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# Through the Heart of the City: Interstates and Black Geographies in Urban America

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History

by

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August 2022  
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This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

Federal urban renewal projects changed the landscape of numerous American cities throughout the twentieth century. Many of these projects worked cohesively in tandem with discriminatory urban planning policies such as redlining. The conclusions of this project demonstrate how U.S. Interstate 630 (I-630) intentionally re-segregated Arkansas' capital city, following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 national desegregation order and the infamous desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in 1957. I further contend that I-630 was constructed using the racialized language and tactics of urban renewal and was fundamental to improving Little Rock's national reputation by purging the city's social memory and legacy of racial violence. Planning strategies elucidated the local, state, and federal confluence of power systems responsible for transforming urban spaces in Little Rock to the aims of white supremacy. This study illuminates the how the history of modern Little Rock was deliberately hidden in plain sight, and why federal interstate construction demonstrated dynamic capacity as an instrument of state will to form urban black geographies.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to acknowledge some important individuals and institutions that contributed significantly to this research. I must first thank the Divine guidance to prepare me for this purpose. I must thank my wife Dr. Synetra Hughes, posthumous daughter Airlie, son Zian and nephew Dylan whom i have been entrusted to care for. Thank you for standing with me throughout this process. Many thanks to my family, especially my mother Sanci Richardson, your support has been instrumental. I wish to thank each interviewee that gave time and life to this research. I also must thank the UA history department, including committee members Dr. Calvin White, Dr. Caree Banton and Dr. Jeannie Whayne. UA Special Collections was foundational to this research, special thanks to Lori Birrell and Geoff Starks for your support and the space share. Special thanks to the Butler CALS and the Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History for providing space to deliver this research to the city of Little Rock and the state of Arkansas. Lastly this project was not possible without the spirit of Mrs. Annie Abrams, the matriarch of black Little Rock. Your life and work has left an indelible mark on the future of communities in our city.

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# Through the Heart of the City: Interstates, and Black Geographies in Urban America

## Introduction

In November 2021, United States Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg revealed to the larger public a reality that generations of American urbanites long and well understood. Highlighting the nuanced design and construction strategies employed by city planners and highway officials to target primarily black and brown communities, seemed to lead Sec. Buttigieg to the readily obvious conclusion that the nation's freeways were conceived and implemented with racist intent.<sup>1</sup> Placing Sec. Buttigieg's perspective into the greater context of the historical timeline leading to passage of the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act in 1956, and their impact on society since that date will explain and confirm his sentiments. Examining the effects of interstate construction in the southern capital Little Rock, Arkansas, provided a glimpse into the realization and ramification of interstate construction in cities across America. This research also presented greater clarity to the relationship between freeway construction and how we understand urban spaces.

Growing up in Little Rock, one feels a deep sense of history within the fabric of the city. The echoes of time still speak to residents of this mid-sized metropolis each day. Whether residing in the numerous suburban communities and commuting through the city for business and leisure or living in one of the numerous neighborhoods relocated 'south of Interstate 630,' (also referred to hereafter as I-630) the interstate dominates the experience for urban dwellers in Arkansas' capital. There is a feeling of distinctly different and designated sides of town defined by race and class, with the interstate serving as a barrier and a buffer omitting undesirable spaces

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Epstein and Josh Wingrove, "Buttigieg Says U.S. Will Use Infrastructure Bill to Address Racist Highway Design," Bloomberg.com (Bloomberg, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-08/buttigieg-targets-racist-road-design-with-public-works-bill>.

and the people within them from engagement with larger society. This research brought clarity to the processes by which urban renewal and freeway construction were employed as reflections of public and state desires to maintain traditional Jim Crow values, amid uncertain evolving social landscapes during the twentieth century.

I-630's construction completed the destruction and relocation of black communities in Arkansas began by urban renewal policies. As America grappled with the social anxieties of urbanization and desegregation, Little Rock city officials and private civic interests actively cooperated to harness these changes and established public policies to subdue them. I-630 and numerous pathways along the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, commonly referred to as the Interstate Highway System, have resegregated American urban spaces. The relocation of urban black communities was initiated through urban renewal policies throughout the 1940's and hastened as the nation faced ramifications from the first major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Desegregation of American schools shook the core of Jim Crow segregationists who took it upon themselves to stop integration at all costs. Massive resistance reinforced the southern social order through public campaigns, forced school closures and ultimately the creation of entirely new public and private school districts far from the access of urban issues. Interstate Highway Systems conveniently connected white suburban communities to their business and personal endeavors in the city, while containing and confining the relocated communities in new standardized housing developments away from commuter's vantage.

Longstanding black urban spaces such as Little Rock's 'The Line' on West Ninth Street was originally the line of segregation in the city prior to urban renewal. This bustling community was the cultural heartbeat of the region and drew many blacks and 'slumming' whites to its many dancehalls, dining, and entertainment options. These areas were points of great social anxiety for



segregationists, especially with the influx of black soldiers returning from World War II demanding equality and full citizenship, seeking to access education and housing through federal provisions. Urban renewal and federal interstate construction redrew the lines of segregation in American cities, in Little Rock this line on Ninth Street was ultimately replaced by I-630.

Arkansas' capital city has a deep history of racial conflicts. Violence and rioting occurred on numerous occasions in Little Rock throughout the twentieth century. As this research shows, the connections between urban redevelopment and this history of racial conflict, determining some important reflections. Little Rock's past racial violence, including John Carter's horrific 1927 lynching and the 1957 desegregation of Little Rock's Central High School presented enormous challenges for Black residents and city officials alike. Carter's lynching pushed many Black residents out of the city in fear of further mob actions, and thirty years later, the fiasco at Central High School placed the eyes of the world back onto the wave of hate that engulfed the city in 1957. Urban renewal and Interstate Highway System construction were employed to recast the image of Little Rock in a progressive and business friendly capacity. Motivated by the disgrace of 1957, public officials and their interests actively worked to rebuild the city's reputation by transforming the city's physical landscape. New interstates were touted as progressive reflections of modernization despite their divisive consequences, and the nation was accustomed to this by previous discriminatory precedents in federal policies, particularly the prejudiced administration of Roosevelt's New and Fair Deals. As freeway generations of urbanites protested and revolted against the spread of interstate construction, they were continuing the spirit of civil rights and social justice movements that focused the nation's attention to injustices in domestic and economic policies.

Interstates have powerful impact on social psychologies in cities such as Little Rock and serve as a key determiner of black geographies in urban spaces. Research helped elucidate and synthesize ideas from various lanes including urban development studies, freeway studies and segregation scholarship, to provide profound insights to the psychological impact of interstate construction. Research revealed how physical barriers such as federal interstate projects reinforce the othering of minority communities. Cold War ideologies such as containment offered a solution to increasing social tensions by containing black communities into predesignated areas using urban renewal and freeway construction.<sup>2</sup> Scholars also point to the reconfiguration of black communities as evidence for the intentional creation of urban colonies, where black laborers can be confined to and extracted from to buffer tensions between companies and organized white labor.<sup>3</sup> America's urban colonies feel neglected and devoid of investment, perpetuating Lewis' culture of poverty and continued societal othering by those travelling through and trapped within these spaces.<sup>4</sup>

Social terminology reflects this impact. In Little Rock, 'south of I-630' is a term that demonstrates the significance of interstates to the daily experiences in Arkansas' capital. It reflects the same meanings as words like Rothstein' ghetto, or Wilson's underclass.<sup>5</sup> Inner city is another similar reference, although interestingly and poignantly scholars have highlighted even this understanding is racialized as white families who gentrify these devalued spaces are not held

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<sup>2</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> William K. TABB, *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).; William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

to this same connotation.<sup>6</sup> ‘South of I-630’ indicates the dehumanized black and brown bodies confined by and to the space, the doubting of black and brown potential evidenced by socioeconomic neglect, and ultimately the devaluing of black ownership and destruction of communities. How we understand our place in society is directly connected to our relationship with the psychology of urban spaces. Urbanites and families strive to progress towards the ‘good’ sides of town and avoid the ‘bad’ sides whenever possible. Maneuvering through these spaces presents completely different experiences by individual, space, and time, however our personal and social understandings are largely formed through our spatial proximity to either ‘side’ of town. The psychological impact of interstate construction reflects how public policies were intended to maintain white supremacy and intersects with Global South studies that explore structural and systemic dynamics with real social consequences.<sup>7</sup>

The language of urban renewal and federal interstate construction was critical to their successful implementation. Advanced data collection strategies provided the statistical indications which ultimately justified the pursuit to maintain white supremacy. New technologies including land and aerial surveying alongside extensive and regularly racialized metropolis studies informed the presumptions of city officials, that urbanization was producing flourishing cultural areas despite and often because of restrictive Jim Crow segregation policies.

Neighborhoods like Little Rock’s Dunbar community disproved white supremacy, whose residents included many prominent and successful black citizens. However, spaces like these were frequently the target of urban renewal and interstate construction projects because black

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Tobias Berger, “The ‘Global South’ as a Relational Category – Global Hierarchies in the Production of Law and Legal Pluralism,” *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 9 (2020): pp. 2001-2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1827948>.

land was easily devalued and often presented the path of least resistance. Language for these urban redevelopments were imbued with Progressive era ideology, most notably that the individual freedoms of some must be sacrificed for the greater social good. Terminology such as eminent domain, and right of way, denote the implication that any inconveniences experienced over time will improve cities economically, socially, and beyond. This language is what continued the othering of black urban spaces and their uneven development. Blighted and opportunity zones became the pseudo-scientific references for black people and communities. Progressive language in environmental impact statements and planning documents coolly vindicated questionable route selections by highway officials against a protesting public keenly aware of interstate highways' segregating capacity.<sup>8</sup> Progressive language allowed the aggressive and persistent goals of white supremacy to evolve and fit the urban landscape, much the same as slavery's evolution to convict leasing and subsequently mass incarceration. Physical barriers now hardened the ethnic, class and psychological barriers constructed by American racial policies. Language is key to understanding the will of the state during urban renewal and interstate highway system construction, and thereby the will of its empowered interest.

My dissertation synthesizes scholarship from numerous fields including urban policy studies, freeway studies, and segregation studies, along with Geographical Information Systems data to grasp a sense of how these historical processes have impacted the mobility of Little Rock's black population.<sup>9</sup> I also conducted interviews with several prominent city historians and public officials to identify how urban renewal and I-630's construction developed in comparison

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<sup>8</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>9</sup> *The Opportunity Atlas, The Opportunity Atlas* (Harvard University, US Census Bureau), accessed 2021, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>.

to example from cities around the country. Chapter one of this project overviewed the time in urban America before renewal, primarily through the lens of changing social and economic trajectories at the turn of the twentieth century. As southern states began embracing New South economic philosophies, the old plantation agricultural model provided fewer opportunities and increased exploitation for primarily black agricultural labor forces. Sharecroppers and agricultural laborers migrated into American cities, which increased social tensions and forced officials to address the social anxieties onset by this transition. Chapter two examined the process of urban renewal in American cities, juxtaposing these methods with the strategies for urban renewal in Little Rock. This chapter demonstrated the effects the New Deal legislation era on the imagination of urban renewal era city planners to use the federal government to control the impact of urbanization, activating the eventual relocation of urban black bodies. Chapter three investigated the growth of America's Interstate Highway System and the interestingly parallel path with the desegregation and integration of the nation's schools. I use these terms intentionally here to highlight that both desegregation and integration of American society is still a work in progress. This chapter demonstrated how federal projects like I-630 and others around the country fulfilled the objectives of segregationists facing legitimate existential threats to their way of life. It also outlined the various methods of resistance to interstate construction projects by local neighborhoods as part of the larger reflection of freeway culture and their psychological impact. Chapter four compiled collected data for this study into the conclusions.

This project was initiated to learn more about how federal interstate construction shaped urban society that I grew up in. The 'inner-city' spaces carved out by I-630 in Little Rock, Arkansas were the backdrop of my youth. I-630 was the only thing separating my childhood bedroom window from the city's only minor league baseball park. In this community off of 12<sup>th</sup>

street, the former Highland court housing project was located at the bottom of our street nestled just off of the interstate exits ‘south of I-630.’ As a child I distinctly remember visiting friends or family living north of I-630 and being enamored by the abundance of trees and yard spaces, restaurants and grocery stores. As an adolescent I worked with the local Martin Luther King Jr. Commission whose offices were located just down from the Arkansas State Capital building at the time. My job duties included delivering mail to and from the capital, but it was these experiences north of I-630 that opened my eyes to the inequalities in urban society. When I began this research, my goals were to understand my personal experience as a youth in the hoods of Little Rock. What I discovered were the ramifications of history and urban policy played out through my very life. I felt like my neighborhood was built for people who looked like me *because it was*. This dissertation revealed how urban social changes occurring throughout the twentieth century were met with calculated responses that perpetuated and were perpetuated by ever evolving forms of white supremacy.

**Chapter One – Before Renewal:  
'New Arkansas' and the 'New South'**

“New South demagogues like Grady and many others restored amity between the north and south following the civil war and reconstruction, with desires to reassert power over black life as central factor to this reunion.<sup>10</sup>”

Progressive ideologies generated reform trends in Arkansas that were consistent with early twentieth century national movements. Public expectations for government solutions to the many challenges of modernization steadily increased. Arkansas embraced various components of national reform campaigns but made pronounced efforts to evolve and retain traditional southern views and customs. Reforms in Arkansas focused on many unresolved socioeconomic issues from the nineteenth century, while new surges of violence and political suppression were employed to restrict African American freedom and maintain the racial order. Progressive era activity in Arkansas revealed the increasing and often contentious interdependence between state and local interest. Economic instability pervaded the nineteenth century in Arkansas, notably evidenced by the state bank failures of the 1840's.<sup>11</sup> Arkansas developed a healthier economy at the turn of the century encouraging desires for more active solutions inspired by nascent national progressive sentiments. As a largely agrarian economy, the post-war economic prosperity that America experienced throughout the 1920's was beset far earlier in Arkansas and states throughout the south, greatly increasing anxieties over urbanization and shifting socioeconomic undercurrents. Significant reduction in prices for commodities, natural disasters of biblical proportions and steadily increasing public debt spurred cries for new regulatory agencies, reform and expansion of the Arkansas education systems and transportation networks, as well as

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<sup>10</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. *Arkansas: a narrative history*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.;

resolutions for the state's overall failure and disinclination by citizens and politicians alike to raise tax revenue.<sup>12</sup>

Arkansas' approach to progressive era modernization is an entryway to examine the motivation for changes which defined and redefined space and place for citizens in Little Rock throughout the century. Surveying Arkansas' development within the larger backdrop of modernization and growing nativism during the early twentieth century revealed understandings of the state's unique obstacles to modernity. Political views in Arkansas ensured reform measures were controlled by and facilitated primarily through wealthy interests. Natural disasters plagued Arkansas throughout the 1920's and 1930's further entrenched the power of landholding planters and business elites, who leveraged life sustaining federal and private relief to control poor, mostly black agricultural laborers.<sup>13</sup> This chapter gives brief general context to Arkansas' economic, social and political situation before twentieth century renewal policies reconstructed state landscapes. This is not an exhaustive account for daily life in Arkansas before and during the urban renewal era, and several historians have greatly contributed to this body of knowledge. These histories do attest that numerous progressive era reforms in Arkansas were aligned with New South socioeconomic philosophies that reorganized southern constitutions and reasserted white control in new forms following Reconstruction. Business and political leadership complicated Arkansas' alignment with New South objectives, guiding the state's stubborn resistance to modernization and the social changes incurred by migration and largescale economic transformation. Detached planning systems and strategic innovation constructed a veneer of progressivism as political coups empowered segregation and disenfranchisement of

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<sup>12</sup> Whyne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.;

<sup>13</sup> Ben F. Johnson, Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999 (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 12



African Americans. Southern Democrats committed to maintaining white supremacy, convinced white voters that they alone could be trusted to prevent any further ‘Negro domination’ of political elections.<sup>14</sup> Southerners aggressively purged black electorates through legal and extra-legal means at all costs. Violence was an ultimate enforcement for hardening color lines and is the final pre-renewal dynamic that will be surveyed. Targeting black communities like Elaine in east Arkansas or ‘the Line,’ Little Rock’s thriving black business district for domestic terror was devastatingly common as America sought to establish a new normal following World War I and amidst an outbreak of global pandemic. This violence shaped a legacy which the business and political elite of Little Rock later actively worked to reform using massive urban development projects.

### **Pre-Progressive Era Arkansas**

Since its statehood inception in 1836, Arkansas maintained a reputation as a land of great potential for opportunity and volatility. Arkansas and states throughout the south faced the dawn of a new era. After four years of civil war and a decade of Reconstruction, the state underwent political and economic changes towards a ‘New Arkansas’ aligned with the ‘New South’ revolution. Prior to the outset of progressive movements in Arkansas, economic conditions endured significant fluctuations and at times were suggestive of progress.<sup>15</sup> An economic formula of traditional commercial agriculture plus newly stimulated farming sectors encouraged diversified crop production within the state and was supplemented by a burgeoning manufacturing segment.<sup>16</sup> American expansion during the nineteenth century brought railways

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<sup>14</sup> Cell, John Whitson. 1982. *The highest stage of white supremacy: the origins of segregation in South Africa and the American South*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press. p.278

<sup>15</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.3

<sup>16</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.4

and accessibility to locations such as Arkansas. Railway development and industry sprouted throughout the state during the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction years, connecting economies and peoples from rural and localized markets to open increasingly urban locales.<sup>17</sup> Pamphlets from the Missouri Pacific Railway company promoted Arkansas as a good place with affordable, fertile soil, a hospitable climate, and abundant natural resources to passengers as the twentieth century approached.<sup>18</sup> Transportation systems expanded with the development of railways throughout the state and Arkansans of means were constructing the frameworks for a new future built upon antebellum mores. Agriculture still dominated the state economy as the nineteenth century concluded, but a new confidence was rising and was shared enthusiastically by the emerging business community. Former confederate and union soldiers, capitalist, industrialist and planters alike all subscribed to a uniquely Arkansan vision of the New South. Leading regional voices from journalist Henry Grady to educator Booker T. Washington, championed creation of new industrial opportunities and southern reconciliation, however New South ideologies maintained systematic deprivation of black political power and economic hierarchies informed by white supremacy. New South industrial desires competed with stubborn adherence to planter friendly agriculture in Arkansas. This tension is evidenced by 1870 census estimates that showed farm products accounting for 93 percent of the total farm and manufacturing production value in the state, while farming received 97 percent of statewide capital investments in agriculture and manufacturing.<sup>19</sup> The overwhelming majority of the state resided in rural locations throughout the turn of the century and eighty percent of Arkansans

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<sup>17</sup> John L. Ferguson and J. H. Atkinson, *Historic Arkansas* (Little Rock: Arkansas History Commission, 1966).

<sup>18</sup> Missouri Pacific Railway Company (1880-1909). 1888. *Arkansas: statistics and information showing the agricultural and mineral resources, the opportunities for successful stock and fruit raising, manufacturing, mining and lumbering ; the advantages of soil and climate, and notes on scenery, game, fish and health and pleasure resorts of this great state*. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified].

<sup>19</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.5

lived on farms or villages into the 1930's.<sup>20</sup> Commercial farming was a key aspect of Arkansas overall agricultural production in the late eighteenth century. Subsistence farming ventures were declining overall by the 1870's, as farmers worked to make enough money to get ahead and sell surplus production through expanding domestic and international markets. Arkansas farmers found success selling diverse varieties of wheats and grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy goods, cattle, and animal livestock locally and regionally, while cotton exports dominated trade with European textile and manufacturing hubs.<sup>21</sup>

Diversified agricultural pursuits were foundation of New South economic philosophies and developed through longstanding consciousness of regional labor markets. One early proponent of this new economic vision for the region was American publisher and statistician James Dunwoody Brownson DeBow, a staunch slavery expansionist and advocate for southern industrialism since before the Civil War. DeBow understood the regions challenges raising capital, grooming skilled laborers, and cultivating new markets, proposing manufacturing as the remedy for woeful southern economies. In the absence of a larger manufacturing presence, agrarian economies were as profitable as market conditions permitted. Henry Grady's vision for the New South called for diversified agriculture and increased industry to stimulate business and encourage northern philanthropy to southern cities such as his hometown of Atlanta. Grady, an Atlanta native and son of a confederate major, refined and amplified his philosophies during his time as editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. Grady had a penchant for marketing his hometown of Atlanta which was vying for prominence among Georgia's emerging cities. Atlanta's rise was

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<sup>20</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 1

<sup>21</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South: 1874-1929* (Fayetteville, AR: Univ. of Arkansas Press, 1997).

credited to the work of Grady and other leading business interest.<sup>22</sup> The *Constitution* became Georgia's premier newspaper under Grady, delivering the New South dogma and championing the causes of business-friendly Democrats. Grady was known as the 'spokesman of the New South' and ascended to national distinction in 1886 after delivering his positions for the region's future to audiences in New York City receiving much acclaim.<sup>23</sup> His vision did not see any changes to the social and economic hierarchy for African Americans. Additionally, his alleged membership in the Ku Klux Klan aligned with Grady's verified perspectives of black inferiority.<sup>24</sup> He and numerous New South advocates verbalized that African Americans should remain unmolested unless necessary to enforce the Jim Crow social order, but despite such moderate rhetoric Grady rarely decried lynch mobs through the *Constitution*. Historians contend that reconciliation of the north and south was among Grady and the New South advocates greatest legacies.<sup>25</sup> Grady openly argued against federal intervention to protect black voting rights, using previous examples of forced Native American expulsion and Chinese exclusion as highlights of white interregional harmony.<sup>26</sup> This reconciliation is foundational to the policies and developments that reconfigured twentieth century urban landscapes in the South and nationally. The work of New South demagogues like Grady and many others restored amity between the north and south following the civil war and reconstruction, with desires to reassert power over black life as central factor to this reunion.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Shaw, Barton C. "Codes of the New South: Henry Grady and John B. Gordon." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (1990): 662

<sup>23</sup> *New-York Tribune*, December 23, 1886.

<sup>24</sup> Raymond B. Nixon, Henry W. Grady, Spokesman of the New South (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1969).

<sup>25</sup> Shaw, Barton C. "Codes of the New South: Henry Grady and John B. Gordon." *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (1990): 663

<sup>26</sup> Raymond B. Nixon, Henry W. Grady, Spokesman of the New South (New York, NY: Russell & Russell, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

Southern identity mainly recognized the right for every white man to profit from the land and to freely suppress African American autonomy to their own advantage.<sup>28</sup> This identity rest on notions of honor for the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer as the epitome of untethered democratic freedom. The industrialization that modernist like Grady suggested posed great threat to the central qualities that formed the southern identity. Southerners seeking economic growth and social reforms hoped for the same changes that those southerners who wanted the continuance of planter dominates societies feared. Southern scholars such as James W. Silver questioned the viability of agrarian economic traditions and the southern identity in a modernizing world.<sup>29</sup> Manufacturing performed a mostly supportive and certainly subordinate role to agriculture throughout Old South history, causing the region to experience issues with modernizing for a century after the Civil War. Low-wage, labor-intensive manufacturing remodeled southern economies but did not create radical sociopolitical impact. As smokestacks rose in cities and towns throughout the south, stubborn adherence to the old social order accompanied economic transformation and perpetuated social and political customs fashioned before the antebellum period. Southern economies underwent industrialization that resulted in growing conflicts between planters and capitalist. Historian James C. Cobb contended that despite a wartime production boom the south experienced comparative deficiency to the United States as a whole each decade between 1850 and 1880.<sup>30</sup> Per capita crop outputs for major cotton producing states dropped in each of the last three decades of the nineteenth century and practically halted in the 1890s.<sup>31</sup> Abusive sharecropping and merchant systems diminished the incomes of individual

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<sup>28</sup> Cobb, James C. 1984. *Industrialization and southern society, 1877-1984*.

