

It is no surprise that with this restructuring, eight of Metro's nine mayors have been white men. All but one of Nashville's mayors was endorsed by the growth machine. While the growth machine is powerful everywhere, it is not always a coordinated and formal group. In some ways Nashville's growth machine was. Beyond the elite chamber of commerce and Vanderbilt Board of Trust there was a "super-elite and secret Watauga Association" (Erickson 193). According to the Nashville Scene, "the 15 to 20 members were the heads of the city's locally owned banks, the CEOs of its most important companies, the chancellor of Vanderbilt University and a smattering of the city's most powerful attorneys". Watauga was formed for long range planning purposes, given the chamber of commerce president served one year terms. From 1960 to 1980, Watauga pulled much of the strings in the city. Watauga hand-picked Richard Fulton as Metro's second mayor in 1974 (Dobie 2002).

⁸ Lobby, along with Robert E. Lillard were Nashville's first black elected representatives since reconstruction. A charter amendment supported by Mayor West in 1949 drew council seats based on smaller city districts rather than city wards, creating favorable majority-black districts for Lobby and Lillard (Erickson 27).

Fulton served three terms from 1975-1987. Fulton's successor was populist Bill Boner. The growth machine despised Boner but did not coalesce behind a candidate, perhaps related to the disbanding of Watauga earlier in the decade. The growth machine eventually got behind Phil Bredesen but Boner emphasized his Nashville native credentials in the runoff with Bredesen, a New Jersey native and Harvard graduate (Wood). Interestingly, Bredesen's loss in 1987 was the best thing to happen to his political career. Boner's tenure was scandal-ridden and propelled Bredesen to a convincing victory in 1991. Bredesen began a string of four transplant mayors. His successors, Bill Purcell, Karl Dean, and Megan Barry, all received advanced degrees from Vanderbilt before settling in Nashville. Mayor Barry resigned after a scandal and was replaced by Vice Mayor David Briley, the grandson of Mayor Beverly Briley. To say Nashville voters have a "type" is an understatement. Well educated, soft-spoken visionaries somewhere between center-left and progressive. By-in-large the coalition that elected Beverly Briley remained in-tact to elect his grandson. It is also the coalition that voted him out in favor of current mayor Jim Cooper. The restructuring of Nashville government in the 1960s has greatly shaped the city's politics and development pattern, mostly in the name of growth.

Government Consolidation and the Growth Machine

Nashville has always been more of a trading center than an industrial powerhouse. In 1950, 34,000 workers were employed in manufacturing and 75,350 in non-manufacturing sectors. At the time the finance, insurance, and real estate sector made up only 5,700 workers, but this group had an outsized impact on political affairs (Erickson 26). Following World War II, this group's leadership "stood generally--if not unanimously--in favor of Nashville's economic expansion and the use of municipal government in this direction" (27).

With a consolidated government, Nashville's growth machine unified. Today, the Nashville area is a sprawling metro spanning several counties. In the postwar era there were very few suburbs outside of Davidson County. Consolidation effectively merged the city and county growth machine into one. No longer was their competition between city and county for a tax base that was leaning suburban. Consolidation allowed the city to compete for and garner federal funding disproportionate to its size. This allowed Nashville leaders to completely reimagine the built environment in the post-war era. By the late 1960s, "one-quarter of the land area of the former City of Nashville came under one urban renewal program or another" (Erickson 122). This kind of turnover had significant effects on people, places, and economies, especially considering Nashville's urban Black population was often targeted.

While all Nashville mayors have expressed support of the city's Black community, none since consolidation have relied on the Black vote in their political majority. That has been the political reality since consolidation. The political capital of Black Nashvillians perhaps peaked when Diane Nash and C.T. Vivian demanded the integration of lunch counters on the steps of city hall. They confronted Mayor Ben West, who met their demands. More than anytime since the 1960s, there is promise of increased representation and consciousness of justice issues. Nashville groups Gideon's Army and People's Budget Coalition are bringing justice issues to the forefront of local conversations. The current Metro Council has ten Black members, including two elected at-large. That constitutes one-quarter of the council, representative of Metro Nashville which is roughly 25 percent Black. In the postwar era, consolidation enabled Nashville's growth machine to efficiently pursue its growth-minded development agenda. Hopefully better representation will begin to reverse the damaging aspects of growth initiatives described below.

Urban “Renewal” and Economic Capital

Bulldozing the Black Central Business District

In the decades immediately preceding Metro consolidation, growth motivations privileged “white Nashville residents over their black counterparts” (Erickson 35). The black central business district was destroyed to construct the new Municipal Auditorium. Nashville’s major black theatre, the black-owned National Baptist Publishing Board, most black law offices, plus several small businesses and restaurants were all demolished without adequate compensation or a plan to rebuild elsewhere. The one white-owned property on the “renewal” site, a Catholic church, remained. The plan was enacted by the mayor and 10 members of a committee, all white men. It was enabled by segregation and government neglect, characteristic of many Metro projects. In a segregated landscape, the black central business district was devalored for decades by the Nashville elite, making it an easy target for “renewal”. The predominately white growth machine had nothing to lose by bulldozing the area in the name of “progress”.