<sup>29</sup> Silver, James W. "Mississippi: The Closed Society." *The Journal of Southern History* 30, no. 1 (1964): 3-34.

<sup>30</sup> Cobb, James C. 1984. *Industrialization and southern society, 1877-1984*,p.10

<sup>31</sup> Cobb, James C. 1984. *Industrialization and southern society, 1877-1984*,p.10

farmers to subsistence levels rendering them unable to amass capital to invest and discouraging them from growing more of their own food to sustain independence.

After 1875, Arkansas economy continued to recuperate despite frequent dilemmas and political obstinance. Progress was made towards the goals of New South advocates in developing non-agricultural economic sectors. Railroad industry growth after the Civil War was the ultimate socioeconomic catalyst in the state and the country in the Gilded Age. During Reconstruction, Arkansas' Republican government favored pro-railroad policies that spurred local railroad construction. Very few miles of track existed between Little Rock in Pulaski county and DeVall's Bluff in Prairie county by 1865. At Reconstruction's end in 1875, railways connected Texarkana and to Van Buren on the state's eastern borders to Little Rock, Memphis, Tennessee and St. Louis, Missouri. 2,373 miles of track extended through the state in 1895, creating access for local farmers and goods to larger countrywide markets, yielding meaningful outcomes.<sup>32</sup> Arkansas was flooded with new products from processed food to furniture due to declining transportation costs. These items appeared in Arkansas stores and households and those who could afford these goods experienced material comforts only previously known to the wealthy in antebellum society. St. Louis and Memphis soon challenged New Orleans, Louisiana, as the state's primary markets for cultivating commerce and finance. Railroad companies sought new opportunities to generate profits and actively promoted economic diversification in agriculture. Migration to Arkansas was promoted in midwestern towns to develop and produce diverse crops instead of growing cotton. European including Bohemians, Germans, Russians, Poles, and Slovaks, established cities of ethnic heritage such as Stuttgart in Arkansas county and Slovaktown in Prairie county. Companies also supported fruit cultivation projects and started

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<sup>32</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 27

new teaching farms where local farmers could learn to develop innovative techniques.<sup>33</sup>

Strawberry and apple production increased in the northwest areas state and farmers tested various fruits wherever railroads opened entrance at the turn of the century.

The transportation revolution also netted opportunities to exploit Arkansas' various natural resources. Widespread untouched forest regions prompted early timber industries in Arkansas before the 1860s. Midwestern lumber companies took advantage of expanding railroads moving into the state to industrialize timber manufacturing.<sup>34</sup> Operations centered primarily on southern Arkansas during these years and typical timber companies such as Colonel Samuel Fordyce's Southern Land and Lumber Co. harvested trees and operated mills to dress the raw timber. Lumber processing companies skyrocketed to nearly twelve-hundred in 1889, up from just over three-hundred a decade before, increasing the value of their exports from \$1 million to \$24 million over the same period.<sup>35</sup> Timber manufacturing represented nearly one-quarter of the state's total economic product by the late 1890s. Coal secured in the western areas of the state remained largely untapped due to their inaccessible location.<sup>36</sup> Railways reached Arkansas River Valley, opening the western part of the state and entrepreneurs quickly began coal mining. By 1900 state mines exported nearly two million tons of hard coal, a tremendous output compared to the fourteen-thousand tons a decade previously.<sup>37</sup> Railways allowed more access to the state's bountiful natural resources, scenery and mineral springs. Cities like Eureka Springs in Carroll county started with railroad construction into the Ozarks and rail connections

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<sup>33</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 5

<sup>34</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.29

<sup>35</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.29

<sup>36</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. *Arkansas: a narrative history*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press. – p.263-266

<sup>37</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.33

into Hot Springs in Garland county stimulated local economies. Therapeutic and leisurely destinations like Ravenden Springs in Randolph county and Siloam Springs in Benton county became enormously popular attractions for their mineral waters.<sup>38</sup>

Manufacturing encouraged development of new industries within the state. Diverse and viable agriculture markets, promising timber industry, natural resource production extraction and expanding railroads all signified growth. Emerging companies processed varied farm goods, including apples, peaches, strawberries, and several different vegetables. Enterprises in the cotton regions such as Southern Cotton Oil, Emma Oil of Pine Bluff in Jefferson county, and the Little Rock Oil and Compress Company pressed cottonseed oil used for many everyday needs.<sup>39</sup> Agricultural and manufacturing foundries including the Ketchum Iron Company in Fort Smith, Dilley Foundry Company in Pine Bluff and Little Rock Cooperage produced plows, cotton gins, and a wide variety of other farming and industrial equipment.<sup>40</sup> Regional manufacturing shops like The Cotton Belt's major workshop in Mechanicsville modernized railway equipment production, incorporating new technologies such as steam engines. Arkansas' New South era industrial output rivaled industries in many of the Midwestern states, the value of the state's manufactured goods swelled 567 percent from \$6.7 million to over \$45 million between 1879 and 1898.<sup>41</sup>

Diversified agriculture, natural resource development, and manufacturing sprang many other economic endeavors, necessary business and service providers flourished. Barbershops,

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<sup>38</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.34

<sup>39</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.34

<sup>40</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.38

<sup>41</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.38



clothing and dry goods stores, boarding houses and restaurants and even undertakers offered services to the numerous travelers and migrants. People flocked to towns attending to local commerce while wholesale merchants, cotton brokers, and insurance agents among others managed transportation of goods in and out of communities. Banking facilitated local financial needs and transactions, McIlroy's Bank in Fayetteville, Pine Bluff's Merchants' & Planters' Bank, and Little Rock's W. B. Worthen & Company and the First National Bank were early prosperous institutions.<sup>42</sup> Economic change also resulted in demographic changes. Established areas along the latest railways developed into vital economic hubs, emphasizing the elevated status of burgeoning cities and towns.<sup>43</sup> Entertainment industries in urban spaces and near military installations flourished, including theaters, saloons, and red-light districts that accommodated attractions like Fort Smith's 'Miss Laura's Social Club,' the only former bordello on the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>44</sup> Accountants and engineers meaningfully contributed to the new economy and professional doctors and lawyers found greater opportunities with expanding markets. The capital city expanded total population by over twenty-five thousand in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

Pine Bluff and Fort Smith also saw explosive growth in population and new industries during this time. Results of urban migration required rural integration into a more complex social orders confronting religious, ethnic, and occupational diversity. They also encountered the broader national culture to a much greater degree than Arkansans who decided to remain in the

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<sup>42</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.40

<sup>43</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.41

<sup>44</sup> Eddleman, Janice Bufford. "Raisin' Hell on the Border: Drinking, Gambling, Prostitution, and General Mayhem in Fort Smith at the End of the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* 18 (September 1994): 2-13.

<sup>45</sup> <sup>45</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.41

countryside. In 1880, agriculture still dominated the state economy, only 17% of laborers worked in non-agrarian industries. Nearly one out of three laborers worked in non-farming sectors in 1900 and consistently into the century.<sup>46</sup> New jobs and increased wages changed workers' lifestyles. Average jobs in timber production offered the lowest wages among the new industries, yet still provided incomes three to four times greater than most farmers. Forming or joining organizations like the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor was an increasingly popular option for Arkansas workers in the Gilded age. Laborers found greater economic success and felt more of the larger economic upswing experienced throughout the nation.<sup>47</sup>

Arkansas farmers faced a unique struggle at the dawn of the twentieth century, largely due to geological forces that defined the state's geographic composition long before any human migration into the area. Indeed, geography has been the most significant factor for determining agricultural production in Arkansas. New South views of diversified production competed with loyalty to king cotton quite visibly in Arkansas, with an uneven boundary line stretching from the northeast to southwestern corners dividing the two agrarian systems. Uplands areas contained various agricultural goods while the lowlands and river valleys were vital cotton regions. Social disparities caused by geographic influence were important in Arkansas, sectionalism in the state prompted the evolution of distinctive societies. Plantation system distribution and consequently the concentration of black populations was directly tied to soil conditions and geographical positioning within the state.<sup>48</sup> Farming systems were typically divided into landowners and

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<sup>46</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.41

<sup>47</sup> Whayne, Jeannie M. 2002. *Arkansas: a narrative history*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.269

<sup>48</sup> Thompson, Geo. H. 1976. *Arkansas and reconstruction: the influence of geography, economics, and personality*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press. p.243

tenant farmers, both in the cotton and diversified production regions. Upwards of 70% of Arkansas farms were cultivated by landowners in the late 1800's, the state established a landlord friendly reputation which remains even a century later.<sup>49</sup>

Railroad expansion also encouraged the spread of cotton farming. Farmers doubled their average landholdings between 1879 and 1899, and the proportion of that land devoted to cotton grew to nearly 60 percent. At the same time the percentage of farmers who owned the land they farmed on declined as more farmers found themselves laboring on small lots owned by larger landholders.<sup>50</sup> Expanding national markets gave Arkansans more places to retail their merchandises, forcing local farmers to compete with producers around the country and overseas. Conditions for Arkansas cotton growers at the end of the nineteenth century represented those for every other farming industry in the state, productivity outpaced consumption. Market oversaturation led to decreasing prices for cotton and other farm goods, which devastated Arkansas farmers who were hesitant to diversify from cotton production. Average cotton prices reduced nearly 50 percent by 1898 creating real challenges for farmers to make profits. Arkansas farms also decreased in size throughout this period resulting in less efficient operations, from 1879 to 1899 the average farm size in the state fell from 128 acres to 93 acres.<sup>51</sup> Many of these farms developed on marginal lands and farmers often lacked adequate resources to cultivate the land economically. Limited access to adequate farming technology, lack of capital to supply equipment, and failure to improve soil conditions through innovative techniques all led to diminishing crop output per acre each year. Between 1879 and 1899, the state's cotton crop

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<sup>49</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.5

<sup>50</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.273

<sup>51</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.274

output dropped from 0.6 to 0.4 bales per acre.<sup>52</sup> Economic conditions pushed many struggling farm families further into poverty. Loan repayments to merchants and bankers often resulted in bankruptcy, transferring property rights over to merchants and banks. Tenant farming grew steadily, and tenants often worked as sharecroppers. Tenant farming increased from 31% to 45% illustrating the destitution of many farm families. These mostly African American tenant farmers faced enormous challenges surviving the array of creditor and proprietor tactics designed to keep them indebted to and under the control of local landlords. Credit for the tenantry was regularly sourced through landlords who were secured by merchants in market towns around the state, or directly through merchants who advanced cash loans against shares of the forthcoming yield using the ‘truck system.’<sup>53</sup> The system allowed employers to compensate workers in fake money scripts to be used in the landowner’s own stores. Often cashless, tenants had to borrow legal tender and were not given transparent recordkeeping nor able to save or build their way out of overwhelming debt.<sup>54</sup> Some old Arkansas cotton counties had as tenant to landowner ration as high as 77 percent in places like Crittenden county.<sup>55</sup> Tenantry was a staple of Arkansas agriculture, by the same time period most of the state’s tenant farmers were confined to the old lowlands plantation bands. Sharecroppers were constrained from moving between plantations by laws forbidding landowners from luring neighboring tenants with new opportunities. Black

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<sup>52</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.68

<sup>53</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.7

<sup>54</sup> Karin Lurvink, “Beyond Racism and Poverty: The Truck System on Louisiana Plantations and Dutch Peateries, 1865-1920 by Karin Lurvink,” *Journal of Southern History* 85, no. 2 (2019): pp. 470-471, <https://doi.org/10.1353/soh.2019.0097>.

<sup>55</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.6

tenants were criminalized for breaching labor contracts and accepting loans with pretense to defraud.<sup>56</sup>

Agriculture was the defining rhythm of life in turn of the century Arkansas. Racial and class operations were closely connected to sociopolitical institutions that ensured stability and order in rural communities. Local institutions were a life source for the state's over eight-hundred thousand primarily rural inhabitants, living either in Arkansas country-sides or in communities of less than twenty-five hundred people. Class, family, and race were leading lenses through which rural Arkansans viewed their lives and served as barometers for social change. Isolation was part of daily life for rural Arkansans, who primarily interacted with their close neighbors and others in town or at larger markets. Families often extended to laborers and servants and were basic social organizations in farming communities. Marriages tended to occur very early for rural Arkansans because economic success mainly depended on family stability. Men as young as seventeen and women as young as sixteen often connected through romance, family arrangements and out of working necessity.<sup>57</sup> Leading up to the twentieth century families grew larger in rural areas than in more urbanized settings. Arkansas families averaged around 5.2 individuals per household, compared to reduced family sizes in more urbanized northern states.<sup>58</sup> Typical yearly activities in these farming communities began with the spring planting season of wheat and vegetables, followed by cotton cultivation and harvest deep into the summer and fall months. To prepare for the coming cold season farmers planted winter wheat, slaughtered hogs and chopped wood among numerous other tasks and jobs necessary to keep family farms in

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<sup>56</sup> Fredrickson, George M. *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.9

<sup>58</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.9

operation. In rural farm communities, children took on crucial functions around the home or farm at very early ages followed with more practical gendered education for their expected performance as adults. Boys milked cows, fed animals and worked in the fields with fathers while girls gleaned homemaking from mothers and helped with childcare for siblings or other young children. These agrarian values grounded the core uplift principles for leaders of Black education such as Booker T. Washington.<sup>59</sup> In addition to daily farming duties, African American sharecroppers bootlegged, gambled, hunted, sought education, built religious communities, and established Juneteenth emancipation celebrations.<sup>60</sup> Arkansans living in country-sides late in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally sent only half of school-aged children to schools, more time was devoted to perfecting the numerous farming and domestic occupations. Monotony remained a hallmark of rural communities in Arkansas as farming culture guided normative social conduct, accepted values and customs. Leisurely visiting comprised the bulk of entertainment in rural communities beyond travel to local markets or religious gatherings.

Class and race provided markers of identity to rural white Arkansans in a world of familiar farming lifestyles. In a state still dominated by agriculture, economic transformations created wealth and new opportunities but generated new tensions and exploitation for the most marginalized Arkansans. Communities throughout the state parted into wealthy landowners, a rudimentary middle class of yeomanry, and poor countryfolk.<sup>61</sup> Yeoman farmers enjoyed considerable life improvements contrasted with poorer classes. Gender definitions and

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<sup>59</sup> Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*: Booker T. Washington (New York, NY: Airmont Pub. Co., 1967).

<sup>60</sup> Eddie Stimpson, *My Remembers: A Black Sharecropper's Recollections of the Depression* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.9

expectations solidified more frequently within this middle class and children had greater opportunities for traditional education. Fluctuations in the state economy were common and impacted these social dynamics, however independent yeoman farmers had better standing navigating uncertainties. Below the yeoman class were tenant farmers and landless laborers, whose numbers swelled with downturns in the state economy. Late nineteenth century social methods in Arkansas plantation regions reflected similarities with lowlands and plantation regions of the southeastern and gulf coasts. Affluent proprietors in the state retained power over the daily aspects of life in the countryside, however they also increasingly decided to buy or construct alternate residences in urban locations far from their home plantations. Planters grew more culturally urbanized during at the turn of the century and took their ideas and customs regarding race into new urban spaces. Their success created new cultural class distinctions which provide a framework to understand the physical separations reflected in patterns of urbanization. Landless white Arkansans were viewed by many in the wealthier classes as “white trash,” “rednecks,” and “hillbillies” for those living in the mountainous regions, indicating perceptions of laziness and unsophistication best characterized by the “Arkansas Traveler” stereotype which endured about the state from early in the nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> Wealthy and landed Arkansans likely were proponents of pervasive Gilded era ideological viewpoints which blamed the poor for their own behaviors, rather than the conditions causative for growing impoverishment. Grace Elizabeth Hale contended that emerging southern middle-classes recreated cultures of racial separation by blending northern middle-class views of gendered socioeconomic spheres with traditional white supremacist sensibilities.<sup>63</sup> Middle class southern whites incorporated racial

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<sup>62</sup> James R. Masterson, *Arkansas Folklore: The Arkansas Traveler, Davey Crockett, and Other Legends* (Little Rock, AR: Rose Pub. Co., 1974).

<sup>63</sup> Hale, Grace Elizabeth. 1998. *Making whiteness: the culture of segregation in the South, 1890-1940.*, p.93

segregation to budding new distinctions between home and work spheres, situating southern white homes as cultural bastions hearkening back to the plantation-centered societies.

As the other primary social differentiator in highly isolated rural communities, race set the basic protocols for social engagement. African Americans approximated one-quarter of the total state population at the end of the nineteenth century and constituted higher numbers in some plantation regions.<sup>64</sup> Through the 1880s, a black middle class emerged in cities across the state, challenging existing social structures. They worked in manufacturing, domestic, and personal service industries and were also doctors, lawyers, educators, and entrepreneurs encompassing a rising black middle class.<sup>65</sup> Even with informal segregation, middle class black Arkansans participated in many of the activities as white citizens. They could afford to pay for any seat on a train, rent hotel rooms, go to theatres, or send their children to schools and they demanded access to these services. Access brought increased interaction between the races. Segregation in the state prior to the twentieth century was informal and local enforcements informed where blacks could and could not go, but it was not yet codified. This was exemplified in when a black man attempted to acquire land north of Cadron, Arkansas and was driven back south under threat of mortality.<sup>66</sup> African Americans enjoyed increased mobility throughout rural areas during the 1880s, despite the understanding that the law could not be relied upon unless they complied to the racial order. Some bought land and farmed their own homesteads, others terminated unfair labor contracts and moved on to landowners that offered better working conditions. In these ways Arkansas was promoted as an attractive location for other migrating African Americans.

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<sup>64</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.9

<sup>65</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, "Black Politics in Arkansas during the Gilded Age, 1876-1900," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1985): p. 222, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40025863>.

<sup>66</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, "Black Politics in Arkansas during the Gilded Age, 1876-1900," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1985): p. 227, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40025863>.



Urban and rural African Americans also engaged in politics by voting, campaigning, and running for office. Attorney and land developer J. Pennoyer Jones of Desha County; state representative, assessor, and county clerk Ferdinand Havis who was known as the “Colored Millionaire of Pine Bluff;” and Mifflin Wistar Gibbs of Little Rock by way of Canada who became the first black elected official in British Columbia in 1866 after winning a seat on the Victoria City Council, all demonstrated the remarkable civic engagement of African Americans, many of whom were formerly enslaved.<sup>67</sup> Increased interaction between whites and blacks over time created problems for many of Arkansas’s leaders. Legalized segregation did not appear right away because in antebellum Arkansas, African Americans were concentrated on plantations. Enslaved black Arkansans had separate living spaces but interacted with whites daily on plantations with little need for segregation. By the late eighteen-hundreds, urban middle-class whites grew more concerned about interactions between the races, particularly political fusion movements prevalent in southern states like North Carolina. Increasing third party popularity and African American’s ascendance to middle class in cities across the states pushed southern Democrats and state leaders to respond.

Planters still needed to recruit African American labor but did not want black majority counties that would elect Republican or third-party leadership to protect civil and political freedoms African Americans gained after the war ended. James Philip Eagle, a Democratic party gubernatorial candidate in 1890 campaigned on a segregation platform supporting separate coach cars for black and white passengers and to modify Reconstruction era election laws. The Separate Coach law was proposed by John Tillman of northwest Arkansas and passed in 1891 requiring “equal but separate and sufficient” coach cars and restrooms to be enforced. Eagle won

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<sup>67</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, “Black Politics in Arkansas during the Gilded Age, 1876-1900,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1985): p. 228, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40025863>.

his election indicating the clear popularity of racial views among white Arkansans.<sup>68</sup> The Separate Coach Law was the first codified form of segregation in the state. Democrats used emotional racial divisions to retain white farmers in the Democratic Party. Small companies operating roads of less than twenty-five miles conformed to the new law by adding partitions and street cars were exempt, company failure to comply with the new laws cost fines ranging from \$100 to \$500. Passengers who refused to comply with the law were also fined. Those supporting the legislation argued that other southern states enacted similar laws and that courts had upheld these rulings setting precedent. Tillman shaped the bill after a Mississippi law that was tested in courts and ruled constitutional, the Supreme Court ruling in the 1890 case *Louisville, New Orleans, and Texas Railway v. Mississippi*, affirmed that the Mississippi separate-coach law did not impose an undue burden on interstate commerce. Arkansans saw this as legal sanction for the separate, but equal doctrine. In January of 1891, those who opposed the bill met at the black First Baptist Church in Little Rock and more than 500 people attended the meeting protesting passage of the segregationist bill. Progressive leaders passed a series of resolutions in response to the bill that denounced the separate coach bill and argued that segregation would lead to violence against black Arkansans. Later that month an interracial group of protestors met in the House of Representatives chamber of the State House, black leaders expressed concerns and disapproval of Tillman's bill. Community leaders W. H. Scott, a landowner and former city councilman, Little Rock dentist J. H. Smith, and religious leaders Arkansas Baptist College president Joseph Booker, Y. B. Sims, pastor of the black First Congregationalist church all campaigned against the bill.<sup>69</sup> One of the leaders attacked the proposal on the grounds that it assumed all black

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<sup>68</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.58

<sup>69</sup> John William Graves, "The Arkansas Separate Coach Law of 1891," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1973): p. 148, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40030733>.

people were the same, ultimately ceasing civil interactions between blacks and whites producing humiliation and unsatisfactory accommodations for black people on the railroads. While debate for the bill occurred in the state Senate, Republican George W. Bell of Desha county and Arkansas' only black state senator, solely spoke out against the proposal. He passionately contended that separate coaches were not necessary in Arkansas because blacks and whites had been riding in the same coaches for almost twenty years with no issues. His message appealed for amity between African Americans and whites, for a new era of race relations in the South. Ultimately the bill passed in the Senate by a vote of 26-2, with only senators Bell and a white union labor member voting against it.<sup>70</sup>

Pushing Democratic party objectives further, the state senate adopted an amendment to the bill outlawing black nurses from riding in the same railway car with their white charges and employers. The Democrat controlled state Senate also proposed and passed legislation to segregate streetcar lines. Adoption of the separate coach law completely altered race relations in Arkansas. The separate coach law ensured division of poor whites and blacks whose coalition was detrimental to white Democrats and remained in effect for 82 years. Federal policy outlawed segregation on interstate transportation, railway waiting rooms and bus stations in 1955, but Arkansas' General Assembly upheld the separate coach law until 1973. In rural Arkansas areas, African Americans were further secluded to their own spaces and communities and subjected to overwhelming racial oppression. Historians confirmed this pervasion of racial views from Alice French's *Expiation*, that all whites were superior to all black people.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> John William Graves, "The Arkansas Separate Coach Law of 1891," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1973): p. 148, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40030733>.

<sup>71</sup> Thanet, Octave. 1901. *Expiation*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons.

Poor whites used race to position themselves on a higher socioeconomic and political status than black Americans, which normally occurred in Arkansas. Historian John Cell argued that the new southern objectives were fundamentally dependent on restoration of the antebellum social order.<sup>72</sup> African American Arkansans were relegated to the bottoms of society using racialized stereotypes of laziness similar to those attributed to poor whites but were primarily seen as a continual labor source for agricultural production and guarded against any black political and educational advancements. Black lives were lived alongside poor whites on the margins of rural southern societies which amplified the use racial distinctions. Despite the financial success of numerous black Arkansans, threatening the color line was often a deadly decision. Successful black farmers and landowners in Arkansas and throughout the south carefully navigated the understood racial etiquette, failure to do so was often provocation for violent enforcement of these social protocols. Violence was frequently used following Reconstruction to reinstate white supremacy in Arkansas with little reprisal and significantly shaped the landscape of Little Rock and cities across America. The violent dedication of post-Reconstruction Democrats in Arkansas could not have been demonstrated more so than through the 1889 murder of John Clayton.

John Clayton was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Arkansas in 1867 to manage his older brother, Powell Clayton's plantation. John Clayton first entered politics in 1871 as a state representative and was elected to the state senate in 1873.<sup>73</sup> Clayton proved to be a staunch advocate for public higher education and an end to government corruption. With the help of black Republican voters in 1876, Clayton was elected sheriff of Jefferson county and served until

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<sup>72</sup> Cell, John Whitson. 1982. *The highest stage of white supremacy: the origins of segregation in South Africa and the American South*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press., p.106

<sup>73</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

1888.<sup>74</sup> In 1888, he ran as a Republican candidate for the Arkansas second Congressional district seat held by Democrat Clifton Breckinridge losing the election by 846 out of 34,000 votes cast.<sup>75</sup> Clayton's loss was part of larger election corruption in the state 1888 elections when Democrats utilized extralegal means to secure political victories. Clayton contested his loss after hearing of instances in Conway county where a group of white gunmen stole the ballot box of an overwhelmingly black voting precinct which overwhelmingly supported Clayton. Clayton went to Conway county himself to investigate the fraud. On January 29, 1889 Clayton was sitting at the desk in his rented room near Plumerville and was murdered by close range shotgun fire.<sup>76</sup> State and national press called for an investigation into the assassination and the federal government sent detectives to investigate. Investigations came up wanting and even after the government issued a substantial reward Clayton's murderer was never found. The United States House of Representative Committee on Elections decided in 1890 that Clayton had won the election of 1888 and Breckenridge lost his seat in Congress.<sup>77</sup> After this, Democrats moved to legally retain control after the chaos and attention from the elections of 1888 initiating a statewide campaign to emphasize the need for new laws to cut down on voting fraud.<sup>78</sup>

In 1891, Democrats seized the opportunity to change the state's electoral process with the passage of the Election Law of 1891, which required illiterate voters to have their ballots marked by election judges. Critics of the law argued that it was designed to intimidate poor whites and

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<sup>74</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

<sup>75</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

<sup>76</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

<sup>77</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

<sup>78</sup> Kenneth C. Barnes, *Who Killed John Clayton?: Political Violence and the Emergence of the New South, 1861-1893* (Durham, NC: Duke U.P., 1999).

blacks from voting. The Election Law of 1891 specifically hurt African American voters who were vital to third party fusion efforts to curb Democratic power. Effects of this law were felt in the 1892 election when voter turnout dropped by 18% and despite a valiant campaign from the Populist candidate, the Democratic party candidate for governor won in runaway fashion. Third party politics, once successful in the state, lost their viability because of the 1891 Election Law. Voter participation in the state elections gradually declined after 1892. Black politicians would no longer have a viable presence in state government until the mid-twentieth century. In 1891, the General Assembly still had eleven black members, in 1893, there were none. Arkansas' General Assembly also called for additional constraints on black voting after 1892.<sup>79</sup> African Americans continued to make economic and political gains throughout the 1870s and 1880s. Democrats returned to power in 1874, but Republicans and third parties continued organizing and winning county elections until 1891. At this time black Arkansans were effectively shut out of politics and segregated from poor whites. It would take the passage of national legislation in the 1960s for African Americans to regain their political rights.

In rural communities, social organizing entities such as churches and local governments dominated daily life, providing the spiritual and secular power apparatus. Christian church congregations used tangible public pressure to force individual conformity to community customs. Spiritually shunned individuals would often have difficulty advancing in other areas of community life because most local residents worshipped at the same church, leaving them to start their own congregations or depart town altogether. Such measures ranged toward the

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<sup>79</sup> Justified as protections against election fraud, legislatures passed an amendment that legalized a poll tax at the ballot. African American Republican voters were further disenfranchised through creation of exclusive party primaries in the 1890s. By the turn of the twentieth century, Democratic primaries decided winners for general elections and black voters were barred from participating in the primaries. The Arkansas Constitution of 1874 provided the framework for segregation and disfranchisement, but the state did not immediately segregate after 1874. For more see Carl Moneyhon, *Arkansas and the New South 1874-1929*.

extreme due to the forgiving nature of Christianity, however they demonstrate the stronghold religious institutions held on rural community spaces. Churches in Arkansas were affiliated with the major national denomination prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century. Baptist and Methodist denominations totaled nearly eighty percent of all congregations in the state and recurring church business meetings reflected chiefly local and neighborhood level attitudes and concerns. Early Arkansas governments were democratic in form but often exclusionary in access to white men. During the congressional phase of post-war Reconstruction, southern governments were required to remake state constitutions that extended suffrage to all age eligible men regardless of race. Arkansas' 1874 state constitution symbolized this transition declaring all male citizens over the age of twenty-one legal to vote.<sup>80</sup> Citizenship advancements from Reconstruction state constitutions were frequently denied to African Americans and their political participation was vastly marginalized. One example is seen in southern education. Antebellum southerners held longstanding vacillations towards education, some southern states were required to construct local school systems using non-tax revenues. Reconstruction governments improved conditions for southern schools but faced an impossible task of educating twice as many students on state budgets devastated by war. Redemption governments hastily slashed funding for schools further impairing the region's already lacking education systems.<sup>81</sup> Local seats of power governed the daily aspects of rural community life, including county courts, justices of the peace and officials of the local judiciary. Official county business and decisions flowed through these administrative channels, as well as enforcement of public morality and the racial codes preventing miscegenation and integrated marriages. Local governing bodies

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<sup>80</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.16

<sup>81</sup> Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt Federa* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11.

dominated the day-to-day dynamics of rural communities, and state policies set by Little Rock officials after Reconstruction undergirded the power of white landowners in Arkansas.

Arkansas political history was notorious for infighting among local and regional interest since it's days as a territory. 1874 marked the beginning of political dominance for the Democratic party in Arkansas which represented the landed interest of the state and shaped public policy accordingly. Augustus Garland was a passionate Confederate supporter and Arkansas' eleventh governor, the first to serve after Reconstruction. Garland used his terms to return political control to longstanding landed interest within the state and initiated a string of state governors late in the nineteenth century that continued to emphasize the power of local elites. Democratic candidates to the 1874 constitutional convention and ensuing state legislatures illustrated the prominence of agrarian interest in state politics and advanced policies favorable to landed elites. The 1874 Arkansas constitution rigorously decentralized state-level government powers and returned authority to county and municipalities perpetually controlled by local propertied and business influences. Term limitations and reduction of appointment abilities placed serious constraints on the role and capacity of gubernatorial power. 1875's General Assembly also set precedent for how the state legislature would address labor concerns, upholding the rights of lien holders against tenant shares of crops and removing any legal defenses from predatory merchants and landowners.<sup>82</sup> Democratic party dominance in late nineteenth century did not indicate total consensus, particularly over remaining state debts from the war and Reconstruction governments. Tensions over state debts revealed fissures in the Democratic party stronghold and highlighted Arkansas' unique challenges within the evolving New South economy. Agricultural interests were not concerned with Reconstruction era

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<sup>82</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.20



commitments and sought to abandon incurred debts, while business and commercial interest saw these debts as detrimental to state credit and potential for infrastructural growth. Held over state debts from the Reconstruction era were a primary concern for state leadership by 1875, with state debt totals reaching \$17 million.<sup>83</sup> This debt contained numerous agreements from Reconstruction era legislatures. Due to disregard during the civil war era, the state prison and institutions like the schools for the blind and deaf also needed largescale renovation.<sup>84</sup>

State governments also had to pay for the public education systems formed by Reconstruction legislatures. Modern research and publication entities including the Bureau of Statistics and Bureau of Agriculture, Mining, and Manufacturing, were established to promote natural resources and economic advantages in the state and compel people, organizations and wealthy entrepreneurs to take notice of opportunities in Arkansas.<sup>85</sup> Problems generating tax revenue in Arkansas demonstrated challenges the state faced fully committing to New South economic philosophies. Generating revenue to operate state governments was a tremendous challenge. Personal and property taxes were the most commonly assessed, with property duties furnishing the bulk revenue raised. Gaining more operational revenue required taxing the landed elite which was a difficult and highly politicized proposition. Repeated efforts to increase taxes and change the assessment system failed displaying landowner's political dominance. Landowners' power was similarly realized through legislation on labor issues. Redemption governments reinforced landowner power over tenants; for example, proprietors were legally granted the first liens over tenant yields.<sup>86</sup> Repudiation was a process state Democrats proposed

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<sup>83</sup> Whyne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.269

<sup>84</sup> Whyne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.270

<sup>85</sup> Whyne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.268

<sup>86</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.6

to resolve what they perceived as unjust debts accrued during Reconstruction forced onto southerners by a northern congress.<sup>87</sup> Other economic sectors were suggested to tax, but manufacturing and production industries were still too underdeveloped to generate sustainable revenue. Laws were passed to minimize tax rates and relegate tax assessments to the jurisdiction of county officials who generally supported wealthy planter and business interest, allowing rampant corruption of property assessments.<sup>88</sup> Predacious lending practices by landowners and merchants were common and tenants were not guaranteed any protections by the state. Arkansas' constitution is still structured this way in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Emerging labor systems initiated during Reconstruction and continued by Redemption governments provided another layer of local institutions that reinforced antebellum social and economic ideals. Convict leasing was a growing concern for southern governors in the last decades of the nineteenth century, especially in Arkansas. State officials tried to make operations as inexpensive as possible, especially for Arkansas' state prison. The goal was to create a self-sustaining carceral system. Prison expenses were funded through private contracts which leased prisoner labor to the highest or most connected bidders. Increases in prison population from 100 in 1874 to 600 in 1882, to over 750 in 1900 supported growing profits from the system, with blacks comprising 70% of convicts leased for contracted labor.<sup>89</sup> Prisoners worked under slavery-like conditions that were embarrassing for the state, and alternative plans did not address the inhumane, racialized nature of convict leasing.<sup>90</sup> Governor James H. Berry voiced concerns over the inhumane nature of convict leasing in his 1885 farewell address condemning the

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<sup>87</sup> Raymond Turner, "Repudiation of Debts by States of the Union," *Current History* 23, no. 4 (January 1926): pp. 475-483, <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.1926.23.4.475>.

<sup>88</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. *Arkansas: a narrative history*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.270

<sup>89</sup> Calvin R. Ledbetter, "The Long Struggle to End Convict Leasing in Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1993): p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40030832>.

<sup>90</sup> Wayne, Jeannie M. 2002. *Arkansas: a narrative history*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.300

deplorable working conditions and threatened to terminate leases if conditions did not improve.<sup>91</sup> Despite Governor Berry's forewarning, three years later an 1888 committee tasked to investigate troubles among convict-leased laborers in western Arkansas coal mines reported workers received minimal rations and clothing, including one change of bedding in fifteen months, and severe whippings up to 100 lashings for failure to reach daily allotments.<sup>92</sup> Few changes to the convict leasing system occurred despite token legislative efforts in the mid-1890's, and inmates were continually hired out for tasks from railroad construction to domestic services. Few efforts were made to address the treatment of inmates until 1883 when the state proposed guidelines for exercising prisoner labor such as limits to 10-hour workdays and adequate food provisions. Substantial changes and ultimately abolition of convict leasing in Arkansas did not happen until well into the progressive reform era. After 1875 through to the next century, governing interests created policies that delivered few services for Arkansans and generated minimal revenue through taxes, while concurrently reinforcing the agendas of landowning elites in the state. Minimal funding was allocated for public education and state legislatures also relegated responsibility for schools to local districts. Black populations were particularly victimized by policies to keep costs down. Despite constituting 28% of the overall Arkansas population in 1900, black citizens received less money per capita for state services than whites.<sup>93</sup> Education expenses were reduced by giving black students substandard or no education and poor provisions.<sup>94</sup> The United States Supreme Court entrenched these educational disparities with the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision, effectively excluding southern black students and schools from

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<sup>91</sup> Whyne, Jeannie M. 2002. Arkansas: a narrative history. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p.299

<sup>92</sup> Calvin R. Ledbetter, "The Long Struggle to End Convict Leasing in Arkansas," The Arkansas Historical Quarterly 52, no. 1 (1993): p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40030832>.

<sup>93</sup> Ben F. Johnson, Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999 (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 17

<sup>94</sup> Ben F. Johnson, Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999 (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 17

state funding. Arkansans desiring changes after 1874 were largely disappointed by economic and sociopolitical impediments that confined most laborers into agricultural pursuits.

Redemption governments effectively reasserted power in southern states, leaving an obstructive legacy to development in Arkansas and prompting calls for serious progressive reforms.

### **The Progressive Era in Arkansas**

The United States acutely experienced growth pains from urbanization and rapid economic expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century. Progressive reform groups from all walks of life sought to improve the corruptions undergirding nascent Gilded Age societies. Progressives ranged widely in their concerns but generally aspired to make American cities cleaner, safer and more efficient places to live. Individuals utilized progressive branding to push political agendas or address various societal concerns including halting rampant political corruption, improving working conditions in factories and forcing accountability for corporations through various federal regulations. Misery resultant from overcrowded city conditions was another area of concern for progressives, particularly for recent immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe living in poor areas. Between 1901 and World War I in Europe in 1914, 13 million immigrants came to the United States primarily from these regions. Millions of the underprivileged congregated in American cities. By 1904, one in three people living in the cities likely suffered starvation levels of poverty. Drawn by the potential for greater financial opportunity, many rural families and migrants from throughout the world relocated to American cities to work in industrial sectors. Also, many progressives devoted their time to environmental conservation and greater protection for consumers against contaminated products. Anxieties from this period revealed deep conflicts between modern culture and traditional values. Progressives promoted reforms motivated by increasing anxieties over declining morality in

cities, which were seen as havens for vice and immorality exemplified through alcohol use and taverns, drugs, and prostitution.

Progressive movements worked to create a more just and open democracy for unprotected Americans and were loosely tied by two basic beliefs. Generally, progressives believed it was their responsibility to change problems afflicting American cities and systems. New emphasis on expertise was a hallmark of progressive reformers, founded in beliefs that trained professionals would best find solutions for complex societal problems. City managers were established to manage logistical issues of daily life in cities. Progressives were also loosely tied to the idea that individual rights must be balanced with the public good, which was a stark transition from more individualist Gilded Age ideologies. Ultimately this belief was effectively used to justify urban renewal policies in the mid-twentieth century. In America's growing cities factory outputs increased, small scale businesses thrived, and salaries flourished for many laborers. Hopes of gainful employment and higher wages attracted greater numbers of migrants into the cities and by 1900, 30 million people lived in cities, nearly 30 percent of the total population.<sup>95</sup> Emerging middle classes benefitted from rising incomes and more time for leisure in expanding cities, with many advantages over the monotony of rural lifestyles. Department stores, retail chains and shopping centers developed to meet growing demands for everyday items and luxury goods. Outdoor playgrounds, amusement parks, and baseball stadiums were built to improve urban aesthetic and recreational needs. Transportation systems improved as well as general city infrastructure, transforming landscapes and catering new activities to urbanites

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<sup>95</sup> "Cities During the Progressive Era." Washington D.C. Accessed March 18, 2021. <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/progressive-era-to-new-era-1900-1929/cities-during-progressive-era/>.

with means. The Progressive era economic growth and prosperity in non-agricultural industries continued well into the 1920s.

In Arkansas, progressive movements commenced at the turn of the twentieth century and were responses to intense societal changes. The economic prosperity that many Americans experienced from increased production before and during World War I ended abruptly in southern states like Arkansas during the 1920s, an ominous precursor to the coming depression. Declining agricultural profits spurred demographic changes that influenced local transformations. International cotton demand fell well into the 1920s and 1930s forcing southern economies to further industrialize.<sup>96</sup> Industrialization, urbanization, and corporate power stoked anxieties throughout the country encouraging numerous reform efforts. World War I augmented the growing automobile revolution and emphasized the importance of quality standardized roads. Arkansans were as enthusiastic about the automobile age as other Americans but struggled with narrow, unpaved and impassable by car.<sup>97</sup> The importance of adequate transportation systems was championed by public support for road construction in the aughts. State legislatures required motorists to buy licenses commencing in 1911 and established the state highway commission in 1913, but administration of roadway developments was highly localized.<sup>98</sup> Arkansas qualified for federal aid to help bolster road infrastructures after 1917. Later progressive governors supported centralized management of roads and it became apparent that local direction of road construction generated difficulties of negligence, deceit and ineptitude. State economies declined after 1920 heightening issues for taxpayers paying road improvement duties and the legislature could not

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<sup>96</sup> Wright, Gavin. 1986. *Old South, New South: revolutions in the southern economy since the Civil War*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>97</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). p.317

<sup>98</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). p.317

remedy the issue. The highly decentralized nature of roadway development mirrored the troubles funding education in new south Arkansas.<sup>99</sup>

Arkansas business and political leaders led the response to twentieth century modernization with stubborn resistance. Three out of four black farmers were stuck in tenancy, wealthy landowners openly manipulated laborer voters to support Democratic party agendas. Economic suppression was often more effective than political violence at protecting planter interests and racism as political currency gained value with white electorates. Arkansas and numerous southern states applied statewide primaries exclusive to whites and reaffirmed poll taxes in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1906, Governor Jeff Davis laid groundwork for disenfranchisement pushing the state Democratic party committee to establish the whites-only primaries. Davis displayed more forceful racial firebrand aligned with larger regional and national reflections of Progressivism. George Washington Donaghey became the first undeniably progressive governor after taking office in 1909 and also fit the southern progressive tradition. He restructured taxes for more public revenues observing demands of the progressives, but only supported reforms empowered wealthy Arkansans.

Racial undercurrents heavily influenced progressives' approach to social issues in Arkansas. Democrats in the state now supported more actions on the part of government so long as they promoted the interest of their party's desired political constituents, farmers and laborers. Black Arkansans received an unduly small amount of state expenses for citizens' welfare. Arkansas Governor Jeff Davis, a self-described progressive, worked to end the convict leasing system, bringing national attention to the plight of carceral laborers. In 1912, after previous unsuccessful attempts to force state legislative action, Governor George W. Donaghey

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<sup>99</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). p.317

furloughed hundreds of prisoners releasing enough labor to not fulfil convict leasing contracts, successfully diminishing the system in Arkansas. Throughout the progressive period labor organizing in Arkansas often resulted in racial violence. Whitecapping, the process of forcefully intimidating African Americans off of land desired by whites through violence, was readily deployed against urban and rural blacks in Arkansas and throughout the south in response to shifting population demographics and as means of racial control.<sup>100</sup> 1891 saw a doomed strike by black sharecroppers in Lee county to raise earnings from planters for harvesting cotton, allegedly with help from the Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Union. Over a dozen African Americans and one white plantation manager perished. Separate incidents erupted in March of 1903 in Cross and Poinsett counties over demands from white laborers to open employment opportunities to white men, angered by local planters and industrialist's preference for cheap black labor. The murder of hundreds of African American sharecroppers and tenant farmers after labor organizing efforts in Elaine, Arkansas in 1919, connected Arkansas to larger post-war problems adjusting to new demands for freedoms by African American communities. Violence in Elaine tested the limits of Governor Charles Brough progressive position and signified substantially more than just racism.<sup>101</sup> In this era of global conflict, sociopolitical revolutions abroad invigorated nativists movements and linked efforts for black progress to foreign political influences. The Farmers and Household Union of America, a predecessor of later interracial groups like the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, was created to organize legal redress against local landholders for more crop payments.<sup>102</sup> These incidents revealed the conflicting economic

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<sup>100</sup> William F. Holmes, "Whitecapping: Agrarian Violence in Mississippi, 1902-1906," *The Journal of Southern History* 35, no. 2 (1969): p. 165, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2205711>.

<sup>101</sup> Whitaker, Robert. 2008. *On the laps of gods: the Red Summer of 1919 and the struggle for justice that remade a nation*. New York: Crown Publishers.

<sup>102</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 319



motivations between landed elites and white laboring interest, as well as intersections of race and class in the new south. African Americans who served abroad often returned to their communities demanding better socioeconomic and political security.

Responses to labor organizing in black communities prompted dozens of violent outbreaks in cities around the country during ‘Red Summer’ in 1919 and for years beyond. In January 1921, mere days after Governor Thomas McRae designated a state ‘Law and Order Day,’ Henry Lowery was brutally lynched at Nodena Landing Point near the eastern Arkansas border <sup>103</sup> Lowery was alleged to have shot and killed his employer O.T. Craig and his married daughter following a dispute over crop settlement proceeds and was apprehended by a white mob while being extradited from El Paso, Texas. Lowery was burned alive in front of hundreds. Tensions escalated as African American migration during the wartime and post-war years increased competition for jobs and forced whites to adapt to greater black presence in American cities. Thomas Dixon’s *The Clansman*, rose to national prominence after publication in 1905, conveying racist and incendiary versions of Reconstruction lionizing the Ku Klux Klan. *The Clansman* attracted filmmaker D.W. Griffin and was adapted to the notorious *Birth of a Nation* film, provoking violence in cities after premiering in 1915 furthering racial frictions. The film and outbursts of racial violence sparked a revival of Klan activity in Arkansas and around the country throughout the 1920s. Controversy over the picture continued well into the twentieth century, poignantly *Birth of a Nation* was showing in 1957 in Little Rock as the desegregation crisis at Central High School unfolded. Klan membership in particular grew throughout the Delta in Arkansas but the reiteration also had connections to local commercial interests. Governor McRae and other state officials wanted to eliminate this unruliness altogether, but

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<sup>103</sup> Jeannie M. Whyne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 330

other highly visible murders transpired throughout the 1920s despite their efforts. Most white southerners argued that lynching was appropriate punishment for sexual assaults on white women however very few were actually triggered by instances of rape, demonstrated thoroughly by the work of Ida B. Wells and early anti-lynching crusaders.<sup>104</sup> Lynching and increased Klan activity reflected white anxieties adjusting to post-war economic and sociopolitical changes. New Klan chapters were founded on the site of Lowery's lynching two year later in 1923 and in Wilson, Arkansas Klansmen targeted a school for African Americans with arson the morning it was set for dedication.

One of Arkansas most infamous outbreaks of racial violence occurred in Little Rock on May 4, 1927, when a thirty-eight-year-old John Carter was brutally murdered after allegedly attacking two white women on the outskirts of the city. The story of Carter's lynching began weeks earlier while national attention was fixated on the state due to immense flooding along the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. Much of Arkansas was inundated with floodwater, 127 people died and some 200,000 were forced to received care in Red Cross aid sites of outside of those camps.<sup>105</sup> Arkansas' recovery from this calamity depended on federal and philanthropic relief. Headlines in local newspapers that spring primarily concerned the flood, however a young white girl named Floella McDonald went missing and was the second young white child to do over a matter of days, igniting a furious manhunt. Police speculated rumors in the Arkansas Democrat mentioning that the two children had been "grabbed up by a negro."<sup>106</sup> Floella McDonald's body was discovered at the First Presbyterian Church at 8th and Scott streets, after church janitor

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<sup>104</sup> Wells-Barnett, Ida B., 1862-1931. *Southern Horrors and Other Writings : the Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Boston :Bedford Books, 1997.