With the black central business district destroyed, nearby residential areas became the target. The goal was a comprehensive redevelopment surrounding Capitol Hill. The area was home to “once-stately nineteenth century mansions,” that had deteriorated into slum conditions partially because of the city’s refusal to pave roads or properly drain the area. Ignoring, “irrefutable evidence of long-term government neglect, and the displacement of viable business... poverty itself became a justification for government neglect” (Erickson 39). In other words, the city created and exacerbated poverty by bulldozing a vibrant businesses district and denying public services to nearby residents. The destruction of the black central business district enabled the destruction of black neighborhoods, beginning with city “slums”, later spreading to black neighborhoods in Edgehill and North Nashville. The government tried to superimpose an

utopian vision of the city. These visions, however lovely, were extremely naive and destructive. Their top-down approach ignored the reality of city residents, ignored the reality of street life, and ignored the complex network of social and economic connections that make a place.



Figure 1. Capitol Hill pre-renewal. **Figure 2.** Capitol Hill post-clearance. In succession, black neighborhoods near Municipal Auditorium, Capitol Hill, Jefferson St, and Edgehill were targeted by urban “renewal” *Source.* Nashville-Davidson County, Metropolitan Government Archives

In Nashville, government involvement in slums went from complete negligence to complete control. The problem with slums is the economic systems that create them and government negligence that worsens their conditions, not the people living in slums. Out of necessity, slums are often full of entrepreneurial activity and community safety networks. Look at Jane Jacobs’ Study of Boston’s North End where “slums” had a strong sense of community and plenty of eyes on the street, not to mention better indicators of health than any Boston neighborhood. Like cities across the country, this reality was largely ignored. Instead, Nashville planners created their own narrative. Creating charts and maps describing the horrors of slum life, these “[s]ystematic spatial understandings of urban life became available both for social reform and growth-minded development” (Erickson 29). It is no surprise, then, that the utopian visions deepened inequality in Nashville. And like Jacob’s critique of New York resulted in

“centers of delinquency, vandalism and general hopelessness than the slums they were supposed to replace” (Jacobs 1992, 4).⁹ Nashville’s black political and professional class faced a tough reality after consolidation. Largely excluded from the new governing coalition, their neighborhoods were targeted for projects they had little input in. This wave of “renewal” projects increased the importance of Jefferson Street and North Nashville for the city’s Black residents. Unfortunately, these areas would soon be targeted by the next wave of uneven development, highway construction.

Highway Construction and Cultural Capital

From Charlotte Avenue to Jefferson Street: Reversing the Nashville I-40 Plan

The interstate highway system changed every city in the county. By necessity, many neighborhoods were disrupted, homes were demolished, local economies changed. Almost every highway plan met resistance. Big cities like New York and Chicago had little choice but to disrupt thousands of residents. Smaller cities like Nashville had better options. The particulars of each highway plan are important for understanding local politics and growth motivations. Growing from its history as a regional railroad hub, Nashville is bisected by three interstates: I-24, I-65, and I-40.¹⁰ Segments of Nashville’s interstates were built with relatively little disruption. The most contentious segment was the westbound section of Interstate 40, going from downtown toward Memphis.

New York-based engineering firm Clark and Rapuano were consulted on the project and originally recommended a route parallel to Charlotte Avenue. The route, “paralleled a rail line and traversed rail yards, obsolete and blighted housing, and much undeveloped land” (Mohl

⁹ Jacobs is referring to New York slum clearance projects that turned into high rise public housing. Nashville’s large “renewal” projects displaced businesses and residences alike, creating a sterilized and dehumanized landscape in and around the state capitol. Most housing projects were built outside the city center, including the James Cayce homes in East Nashville.

¹⁰ Plus the later bypasses of I-440 and I-840

880). Importantly, it would not destroy homes or businesses but *would* segregate white residential areas to the south and Black residential areas to the north of the interstate.¹¹ The plan followed best practices and after some pushback was agreed upon by the State Highway Department.

A decade later, the public learned the plan had shifted. Rather than choosing the path of least resistance, the department shifted the interstate north. The new route would cut directly through Nashville's Black community. Running parallel to Jefferson Street and its 128 Black-owned businesses, rather than an underdeveloped section of Charlotte Avenue. The shift was approved by the state. The destruction is hard to quantify in mere numbers but did destroy 620 Black homes, 27 apartment homes and 6 black churches. It dead-ended 50 neighborhood streets and imposed a physical barrier between the historically Black institutions of Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, and Fisk University. Children were separated from playgrounds, congregants from their churches, students from their schools, and customers from local businesses (Mohl 2014, 880). Worse yet, the government actors provided no rationale for the shift. Yale Rabin, a city planner and consultant for the NAACP legal defense fund reported the following for litigation:

'The submittal of the proposed [Charlotte Avenue] route was accompanied by a comprehensive report containing supporting data including not only engineering and traffic criteria, but noting in addition that careful consideration had been given to such factors as the impact of the proposed route on neighborhood patterns and structures, and the economy of the areas through which the road would pass.' By contrast, no detailed impact, traffic, or cost-benefit studies of the kind highway engineers routinely made of alternate routes were conducted during the three-week period in 1955 when the expressway was officially shifted to North Nashville (Mohl 880).