<sup>105</sup> Brian Greer, "Little Rock's Last Lynching Was in 1927, but the Terrible Memories Linger: A New Look at Little Rock's Last Episode of Deadly Mob 'Justice,'" Arkansas Times, August 4, 2000.

<sup>106</sup> Brian Greer, "Little Rock's Last Lynching Was in 1927, but the Terrible Memories Linger: A New Look at Little Rock's Last Episode of Deadly Mob 'Justice,'" Arkansas Times, August 4, 2000.

Frank Dixon alerted police of ominous odors in the belfry. Frank Dixon was immediately named the prime suspect and was arrested along with his son Lonnie within hours, as were six other African Americans in Little Rock. Frank and Lonnie Dixon denied involvement in Floella McDonald's murder. Local newspapers covered the tragedy extensively, describing the crime scene in detail. Her remains had decayed so much that Floella was unrecognizable even to her father. The coroner was unable to confirm if Floella was sexually defiled, but newspapers speculated that she had been "outraged" and "assaulted."<sup>107</sup> News sources pinned Frank and Lonnie Dixon as the two primary suspects publishing pictures of both. A white mob searched for the Dixon's gathered in the city and hunted Carter after his alleged assault on the two white women. John Carter was hung from a telegraph pole and over two hundred bullets were shot into his dead body. He was dragged around Little Rock's streets for several hours in a carnival type frenzy, with thousands of white residents gathering along the way until the procession ended on West Ninth Street and Broadway. Pews were taken from Bethel AME Church and used as pyre to burn Carter's body.<sup>108</sup> The mob only dispersed when Governor John E. Martineau sent in Arkansas National Guardsmen to quell the disturbance and not one single charge was ever brought against Carter's murderers.<sup>109</sup> The Arkansas Gazette ran an editorial prior to Carter's lynching warning that "Arkansas is in the eyes of the nation" due to severe flooding that spring, and of the dire consequences for the city should the lynching occur.<sup>110</sup> Carter's lynching was seared into the memory and reputation of Little Rock, as the city descended into what was described as a "saturnalia of savagery."<sup>111</sup> Carter's lynching left such a lasting mark on the city, a

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<sup>107</sup> Guy Lancaster, *Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2018)

<sup>108</sup> Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt Federa* (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 1991), 11.

<sup>109</sup> Kirk, John. "The Lynching of John Carter." KUAR. Accessed March 14, 2021.  
<https://www.ualrpublicradio.org/post/lynching-john-carter>.

<sup>110</sup> Editorial, "Law and Order Betrayed" *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.

<sup>111</sup> Editorial, "Law and Order Betrayed" *Arkansas Gazette*, May 5, 1927.

full a grizzly narrative of the incident was chronicled by the renowned authors Marcet and Emanuel Haldeman-Julius in 1929, with slight changes to protect identities.<sup>112</sup> Carter's lynching ingrained racial violence into the social memory and national reputation of Little Rock and reverberated in the city for decades to come.

Mobs like the one that murdered John Carter and ritualistically desecrated his dead remains were retaliating Floella McDonald's death, but the mob also struck unknowing black bystanders and rioted for hours in black neighborhoods around Little Rock directing a frightening message through a most public method. Carter's lynching and racial violence throughout the progressive era was intended to reestablish white supremacy and intimidate blacks from confronting white power. The reality that Carter's lynching occurred during one of the worst natural disasters in state history was an embarrassment and serious hindrance to securing federal relief. State and leaders took renewed efforts to improve the capital city's social and economic reputation, spurring redevelopment projects throughout the twentieth century. 1927's flood elevated disease prospects and brought devastation to state livestock and agriculture, Arkansas was covered under as much floodwater as its southern and eastern neighbors combined.<sup>113</sup> Red Cross relief aid was largely administered by landed elites in rural communities and was used to dictate the mobility of black laborers in widely dispersed refugee camps. Arkansas governors faced natural disasters at the close of the decade which increased urban migration and intensified the impact of the coming depression. Efforts to harness the transformations brought by natural disaster and the economic downturn were largely motivated

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<sup>112</sup> Haldeman-Julius, Marcet, and E. Haldeman-Julius. *Violence*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1929., p. 257-303

<sup>113</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 333

by desires to determine black geographies. This objective continued through the onset of the depression and into the New Deal and urban renewal eras.

State decisions on black lives and geographies in Arkansas developed alongside the growth of the outpost territory into a formidable agrarian economy. The collapse of formal slavery and shifting ideas on the future of southern economies impacted migration and motivated public policies, often through private interest, to maintain control over black bodies.

Sharecropping and convict leasing evidenced this desire. As black southerners began moving away from their former plantation lands, their successes challenged white supremacy and forced local officials to address their growing presence in urban society and the potential for explosive racial violence. Anxieties triggered by black migration led to the displacement and removal policies of the urban renewal era.

## **Chapter Two –Removing Black Bodies 'The New Deal and Urban Renewal'**

“...appropriated spaces were often re-purposed for private interest or to make way for highways in the generation to come.”

### **The New Deal and Urbanization**

Economic prosperity, the growth of industry and rise of consumerism in America throughout the 1920s was experienced in many ways. Opportunities in major cities drew many from around the world and new leisurely activities entertained swelling urban populations. International and domestic migrants competed with established white communities for space and resources, enflaming tensions and furthering desires for solutions to the anxieties brought on by increasing ethnic diversity and wealth inequality. The stock market crash of October 1929 and subsequent economic depression set the stage for an unprecedented expansion of federal power over the lives and communities of Americans. This chapter examines some of the effects of America's transition from the prosperous roaring twenties into the 1930s and 1940s to demonstrate that New Deal era policies pushed African Americans more into urban spaces, encouraging efforts by local power brokers to control changing city landscapes. Prior to the depression crisis America's economy was no stranger to fluctuation and regularly went through up and down cycles. Progressive era reformers often fought for increased government measures to better regulate the notoriously unstable national economy. Then elected President Herbert Hoover's initial approach to the downturn mirrored that of many business and industry leaders unaware of the gravity of the coming crisis. Agricultural industries felt the brunt of the depression well before the stock market crash in Arkansas and many southern states. Stagnant wages in industrial sectors did not keep up with record production levels resulting in

oversaturated markets and higher income inequality. The stock market crash was the culminating point on along a steadily declining national economic trajectory. American business and political leaders were unprepared for the global financial collapse and initially encouraged voluntary associational sacrifices from businesses rather than comprehensive regulation. President Hoover's initial hands-off approach to American suffering was devastating for unemployment and wage compressions, banking failures, hunger and homelessness. Hoover's economic philosophies appeared out of touch with the needs of the American people.<sup>114</sup>

Economic depression struck particularly hard in American cities. New York at the beginning of the 1930s was a skyline of half completed skyscrapers from insufficient funding, crowds gathering as freshly dumped garbage heaps scrounging for food scraps and dignity-stricken men standing in soup lines being served out of army trucks. At least one out of every three manufacturing companies closed for business in New York alone.<sup>115</sup> Between 1929 and 1932 share prices for companies like U.S. Steel and General Motors plummeted to record lows, eviscerating the fortunes of wealthy industrialist and everyday workers alike. By 1932 the economy was at rock bottom with nearly one quarter of Americans facing unemployment. Hoover, who opposed government regulations of the economy, did not take immediate actions to alleviate the suffering for Americans. His successor President Franklin Roosevelt oversaw one of the largest expansions of federal power in national history. Roosevelt's approach to the economic downturn played a significant factor in shifting American ideas about how federal power could be used to serve public interest. Roosevelt's New Deal developed as a more active solution to the depression than his predecessor, stagnation was supplanted by experimentation, active trial and

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<sup>114</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, "In the Right Place at the Wrong Time? Herbert Hoover," in *Great Depression ; America, 1929-1941* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1993), pp. 51-72.

<sup>115</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) 323

error to convey a sense of movement and progress to the American public. There was no blueprint for such severe economic calamity, but Roosevelt believed federal intervention was necessary to fix the economy. An array of public relief and recovery programs were initiated within the first one hundred days of the Roosevelt administration. These programs focused on providing immediate aid to help boost employment and increase consumer spending. Federal officials sought to prevent economic downturns by supporting collective buying demand.<sup>116</sup> Administration for many these recovery initiatives was left to local control, resulting in exclusion and discrimination for many African Americans desperate for help. Among the recovery programs that were aimed at stabilizing the economy, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) had an exponentiating effect on urbanization after 1933.<sup>117</sup>

The federal agricultural program was realized because regional efforts to control the longstanding farming crisis were insufficient. New Deal farming plans addressed regional concerns, especially issues linked to cotton refinement, demonstrating the power of southern interests who organized and oversaw the program administration. Roosevelt asserted in 1934, “The cotton states have found it impossible to act independently or in unison...they have asked for the use of Federal powers. A democratic government has consented.”<sup>118</sup> Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace decentralized the AAA structure to guarantee preservation of local control, allowing southern farmers embraced the program. Landed southerners held advantageous positions of power in the decentralized AAA organization. Subsequently, the cotton production program covered the interests of regional elites. The AAA set prices for many

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<sup>116</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 64

<sup>117</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 64

<sup>118</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 16



other agricultural products, effectively paying farmers to take acreage out of production.

Landowning planters saw considerable rises on their financial returns over the previous year and presumptions were that planters would slash production uniformly from the wage labor and tenant sections of their assets. AAA efforts succeeded in stabilizing the cotton production industry, but landed southerners fired sharecroppers and tenant farmers who were forced off of their lands. AAA policies heartened proprietors to contract less tenants and the program benefits structure reallocated lands to southern whites. In 1934, AAA payments accounted for 39 percent of planter net cash income, tenants were only provided 4 percent.<sup>119</sup>

AAA policies supplanted thousands of poor tenants and sharecroppers, but the depression worsened the deep troubles facing black communities in the south and beyond. In industrial sectors, African Americans largely were consigned to otherwise undesired occupations, serving as blacklegs in iron and coal mines, steel mills, lumber camps, in packing plants and a variety of other trades.<sup>120</sup> Skilled unions exclusion of black labor and former sharecroppers general ignorance to labor organization strategies made African Americans attractive for jobs as strikebreakers.<sup>121</sup> Jobs that were open to black laborers during the wartime years vanished with the onset of the depression. White laborers in northern cities returned to the post-WWI workforce demanding access to the vocations African Americans filled in their absence. Municipal licensing ordinances were implemented throughout the south to drive out black barbers, plumbers, and other occupations where black laborers found economic success.<sup>122</sup>

Southern black laborers were especially worried by precipitous drops in agricultural earnings and

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<sup>119</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 18

<sup>120</sup> Tabb, William K. 1970. *The political economy of the Black ghetto*. New York: Norton., p. 26

<sup>121</sup> Fredrickson, George M. 1981. *White supremacy: a comparative study in American and South African history*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 226

<sup>122</sup> Arthur M. Ross, "The Negro in the American Economy," in *Employment, Race and Poverty*, ed. Arthur M. Ross and Herbert Hill (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p.12.

by losing urban jobs to whites.<sup>123</sup> Low wages for adult males required women and children laborers to become a more present dynamic of southern workplaces. The *Report on Economic Conditions of the South* identified low wages for males as a prime motivation for elevated numbers of women and children in unskilled jobs in the region.<sup>124</sup> Roosevelt made a concerted effort to form protections against low wages which especially crippled the south. Federal government also created the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) as a solution to the issue of low southern wages. Unequitable pay practices in many southern manufacturing industries were inhibited by new federal wage guidelines. Notwithstanding initial balking of southern capitalists who valued and profited greatly from manipulating labor, Roosevelt acknowledged an industrialized southern economy would need to sacrifice some unskilled jobs to increase efficiency and consumption capacity.<sup>125</sup> The national government willingly sacrificed positions in many unskilled industries to furnish greater employment security and higher wages for men, generally regarded the heads of households.<sup>126</sup> Black workers were precluded from various labor protections started during the New Deal era as well. Southern black young people, women, and adult men were the low wage workers whose jobs were earmarked for removal. Southern firms hired white laborers at rates equivalent to salaries lawfully required for black workers after the enactment of the minimum wage act.<sup>127</sup>

FLSA policies restructured southern industries, requiring firms to increase their wage payments or as many firms chose, shift to more mechanized operations. Pecan shellers near San Antonio, Texas stood to receive triple their previous wages under the new mandates, but rather

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<sup>123</sup> Tabb, William K. 1970. *The political economy of the Black ghetto*. New York: Norton., p. 26

<sup>124</sup> NEC, *Report on Economic Conditions of the South*, p. 39

<sup>125</sup> Roosevelt, "Address at Thomas Jefferson Day Dinner," in Rosenman, ed., *Public Papers*, Vol. 5, p.181

<sup>126</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 65

<sup>127</sup> Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2014).

than capitulate many processing plants simply outfitted mechanized shelling equipment.<sup>128</sup>

Outdated and inefficient southern firms were driven out of business by the new federal orders.

Women and children could be excised from the labor pool as representatives preferred. Unskilled male workers also lost established employment outlets and struggled without requisite training or education for other fields. By 1932, black unemployment reached 50 percent in the United States. African Americans largely deprived of education and opportunities to fill skilled positions, even when qualified, felt the weight of the changing southern economy. They were often the last hired and first fired from the New Deal programs. The FSLA also exempted domestic workers from safeguards by restricting eligibility to workers “engaged in commerce or the production of goods for commerce.”<sup>129</sup> Wartime mobilization opened migration channels for many African Americans seeking better opportunities, ultimately rendering the FSLA obsolete. Wartime mobilization broadened southern manufacturing by 50 percent and from 1939 to 1942 wages rose 40 percent.<sup>130</sup>

Southern legislatures in the 1930s regularly prioritized continuing the subjugation of black agricultural labor at slavery conditions. Florida representative James Wilcox explained, “there is another matter of great importance in the south and that is the problem of our negro labor. There has always been a difference in the wage scale of white and colored labor...We may rest assured, therefore, that when we turn over the power to a federal bureau or board to fix wages, it will proscribe the same wage for the Negro that it prescribes for the white man. Now, such a plan might work in some sections of the United States but those of us who know the true

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<sup>128</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 67

<sup>129</sup> Suzanne Mettler, *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp.185, 204, 209.

<sup>130</sup> Schulman, Bruce J. 1991. *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: federal policy, economic development, and the transformation of the South, 1938-1980*. New York: Oxford University Press.p. 72

situation know that it just will not work in the south. You cannot put the Negro and the white man on the same basis and get away with it.”<sup>131</sup> The FSLA and other New Deal labor legislation built in occupational contingencies that reflected and upheld deep racial ideologies, delivering beneficial policies explicitly only for white workers.<sup>132</sup>

The onset of World War II did not alter the exclusionary nature of Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. Economists believe the G.I. Bill “exacerbated rather than narrowed the economic and educational differences between blacks and whites.”<sup>133</sup> African American veterans who did access the G.I. Bill had noticeably different experiences based on where they attended school, whether the few that attended colleges in the north and students who were educated at southern institutions. For them the G.I. Bill higher education program rarely helped them accomplish education goals or improve life outlooks.<sup>134</sup> G.I. Bill home loans were regularly denied to black veterans and the vast majority of financial institutions refused to approve loans to black drawees.<sup>135</sup> They were disqualified from receiving loans due to low credit, deficient capital and residences in neighborhoods that were systematically devalued by financial institutions. Financiers made circumstances nearly impossible for black veterans to receive home loans, a process which occurred in northern cities as well.<sup>136</sup> Sharecroppers and other African American agricultural workers were refused small business assistance because the land which produced

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<sup>131</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).59-60

<sup>132</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).61

<sup>133</sup> Sarah Turner and John Bound, *Closing the Gap or Widening the Divide: The Effects of the G.I. Bill and World War II on the Educational Outcomes of Black Americans* (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2002), 22-25.

<sup>134</sup> Herman Phillip Miller, *Income Distribution in the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966, pp. 145-46

<sup>135</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).139

<sup>136</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).140

from their labor was not in their ownership, barring them from being classified as self-employed. The G.I. Bill was exercised with heavy racialization and was among the most injurious of the New Deal programs. Historian Ira Katznelson noted, “the performance of the G.I. Bill mocked the promise of fair treatment.”<sup>137</sup> Black migration and increased presence in cities sparked major anxieties about space and proximity. Concentrations of successful black lawyers, newspapers, colleges and large churches reflected the vast differences between urban areas and planter dominated rural spaces. Precisely because urban blacks were more autonomous and less vulnerable, their place was circumscribed in more detail and through evolutions in state power.<sup>138</sup> Business and political leaders in many southern states responded to these changing demographics with desires to segregate and ultimately reconstruct urban terrains.<sup>139</sup>

### **Urban Segregation in America**

New Deal era residential segregation endeavors were consistent with historical conceptions of racial segregation as central to the nation’s founding. Grace Hale showed how white racial ideals were first learned in homes and activated in society.<sup>140</sup> Racial segregation, *de jure* and *de facto*, has irrefutably been a goal and tool of American power since early conceptions of a constitution were debated at the Pennsylvania State House and put to paper in 1787.<sup>141</sup> For many in the founding generations, imagining a society where Europeans, enslaved Africans and native Americans resided in proximity was simply unfathomable. Pre-national segregation

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<sup>137</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).141

<sup>138</sup> Cell, John Whitson. 1982. *The highest stage of white supremacy: the origins of segregation in South Africa and the American South*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press., p.133

<sup>139</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).141

<sup>140</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 97.

<sup>141</sup> Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation* (New York: Basic Books., 2016).

models can also be found in the colonial low-country, where slaving aristocrats built lavish retreats in regional cities including Charles Town, Beaufort, Georgetown, Savannah and Wilmington, far away from black majority populations in malarial lowlands.<sup>142</sup> Economist Gunnar Myrdal expounded on this perspective contending, “patterns of segregation developed as part of the social heritage of Americans.”<sup>143</sup> Sharp increases in spectacle lynching and racial violence during and following the Redemption era were tools to enforce the Jim Crow social order.<sup>144</sup> Hale contended that spectacle lynchings were functional rituals of maintaining segregation and white supremacy.<sup>145</sup> John Carter’s lynching and subsequent dismemberment was a signal to black Little Rock that the threat of disregarding Jim Crow was lethal and ever-present, even as the city began the process of modernizing. Federal housing policies in the New Deal era powerfully reinforced residential segregation and revealed the limits of freedom for New Deal policies. Housing built or financially supported by the federal government was racially segregated and the Federal Housing Administration unabashedly insured mortgages that contained clauses barring future home sales to non-white buyers or fund racially integrated neighborhoods.

Richard Rothstein unarguably demonstrated that government actions and policies which determined housing zones for black citizens were *de jure* segregation (not *de facto*, or privately enforced). United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy disputed *de jure* segregation in the country, despite acknowledging that “vestiges of past segregation by state

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<sup>142</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 131.

<sup>143</sup> Sam Bass. Warner and Gunnar Myrdal, “National Planning for Healthy Cities: Two Challenges to Affluence,” in *Planning for a Nation of Cities* (Cambridge, MA, MA: MIT Press, 1972), p. 4.

<sup>144</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 231.

<sup>145</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 231.

decree do remain in our society and in our schools. Past wrongs to the black race, wrongs committed by the State and in its name, are a stubborn fact of history. And stubborn facts of history do linger and persist.”<sup>146</sup> Black ghettos developed primarily as a twentieth century phenomenon. By 1910 black populations in northern cities generally resided in lesser maintained areas but freely moved and interacted with poorer whites, exclusively black zones rarely manifested. In well-established southern cities, black residents were widely interspersed.<sup>147</sup> Government endorsed racial zoning practices began at local levels in cities during the World War I era, dissimilar from federally backed public housing programs.<sup>148</sup> Racial zoning policies were implemented beginning early in the twentieth century in cities across the south and the country including Baltimore, Atlanta, Birmingham, Miami, Charleston, Dallas, Louisville, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Richmond, and St. Louis among others, after migration stoked white perceived threats of ‘negro invasions.’<sup>149</sup> Racial zoning programs were touted as the best solution to prevent racial violence and miscegenation. African American migration into northern and western cities precipitated a mass exit of white urbanites and organizing resistance against integrated neighborhoods developed into big business.<sup>150</sup>

Robert Park and the 1920s Chicago School of Sociology perceived segregation as a multistage urban issue triggered by resettling foreign and domestic migrants with ambitions of

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<sup>146</sup> Crawford, Jon G., and Linda J. O'Neill. "A Mere Footnote? "An American Dilemma" and Supreme Court School Desegregation Jurisprudence." *Peabody Journal of Education* 86, no. 5 (2011): 506-28. Accessed February 17, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23120511>, p. 520

<sup>147</sup> Williams, Norman. "Discrimination and Segregation in Minority Housing." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 9, no. 1 (1949): 88.; Harington, Donald. 1965. *The cherry pit*. New York: Random House.

<sup>148</sup> Rothstein, Richard. 2018. *The Color of Law*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation., p. 44.

<sup>149</sup> Rothstein, Richard. 2018. *The Color of Law*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation., p. 45.; Nightingale, Carl Husemoller. 2012. *Segregation: a global history of divided cities.*, p. 305-311

<sup>150</sup> Williams, Norman. "Discrimination and Segregation in Minority Housing." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 9, no. 1 (1949): 86-88.

dispersion into isolated ghettos.<sup>151</sup> Black ghettos became permanent fixtures of urban society despite conceptions of these spaces as transient.<sup>152</sup> Urban ghettos are collections of similar people groups residing and trading, but ghettos are stigmatized by social marginalization the rest of the city.<sup>153</sup> Notions that diversity in urban spaces equivocates to racial threats perpetuate vicious cycles of othering. Racial threat hypothesis is an analytical framework that contends increased minority presence can jeopardize the socioeconomic and political privileges of the ruling faction.<sup>154</sup> Consistent with general theories of social control, a growing minority faction is likely to elicit greater repression from whites as they work to halt their loss of privilege. Repressions imposed can take on several forms from overt violence to *de jure* residential segregation.<sup>155</sup> Negative perceptions of ethnic concentration persist because of ideas regarding spatial separation contexts, which are encapsulated by William Julius Wilson's notion of the 'underclass' or in current contentions about the varieties of government established barriers to exit.<sup>156</sup>

Wilson's work proposed that racism was too simplistic a notion to explain the growth of an urban underclass (defined loosely as the remnants of poor minority groups unable to afford an escape from ghettos). Wilson asserted that inner city ghettos developed from the desire to

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<sup>151</sup> Anthony J. Cortese (1995) The rise, hegemony, and decline of the Chicago School of Sociology, 1892–1945, *The Social Science Journal*, 32:3, 235-254, DOI: 10.1016/0362-3319(95)90009-8

<sup>152</sup> VAUGHAN, LAURA, and SONIA ARBACI. "The Challenges of Understanding Urban Segregation." *Built Environment* (1978-) 37, no. 2 (2011): 129.

<sup>153</sup> VAUGHAN, LAURA, and SONIA ARBACI. "The Challenges of Understanding Urban Segregation." *Built Environment* (1978-) 37, no. 2 (2011): 129.

<sup>154</sup> DeFina, Robert, and Lance Hannon. "Diversity, Racial Threat and Metropolitan Housing Segregation." *Social Forces* 88, no. 1 (2009): 376.

<sup>155</sup> DeFina, Robert, and Lance Hannon. "Diversity, Racial Threat and Metropolitan Housing Segregation." *Social Forces* 88, no. 1 (2009): 376.; D'Alessio, Stewart & Eitle, David & Stolzenberg, Lisa. (2005). The impact of serious crime, racial threat, and economic inequality on private police size. *Social Science Research - SOC SCI RES.* 34. 267-282. 10.1016/j.ssresearch.2004.02.002.

<sup>156</sup> Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 49.; Rothstein, Richard. 2018. *The Color of Law*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation., p. xvi-xvii.



contain and control black labor.<sup>157</sup> I contend that America's long legacy of racial segregation is the best lens to evaluate racism functioning through other modes of government and public policy. Urban economic improvement became the language to subterfuge racist intentions, because white flight was literally a desire to increase physical space between races for economic and personal reasons. To facilitate this desire city leaders often conspired with state and federal governments to change urban infrastructure easing white access to and from suburbia, while confining poor black populations to designated easily surveilled and policed areas.

Legacies of racialized segregation in America are well chronicled and white southerners were clear regarding desires to maintain segregation.<sup>158</sup> American editor John Temple Graves stated, "a fact sure as science, is that the white majorities of the south are unwavering and total in their determination not to have race segregation abolished."<sup>159</sup> Writer David Cohn affirmed these southern sentiments, "Southern whites...will not at any foreseeable time relax the taboos and conventions which keep the races separate from the cradle to the grave."<sup>160</sup> During and after World War II, suburbs sprouted across the country in the model of Milpitas or Palo Alto, California and Levittown, New York, where Federal Housing Authority policies plainly withheld funding from integrated neighborhood developments.<sup>161</sup> Segregation in urban America manifested through uneven distributions of federal resources, education and urban spaces.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Wilson, W. J. (1987). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 11-12

<sup>158</sup> Satter, Beryl. 2009. *Family properties: race, real estate, and the exploitation of Black urban America*. New York: Metropolitan Books.; Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the second ghetto: race and housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press. Hirsch, Arnold R. 1983. *Making the second ghetto: race and housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press.; Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: poverty and profit in the American city*.

<sup>159</sup> Woodward, C. Vann 1908-1999, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957., p. 120

<sup>160</sup> Woodward, C. Vann 1908-1999, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957., p. 120

<sup>161</sup> Rothstein, Richard. 2018. *The Color of Law*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation., p. 7

<sup>162</sup> Fredrickson, George M. 1981. *White supremacy: a comparative study in American and South African history*. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 280

## Urban Segregation in Arkansas and the New Deal Years

Arkansas mirrored the tremendous turn of the century rush to urban areas taking place in cities around the nation. Three of the largest towns in Arkansas all tripled in size by 1900.<sup>163</sup> No fewer than ten other cities attained urban status by the turn of the century, showing how urbanization rapidly changed all corners of the state.<sup>164</sup> Urban expansion symbolized social transformations that altered social understandings for rural newcomers. Relatively homogenous rural populations moved into urban centers, compounding existing diversity with new growth. Urban societies displayed greater ethnicity and regional differences, more complicated systems of class and changes to traditional racial orders. Cultural variety was a key aspect of growth in Arkansas cities. Hubs like Little Rock held up to five times higher numbers of foreign-born citizens within its boundaries than were represented in the rest of the state. Mexicans, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Poles, Turkish and even Russian born immigrants journeyed to the state capital, Hot Springs and Fort Smith also featured large migrant residents.<sup>165</sup> Northern itinerants including former Union army soldiers also relocated to Arkansas towns. Development of new industries offered greater opportunities attracting workers for management and white-collar positions.<sup>166</sup> Diverse national and regional backgrounds rearranged traditional social relationships and added to the complexity of town life. New classes emerged among whites resulting from larger shifts in regional and national economies. Towns were longtime locales for successful business and craftsmen, as well as a multitude of small entrepreneurs seeking their own success. Unskilled

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<sup>163</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 41

<sup>164</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 42.

<sup>165</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 42.

<sup>166</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 43.

workers and day laborers were also a consistent, although transient, urban economic group. Business and wealthy classes engaged with an emerging and skillful middle class whose proficiencies made them vital for community life. By 1900, 17 percent of the capital's developing middle class occupied roles as architects, attorneys, teachers, physicians, clergymen, dentists, electricians, engineers and managers, in addition to new occupations in white collar work as clerks, accountants, copyist, stenographers, gendered 'typewriters' and telegraph operators.<sup>167</sup>

Black elites were a major challenge to the racial order. Issues of race complicated urban life and proved the paramount antagonist to segregationist social organization models. African Americans formed a perpetual underclass in rural societies, as it was nearly impossible to overcome the interconnected strength of planter power. Black urbanites were also deemed inferiors by whites, but the labor demands and the unique station of urban life allowed some to realize economic success and defy hoary racial ideals. Black employees in the new industrial mills, manufacturing plants and on the railroads, as well as service providers to black and white business classes comprised the core of new successful urban communities. In Pine Bluff, Helena, and Little Rock, thriving black entrepreneurs emanated throughout the turn of the century. Two-hundred thirty-five black businessmen were listed in Pine Bluff's business directory in 1900.<sup>168</sup> Black barbers, confectioners, grocers, hoteliers, saloonkeepers, restaurateurs and almost every other type of entrepreneurial endeavors developed to service black and white clients, resisting conventional racial stations. Economic success made it possible for them to ride in trains, enjoy nice restaurants and hotels and attend theatre shows, not dissimilar to wealthy whites, raising

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<sup>167</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 44.

<sup>168</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 45-46.

their ambitions even more. Rural and farming black transplants posed less of a threat to white positions in urban areas, but affluent African Americans tested customary standards of racial separation.

Little Rock's West Ninth Street was popularly known as 'the Line.' This downtown space was widely known as the capital of black communities in Arkansas.<sup>169</sup> In 1863, Union troops occupied the state capital constructing log cabins to house formerly enslaved refugees.<sup>170</sup> Originally called West Hazel Street, the street was later renamed to West Ninth Street as skilled black migrants collected in the area. Uplift agencies such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the Mosaic Templars of America were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to furnish resources and services for growing black communities in urban areas.<sup>171</sup> The UNIA spread Garvey's Afrocentric social and economic philosophies throughout the urban north and well down the eastern seaboard into the deep south. Arkansas featured forty-two chapters in rural communities like Blytheville, Cotton Plant, Earl, Hughes and Postelle.<sup>172</sup> The National Negro Business League (NNBL) hosted its twelfth annual convention in Little Rock on August 16-19, 1911, assembling diverse black business minds together to discuss best practices and future opportunities.<sup>173</sup> Black community leaders and entrepreneurs such as Mame Stewart Josenberger owned numerous ventures and properties

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<sup>169</sup> *Dreamland: Little Rock's West 9<sup>th</sup> Street*, AETN film, 2017.

<sup>170</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rock's West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 2

<sup>171</sup> A. E. Bush, P. L. Dorman, and John William Graves, *History of the Mosaic Templars of America: Its Founders and Officials* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>172</sup> Hahn, Steven. *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2005. 471

<sup>173</sup> John Bracey and August Meier, "Records of the National Negro Business League: Part 1: Annual Conference Proceedings and Organizational Records, 1900-1919 Part 2: Correspondence and Business Records, 1900-1923" (Bethesda, MD, 1995).

throughout the state, connecting the NNBL with black economic development in Arkansas.<sup>174</sup> By 1913 the Mosaic Templars constructed a building on the corner of West Ninth Street and Broadway to serve as the group's national headquarters, quickly and undeniably marking the center of black community life on the Line.<sup>175</sup> Black residents of the Line neighborhood adjusted to the onset of Jim Crow in Little Rock by creating their own culture and economy, featuring churches, schools, businesses and social functions.<sup>176</sup> The Line represented the enforceable separation areas between races in the city.<sup>177</sup> Segregation contributed to the growth of black owned confectionaries, cab services, pharmacies, grocery stores, salons and publication offices. Older southern communities in Little Rock were largely peppered even during the Jim Crow era, with different ethnic enclaves dispersed throughout the city.<sup>178</sup> Great migration era movements ravaged black communities like West Ninth Street, some 200,000 African Americans ultimately left the state overall.<sup>179</sup> Economic depression devastated West Ninth Street communities. Between 1930 and 1935 eleven percent of local businesses shut down, including a declaration of bankruptcy by the Mosaic Templars.<sup>180</sup> As black soldiers returned home from World War II a new spirit and sense of pride enveloped communities like the Line. Soldiers and civilians alike

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<sup>174</sup> Cherisse Jones-Branch, "Mame Stewart Josenberger," *Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* 43 (April 2019): pp. 23-28.

<sup>175</sup> A.E. Bush, and P.L. Dorman, *History of the Mosaic Templars of America: Its Founders and Officials* (Little Rock: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), xx-xxii.

<sup>176</sup> Shanika Smith, "The Success and Decline of Little Rock's West Ninth Street," *Pulaski County Historical Review*, 2019, pp. 41-50.; Hubbell, "History of Ninth Street."

<sup>177</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rock's West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 5

<sup>178</sup> Donald Harington, *The Cherry Pit* (New York, 1965: Random House, n.d.).

<sup>179</sup> Donald Holley, "Leaving the Land of Opportunity: Arkansas and the Great Migration," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2005): pp. 245-247, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40028047>.

<sup>180</sup> A. E. Bush, P. L. Dorman, and John William Graves, *History of the Mosaic Templars of America: Its Founders and Officials* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2008), 11.xliv-xlv

flocked to the downtown entertainment and dining options, including Dean Johnson's Café, Vincennes Hotel and Dining Room, and the Gem Theatre which were readily available.<sup>181</sup>

Pride and celebration of African American culture was prevalent in Little Rock's black communities throughout the 1930s. Paul Laurence Dunbar High School and the Dunbar community was a site of major cultural and educational influence for the city, nurturing many prominent black Arkansans including Mrs. Annie Abrams and Mr. Herbert Denton Jr. Abrams humble beginnings in Arkadelphia propelled her to advocate for women and families before the United Nations. She also assisted longtime friends Daisy and L.C. Bates during the desegregation crisis at Central High School and remains a resident of Little Rock.<sup>182</sup> Herbert Denton Jr. was raised in Little Rock and graduated from Harvard University before becoming a successful columnist for the Washington Post. Denton was in the ninth grade at Dunbar when the Central High desegregation crisis began in 1957, he personally knew many of the Little Rock Nine.<sup>183</sup> Dunbar High School was a modern school for black students when it was dedicated in 1930. Renowned composer and Little Rock native Florence Price gave a charity performance in the Dunbar auditorium. Price worked with William Grant Still, whose mother taught English in Little Rock and educated young Still in city schools, to integrate black cultural music into the symphonic form.<sup>184</sup> Carter G. Woodson, Harvard educated historian and founder of Negro History Week which became Black History Month, made an unannounced guest lecture at Dunbar High School in 1938 after discovering local educator and Fisk University graduate

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<sup>181</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rocks West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 25

<sup>182</sup> Airic Hughes, in *Service Is the Rent You Pay: Annie Abrams, A Legacy of Democracy*, n.d.

<sup>183</sup> Benji de la Piedra, "Encyclopedia of Arkansas," in Encyclopedia of Arkansas, 2020, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/herbert-denton-jr-14496/>.

<sup>184</sup> Judith Anne Still, Michael J. Dabrishus, and Carolyn L. Quin, *William Grant Still: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

Gwendolyn Floyd was teaching a course on black history using Woodson's study *The Negro in Our History*.<sup>185</sup> Floyd's course encouraged social consciousness about the constructed nature of segregation among Little Rock's students. She reflected, "we were aware that we were being manipulated; that there were certain jobs we could not get; that we lived in an isolated society."<sup>186</sup>

As towns and cities became population focal points, technological revolutions in railroad and communications industries intensified ideas that eliminated homogenous perspectives for rural migrants. Telegraph and telephone stations were part of urban landscapes in Arkansas since the late nineteenth century. New communications systems introduced a flood of diverse information and ideas, forcing adjustment to the complications of urban life. Essential institutions operated differently in towns than in rural spaces and within this disordered framework, public education became a key focus of urban life. State subsidized school systems developed during Reconstruction, but rural life did not emphasize formation of education systems as seen in Arkansas towns. Townspeople invested sufficient tax revenue necessary to create schools and systems much eagerly. Ideas about government roles and functions in society were also transformed by urbanization, as local, county and state governments rose in prominence. Local authorities were relied on to deliver many basic needs like clean drinking water, waste disposal, public safety, fire protection and transportation for their communities, or to oversee private enterprise. Local and state governments increasingly defined social relationships and matching national trends expanding government powers. Rising fire insurance

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<sup>185</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 44

<sup>186</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 44

premiums highlighted the inadequacies of all volunteer fire companies.<sup>187</sup> Little Rock officials responded with new government agencies that supported private business and offered solutions to white urban concerns, similar to other cities around the country. Government activities spanned beyond providing basic services or regulating utilities, into the regulation of social relations.<sup>188</sup> Citizens increasingly looked to the government to outline social relations and behaviors as traditional class and race lines blurred in urban society.

Arkansas governments functioned differently beginning in the twentieth century. Greater reliance on professional agencies and systematic planning to address state problems had significant results.<sup>189</sup> Education offered prospects for rural Arkansans to advance beyond agricultural endeavors, educational and health initiatives improved life for many Arkansans. Yet officials struggled to improve Arkansas in the midst of a farming crisis and coming natural disasters in the 1920s. World War I's conclusion signaled the reversal of many economic fortunes in the state. Arkansas governors in the 1920s accommodated the reforms and interests of the business and professional class. Governor Thomas McRae made his views on the changing role of state government in Arkansas very clear in his January 1921 inauguration speech, when he noted conservative fears over changing socioeconomic dynamics, stating, "We want progressivism in Arkansas...but we should not allow this desire for things modern to destroy or remove any of the character building teachings and customs that were good and valuable in years that are gone, and will be good and valuable in years to come."<sup>190</sup> McRae concluded that state

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<sup>187</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 54.

<sup>188</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 54.

<sup>189</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 131-132.

<sup>190</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 144.



and local governments needed a prominent role in solving urban problems, education and highway construction being among the top two priorities for the state.<sup>191</sup> These two areas remained intertwined as the processes that reconstructed urban landscapes intensified during the twentieth century. Natural disasters dramatically challenged the nature and value of southern agrarian economies in the 1920s, encouraging further urban migration and exacerbating already increasing social anxieties.

At the beginning of the decade cotton production was seriously declining and demand was decreased along with revenue generated. Boll weevil infestations and flooding devastated Arkansas farmlands in the 1920s, while severe drought compounded these issues. Dire economic circumstances were clearly proven by the collapse of state farm values during the decade. After more than doubling in value between 1910 and 1920 and reaching over \$753 million in total worth, by 1930 the collective value of Arkansas farming fell to \$547 million, a drop of 17 percent.<sup>192</sup> Arkansas manufacturing suffered damages early during the 1920s but regained much of their falloffs by 1929. In his inaugural address in January 1927, Governor John Ellis Martineau noted, “Our state is believed by many to be on the eve of a long deferred industrial awakening.”<sup>193</sup> That awakening was not realized because of the market crash after 1929 and Arkansas governors in the 1930s struggled with the gravity of the depression. Arkansas cotton farmers suffered heavy losses as demand and prices declined. AAA programs paid local farmers to remove acreage from production starting with Delta farmers plowing up over one quarter of their cotton fields in the spring of 1933. Arrangements were made for certain

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<sup>191</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 145.

<sup>192</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 136.

<sup>193</sup> Moneyhon, Carl H. 1997. *Arkansas and the New South, 1874-1929*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press., p. 138.

percentages of farmlands to remain unused. The distribution of AAA funds through local planter elites prompted mass migrations and led to the organization of tenant advocacy groups like the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU). Grievances from Poinsett county tenants who were excluded from New Deal era work programs led to the STFU's organization in 1934 by local farmers working with businessmen H.L. Mitchell and Clay East, along with Socialist Party of America leader Norman Thomas. The STFU operated as an interracial advocacy group missioned to break planter control by stopping them from evicting tenants and forcing them to equally share AAA crop assistance payments with still occupant farmers.<sup>194</sup> However, President Roosevelt remained unresponsive to the demands of the over 35,000 members in states like Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma, who became targets for violence by local nightriders and law enforcement officers.<sup>195</sup> Mitchell and STFU members succeeded in gaining national attention to the plight of the tenants, forcing Arkansas Governor Junius Marion Futrell to task a state commission on tenant injustices.<sup>196</sup>

STFU goals were somewhat achieved through passage of the 1937 Bankhead-Jones Act which created the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA secured rehabilitation loans for tenants and assisted with credit to finance farm purchases.<sup>197</sup> FSA resettlement programs portioned thousands of acres in Mississippi county in 1934 to former contractor and farmer William Dyess to create resettlement communities. Three of these communities were exclusively designated for black residency and elsewhere segregated units housed black and white families.

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<sup>194</sup> H. L. Mitchell, "The Founding and Early History of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1973): p. 342, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40027642>.

<sup>195</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 347-350

<sup>196</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 347-350

<sup>197</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 30

Resettlement communities sustained and provided opportunities for thousands of southern farmers at a cost lower than providing direct aid, helping over fourteen hundred families in Arkansas achieve new levels of independence.<sup>198</sup> This success was only experienced by a fraction of the state's tenants, further encouraging prompting migration into urban areas and increasing white desires for the state to devise tools and solutions to set the proper place for black bodies. Rural and urban whites realized their fears regarding lost control over black bodies leaving the plantation for American cities and responded decisively. Progressive era fixations on efficiency and reform combined with expanded local and state powers in the 1940s and 1950s to ease the anxieties of white citizens through new systems aimed to renovate land and prescribe space in urban America.

### **Urban Renewal and City Development in America**

Urban renewal developed as federal policy after the conclusion of the second world war with passage of the Housing Act of 1949. Origins of the act began with nineteenth century housing reform in the United States.<sup>199</sup> 1840s era reformers espoused notions that slums were detrimental to public health and campaigned for building and sanitary regulations, innovating techniques to educate landlords and real estate developers on ways to improve conditions for the impoverished.<sup>200</sup> Urban slums continued to grow as migrants sought better employment in industrial hubs across the country. Political economist Edith Elmer Wood, lawyer and settlement house worker Louis Pink, and Catherine Bauer, director of the American Federation of Labor's Housing Conference, were among the housing reformers inspired by the innovative European

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<sup>198</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 31

<sup>199</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>. 299

<sup>200</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>. 300

public housing models early in the twentieth century, who demanded federal securement of mass rental housing for the lowest and middle-income tiers.<sup>201</sup> Early urban planning models were heavily influenced by European development and understanding of urbanization challenges.

Leading city planning theorists included Lawrence Veiller, who championed use of building codes to guide housing reform;<sup>202</sup> Ebenezer Howard, an English court reporter developing urban planning models in London, aimed to reestablish self-sufficient villages desolated by urban migration;<sup>203</sup> and Robert Moses, the power catalyst behind New York city's modern development, had influence comparable and sometimes surpassing the city Mayor.<sup>204</sup> Judge Elbert Henry Gary helped arrange the growth of 'company town' models in the early twentieth century, receiving investments earmarked at least in the amount of \$80,000,000 from the U.S. Steel Company to found a plant on the south shore of Lake Michigan in Calumet Township, Lake County, Indiana.<sup>205</sup> Gary, Indiana remains on the original corporate sponsored plot today.<sup>206</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead of Staten Island, New York was a prominent architect, Harvard professor and led urban planning projects, special committees and advisory boards in cities around the country.<sup>207</sup> J. Horace McFarland of Pennsylvania developed numerous projects including national parks and municipal improvements.<sup>208</sup> Frank Backus Williams was a Harvard

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<sup>201</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>. 301

<sup>202</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>. 300

<sup>203</sup> Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961. 17

<sup>204</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975). 114

<sup>205</sup> John William Reps, *The Making of Urban America: a History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). 427

<sup>206</sup> John William Reps, *The Making of Urban America: a History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). 427

<sup>207</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xiii

<sup>208</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xiv

University and Law graduate, who was commissioned by the city of New York to investigate European building laws and ordinances to inform the Heights of Building commission in New York City.<sup>209</sup> Edward H. Bouton oversaw the development of the Roland Park community in Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>210</sup> Edward H. Bennett, a native of England, worked with D.H. Burnham to develop city plans in San Francisco, Chicago, Portland, Minneapolis, and Brooklyn among others.<sup>211</sup> Arthur C. Comey graduated from Harvard before creating city plans in Houston and Detroit. E.P. Goodrich was a civil engineer for the United States Navy and served on planning commissions in Los Angeles, Manhattan and Newark.<sup>212</sup> Many other contemporaries contributed to the remodeling of cities around the world, but John Nolen is recognized alongside the most established twentieth century urban planners. Nolen was born in Philadelphia in 1869 and studies at the University of Pennsylvania and at Harvard before beginning professional practices in Cambridge, Massachusetts.<sup>213</sup> Nolen noted his support for use of powers like eminent domain, “As long as city planning control over private property is pursued in this democratic, modest, common-sense spirit, there is no vital danger to be feared even from wholly unprecedented applications of police power.”<sup>214</sup> Nolen and the city planners affirmed the new emphasis on efficiency and use of state power to redress social ills. City surveys were the tools by which

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<sup>209</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xv

<sup>210</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xv

<sup>211</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xv

<sup>212</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xvii

<sup>213</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). xiv

<sup>214</sup> John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929). 17

underlying conditions in cities could be analyzed for physical, economic or social improvements.<sup>215</sup>

As city planners grappled with swelling urban populations during the progressive years and throughout the post WWII era, increasingly expanded state powers began supporting the consolidation of whiteness by employing criminologist Edwin Sutherland's suggestion to eliminate European nationality distinctions in arrest data.<sup>216</sup> This measure granted European immigrants easier assimilation into American society, but also made African Americans a convenient demographic to villainize as harbingers of criminality.<sup>217</sup> Longstanding African American communities were overwhelmingly targeted for redevelopment during the urban renewal era, with most relocations consigning relocated residents to strategically racialized zones.<sup>218</sup> Urban spaces seized from poor communities were redistributed to private interests and ultimately served the needs of white supremacy through environmental resegregation. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from American cities like Little Rock elucidate measures and processes that urban power systems employed to systematically devalue black communities. Designated black

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<sup>215</sup> John Nolen, *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages* (New York, NY: American City Bureau, 1919). 11

<sup>216</sup> Edwin H. Sutherland and Donald R. Cressey, *Principles of Criminology* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Company, 1966), 115.

<sup>217</sup> Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), xxv.; Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), xxv.; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999).; STUART HALL, *FATEFUL TRIANGLE: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Cambridge, MA: HARVARD UNIV Press, 2017). Haney-López Ian. *White by Law the Legal Construction of Race*. Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2017.; Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): p. 1707, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787>.; Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

<sup>218</sup> UR ARK 1-1, "Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project," Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project § (1960), pp. 1-28; Dowell Naylor, "Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project," Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project § (1960), pp. 1-6.; Martha Walters, "Little Rock Urban Renewal," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 24 (March 1976): pp. 12-16.

spaces were less likely to be covered by fire insurance, making these areas justifiable targets for renewal policies.<sup>219</sup>

The National Housing Act of 1934 founded the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to insure private residential mortgages and home improvements. City leaders deemed slum eradication necessary to the goals of quality low-cost housing to improve the lives of poorer citizens. Slum clearance had great political appeal. The notion that the inner-city environment trapped the poor evoked a sympathetic response across the political spectrum. A national housing movement was forming as advocates mobilized against the spread of degenerative slums and worked to push a comprehensive housing agenda as the solution to urban ills. Congress passed United States Housing Act, known as Wagner Housing Act in 1937. New York Senator Robert Wagner who established a public housing program, was the act's namesake.<sup>220</sup> Urban housing projects were bought and supported through the 1937 federal housing act which enacted local housing authority agencies to cultivate and maintain local units. Conservative congressmen restricted eligibility to low-income residents by capping a maximum income of eligible tenants and the number of public housing units and requiring one slum area to be demolished for every public housing unit created. City officials and public business interest feared that the negativity associated with slum areas in larger cities would sully the progress of the burgeoning capital. Wealthy white Americans had long practiced forms of social distancing and racial separation in the north and the south since the country's colonial past. This process transitioned to suburban developments and quickened in the 1920s, affecting sharp decreases in land values for what once

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<sup>219</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas*. Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 2, 1939. Map. [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn00285\\_008/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn00285_008/).