¹¹ This Black/white separation already existed along the Charlotte Avenue corridor. The interstate would simply add another physical barrier.

Clark and Rapuano associates confirmed Rabin's reporting in later research. So why did the plan shift? Clark and Rapuano described the Jefferson Street plan as the only feasible alternative, but evidence suggested the Charlotte Avenue plan was better for all stakeholders on the ground.

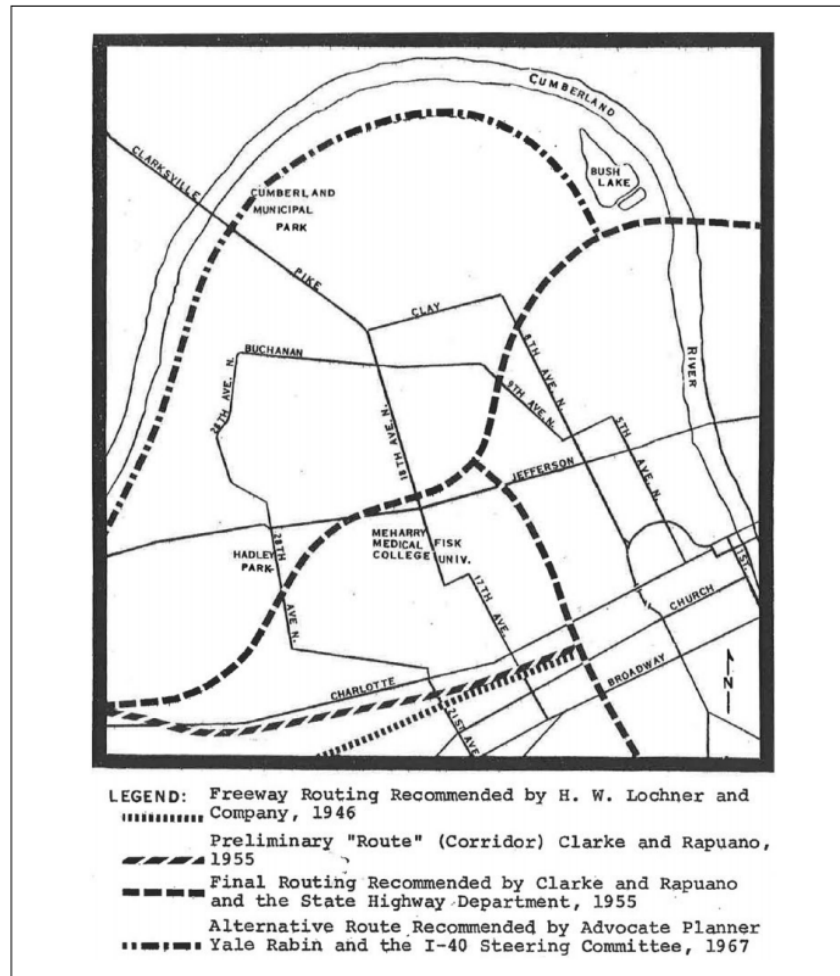


Figure 1. Map showing the original Charlotte Ave route (bottom) and eventual Jefferson St route (middle) cutting through the center of North Nashville. *Source.* Mohl (881).

Given there was no rationale provided, it is fair to speculate on a motive. It is documented throughout this paper that the growth machine's profit motives relied on the segregation of Nashville. This case is no different. Growth actors sought profit and used a segregated landscape to achieve these goals. The isolation of North Nashville public schools would make the federal

desegregation mandate more difficult to impose (Mohl 880). Furthermore, a white-owned retail development further north sought to “reap the benefits of the demise of Jefferson Street” (881).

Worse yet, neighborhood residents were not given an opportunity to organize against the plan. News articles about the plan were misleading and incomplete, and notices of public meetings were not placed in the paper. It was not until 1965, eight years after the plan shifted, that Black citizens realized their neighborhood was being targeted. By then, land was already being acquired for the project (Mohl 882). The original Charlotte plan was only agreed to as part of a larger urban “renewal” project for which federal funding never came. With no “renewal” funding, planners decided the route ran too close to Vanderbilt University, an affluent white neighborhood, segregated park, and segregated hospital (882). Importantly, the plan would not have run through those institutions, just too close to them. Nashville planners operated through an obvious double standard for the city’s Black and white institutions. The highway decision had an immeasurable impact on the Black business community, including Jefferson Street’s once-vibrant R&B scene and retail scene.