<sup>220</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

was prized downtown real estate.<sup>221</sup> City planners abhorred the inefficiency in underdeveloped areas deeming these locations ‘blighted,’ it was believed that these spaces denoted further degeneration would encroach on white communities before eventually destroying the nations urban metropolises. Officials lobbied for urban redevelopment projects to help stop suburban white flight and curb the spread of slums. Clearance campaigns commenced in cities throughout the country renovating delapidated buildings, carrying out infrastructural improvements and stimulating downtown growth.<sup>222</sup>

The National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), forerunner of the National Association of Realtors (NAR), was created in 1908 and spearheaded national urban redevelopment policy throughout the 1930s.<sup>223</sup> NAR represented large real estate interests who were heavily invested in preserving urban real estate value. NAR leaders opposed public housing, fearing administrators would take the best urban redevelopment sites for low-income housing.<sup>224</sup> Commonly situated near city hubs and prime transportation, inner-city industrialized and low-income residential areas were highly in demand for factories, stores, and low rent homes. Slum proprietors did not want to lose money or be forced into selling their lands to accommodate public housing interest. Private developers had to cover demolition and renovation construction costs out of pocket, consequently few took interest to revitalize slum zones.<sup>225</sup> In 1941, NAR set to alleviate these issues by establishing metropolitan land commissions to procure slum zones using eminent domain and federal ‘write-downs’ or local government subsidies that

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<sup>221</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>222</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>223</sup> “History,” [www.nar.realtor](https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/history), accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.nar.realtor/about-nar/history>.

<sup>224</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>225</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.



sold these areas below market prices for private development. Urban redevelopment became big business from 1941 to 1948, as legislatures in 25 states passed urban redevelopment acts.<sup>226</sup> Foreshadowing the urban renewal program, the New York planning czar Robert Moses razed a nearly twenty-block wide area that housed up to 20,000 people and erected Stuyvesant Town, a modern apartment unit housing 24,000 residents.<sup>227</sup> In 1943, city leaders introduced urban redevelopment legislation in Congress. Led by city planners, the eminent Alfred Bettman authored legislation calling for a central planning body in the nation's capital to direct efforts locally.<sup>228</sup> City planners desired for large scale transformations in urban landscapes, making them hesitant to marry any long-term renewal plans with public housing initiatives. Public housing advocates effectively reasoned that federal support for urban development was not justified without rehousing' plans for the thousands of poor families displaced by slum clearance.<sup>229</sup> Importantly, they also argued that displacing poor residents further extended slums into new spaces. Public debates and conversations over housing escalated in the 1940s, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the Economic Bill of Rights in 1944 indicating his focus on adequate housing for the country. A Special Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Redevelopment in the Senate was chaired by Robert A. Taft and held extensive investigations on postwar housing. Dorothy Rosenman organized the National Committee on Housing.<sup>230</sup> The public housing debate led to the passage of the Housing Act in 1949.

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<sup>226</sup> William J Collins and Katharine L Shester, "Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal in the United States," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 5, no. 1 (January 2013): pp. 239-273, <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.5.1.239>.

<sup>227</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

<sup>228</sup> John Nolen and Alfred Bettman, "City Planning Legislation," in *City Planning: a Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1916), pp. 431-471.

<sup>229</sup> Williams, Norman. "Discrimination and Segregation in Minority Housing." *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 9, no. 1 (1949): 86-88.

<sup>230</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

The Housing Act of 1949 put the original goal of “a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family,” into law but this was a small step towards fulfilling the housing objective.<sup>231</sup> Slum redevelopment was set as national urban policy with the passage of the housing act. The act loaned \$1 billion to cities to purchase blighted areas for public or private redevelopment. \$100 million grants marked for five consecutive years to insured two-thirds of the cost on slum land values.<sup>232</sup> Other provisions in the Housing Act of 1949 invigorated existing housing programs, restarting the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937. The 1949 act capped construction costs and secured tenant incomes, also mandating local public housing rent be at least twenty percent below the lowest comparable rents in the community.<sup>233</sup> Housing authorities were tasked to demolish or renovate slum dwellings at a rate of one demolition per housing unit raised.<sup>234</sup>

The 1950s brought tens of thousands of displacement notices for the unfortunate urban families whose communities were opportunity zones for clearance and redevelopment, especially families of color. Displaced residents were met with some imbursements for the inconveniences of eminent domain, but those payments were far too insufficient for sustainable return on value lost. Insufficient notice time became a typical example of the traumatic nature of displacement, often jarring the entire livelihoods of families and communities. Consequently, urban renewal

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<sup>231</sup> “The American Housing Act of 1949 ( Pub. L. 81–171)” (Library of Congress), accessed March 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/81st-congress/session-1/c81s1ch338.pdf>.

<sup>232</sup> “The American Housing Act of 1949 ( Pub. L. 81–171)” (Library of Congress), accessed March 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/81st-congress/session-1/c81s1ch338.pdf>; Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>233</sup> “The American Housing Act of 1949 ( Pub. L. 81–171)” (Library of Congress), accessed March 2021, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/81st-congress/session-1/c81s1ch338.pdf>; Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>234</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

projects were early protest grounds for the civil rights movement. Residents, organizers and allies objected the disproportional displacement of minorities through targeted renewal.<sup>235</sup> Groups including the Congress of Racial Equality organized in communities like Cleveland, Ohio to combat the destruction and forced displacement of communities.<sup>236</sup> Articulated goals of urban progress concealed deeper motivations of local elites, whose redevelopment agenda exacted terrible costs for poor and working-class families. Billions of dollars flowed throughout urban redevelopment projects, drawing a stark contrast to the grave economic impact on displaced communities.

Federal government guarantees of nearly \$13 billion in grants to over a thousand different cities altogether displaced a third of a million families.<sup>237</sup> New studies outlined the massive scale of these urban renewal developments, a majority of which were in cities with less than 50,000 occupants. Many southern cities that implemented redevelopment projects had small percentages of black and brown populations but crushingly relocated the majority of those communities. People of color comprised nearly all of the 1,300 displaced in Lubbock, Texas despite representing only eight percent of the town population.<sup>238</sup> Situations mirrored these conditions in cities across the south. African American neighborhoods in towns of all sizes were targeted for renewal at uneven rates. These appropriated spaces were often re-purposed for private interest or to make way for highways in the generation to come.

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<sup>235</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, "Renewing Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=-1/0/1&viz=cartogram&text=about>.

<sup>236</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, "A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

<sup>237</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, "Renewing Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=-1/0/1&viz=cartogram&text=about>.

<sup>238</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, "Renewing Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=-1/0/1&viz=cartogram&text=about>.

Urban renewal was more than simply land redevelopment. In many ways' redevelopment programs revitalized American cities, the post-World War II industrial and economic engines of national power. However, Cold War ideology also shaped urban renewal policy. Containment ideology was used to control the spread of communism abroad and informed domestic urban renewal policies to curb the growing civil rights movements in American cities and maintain traditional customs and sociopolitical interest. James W. Follin, federal commissioner for the Urban Renewal Administration connected urban renewal to Cold War society in 1955, "slums and blight, like an octopus, have fastened their tentacles on the vital parts of most of our cities...it is the same in Washington, New Orleans, New York, and Louisville. It is not different either in Miami, Austin, San Antonio, and Durham."<sup>239</sup> The massive governmental project urban renewal and use of eminent domain empowered elites to rebuild American cities to their own interest. Urban renewal transformed ideas about who cities were made to accommodate, redefinitions of public good and what city residents understood about spatial context.<sup>240</sup>

### **Urban Renewal in Arkansas**

Wartime mobilization heightened the effects of urban migration in Arkansas. Nearly two-hundred thousand Arkansans served in the armed forces during World War II. West Ninth Street

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<sup>239</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, "Renewing Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=-1/0/1&viz=cartogram&text=about>.

<sup>240</sup> Critical responses to urban renewal policies evaluated prospects for urban advancement against the cost of displacement for urban renewal programs. James Hurley's "The Urban Renewal Architect: Dr. Purist and Mr. Compromise" analyzed urban renewal planning and power dynamics using fictive divinities to demonstrate how systems of power function in urban spaces. Frederick Gutheim contended in "Urban Space and Urban Design," that urban design knowingly and unknowingly shapes social psychology and city planning measures resonate or repel based on human inclinations of justice and harmony. Jane Jacobs *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* provided among the most thorough critiques of urban renewal development. Jacobs challenged outdated theories of urban design articulating their basis in disinformation disseminated by and between interloping power systems. Common criticisms of urban renewal programs assert that redevelopment policies do not consider the substantial changes to social structures in and outside of the affected areas. Consequently, gentrification is an example of this common oversight of urban renewal programs that exclude poorer people from neighborhoods.

featured a United Service Organization club location for black soldiers.<sup>241</sup> Urbanization in Arkansas towns and cities exhibited the magnitude of national housing issues which continued throughout the wartime era. By 1945, Little Rock was the most densely populated southern city.<sup>242</sup> Funding opportunities in the Wagner Act motivated the state General Assembly to authorize local housing authority offices to access the available aid.<sup>243</sup> The Americanization of Arkansas increased during the World War II era. Governor Benjamin Travis Laney favored business and efficiency, he rationalized distribution of tax revenue and encouraged more responsibility among state legislatures. Laney's successor Governor Sidney McMath proposed new progressive economic developments, enhanced public schools and racially moderate perspectives.<sup>244</sup> McMath positioned himself politically as a southern moderate. He was moved by the stories of black veterans returning home to face violence and lynchings. McMath urged the elimination of poll taxes and called for an end to segregated interstate travel as well as fair access to job opportunities.<sup>245</sup> Very early in life, he learned empathy towards the struggles of African Americans from his mother. By 1948 McMath would be pressed on his position regarding black issues by political opponents, set on proving McMath was soft on the Negro question.<sup>246</sup> White Arkansans fought amongst themselves over a variety of social, economic, geographical and political reasons racial solidarity was one of the most uniting factors.<sup>247</sup> Urban renewal in the

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<sup>241</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 60

<sup>242</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 61

<sup>243</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 61

<sup>244</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 93

<sup>245</sup> Brown, Robert L. *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010. 7

<sup>246</sup> Brown, Robert L. *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010. 10

<sup>247</sup> James E. Lester, *A Man for Arkansas: Sid McMath and the Southern Reform Tradition* (Little Rock, AR: Rose Pub. Co., 1976). 66

state was most palpable in spaces like Little Rock, where the goals and strategies of business and economic development converged with older desires to maintain white supremacy in the face of growing change.

### **Urban Renewal in Little Rock**

Urban renewal projects began with the passage of the federal housing act of 1949 and was designed to organize the redevelopment of land in urban areas. City leaders promised African Americans in Little Rock was that they would improve living conditions, eradicate poor housing to be replaced with modern standardized housing units. However, Little Rock's white planners used urban renewal to segregate the races and delineate their desired relocation areas for black populations. Director of the newly commissioned Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA) B. Finley Vinson admitted as much, noting that the city housing authority and other agencies systematically worked to continue segregation.<sup>248</sup> The LRHA threatened owners with eviction in targeted areas like the Dunbar, Granite Mountain and West Rock communities, which sharply reduced West Ninth's Street's economic viability.<sup>249</sup> Housing units for black residents were placed near the edge of city limits. City officials also accepted plans to build an east-west expressway through downtown, one street from West Ninth Street.<sup>250</sup> Historians have speculated the associations concerning urban renewal agencies and the Arkansas Highway Transportation Department and expressed suspicions about the timing of the expressway's construction and urban renewal. Which will comprise the bulk of the research in the following chapter. Much of the downtown land necessary for the expressway construction was purchased and cleared by the

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<sup>248</sup> John Kirk, "Housing, Urban Development, and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the Post-Civil Rights Era South," *Souls* 8, no. 1 (January 2006): pp. 47-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999940500516967>.

<sup>249</sup> John Kirk, "Housing, Urban Development, and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the Post-Civil Rights Era South," *Souls* 8, no. 1 (January 2006): pp. 47-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999940500516967>.

<sup>250</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rock's West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 85

urban renewal programs.<sup>251</sup> Little Rock's urban renewal programs were celebrated and remodeled nationally. Robert Kennedy acknowledged the legally sanctioned nature of these community assaults in a 1967 speech, declaring that efforts to change the laws which supported urban renewal had been unsuccessful.<sup>252</sup>

Longstanding African American communities were overwhelmingly targeted for redevelopment during the urban renewal era, with most relocations in Little Rock consigned to strategically racialized zones.<sup>253</sup> The Wagner Act proposed to protect the best interest of low-income families by securing decent, safe and sanitary housing. As Ira Katznelson intimated, demand in the war years limited black access to standardized housing units like Sunset Terrace and Highland Court in the state capital.<sup>254</sup> Urbanization stimulated new African American movements. Wartime tumult thrust a new generation of black leaders to challenge the southern racial orders. In contrast to their adaptability in the face of economic change, white business and political leaders responded to the emerging civil rights agendas with stubborn resistance.<sup>255</sup> Little Rock voters approved measures to construct a park for black residents in February 1949, but black citizens did not agree on the value of the project. L.C. and Daisy Bates editor owners of the State Press newspaper were averse to developing the Gillam Park location and a city council postponed construction pending federal urban renewal funding. Little Rock historian John Kirk

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<sup>251</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rocks West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 85-86; Martha Walters, "Little Rock Urban Renewal," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 24 (March 1976): pp. 12-16.

<sup>252</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rocks West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003). 85

<sup>253</sup> UR ARK 1-1, "Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project," Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project § (1960), pp. 1-28; Dowell Naylor, "Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project," Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project § (1960), pp. 1-6.; Martha Walters, "Little Rock Urban Renewal," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 24 (March 1976): pp. 12-16.

<sup>254</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006).

<sup>255</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 82

affirmed that using federal funding for renewal projects like Gillam Park signaled the start of white expansion to the west and black confinement in the eastern sections.<sup>256</sup>

Business and professional elites governed the political and economic life of Little Rock. Elizabeth Jacoway identified nearly thirty-two men who held interlocking leadership roles in municipal reform, industrial recruitment and civic organizations.<sup>257</sup> At the same time, an urban managerial campaign was reinforcing older policies that produced racially divided neighborhoods.<sup>258</sup> Fifteen months before Little Rock Central High School was desegregated, the established elites and segregationists worked closely to halt the impending social changes.<sup>259</sup>

Martha Walters published a social study entitled *Little Rock Urban Renewal*, in 1976 while a graduate student at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Department of History.<sup>260</sup> Walters reported the historical connections behind Little Rock's urban renewal projects, which were initiated by the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act and further entrenched by the Federal Housing Act of 1949.<sup>261</sup> These acts sanctioned federal resources to predetermine areas for urban renewal. Walters' illuminated the processes of post-War urban renewal plans intended to devalue poorer, mostly black communities for repurchase by city officials in the newly founded LRHA, part of the larger federal program of Local Housing Authorities (LHA). Walters' appealed to moral concerns over renewal, questioning if the results of city urban

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<sup>256</sup> John Kirk, "The Roots of Little Rock's Segregated Neighborhoods," *Arkansas Times*, July 10, 2014.

<sup>257</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 133

<sup>258</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 133; Michael Pierce, "The City Manager System and the Collapse of Racial Moderation in Little Rock, 1955-1957," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* LXXVIII, no. 2 (2019): pp. 166-205.

<sup>259</sup> Michael Pierce, "The City Manager System and the Collapse of Racial Moderation in Little Rock, 1955-1957," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* LXXVIII, no. 2 (2019): pp. 166-205.

<sup>260</sup> Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

<sup>261</sup> Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).



renewal projects justified the means of mass displacement. Walters identified the demographics behind urban displacement, using this information to critically assess federal and state housing objectives. The LHA and LRHA's stated objectives were first, to eliminate unsafe and unsanitary housing; second, to eradicate slums; finally, to provide decent, safe and sanitary residences for low-income families. Walters clarified these vague descriptions by revealing the renewal plan objectives to mainly impact poor, mostly black migrants, formerly sharecroppers and rural laborers.<sup>262</sup>

Walter's revealed that the extreme nature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century urban housing crisis in cities like Little Rock, reflected larger national issues of housing and urban development. Her concluding tone and word choice was revealing, especially assertions that urban renewal was heavily criticized by blacks and whites resulting from questionable use of cleared land, "many poor people have been uprooted from the only environment they have ever known and become lost in the shuffle."<sup>263</sup> This statement justified the protests over urban renewal from black citizens whose traditional communities were primarily displaced. Walters also noted, "too often their [poor blacks] land has been bought, renewed, and established usage or designated as an area for middle class and upper income groups." She continued, "apartments and homes in these areas are far out of reach of persons with low-incomes, the very people uprooted in the first place."<sup>264</sup> Walters called to question the ethics of Little Rock's urban renewal plan, which was crystalized

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<sup>262</sup> Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

<sup>263</sup> Martha Walters, Little Rock Urban Renewal, The Pulaski County Historical Review, March 1976, accessed March 2018.; Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

<sup>264</sup> Martha Walters, Little Rock Urban Renewal, The Pulaski County Historical Review, March 1976, accessed March 2018.; Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

by the construction of U.S. Interstate 630 through the heart of the capital city to reify these new intentionally segregated city development plans.<sup>265</sup>

Recontextualizing the legacies of New Deal and federal urban renewal policies help ground these seemingly disparate administrative responses under the framework of evolving efforts to control and maneuver black communities. The speed and far-reaching impact of New Deal policies inspired city officials to reconsider the federal government as a tool to serve private interest and maintain white supremacy through racial segregation. Throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Black migration and urbanization foreshadowed the demise of legal segregation, substantiating fears among white America over the future of urban black geographies. Responding to these anxieties, city leaders seized control over social changes through public policy. Repercussions of the relationship between urban renewal, segregation especially in education, and interstate construction will be discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>265</sup> Airic Hughes, “Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock,” *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

### **Chapter Three –Dividing the City 'Desegregation and Freeway Development'**

“If you have the money, plus the will and desire to do it, then you have all the ingredients there and control of the levers of power to make sure it gets done.” – John A. Kirk

Politicians and city leaders across the nation actively fought to remain in control of the extensive social changes occurring during the post-World War II era. Urban renewal transformed American cities and the migrations of laborers into urban areas increased reliance on local, state and federal governments to bring order to this uncertain time. The eyes of the world were attentive to the plight of African Americans during the rapidly changing twentieth century. Black agricultural and industrial laborers worked alongside international labor unions, which often held philosophically different economic views of class systems, to redress economic and legal oppression in the United States.<sup>266</sup> Rising nativist sentiments throughout the twentieth century were deeply intertwined with disdain the international element of labor unions and associations with terrorism and anarchy. Anxieties over collaboration between black workers and foreign influenced labor movements continued well into the 1960s.<sup>267</sup> German military forces openly campaigned to African American soldiers fighting in Europe on the basis of their inhumane and second-class status in America.<sup>268</sup> The nation’s response to internal pushes for black freedom and

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<sup>266</sup> International Workers of the World General Defense Committee, “Bylaws of the General Defense Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World,” October 5, 1917.; “A Brief History of Labor, Race and Solidarity.” Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice. American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, January 13, 2017. <https://racial-justice.aflcio.org/blog/est-aliquid-se-ipsam-flagitiosum-etiamsi-nulla>.; Robert Whitaker, *On the Laps of Gods: the Red Summer of 1919 and the Struggle for Justice That Remade a Nation* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 2009).

<sup>267</sup> Clive Webb and Jeff Woods, “Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2004): p. 335, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40038285>.; “A Brief History of Labor, Race and Solidarity,” Labor Commission on Racial and Economic Justice (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, January 13, 2017), <https://racial-justice.aflcio.org/blog/est-aliquid-se-ipsam-flagitiosum-etiamsi-nulla>.

<sup>268</sup> Carter Boehm, *GERMAN PROPAGANDA LEAFLET FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS*, photograph (Washington D.C., n.d.), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection.

civil rights brought renewed international scrutiny during the cold war era. The gravity and growing pains of postwar social and economic change were reflected most in the desegregation of American education and the development of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

### **Desegregating American Education**

Education was one of a few focused areas that early twentieth century civil rights activists decided to target segregation through court litigations. Dismantling the 1896 *Plessy v Ferguson* case required such strategic planning because of the invasive nature of segregations, especially in the southern states. *Plessy* legalized segregation across the board and southern officials and business leaders used every tool at their disposal to maintain this separation in the face of urbanization and wholesale social reordering. Prior to the monumental *Brown v Board of Education* decision, national efforts to lead desegregation in education were headed by organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was largely created to challenge the legality of segregation in American courts in areas of education, voting, transportation and housing. Since its inception the NCAAP worked to void *Plessy* decision and commissioned reports to analyze the state of black education for evidence to document the inequalities in American schools.<sup>269</sup> Studies indicated that despite obvious inequities, desegregating primary and secondary education in the 1930s would require patience and tedious, skillful planning and still may ultimately not render a reversal of the *Plessy* decision.<sup>270</sup> Charles Hamilton Houston, Harvard Law graduate and eventual Dean of the Howard

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<sup>269</sup> Nathan Margold, "Preliminary Report to the Joint Committee Supervising the Expenditure of the 1930 Appropriation by the American Fund for Public Service" (New York City, NY: NAACP, 1930), pp. 1-218, [www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-great-depression.html#obj1](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-great-depression.html#obj1).

<sup>270</sup> Nathan Margold, "Preliminary Report to the Joint Committee Supervising the Expenditure of the 1930 Appropriation by the American Fund for Public Service" (New York City, NY: NAACP, 1930), pp. 1-218, [www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-great-depression.html#obj1](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-great-depression.html#obj1).

University Law School, was instrumental in organizing the NAACP strategy to attack Jim Crow in education. Houston believed the likelihood for a successful Supreme Court ruling was better in higher and professional education, because of the glaring inequalities, lack of institutional options, as well as the leverage of financial costs for delivering on the but equal part of the *Plessy* ruling.<sup>271</sup> The NAACP supported desegregating higher education especially in southern states where there was no pretense of equality. In 1943 no Deep South states had graduate or professional schools for African American students, but the lack of general applicants to these levels of education provided further confidence for NAACP strategists.<sup>272</sup> NAACP legal efforts secured early victories in cases against the University of Maryland, University of Missouri, University of Oklahoma, University of Texas, so that by 1950 segregation in higher education was all but illegal.<sup>273</sup>

Southerners ominously understood the ramifications for the future of segregated primary and secondary schooling and began works to equalize K-12 education in advance of a major supreme court mandate. Southern fears were realized when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of Oliver Brown in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka case. Separate but equal was struck down as unconstitutional and segregation was no longer legal in public education in America, however segregation was still pervasive in many other aspects of daily life and importantly, the 1954 *Brown* ruling did not define a clear timetable for desegregation.<sup>274</sup> In a second *Brown* decision on May 31, 1955 federal courts refused request to expedite desegregation.<sup>275</sup> School districts and state governments proceeded with desegregation at their

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<sup>271</sup> *Road to Brown* (California Newsreel, 1990), <http://newsreel.org/video/THE-ROAD-TO-BROWN>.

<sup>272</sup> *Road to Brown* (California Newsreel, 1990), <http://newsreel.org/video/THE-ROAD-TO-BROWN>.

<sup>273</sup> *Road to Brown* (California Newsreel, 1990), <http://newsreel.org/video/THE-ROAD-TO-BROWN>.

<sup>274</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005).

<sup>275</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005).

own deliberate pace, allowing for coordination of the Southern Manifesto questioning the legality of federally imposed integration decision by political leaders and concerted massive resistance to the *Brown* order.<sup>276</sup> While not all southerners violently opposed forced integration, southern political conservatives and local officials harmonized the racial, political and economic motivations arousing resistance to *Brown* with existential importance.<sup>277</sup> South Carolina Lieutenant Governor expressed the economic racial and political intersections of desegregation for southerners in May of 1956 when he stated, “we are not going to have labor unions, the NAACP and New England politicians blemish the southern way of life.”<sup>278</sup> The first Citizen’s Councils were founded in southern states immediately after the first *Brown* ruling, with a primary mission to lawfully stop school integrations.<sup>279</sup> Groups like the Citizens Councils demonstrated another local apparatus to coordinate key individuals from all corners of society who were commonly interested in maintaining segregation and white supremacy. Mass marches, sit-ins, and violence during the civil rights movement stoked concerns, prompting white women segregationist to further push white supremacy in education at the home, community and state levels.<sup>280</sup> The Mississippi Historical Society called for a new history program in public schools and the state Association of Citizens’ Councils used state funding to host an essay contest through the State Sovereignty Commission.<sup>281</sup> The winning essay for 1960 was submitted by

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<sup>276</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005).; Gillespie Elizabeth. McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). 126

<sup>277</sup> James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society: 1877-1984* (Kentucky, KY: University Press, 1984).152 ; Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005). 126-132

<sup>278</sup> Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South during the 1950's* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1999). 244

<sup>279</sup> James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society: 1877-1984* (Kentucky, KY: University Press, 1984).152-153

<sup>280</sup> Gillespie Elizabeth. McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). 192-194

<sup>281</sup> Gillespie Elizabeth. McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). 192-194

Mary Rosalind Healy and entitled, “Why I Believe in the Social Separation of the Races of Mankind.”<sup>282</sup> Responses by white women and segregationist groups alike would influence the growth of urban infrastructural projects intended to achieve the common segregationist objectives.

Social transformations onset by federal support from President Johnson reflected successful desegregation in American schools and increased southern anxieties over abilities to resist. School districts failing to comply received harsh sanctions from justice department civil rights lawyers crippling local schools’ ability to function without desegregating.<sup>283</sup> Government enforcement of the *Brown* decisions halted after 1969 with the election of President Richard Nixon, who compelled to white voters by opposing school busing laws on grounds that forced integration was occurring too rapidly.<sup>284</sup> Nixon was elected fifteen years after the initial *Brown I & II* decisions, but still echoed mainstream white sentiments of a rushed integration process imposed onto southern by federal powers. This motif was reinforced by the Supreme Court decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, which outlined post-*Brown* bussing schemes an appropriate means of achieving desegregation.<sup>285</sup> Public schools in the 1960s were starting to mirror the early successes by Charles H. Houston, Thurgood Marshall and others who planted the legal seeds to dismantle Jim Crow in higher education. The first major reaction to progress made through school bussing was the 1974 *Millikin v. Bradley* effectively shifted responsibility for enforcing desegregation in schools to the local districts to administer,

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<sup>282</sup> Gillespie Elizabeth. McRae, *Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women and the Politics of White Supremacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020). 192-194

<sup>283</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005). 132

<sup>284</sup> Gary Orfield and David Thronson, *Dismantling Desegregation: Uncertain Gains, Unexpected Costs* (New York, NY: The New Press, 1993). 9

<sup>285</sup> *Swann*, 404 U.S. 811 (1971).; Nikole Hannah-Jones, “It Was Never About Busing,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2019.

empowering local efforts to resist integration orders. Millikin revealed that the fundamental obstacle to fully integrated schools was white suburbanization, particularly in the urban north.<sup>286</sup> Suburbanization was disastrous for integration efforts in northern cities such as Detroit but also in southern capitals such as Little Rock. Curious, though admittedly speculative chronological overlap exist for desegregation in schools and the construction of infrastructures that facilitated white flight out of American city spaces. Kevin Kruse's *White Flight* outlined the southern strategy of massive resistance by suburbanization divided the community of Peyton Forest in Atlanta, Georgia, hub for many of the New South progressives. Atlanta was a southern city that was according to mayor William Hartsfield "too busy to hate" despite a legacy of racial violence.<sup>287</sup> White Atlanta residents faced tremendous pressure from the civil rights movement and federal desegregation mandates. Formerly overt policies ensuring white supremacy would evolve through more polished and systemic measures to create white suburbia during the era of urban renewal and freeway construction. Segregation was legally re-implemented with assistance from local, state and federal resources.<sup>288</sup> *Through the Heart of the City* affirms Kruse's contentions that modern segregation, much like the peculiar institution, was a fluid experience that was most often exerted through the path of least resistance. Overt white supremacy was refined and sophisticated to fit changing urban landscapes across twentieth century America. President Nixon openly opposed bussing mandates and campaigned against opening suburban communities to African American families.<sup>289</sup> His tacit compliance in relegating desegregation to

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<sup>286</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005). 132

<sup>287</sup> Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007).

<sup>288</sup> Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007).

<sup>289</sup> Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York, NY: Norton, 2005). 133



most local of levels empowered white communities to circumnavigate the legal rulings in *Brown*. White flight hastened the end of work throughout the civil rights and social movements decades, nullifying the work towards equality in education ordered by Brown. Efforts to solidify resistance to desegregation through suburbanization were facilitated by the ever-expanding reach of America's National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

### **Desegregation and Arkansas Education**

Black Arkansans embraced the national Double V campaign during the war years and were equally engaged in the fight against segregation at home as they were in the fight against fascism abroad. Notable African American community members encouraged enlistment as a method to leverage the civil rights demanded in education and all other areas of society. As the numbers of black enlistees increased President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 outlawing discriminating employment practices in defense industries.<sup>290</sup> Mid twentieth century black leaders in Arkansas grew impatient with the tired political and social tactics used to withhold citizenship and education from their communities and began to organize local efforts around the national activity in American courts. In 1940, Pine Bluff attorney Harold Flowers created the Committee on Negro Organizations (CNO) to coordinate black organizations and end the exclusive primaries used by Arkansas Democrats to disenfranchise black communities.<sup>291</sup> U.S. Supreme court cases in Texas challenged the legality of these segregating political and educational strategies, signaling to Arkansas Governor Homer Adkins that the old social order would change in Arkansas soon.<sup>292</sup> The NAACP supported local efforts in 1942 to equalize

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<sup>290</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 376

<sup>291</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 376

<sup>292</sup> *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649 (1944); *Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629 (1950); Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 376

salaries for black educators in Little Rock through the Little Rock Classroom Teachers Association (CTA), an affiliate of the black teachers' organization the Arkansas Teachers Association (ATA).<sup>293</sup>

In 1948, the University of Arkansas enrolled World War II veteran Silas Hunt. Amidst the other integration cases in higher education occurring at campuses around the country, Arkansas admitted the first African American to a white southern university since Reconstruction with little to no national attention. Hunt was originally from Ashdown in Little River county and graduated from Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical and Normal college in 1947 (eventually University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff).<sup>294</sup> Without the resources to pay for Hunt to attend school outside of the state, university officials admitted Hunt to the law program.<sup>295</sup> Hunt was segregated from within during his time at the university and did not receive any semblance of equality while on campus. Black community members and local institutions supported Hunt until his eventual withdrawal and death from injuries sustained during wartime service.<sup>296</sup> Hunt was one of six black men to open access the university; Jackie Shropshire was the first African American to graduate, Wiley Branton became Dean of the Law School at Howard University in Washington, D.C., George Haley was eventually elected to the Kansas Senate, George Howard was the first African American appointed to the Arkansas Supreme Court, and Christopher C.

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<sup>293</sup> Jeannie M. Wayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 377

<sup>294</sup> Guerdon D. Nichols, "Breaking the Color Barrier at the University of Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1968): p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40018323>.

<sup>295</sup> Guerdon D. Nichols, "Breaking the Color Barrier at the University of Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1968): p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40018323>.

<sup>296</sup> Guerdon D. Nichols, "Breaking the Color Barrier at the University of Arkansas," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1968): p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40018323>.

Mercer worked for the state NAACP and assisted the 1957 Little Rock Central High School integration.<sup>297</sup>

The makeup of Northwest Arkansas bred for successful early integration experiences. Within days of the monumental 1954 *Brown* declaration, Bentonville Schools, Charleston Schools, and Fayetteville Schools all in Northwest Arkansas decided to integrate for the upcoming year.

Future Governor Dale Bumpers argued the logistical benefits of integration to disparate groups in Charleston, near Fort Smith and their integration occurred largely under the radar.<sup>298</sup> Black students faced significant challenges, but a relatively low black population combined with an economy generally less reliant on unskilled black labor created far different circumstances for school desegregation than will be seen elsewhere in the state.<sup>299</sup>

Preluding the visceral opposition to integration in the capital, the situation in tiny Hoxie School District in Lawrence county, in Northeast Arkansas also thrust school integration to the state political forefront. Hoxie schools vowed to comply with *Brown* in June of 1955. Integration in Hoxie went smoothly as in the northwest Arkansas schools until the district was flooded with political pressure from segregationist following a *Life* magazine article documenting the first days of integrated schools. The article entitled, “Morally Right Decision,” showed black and white children initially uncertainly encountering each other earlier in the day before documenting the children playing as they naturally do. It was widely distributed and drew the ire of segregationists across the South.<sup>300</sup> National scrutiny motivated local firebrand politicians to

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<sup>297</sup> Guerdon D. Nichols, “Breaking the Color Barrier at the University of Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1968): p. 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/40018323>; Kirk, John. “The ‘Six Pioneers’ @ UofA.” Broadcast. *Arkansas Moments*. Little Rock, Arkansas: FM 89.1 KUAR, January 9, 2018.

<sup>298</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 124

<sup>299</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 124

<sup>300</sup> “Morally Right Decision” *Life Magazine* (25 July 1955)

arouse anti-integration sentiments, but Hoxie remained integrated. Segregationists in Hoxie were unsuccessful, but their stand foreshadowed integration challenges in Little Rock in 1957.<sup>301</sup> Cold War era consciousness permeated Arkansas integration politics much the same as it did nationally. International attention drawn to integration efforts in Arkansas led to the confluence of integration movements with anti-communist rhetoric by radical segregationists, who fearmongered white citizens with impassioned, baseless racial arguments.<sup>302</sup>

Governor Sidney McMath and Governor Francis Cherry managed Arkansas in the time before and during the *Brown* decisions. McMath was a political moderate who keenly understood Arkansas' history and current changing attitudes towards segregation. While McMath employed his confederate family legacy to his political defense as most New South moderates did, he also recognized the strength of African American electorates.<sup>303</sup> McMath was pressed on issues of race and delicately navigated his progressive stances and acceptance of black support with political pressure from segregationists.<sup>304</sup> Cherry was a gubernatorial candidate with a stately presence who served as chief of the state during the *Brown* decision, but his tenure was marred by ineptness and ostracizing the political establishment which ultimately doomed him to one term.<sup>305</sup>

The 1954 gubernatorial election introduced the state's most noted figure regarding race and integration, Orval Faubus. In the campaigning months between the *Brown* decision and the 1954

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<sup>301</sup> Ben F. Johnson, III, *Arkansas in Modern America: 1930-1999* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 142-47.

<sup>302</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 126

<sup>303</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 3-14

<sup>304</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 3-14

<sup>305</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 3-14

election, Governor Cherry insisted that Arkansas would observe the new law and popular challenging candidate Faubus shared the governor's moderation. Faubus unseated Cherry and during his first term as continued in the mold of his mentor, Sid McMath. Faubus progressive reputation was tested by fate in 1957, as Arkansas became the face of massive resistance in the south.

Faubus was born in 1910 to a poor family in the Ozark regions of Madison County which shaped his progressive views. Politically he tried to avoid any confrontations regarding race.<sup>306</sup> Arkansas industries grew during Faubus's years as governor. He implemented policies to increase teacher salaries and supported education. State highways were a priority for his administration, which also significantly factored into his response to desegregation. Faubus took up conservationist causes and overhauled the state institutions dedicated to serving the mentally ill and children with developmental challenges.<sup>307</sup> During his first term as governor, Faubus appointed African Americans to state boards and he had support from the African American community in Arkansas. He was rumored to be a communist affiliate by segregationist opponents due to his early moderate positions on race.<sup>308</sup> Faubus shrewdly avoided publicly espousing his personal racial opinions until the questions of integration in Arkansas intensified in the fall of 1955. It was clear that Faubus had come to his own crossroads of race and southern political ideology.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 21-37

<sup>307</sup> Reed, Roy. "Orval Eugene Faubus (1910–1994)." In *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*. Little Rock, AR: CALS, 2011.

<sup>308</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 21-37

<sup>309</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 21-37

## Little Rock Central High School Crisis

In 1941, Daisy and Lucius Bates moved to Little Rock and started one of the early African American newspapers, the *State Press*.<sup>310</sup> Daisy was elected to serve as president for the Arkansas NAACP chapter and the Bates family helped lead local efforts to continue dismantling Jim Crow segregation.<sup>311</sup> Bates lambasted the gradualist plans to desegregate Little Rock schools, designed by city school superintendent Virgil Blossom.<sup>312</sup> Blossom's plans to integrate minimal numbers of academically gifted black students was designed to gain support from southerners wishing to forestall complete integration and with his own political aspirations in mind.<sup>313</sup> The Blossom desegregation plan paralleled city leaders efforts towards residential segregation and valued controlled integration over equity for black students.<sup>314</sup> The state set its education budget to increase by forty percent during the 1957-58 school term after Faubus conceded to segregationist policies that among other things required NAACP membership to publicly identify rosters to state officials.<sup>315</sup> By 1957 radical segregationist in the state forcefully cried for segregation to continue in schools. Local chapters of the Citizen's Council flooded Faubus offices with angry and threatening calls about the potential integration of Little Rock Central High School in the fall, and he could no longer skirt away from the demands of segregationists.<sup>316</sup> Faubus had to choose between the cautions of some state leaders to publicly

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<sup>310</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007.

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<sup>311</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 134

<sup>312</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 135

<sup>313</sup> Robert L. Brown, *Defining Moments: Historic Decisions by Arkansas Governors from McMath through Huckabee* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). 21-37

<sup>314</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 135

<sup>315</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 135

<sup>316</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 137

endorse compliance to Brown and his own fears of losing reelection to arch-segregationists.<sup>317</sup>

On September 2, Faubus deployed state National Guard to surround school and neither integrationist nor segregationist knew which side they would be used to protect. The state stood on the brink of open violence as numbers of Delta white council members and vigilante groups migrated to the city to contest the integration.<sup>318</sup> The situation escalated quickly, causing President Dwight Eisenhower to meet with Faubus in Newport, Rhode Island and confirm his decision to comply with federal laws.<sup>319</sup> Bates received word of the national guardsmen from a local reporter the night before Melba Pattillo, Jefferson Thomas, Carlotta Walls, Gloria Ray, Thelma Mothershed, Minnijean Brown, Terrance Roberts, Elizabeth Eckford and Ernest Green were set to begin school. Faubus made a television announcement that evening detailing that the guard was activated to protect against caravans of white supremacists converging on the city.<sup>320</sup> Bates recalled of the Faubus television address, He therefore declared Central High School off limits to Negroes. For some inexplicable reason he added that Horace Mann, a Negro high school, would be off limits to whites. Then, from the chair of the highest office of the State of Arkansas, Governor Orval Eugene Faubus delivered the infamous words, ‘blood will run in the streets’ if Negro pupils should attempt to enter Central High School.”<sup>321</sup> Bates revealed that Eckford’s mom was terrified by Faubus predictions and that she lived through the Carter

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<sup>317</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 138

<sup>318</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 139

<sup>319</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 139

<sup>320</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 60-61

<sup>321</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 60

lynching in 1927 as a child.<sup>322</sup> This statement profoundly captured the parents fears but also revealed the deep legacy of racial trauma in Little Rock. Bates and the families of the nine met with superintendent Blossom on the day the students were originally scheduled to begin school to prepare for the potential outbreak of violence. Bates received last minute word to cancel the integration scheduled for the following day and successfully notified all parents except Elizabeth Eckford's whose family was without a telephone.<sup>323</sup> Eckford was infamously pictured facing the fury of the mob alone before rejoining the other eight students. Dr. Benjamin Fine, education editor of the *New York Times* and Mrs. Grace Lorch, wife of a Philander Smith College professor were among those there to help the defenseless child during the violent scene.<sup>324</sup>

On Monday September 23, the nine black students who integrated Little Rock schools were solemnly congregated in Mrs. Bates home before police escorted them to the school. The police took the children, and the team of black reporters and supporters followed a different route to ensure safe arrival for the children who now faced a vicious mob of segregationists. The children were safely guided into the school, but reporters and supporters were brutally beaten by the vengeful mob of anti-integrationists.<sup>325</sup> Insufficient police support required the students to be removed from campus later that day for their protection and mobs terrorized black neighborhoods including the Bates home.<sup>326</sup> Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) president Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. closely followed the impasse between Faubus and the

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<sup>322</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 62

<sup>323</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 66

<sup>324</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 69-70

<sup>325</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 92-93

<sup>326</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 93-94



federal government, and sent a telegram to President Eisenhower urging him to “take a strong forthright stand in the Little Rock situation.” King alerted that if the federal government did not take a stand against the injustice it would “set the process of integration back fifty years. This is a great opportunity for you and the federal government to back up the longings and aspirations of millions of peoples of good will and make law and order a reality”<sup>327</sup> The following day the nine students remained away from Central High School and the city was further aroused by the announcement that President Eisenhower federalized the Arkansas National Guard units in the state.<sup>328</sup> Eisenhower committed 1,000 black and white paratroopers from 101st Airborne Division and 327<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment out of Fort Campbell, Kentucky to secure the nine students safe entry to the school. Bates remarked to a white reporter who asked if she was happy about the soldiers’ arrival, “Excited, yes, but not happy... any time it takes eleven thousand five hundred soldiers to assure nine Negro children their constitutional right in a democratic society, I can’t be happy.”<sup>329</sup> When classes ended that afternoon the bewildered students were escorted back to the Bates home, where they reflected on the meaning of their accomplishment. Ernest Green refuted any cause for celebration, when asked if he was sorry that President Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock he responded, “I’m only sorry it had to be that way.”<sup>330</sup> As a young black man who was near the same age as Emmett Till, Green vividly knew the potential price for the student’s landmark success.

Desegregating Little Rock Central High School came at a heavy cost. The nine students faced violence and ostracization all year as well as lasting emotional and family repercussions for their

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<sup>327</sup> Martin Luther King (Montgomery, Alabama, n.d.).

<sup>328</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 98-99

<sup>329</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 101

<sup>330</sup> Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir*. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007. 109

bravery. Little Rock NAACP chapter president Reverend J.C. Crenshaw and Mrs. Bates were arrested for refusing to deliver membership rosters to state officials.<sup>331</sup> Several of the students' parents were forced from their jobs or outright fired and major corporate sponsors pulled financial support from the Bates' *State Press* newspaper signaling its demise.<sup>332</sup> International attention juxtaposed the backwards integration attempts in Arkansas with the successful launch of Sputnik 1 to gain a Cold War era ideological propaganda victory. In May 1958 with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in attendance, Ernest Green participated in the Central High School commencement ceremonies as the school's first African American graduate.<sup>333</sup> Faubus sought solutions for the 1958-1959 school year and did not want to risk accruing any federal sanctions for non-compliance to the *Brown* ruling. His answer was to call a special General Assembly session to determine a best path forward to delay integration. Faubus weaponized legislation under Act 4 to shut down schools until a referendum on integration could be decided by local voters.<sup>334</sup> Governors and all-white legislatures closed individual schools and entire school districts rather than permit black student to integrate. Faubus closed public high schools in Little Rock for one year on September 15, 1958 in solidarity with massive resistance to integration, disrupting over three thousand students' access to public education.<sup>335</sup> The 'Lost Year' of 1958-1959 was a key time for organizing groups of women in particular to galvanize public support both for and against reopening city schools. In September 1958, a group of women met to form

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<sup>331</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 142

<sup>332</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 142

<sup>333</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 142

<sup>334</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 143

<sup>335</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 143

the Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools (WEC). WEC was exclusively white in membership, but the silence of business and community leaders on the matter emboldened Vivian Brewer and Adolphine Terry to publicly condemn the school closings and support school reopening under the Little Rock School District's desegregation plan.<sup>336</sup> Other groups such as the Mother's League and the Committee to Retain our Segregated Schools (CROSS) fought to counteract the work of the WEC.

As schools reopened for the new decade, it was clear that integration of public schools was the new reality and the old tactics of overt racism needed to evolve and adjust to the changing power dynamics in urban cities.<sup>337</sup> A private school campaign spread throughout central Arkansas in 1969 when the Pulaski County Special School District declared intentions to begin busing integration, prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling on the landmark busing case *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg*. State generated tax revenue helped establish separate private academies for white communities, paying teacher salaries and offering white children tuition vouchers to attend. Pulaski Academy, the capital city's first 'segregation school,' opened in 1971 with 189 students after Little Rock schools declared intent to enforce busing integration.<sup>338</sup> Enrollment at Pulaski Academy was publicly listed as open to all, but the school's first headmaster readily admitted many African American families would not be able to afford tuition.<sup>339</sup> Pulaski Academy did not enroll an African American student until 1978.<sup>340</sup> By the early 1970s busing

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<sup>336</sup> "The Women's Emergency Committee," LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE (NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, April 15, 2021), <https://www.nps.gov/people/the-women-s-emergency-committee.htm>.2

<sup>337</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 148

<sup>338</sup> Stewart, Jeffery. "The Private School Movement in Pulaski County, 1969-1979." *Pulaski County Historical Review* 64, No. 4 (Winter 2016): 122-137

<sup>339</sup> Stewart, Jeffery. "The Private School Movement in Pulaski County, 1969-1979." *Pulaski County Historical Review* 64, No. 4 (Winter 2016): 122-137

<sup>340</sup> Stewart, Jeffery. "The Private School Movement in Pulaski County, 1969-1979." *Pulaski County Historical Review* 64, No. 4 (Winter 2016): 122-137

crises increased local tensions, as white politicians and leading civic interest challenged the legality of the United States Supreme Court mandate to integrate. Busing was such an effective method of integration that it provided a prime target for the majority of white Americans who were determined their children would not share schools with large numbers of black children.<sup>341</sup> This push to maintain racial homogeny fueled the vicious cycles of white flight and suburban development, while simultaneously isolating and alienating black communities into predetermined urban spaces.