The Destruction of Jefferson Street’s Music and Business Scene

The construction of an interstate through any neighborhood would shift the social fabric and economic conditions of old. That said, Jefferson Street is no normal neighborhood and Nashville is no normal city. This section is titled “highway construction and cultural capital”. And one could ask, what does highway construction have to do with cultural capital? Would the primary shift be in economic capital? In the Music City, cultural capital should be addressed in the context of development.

A little-known fact is that the “Music City” nickname comes not from country music but from the Fisk Jubilee Singers. After performing at Buckingham Palace, the queen exclaimed,

“surely you must be from the music city!”, and the name stuck. In Jim Crow Nashville, the R&B scene grew alongside the country music scene. The Bijou Theater opened to Black artists in the 1920s, just blocks from Ryman auditorium (Paulson 2021). The theater was the crown jewel of venues up and down Jefferson Street, a must-stop on the “Chitlin Circuit”. Artists like BB King, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, and Marvin Gaye all came through Nashville. Etta James recorded her first live album at the New Era Club because of its great atmosphere. Little Richard regularly appeared at Club Baron, and anybody who was anybody on the R&B scene played at the Bijou. Radio station WLAC, with one of the strongest signals in the country, spun R&B records across the county. Locally, WLAC supported local record shops. Jefferson Street’s R&B industry, Black musicians, and Black entrepreneurs are part of a largely untold history of Nashville.

Jimi Hendrix came to Nashville in 1962, playing in the house band at Club Del Morocco. Before his break, Hendrix lived rent-free above a beauty school on Jefferson Street (Paulson). In a 1967 interview with the Los Angeles Free Press, Hendrix recalled in Nashville, “[y]ou really had to play, ‘cause those people were really hard to please...that’s where I learned to play, really, in Nashville”. Nashville gave Hendrix his start and introduced him to a national audience. Hendrix appeared on WLAC’s “Night Train”, the first television program to feature an all-Black cast, five years before “Soul Train” (Paulson).

Highway construction, directly or indirectly, destroyed these venues. The profit motives of the interstate shift pale in comparison to the cultural contributions made to music and the city of Nashville on Jefferson Street. The battle to preserve this historical memory has been difficult. Much credit is due to Lorenzo Washington, owner and founder of Jefferson Street Sound museum. Washington grew up going to Jefferson Street clubs and was friends with most of the circuit’s regulars. Washington’s work got a boost from the Country Music Hall of Fame’s 2004

exhibit on “Night Train”, the first time Nashville’s country and R&B scenes meaningfully connected. That connection will be clearer with the National Museum of African American Music opening across the street from Ryman Auditorium. The project replaces the old convention center and the city insisted the museum be part of the public-private development deal. The development also features Broadway’s first Black-owned restaurant, Slim & Husky’s. These recent developments are promising, but fail to erase the damage caused by growth-minded development in the postwar era. Together, government restructuring, urban “renewal”, and highway construction, greatly disrupted ways of life for Nashvillians, and robbed Black Nashvillians of political, economic, and cultural capital.

School Desegregation and Knowledge Capital

Schools were not simply pawns in a changing and challenging urban and metropolitan context; they helped shape that context... planners and real estate developers identified schools as defining features of neighborhoods, and property markets valued connections between housing and schools. Through their locations, as well as through zoning and student assignment choices, schools helped to segregate the metropolitan landscape (Erickson 9).

Any conversation about school desegregation efforts should begin with a conversation about *Brown v. The Board of Education*. *Brown*, of course, is a landmark case with implications far beyond school desegregation. In the decades of change since *Brown*, the origins of the case are usually overlooked. The *Brown* family sued the Topeka Board of Education for denying them admission to the school closest to their home. Most know this denial was race-based. It was also place-based discrimination. In practice, *Brown* destroyed historically Black schools, fired Black teachers, and drove white families and affluent Black families to suburban public schools or private schools. More importantly, *Brown* made schools the main battlefield in racial integration. It was not accompanied by a policy platform that would integrate neighborhoods or seek

economic justice. In fact, federal pressures to desegregate schools ran against federal incentives creating segregated white suburbs. American society placed a large burden on all students, and especially Black students, to correct the historic wrongs of segregation. Nashville was no different from the rest of the country in this respect.

In Nashville, gradual school desegregation began in 1957. Meaningful school desegregation began in 1971, with a court order that bused students across urban and suburban neighborhoods. Nashville achieved successful statistical desegregation but failed to use school integration as a meaningful tool for justice.¹² Rather than challenge systems of racial injustice, “busing sustained long-established patterns of economic as well as social privilege and neglect in the metropolis” (Erickson 17). In reality, Nashville used federal school desegregation mandates to grow the economy while deepening the racial segregation of space, education, and labor. It did this through the spatial organization of education and by tying vocational education to visions of city growth. The specific means of this vary, from schools’ roles in urban “renewal”, the burden of busing, geography of Brown v. Board, race-based sorting within schools, and the plan for comprehensive high schools. In reality, Brown did not achieve racial justice. It *did* deepen spatial injustice. Post-Brown school construction decisions privileged white people *and* white places. While Brown is held up as a progressive win, it tangibly reorganized capital in a way that remade inequality. In other words, the successes of Brown are better known than its failures.

The Brown family is an important place to start. The Browns represent a minority of Black families whose closest school was a segregated white school. Their victory allowed them to attend a school in their neighborhood. This was not the result of Brown for most American

¹² “‘Statistical desegregation’ refers to one basic measure -- how many white and how many black students attend school with one another?” (Erickson 21).

families. For most, busing was the first time families disassociated school from place.¹³ Place was not ignored at the time. It was a continuous consideration in reshaping the education landscape, beginning with Clarence Perry's neighborhood model.

Influential New York planner Clarence Perry designed a neighborhood model in the 1920s that shaped suburban development around the country. Perry recognized the importance of schools and centered them in his plan. The idea was to place schools and other community anchors in the center of a half mile radius of homes. Each neighborhood would be dense enough to support one elementary school. A cluster of three neighborhoods would support one high school. Contemporary planners viewed homogeneity as a critical aspect in designing these neighborhoods (Erickson 31). Thus, many Black families and working class white families were excluded from these plans. Somehow, these visions of community-centric schools were inapplicable in urban neighborhoods, despite their walkability, density, and other assets. Metro Nashville's Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) considered "crowded neighborhoods" incompatible with new school construction (123).¹⁴

In the postwar era, nearly all school construction happened in the suburbs. The only school built in a predominantly Black neighborhood was tied to urban renewal funding (Erickson 130). All new high schools were built in the suburbs, near the new Briley Parkway loop. While busing remained a continuous topic, vocational education tied to economic growth was very popular. With new funding from the state, Nashville built comprehensive high schools that would have varied vocational offerings (202). These new schools worked to achieve statistical desegregation, but they ensured most urban and rural students would attend suburban high

¹³ This remains a relevant trend. The regionalization of education has complicated the education landscape. Charters, magnets, and other types of schools, all place an increased pressure on parents to do what's best for their students.

¹⁴ Today, Metro Nashville's highest performing high school, Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet, sits in the most centralized location in the city, on Broadway between 7th Avenue and Rosa L. Parks Boulevard.

schools. Moreover, seeing students as future workers allowed teachers to play on negative stereotypes, further segregating students *within* the school by race, gender, and class. McGavock High School was the district's first comprehensive high school.¹⁵ While it was “formally open to black students, [it] lacked structures for substantially equal access and inclusion,” including access to transportation.¹⁶ In the 20th century the school would remake inequality by limiting certain students to certain career paths, excluding those without transportation completely. These new schools disassociated students from communities in their location and size. For example, my mother transferred from the traditional Dupont High School to the comprehensive McGavock High School, only to be overwhelmed by its size.¹⁷ McGavock was roughly three times larger and had four offices, one for each of its sprawling wings. By increasing the size of schools and moving them out of denser areas, families, neighborhoods, and community groups had less oversight in school decisions. More decisions were made from a top-down approach, allowing the growth machine to impose its vision of education for job placement and growth. Again, this vocational focus increased segregation within the school, even when statistical desegregation was achieved.

Importantly, housing and schooling decisions were not disparate, but complimentary processes, in remaking inequality in the city. Before Brown, planners used schools within Perry's neighborhood model, as anchors for segregated residential areas. After Brown, planners used busing as a mechanism to legitimize the construction of suburban schools and the neglect of urban ones. The East Nashville “renewal” project used Meigs and Warner schools to increase segregation along Main Street. Displaced residents from the Capitol Hill “renewal” project were

¹⁵ McGavock is named for “the once slave-owning family on whose 1,100-acre former plantation the school would sit” (Erickson 130).

¹⁶ This remains an issue today with public charter and magnet schools where, in most cases, parents have to make their own transportation arrangements for their kids.

¹⁷ Dupont High School is now Dupont Tyler Middle School

in need of affordable housing. This left Black councilmen Looby and Lillard little choice but to support the plan, which built segregated white housing and Black housing on either side of Main Street (Erickson 47). The “renewal” plan also included school improvements. Between 1950 and 1960, it increased the concentration of Black residents near all-Black Meigs School, to the north of Main, and decreased the Black population near all-white Warner School, to the south of Main (46).¹⁸ These choices were an attempt to maintain “separate but equal” education facilities. In the Brown era, Black student presence in predominantly white schools was associated with “progress”. This largely ignores the reality that planners saw Black students as a means to an end. When a “largely white suburban area needed a new school; black students (from what community or distanced unspecified) would be used to meet the required racial ratio for the school” (199).

In Nashville, Black students “disproportionately [bore] the burdens of desegregation in travel time, dislocation, and closures of schools” (Erickson 3). On average, Black students were bused from their neighborhoods for 9 or 10 years of school, whereas white students were typically bused for 2 or 3 years (3). Importantly, most elementary schools were located in white neighborhoods. Elementary schools were central in Clarence Perry’s influential design for a neighborhood unit (31). New suburban neighborhoods were built with elementary schools at the center. Most Black students were bused to white neighborhoods in this important period for social reproduction and individual development. It is widely regarded that birth to age eight are the most important years for a child’s development. Black students spent some of these years commuting to white neighborhoods after white school board members and planners labeled Black neighborhoods unacceptable learning environments (123).

¹⁸ The author attended Meigs Middle Magnet School from 5th through 8th grades. Meigs was a high school when it was officially segregated. As a magnet school, it pulled students from across the county.

School desegregation was leveraged as a tool of uneven development. The logic of Brown was applied to individual students, not the aggregate investment experienced by Black and white communities.¹⁹ Black students had access to more resources than before, but the spatial-component of Brown is too often overlooked. Black students increasingly left their neighborhoods to receive an education. This reality was a result of systematic disinvestment in Black schools and neighborhoods. Black students, “[w]ith their travel and their bodies...enabled the construction of a school designed to meet the desires of others” (Erickson 199). The school construction decisions in the postwar era played a major role in the city’s education and labor makeup going into the 21st century.

Reshaping the City: Development Patterns into the Present

The organization of this section is an illustration of how growth-centered development impacted every corner of city life. It is not intended to be a Bourdieu-style analysis of forms of capital. The thesis of this section is clear: Nashville’s growth machine restructured the basic geography of city life in the postwar era. This restructuring remade inequality through stratified spatial disruptions that maintained and deepened segregation. The specific longitudinal effects on income inequality are beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the degree to which white and suburban spaces were valorized while Black and urban spaces were devalorized is critical to understanding postwar Nashville and the modern city it created. Namely, it is critical to understanding how capital was robbed from Black communities. This restructuring primarily served elite members of the growth machine. The devalorization of urban space in the postwar era sets the table for the modern processes of gentrification and revalorization. Like the era

¹⁹ The logic that separate but equal is inherently unequal

before it, these processes privilege white Nashvillians over Black Nashvillians. In a city that is more diverse than 1945, the postwar battle between urban and suburban, elite and non-elite, Black and white, has broad implications for current urban conflicts.

Since suburbanization and urban “renewal” are opposite sides of the same coin, gentrification is a natural return to previously devalorized urban space. These spaces, particularly in North Nashville, have been devalued and disinvested in for decades. Only after this process of devalorization did the financial sector see the opportunity to extract value once again. While all Nashville residents recognize the city’s affordable housing crisis, most ignore “the historical amnesia and silencing of racial injustices that has made gentrification possible” (Hightower and Fraser 240). Further, there is little understanding of how “neoliberal accumulation regimes both rely on and further entrench racial difference and oppression” (240). This thesis begins to draw a line from historic accumulation patterns into the present, awakening Nashvillians’ historical amnesia on the subject.

Full Circle on Development

The conversation of American development began with President Truman’s inaugural address, reflecting the naivety and promise that comes with a new administration. This section begins with a sober reflection at the end of another presidency. President Eisenhower’s farewell address warned of the rise of the military-industrial complex, a growing concentration of shared power between the corporate and military sectors. Eisenhower’s warning came a few years after the publishing of C. Wright Mills’ *Power Elite*. A book which was unpopular at the time but later an influential piece in American sociology. Mills identified big business, big government, and big military as the “big three” institutions which increasingly dictated the actions of decentralized

social institutions such as education, religion, and family (Mills 2000, 6). These elite protect their own interests regardless of societal impact. Critically, these power elites supersede the influence of democratic institutions. The average citizen is unaware of the extent of their power. And in many cases, individual members of the power elite are unaware of their role in the “sequence of event and decision”, but they are powerful nonetheless (4).

Those that believe there is no power elite often rests these notions on what the power elite express publically, and believe individually, about their own power (Mills 5). Contrasting Truman’s promise with Eisenhower’s warning reveals the power elite’s global influence. Beginning with Truman, the United States became the world hegemonic power. America’s global interests reflect the political, corporate, and military interests of the power elite, explaining coalitions between the United States Government, military, and WTO, World Bank, NGOs, and multinational corporations. The combination of state power, economic power, and military power has its roots in colonialism and racial capitalism. The power elite reflects these interests at the national level and the growth machine at the local level. Members of the growth machine are both subject to, and take part shaping, elite interests at the local level. The U.S. Military is not the direct threat to young Americans as it was in Mills’ era, but its global presence remains intact. At the local level, the power elite’s military arm is reflected in the militarization of local police departments. These shows of force were on display in reaction to citizen protests in 2020. The murder of George Floyd sparked outrage across the country, and governments responded in different ways. In Tennessee, the National Guard was deployed to the state capitol and met with protestors occupying Ida B. Wells Plaza.²⁰ After weeks of peaceful demonstration, the specific form of protest was criminalized by Republicans in the state legislature. This is an example of the power elite coming together to maintain their power in the present day.

²⁰ Organizers renamed Legislative Plaza, “Ida B. Wells Plaza”, in their weeks-long demonstration at the capitol.

At the global level, the United States leverages more influence than any nation-state since the Roman Empire. This is where the teachings of Jesus Christ come in. At the local level, the growth machine continues to shape the city through uneven development and racial capitalism. This is where the teachings of Civil Rights leaders come in. The gospel and civil rights movement has often been co-opted to rationalize racial capitalism and American imperialism, as well as promote violence, preach prosperity gospel, and justify inequality. Religion is a powerful narrative and one that must be won if there is hope of reversing these patterns of development at any scale, especially in the U.S. South. The purpose of beloved community development is to correct rhetorical narratives, understand their connection to development practices, and leverage this knowledge to reverse unjust development patterns.

Toward Beloved Community Development

It is impossible to dissociate the modern economy from the history of colonialism and enslavement. In the United States, discussions of reparations must extend beyond chattel enslavement. That historic wrong was never meaningfully addressed. As a result, it has reemerged under a new name in each chapter of the American story. Black codes, Jim Crow, lynchings, redlining, urban “renewal”, highway construction, school segregation, mass incarceration, gentrification, school funding, and over-policing are just a few of these processes.

We should call this racism. We should call this white supremacy. We must also understand a more historic and universal threat: the narrative of difference. Leaders, including John Lewis, identified this narrative as the most heinous enabler of injustice. From a Christian perspective, all children are made in the image of God. Tragically, children are born into an unequal world. This unequal world is forged by the human sins of greed, exploitation, and deceit.

Hyper-personalized Protestantism has disabled Christians from acknowledging collective sin. We have become more forgiving of systems of oppression than the victims of those very systems.

Hope lies in the promise that humans are equally capable of goodness as we are evil. This is the hope for a better path forward.

I never planned on speaking so openly about my faith in an academic thesis. But at this moment, I feel it is necessary. I recognize the church's continuing role in perpetuating injustice. I do not intend to force Christian thought on anyone, nor suggest Christian ideology is the only tool for fighting injustice. People of all faiths find goodness and spirituality in the world. For me, that light is the good news of the new testament.

Instead, I write this section to provide an important counter-narrative to what American evangelicalism has become. And to defend, even from a secular perspective, one of the most radical thinkers of all time: Jesus of Nazareth. I use the beloved community terminology because it can be applied secularly. But like the beloved community thinkers that came before me, my ultimate teacher is Jesus. Achieving the beloved community requires an understanding of Jesus's mission.

The Jesus I know loved all people. He provided free healthcare by healing those with leprosy and other ailments. He critiqued corporate greed by flipping over tables in the temple. He criticized the church and called its leaders hypocrites. He was an anti-racist through the parable of the Good Samaritan. He provided free food to large crowds. He eat with prostitutes, lepers, and other people marginalized by society. Even as the son of God, he came not to be served, but to serve. And often overlooked, the Jesus I know was born into an empire, fled as a refugee from a violent king, and was murdered by a conspiracy of government and church leaders.

He said very little, or nothing, about the issues some in the church incessantly focus on.²¹ These issues are an evil distraction from the true mission of Jesus: justice. More specifically, the creation of heaven on earth. A peaceable kin*dom where society reflects the innate goodness of all people. A society that recognizes the innate dignity in all people. In the following section, I humbly suggest where this tangible mission can begin.

Tangible Options in Beloved Community Development

I should be clear that this section is not comprehensive nor should be taken as truth. It is written with the bias of the author, my lived experiences and observations of the world. It prioritizes halting the locational seesaw of uneven development. This is a great enemy of community because it prevents people from gathering. It prevents people from investing in their home, neighborhood, and neighbors, over time, in a sustainable way. It places control almost entirely in the hands of the elite. Stopping this effect of uneven development must be done at the appropriate scale.

The use of “community” in “beloved community development” does not define scale. The beloved community should not be limited by scale but community development must be accomplished at-scale.²² State and federal policies have a significant impact on development but beloved community development (BCD) begins at the local level. Specifically, BCD begins at the neighborhood and city level. A potential path forward are cities of 20-minute neighborhoods. Here, residents can meet most of their needs in a 20-minute walk from home. Neighborhood centers could take a placemaking approach to sustain vibrant public spaces and resilient local economies. The city can play a role ensuring 20-minute neighborhoods are not a tool for gentrification and uneven development but a universal expectation for city neighborhoods. This

²¹ I am mainly referring to abortion and sexuality

²² Think of the common “think global, act local” saying.

should not be taken as a comprehensive or prescriptive solution. It *is* an appropriate response to the current urban crisis, one that is human-scale and based in human need.

BCD must begin with equity. Most urban solutions ignore historic patterns of uneven development. The earlier discussion of Neil Smith's work identifies these patterns: differentiation and equalization, valorization and devalorization, and the rhythm of unevenness. The simplest way to understand uneven development is through the locational seesaw. Arguably, this is more pronounced in the United States than anywhere else, leading to destruction of the natural, built, and human environment. This understanding sees gentrification as a natural evolution of suburbanization. Since the 1980s, uneven development has been accelerated by the financialization of housing and rise of the real estate state (Push 2019, Stein 2019). These trends will transform urban life to the same extent urban "renewal" and other processes did in the postwar era. The question is: how much can motivations shift from profit and growth to people and place?

Equitable place-based solutions address uneven development on the front end. This protects BCD from being co-opted, used to privilege parts of the city, and neglect others. To combat this, cities must support the bottom-up process of BCD with city-wide guidance. Interconnected 20-minute neighborhoods should be the center of this framework. Some urbanists are championing the 20-minute neighborhood concept (Schweitzer 2018, Stanley and Hansen 2020), but it is nothing new. Nothing about BCD is new. It is a simplification of urban life, a simplification of human need. In this case, simplicity must not be confused with ease. Reversing the damage done by the planning profession, other government actors, and all growth-minded stakeholders, will take intention, coalition-building, and time. Yet, for place-based thinkers, there is hope. The idea of 20-minute neighborhoods has been adopted to different degrees in Portland

(Peters 2020), Melbourne (“Inclusive, Vibrant and Healthy Neighbourhoods” 2016), Singapore (“Land Transport Master Plan” 2020.), and yes, even Detroit (Boyle 2016). The ambition of Melbourne’s plan inspired Singapore to incorporate 20-minute neighborhoods in its Land Transport Master Plan 2040 (Peters 2020).

Incorporating 20-minute neighborhoods into a city-wide plan, cities are making livability an expectation for all residents. They are making justice a city-wide issue. Urban livability can get bogged down in policy and urban design. In reality, environmental justice, social justice, and economic justice are at its core. 20-minute neighborhoods are a framework for urban livability. A framework that can benefit all city residents, unlike the empty promises of growth. Importantly, cities cannot superimpose their vision for each neighborhood. The investments in each neighborhood must be appropriate and driven by a democratic process at the neighborhood level.

Returning to Nashville, this work has begun. The non-profit Gideon’s Army has taken a hyper-local approach in serving Nashville’s 37208 zip code. The zip code covers the North Nashville neighborhoods most targeted by the historical processes outlined in this paper: government restructuring, urban “renewal”, highway construction, and school desegregation. These processes, as well as over-policing in the modern era, have made 37208 the zip code with the highest incarceration rate in the country. Gideon’s Army response has been thorough and direct. Their programs include violence interrupters that step in before the police, homeowner education to slow the pace of gentrification, and relief for victims of the 2020 Nashville tornado. With calls to defund police, Gideon’s Army provides an alternative that stops violence and takes a holistic approach to community development (Hale 2019, Hale 2020).

Nashville is also a promising example of how grassroots efforts on large public/private projects can win victories for the community. The community benefits agreement (CBA)

negotiated between Stand Up Nashville and the city's Major League Soccer team is considered one of the best in the country. The Nashville SC Stadium project will build affordable housing, a child care center, and pay workers a minimum wage of \$15 an hour (Garrison 2018). Further, since the CBA is between private interests, it avoids a state law against inclusionary zoning. Odessa Kelly, the CBA's lead organizer, is running for congress against 38-year incumbent Jim Cooper. Kelly is a community organizer, graduate of Stratford High School and Tennessee State, a former Metro employee, and gay Black woman. Her candidacy represents a reversal of the status quo in Nashville. She is the first candidate in the 2022 cycle to be endorsed by Justice Democrats. While her future is uncertain, her work, and the work of Gideon's Army and many others, is the work of beloved community development. As Gideon's Army founder Rasheedat Fetuga says, "Our story is North Nashville, but there is a North Nashville in every city" (Vox Creative 2021). Fetuga's work is a powerful example in reimagine community development in our time.

In summation, there are three things to consider with future research. First, elites prioritized "growth" while de-valuing people and place. In conjunction with state and federal policies, this disrupted communities, deepened inequality, and entrenched elite power and control of city space. Second, it is worth considering how growth machines have evolved with globalization and financialization. Local growth machines were always influenced by outside actors. How much more of an impact do outside actors have today? Are cities more subject to the wills of large corporations now than previous decades? For some actors, scale has changed but motivations have not. Growth, translated to profit, remains *the* motivating factor. Third and finally, the global elite's success in extracting resources from the city is built on the local elite's success extracting resources from *certain* demographic groups *within* the city in previous years.

To what extent is the neoliberal, globalized economy built on the foundation of destructive urban restructuring in the postwar era? Each of these considerations centers people and place. More specifically, proximity to place and other people.

The great commandment, love thy neighbor as thyself, is not abstract. We are meant to live together. We are meant to love each other. We are meant to see and interact with each other on a daily basis. Historic development patterns challenge this commandment. We cannot love a neighbor that we do not know or see. It is hard to love a neighborhood under constant disruption from elite actors. Yet, with the great commandment as a north star, we can transform our neighborhood communities. This is a scale where all people can participate and co-create a better world. With time and persistence, just neighborhoods become just cities. Just cities create a just world. This is a path toward a truly beloved community for all.

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