Correlated phenomena of white flight to growing suburban communities are well documented and factored significantly into the core of this study, and into the modern development of cities such as Little Rock.<sup>342</sup> Herbert Denton Jr. reported on numerous topics during his time leading the Washington Post's metro, national, and international coverage. He was one of the first black voices to connect local debates over urban renewal in Little Rock to larger conversations of equal access and American citizenship.<sup>343</sup> T.E. Patterson, the only African American on Little Rock's school board in 1969, revealed in interviews with Denton that despite previous scatterings of black and white occupants throughout the city, an "increasingly ghettoized" space was emerging.<sup>344</sup> Black residents were growing more concentrated in the city's core as white

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<sup>341</sup> Stewart, Jeffery. "The Private School Movement in Pulaski County, 1969-1979." *Pulaski County Historical Review* 64, No. 4 (Winter 2016): 122-137

<sup>342</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-Super Hoax* (USA: Doubleday, 1970); Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the United States City* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971); RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 1997). N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>343</sup> Herbert denton jr. – race issue still dogs schoos in nation, conference told February 3 1969; Herbert denton jr. – deep dilemmas back home in little rock September 5 1965

<sup>344</sup> Herbert denton jr. – race issue still dogs schoos in nation, conference told February 3 1969 16

residents resettled in newly developing suburban communities. Housing patterns reflected the power of local real estate interest and confirmed desires the of many white residents for segregation.<sup>345</sup> Denton pointed to contradictions in racial opinion surveys which indicated nine out of ten whites believed blacks ought to be able to live wherever they can afford to purchase a home. However, when asked the question a different way the same white participants believed they had the right to exclude black people from their neighborhoods at their discretion, with only four out of every ten responders strongly disagreeing.<sup>346</sup>

Denton only wrote of Little Rock's challenges to dismantling outdated systems of white supremacy in education and housing a few times, but each publication exposed the continuing problems caused by urban housing, education, and development policies. They also substantiated an understanding that local desires to determine the mobility of black and brown bodies led to strategies promoting geographical containment. Systemic infrastructural efforts encouraged further discriminatory policymaking and worsened the problems these communities already were unevenly pitted against. Urban dwellers acknowledged the uneven nature of geography and development in American cities. Food, health and wellness deserts, hyper policing resulted from of increased concentrations of vice, crime and incarceration, compounded by marginalized political, economic and educational opportunities. Such conditions are among the factors articulated by many who demonize black and brown communities in urban areas like Little Rock. Analyzing American freeways through the lens of black geographies gives clarity to the tacit meanings of freeway construction. Interstates form and inform urban black geographies,

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<sup>345</sup> Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners (City of Little Rock, September 2017), <https://www.littlerock.gov/media/3715/post-ww2-residential-context-sections-i-ii.pdf>.

<sup>346</sup> Herbert denton jr. – the paradox of change. Racial attitudes in America: trends and interpretations howard schuman, charlotte steeh and Lawrence bobo. Harvard university press 1985

ultimately revealing barriers to the fullness of American citizenship. Interstate construction was a conduit for white flight and the re-segregation of the nation's cities.

### **Interstate Construction in America**

We will briefly discuss the development of American interstates but primarily focus on the critiques generated by scholars and impacted communities alike. American interstate expansion is a twentieth century phenomenon that is foundational to our modern national existence. The Interstate System is a space on which the twentieth century American experience has played out for us all.<sup>347</sup> National System of Interstate and Defense Highway history is well documented, and the system's legacies have been chronicled and contested since the initiation of early expressway projects.<sup>348</sup> Interstate roadways are an exceptionally huge phenomenon. These technological structures revolutionized the nation in many, lasting ways. The 48,440 mile long National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, is behemoth in sheer size and capacity, ranking among the largest public works projects ever constructed.<sup>349</sup> Named after President Dwight Eisenhower, the Interstate System was originally conceived in 1944 to serve long distance traffic and as part of the national defense apparatus during Cold War hostilities.<sup>350</sup> A highway bill embracing the Interstate System was introduced in the House in 1955 and was narrowly defeated

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<sup>347</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). ix

<sup>348</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-Super Hoax* (USA: Doubleday, 1970); Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the United States City* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971); RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 1997). N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016). Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>349</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971)

<sup>350</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 7

over questions regarding financing. The following year Congressman George Hype reintroduced the 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act which passed along with a new Highway Trust Fund to alleviate financial concerns.<sup>351</sup> Federal cost sharing for highway construction was government policy since the 1920s, but the 1956 Federal Aid Highways Act increased federal support to a 90/10 ratio to encourage faster completion of interstate projects.<sup>352</sup> Maintaining the national highway program required coordination of federal and state highway officials, contractors, car manufacturers, legislators and congressmen, city planners and engineers, news and media publishers.<sup>353</sup> Urban and rural spaces are affected by federally supported primary and secondary roadways, ultimately interstates emphasized the automobile over all other modes of transportation.<sup>354</sup> Interstate System construction dominated national budget, in 1966 twice as much was spent on interstate development as was spent on all levels of education.<sup>355</sup> In the same year, the federal Bureau of Public Roads issued the “Highways and Human Values” report to better understand the toll of interstate construction on urban populations in areas including environment, housing, recreation and culture.<sup>356</sup>

### **Freeways and Urban Planning**

Early highway planners and city managers were equally invested in progressive notions of efficiency in the 1930s. In 1956, when the Federal Aid Highway Act was passed it was hailed as a human triumph over nature. Highway engineers frequently collocated new roadway projects firmly against the nation’s rivers, reordering urban dwellers lives away from the once essential

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<sup>351</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 50; Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York, NY: D.W. Brown, 1971). 15

<sup>352</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 397

<sup>353</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 4

<sup>354</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 4

<sup>355</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 7

<sup>356</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 18

waterways that served as national highways prior to the twentieth century.<sup>357</sup> Large sums of cashflow funneled through highway programs made resisting corruption an increasingly difficult task. New interstate construction spelled an unprecedented of wealth for local highway departments, Colorado's highway budget increased by \$45 million after 1956.<sup>358</sup> City planning studies were vital to the development of urban freeway projects. Federal, state and local planning committees utilized new surveying technologies and other Geographic Information Systems (GIS) datapoints including airplanes, helicopters and satellites to maximize efficiency in spatial planning.<sup>359</sup> These planning tools provided effective communications between planners and the public, but these tools often reinforced racial and patriarchal perspectives of urban design as early critics like Jane Jacobs contended.<sup>360</sup> Insights of city and freeway planning revealed sometimes similar and sometimes disparate methods of organizing and executing highway projects. In cities like New York, New Orleans and Little Rock, Highwaymen dominated the political and urban development landscape.<sup>361</sup> Highway engineers often saw themselves as urban catalysts working for the best public interests.<sup>362</sup> In November 1965, city planner and urban scholar Paul Davidoff argued that planners were more than mere technicians but were integral to the development and political process, and that their expertise should be available to

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<sup>357</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). x

<sup>358</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). xi

<sup>359</sup> A glossary of GIS terms is available in the bibliography. Grant Drawve, "Pdf" (Fayetteville, 2021).

<sup>360</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). 125-126; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961).

<sup>361</sup> Richard O. Baumbach and William E. Borah, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: a History of the Vieux Carré Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019). 30; Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

<sup>362</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York, NY: D.W. Brown, 1971). 15; Wayne Attoe and Chris Logan, *American Urban Architecture: Catalysts in the Design of Cities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989). 73



all parties in consistence with progressive era themes.<sup>363</sup> Metropolitan planning agencies considered highway construction among the most important aspects of urban development.<sup>364</sup> Thorough city planners delivered clear messages in their urban development strategies, the first being that interstate systems would do more than transport people to destinations.<sup>365</sup> Expressways had enormous potential to shape urban experiences both negatively and positively and it was city planners responsibility to take all factors into consideration.

Real estate interest had serious stakes in the placement of urban freeways. Southern landowners and business leaders used freeway construction to halt social advances and define the lines of segregation in urban spaces. This research will explore how freeways determine black geographies in the last chapter, but I use historiographical contributions from Nathan Connolly, whose work *A World More Concrete* elaborated on urban development strategies that reshaped South Florida to the designs of wealthy, white, real estate interest.<sup>366</sup> Connolly maintained that land disputes allowed aspects of Jim Crow culture to filter into the larger national policy for urban development.<sup>367</sup> U.S. Interstate 95 (I-95) effectively re-segregated south Florida, confining black populations to predetermined spaces beyond the gaze of tourists and whites embarrassed by the underbelly of American capitalism.<sup>368</sup> More importantly, racial real estate divisions generated more wealth by limiting the mobility of poor urbanites. Connolly also asserted that

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<sup>363</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 17

<sup>364</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 17

<sup>365</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 157

<sup>366</sup> N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>367</sup> N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>368</sup> N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

urban renewal projects like I-95 only could work with the support of black community leaders which willingly coordinated with local, state and federal power systems to champion these endeavors.<sup>369</sup> *A World More Concrete* exhibited significant growth in segregation historiography by showing connections between segregation and state power, a connection denied by early scholars including C. Vann Woodward.<sup>370</sup> Woodward and other segregation scholars conceded and thoroughly studied the phenomena of white flight in many works from *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* to *Making Whiteness*.<sup>371</sup>

Segregation scholarship mirrored social anxieties in the decades following the freeway generation, with analysis expressly connecting America's destiny to questions of race and urbanization.<sup>372</sup> Social anxieties and public disillusionment during the 1960s transitioned to the reemergence of conservatism in the 1970's, and new executive administrations solidified the need for state intervention to eradicate urban blight. In 1970, advisor Daniel P. Moynihan proposed a "Memorandum for the President on the Position of Negroes" to newly inaugurated president Richard Nixon, offering: "the Negro lower class must be dissolved by transforming it into a stable working class population... [it is] the low-income marginally employed, poorly educated, disorganized slum dwellers [whom] black extremists use to threaten white society with

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<sup>369</sup> Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).; N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>370</sup> C. Vann Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 213.; Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

<sup>371</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999), 95.; C. Vann Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 213.; Airic Hughes, "Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock," *Through the Heart of the City: I-630 and the Re-Segregation of Little Rock* (November 7, 2019).

<sup>372</sup> William K. TABB, *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1970), 5.

the prospects of mass arson and pillage.”<sup>373</sup> This memo presented the urban race problem as a paramount issue for the newly elected Nixon administration, who oversaw the expansion of the 1956 National System of Interstate and Defense Highways through the rehashed Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970.<sup>374</sup> This position builds upon historiographical contributions from N.B.D. Connolly, whose work *A World More Concrete* elaborated on similar urban development processes that reshaped South Florida in the interest of wealthy, white, real estate interest.<sup>375</sup> In densely populated urban areas, creating a right-of-way triggered complex social and political issues.<sup>376</sup> Other urban areas such as Los Angeles did not feature any singular highway construction figureheads but planning and implementation of interstate roadways was overseen by the city Division of Highways.<sup>377</sup> The takeaway is that freeway and interstate progress did not necessarily look the same locally or regionally, but federal activation united many of the loosely tied highway development efforts. The Division of Highways assumed responsibility for the disruptions and displacement of Angelenos to project a sense of objectiveness and progress for freeway construction rather than personal ambitions.<sup>378</sup> Coalitions of acronymic organizations, such as the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), Associated General Contractors (AGC), Automobile Manufacturers Association (AMA), American Road Builders Association (ARBA), Automotive Safety Foundation (ASF), American Trucking Association

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<sup>373</sup> “‘69 Moyihan Memo to the President Urged Jobs for Negroes,” The New York Times, March 1, 1970, p. 1, and “Text Memorandum for the President, by Daniel P. Moynihan, counselor to President Nixon, on the position of Negroes

<sup>374</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971), vii.

<sup>375</sup> N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

<sup>376</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 159

<sup>377</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). 199-200

<sup>378</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). 199-200

(ATA), Highway Research Board (HRB), and National Highway Users Conference are among the national entities that collaborate to influence federal interstate system policies.<sup>379</sup> For that reason these separate institutional and governing entities managed planning and operations for metropolitan transportation, state road agencies worked closely with the federal Bureau of Public Roads.<sup>380</sup> Highway agencies in cities like Boston were staffed with engineers that many times lacked any educational credentials, consequently the professional aptitude of highway departments was contingent upon the acumen of highway agency staff.<sup>381</sup> The 1956 Federal Aid Highway Act opened funding for cities from Boston to Los Angeles to receive up to ninety percent federal funding for highway construction and eminent domain.<sup>382</sup> Once cities were able to access federal funding, local politics often determined where interstate roadways were built, and acquire private property for public use.<sup>383</sup> Each mode of transportation has its own political arena and conflicts between local and state powers sometimes functioned for urban dwellers as if transportation needs were the only concern for engineers and city planners.<sup>384</sup>

An increasingly discussed aspect of American freeways is the psychological impact beyond their imposing and intrusive physical dimensions.<sup>385</sup> One psychological dynamic revealed by freeway scholars was the propensity of interstate projects to perpetuate ‘othering’ in urban spaces. In a 1965 editorial from Carey McWilliams of *The Nation*, historian Eric Avila confirmed the way

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<sup>379</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 301

<sup>380</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 157-159

<sup>381</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 179

<sup>382</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 14

<sup>383</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). 331

<sup>384</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 186

<sup>385</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

infrastructure developments promote othering, “Los Angeles is a comfortable city, psychologically as well as physically, because the unpleasant can be kept in its place—at a safe distance from most of the people.”<sup>386</sup>

In many cities, the highway blocked pedestrian movement and cut off social interactions.

Churches, schools, businesses, parks and residences alike were leveled to clear room for the highways, eviscerating the social fabric in thriving non-white neighborhoods and erasing all aspects of community and connection.<sup>387</sup> The Eisenhower Interstate System was conceived as part of the domestic Cold War and offered city leaders a way to revitalize cities the industrial and economic engines of American global power. Cold War culture shaped urban renewal and interstate construction in other ways. As James W. Follin, the Commissioner of the federal Urban Renewal Administration explained in 1955 drawing upon a Cold War metaphor, “slums and blight, like an octopus, have fastened their tentacles on the vital parts of most of our cities...it is the same in Washington, New Orleans, New York, and Louisville. It is not different either in Miami, Austin, San Antonio, and Durham.”<sup>388</sup> The sheer scale of federal subsidies and eminent domain powers enabled elites to completely re-imagine their cities' urban fabric. In Cleveland, the Congress of Racial Equality protested the destruction of communities and the forced displacement of families and individuals.<sup>389</sup> Urban renewal and Interstate System construction did much more than redevelop cities across the country, it changed who cities were made for and what residents understood about spatial context.

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<sup>386</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 213

<sup>387</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). 179

<sup>388</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, “Renewing Inequality,” *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=-1/0/1&viz=cartogram&text=about>.

<sup>389</sup> Alexander von Hoffman, “A Study in Contradictions: The Origins and Legacy of the Housing Act of 1949,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): pp. 299-326, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521370>.

## Freeway Revolts in America

In the decades following the 1950's, new generations of scholars gave voice to the contentious national freeway revolt movement, chronicling the arguments and passionate resistance to interstate construction that occurred in many cities and on a variety of positions. Their analysis offered perspectives ranging from evaluations of the interstate system as an unfulfilled promise to interpretations of the interstate system as modern manifest destiny.<sup>390</sup> Consistent themes rose from these early critiques, including the use of urban growth forecasting and calculation models to justify clearly discriminatory route selections that overwhelmingly displaced poor black urbanites, the recognition of freeway's tendencies to re-segregate urban spaces, mixed responses from affected communities with sides taken both for and against construction, and the coordination of white power systems that united to implement freeway programs in many urban locations and with varying levels of success.<sup>391</sup>

American communities won and lost battles against the expanding national interstate system. One stipulation of the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act required every highway department to hold public hearings for any federally funded highway projects to consider their long-term economic impact.<sup>392</sup> Today we have deeper context to how urban life fundamentally transformed during freeway age. Early conventional narratives reported on the freeway construction and revolt eras, thoroughly chronicling a spectrum of conventional perspectives concerning urban political struggle.<sup>393</sup> Post-war jubilation validated everything American, and there were few

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<sup>390</sup> Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-Super Hoax* (USA: Doubleday, 1970); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 1997).

<sup>391</sup> RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019)

<sup>392</sup> The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 (PL 627, 29 June 1956); Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-- Superhoax* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1971). 51

<sup>393</sup> Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975); Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-Super Hoax* (USA: Doubleday, 1970);, Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the United States City* (Boston: Little, Brown,

things that better represented the country during the twentieth century than automobiles and freeways.<sup>394</sup> Automobiles became indispensable as principle mediums for inter-metro travel and instruments of personal freedom.<sup>395</sup> Critics like Jane Jacobs vehemently argued that automobiles and car culture-parking lots, gas stations, drive-ins, etc.- were the crux of what was destroying the human and organic fabric of American cities.<sup>396</sup> The 1960s and 1970s brought new critical perspectives on everything from foreign policy to gasoline dependence, to how roads impacted environments and divided communities.<sup>397</sup> Analyzing the ordering of American cities, Aaron Fleisher observed, “at the other end of relevance are the possible devices that will replace or separate people or move them and their products.”<sup>398</sup> The multifaceted technological use of American interstates was not lost on the freeway revolt generation. Fresh insights reframed the experiences of impacted residents, delving beyond the public taglines of progress and imagery of poor black individuals and families relocating to ‘standard’ housing facilities that filled urban renewal propaganda in numerous cities.<sup>399</sup> Critics argued that new freeway systems undercut economic growth by embracing mass-transportation, drawing consumers and producers away from urban markets.<sup>400</sup> Americans were essentially critical and embarrassed of freeways in the

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1971); Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971); RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 1997).

<sup>394</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). xiv

<sup>395</sup> Melvin Webber, *Cities and Space: Future Use of Urban Land*, ed. Lowden Wingo (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1963).

<sup>396</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). 338

<sup>397</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). xiv

<sup>398</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *The Architect and the City Papers from the ALA-ACSA Teacher Seminar, Cranbrook Academy of Art, June 11 - 22, 1962* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966).

<sup>399</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). x

<sup>400</sup> Melvin Webber, *Cities and Space: Future Use of Urban Land*, ed. Lowden Wingo (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1963). 16

1980s.<sup>401</sup> Deep-seated beliefs that postwar highway construction was a state sanctioned assault on minority urban communities was eloquently affirmed in the generations since the freeway scholars' early critiques.<sup>402</sup> Southern cities like Atlanta, Georgia, Little Rock, Arkansas and Nashville, Tennessee demonstrated a "racial double standard" in highway planning. Local and state officials in Nashville openly admitted so when pressed by the *Saturday Evening Post* about the route selections for U.S. Interstate 40 (I-40).<sup>403</sup> Congressional highway committees were overwhelmed with protests from "groups that ordinarily have little in common on other public issues."<sup>404</sup> Freeway revolt generations, residents and planners alike understood that highways had tremendous power to divide or unite, and to transform vibrant urban communities into impersonal and unforgiving colonies of confinement.<sup>405</sup> This power was wielded to uproot long established black cultural and economic stability in Little Rock and urban spaces around the country, re-establishing a social order based on the desires of affluent white private interests. New clashes arose between environmentalist and urban developers in the 1960s. Conflicts over freeways took on existential nature for many communities, not unlike the native Americans whose lives were uprooted from the same spaces a century before. When Interstate System development reached city centers, urban dwellers protested, organized, marched and even sued to fight the "concrete and steel monsters" anyway possible.<sup>406</sup> As militant resistance grew in

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<sup>401</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). xiv

<sup>402</sup> N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).; Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007).

<sup>403</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971), 99; Richard Whalen, "The American Highway: Do We Know Where We're Going?," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 1968.

<sup>404</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971), 113

<sup>405</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). x

<sup>406</sup> Richard O. Baumbach and William E. Borah, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: a History of the Vieux Carré Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019). xxxv



cities around the nation, protests and agitation unveiled the practice of targeted route selections for many freeway projects.<sup>407</sup> Neighborhoods from Boston to Los Angeles responded to this assault by developing distinct cultures that are in direct relationship to the freeway structure. These broadly defined cultural expressions including, but not limited to art, literature, photography, graffiti, murals, theatres, oral history, poetry, sculpture and film, all reflect intimate knowledge of the freeway structure itself and its greater impression on urban communities.<sup>408</sup> Freeway culture remains a plausible reification of community responses to such traumatic and enervating impositions as eminent domain and highway construction. Local, state and federal governments undeniably used urban renewal and highway construction specifically to execute the agendas of their monied interest, exacerbating many of the crises progressive urban policies were intended to solve.

### **Interstate Construction in Arkansas**

Roadway construction and education have shared a tenuous relationship throughout Arkansas history. Road reforms were part of the 1920s state reform initiatives, however until the 1950s paved highways were a rare amenity in the state.<sup>409</sup> Flooding in 1927 prompted U.S. Commerce Secretary to send direct relief to refugees, consequently federal officials believed responsibility for road upkeep and expansion lay with the individual states.<sup>410</sup> The Arkansas Highway Department managed over 11,000 miles of highways by 1959, nearly one quarter of which were

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<sup>407</sup> Richard O. Baumbach and William E. Borah, *The Second Battle of New Orleans: a History of the Vieux Carré Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019). Xxxv;

<sup>408</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>409</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 156

<sup>410</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 156

unpaved gravel roads.<sup>411</sup> Early advances in state transportation development was spurred by entrepreneurship, Sam M. Walton and John Tyson who avidly supported state highway development.<sup>412</sup> Racial advancements in American education during the 1950's motivated evolutions in strategies and approaches for modern urban planners, revealing a growing need for infrastructural support to combat sweeping social changes occurring throughout this tumultuous era. As the state Highway Department worked to modernize Arkansas roadways, they also lobbied to join the newly created National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.<sup>413</sup> The first interstate in Arkansas was a stretch of bypass in West Memphis constructed in 1952, by the mid-1950s lanes for U.S. Interstate 30 (I-30) were completed between Little Rock and Benton.<sup>414</sup> Efforts to connect I-30 from Little Rock to Texarkana, I-40 from Fort Smith to Oklahoma and U.S. Interstate 55 (I-55) from West Memphis to Missouri.<sup>415</sup> U.S. Interstate 540 (I-540 , now I-49) in northwest Arkansas, and U.S. Interstate 430 (I-430) in western Little Rock. Ninety-one percent of Arkansas roadways were new constructions, and seventy seven percent of all Arkansans now lived within fifty miles of federal interstates.<sup>416</sup> Interstate development in Little Rock came to dominate the rhythms and social understandings for the city itself.

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<sup>411</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 397

<sup>412</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 397

<sup>413</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 397

<sup>414</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 397

<sup>415</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 398

<sup>416</sup> Jeannie M. Whayne, *Arkansas: a Narrative History* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2002). 398

## Wilber's Wall Divides Little Rock

White migration out of the central city to western suburbs was accelerated by the Little Rock's prominent role in desegregating public schools.<sup>417</sup> Millions in federal funding were used to geographically and racially divide the capital city. 41,000 whites moved from east to west of the city while 17,000 blacks, over forty percent of the total city population, voluntarily moved or were relocated in the south and east during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>418</sup> Increased geographical separation devastated public schools in Little Rock. The Little Rock School District sought to implement different desegregation plans in the 1960s but the geographical divide in the city repeatedly undermined their success.<sup>419</sup> After years of theoretical foundation and surveying analysis, Little Rock's solution to these issues would realize the long-standing vision of early city planners by completing the construction of an east-west connector route between US Interstate 30 in the east of the city and US Interstate 430 at the western outskirts.<sup>420</sup> Initial conceptions for what became I-630 began in the 1930's by the Pulaski County Planning Board, as community planning data indicated Little Rock's growing population was shifting away from the central metropolis to growing northern and western periphery communities.<sup>421</sup> Little Rock's population approximated 81,000 in the 1930's and was largely focused around the central downtown area. Modes of transportation included trolleys, buses, and walking, with trains that carried passengers longer distances outside of the city. City planner John Nolen predicted a highway in Arkansas's capital that would ease access between downtown

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<sup>417</sup> Post WWII Residential Development of Little Rock, 2017. Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners

<sup>418</sup> John Kirk, "Encyclopedia of Arkansas," in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (Central Arkansas Library System, November 13, 2018), <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/civil-rights-movement-4704/>.

<sup>419</sup> John Kirk, "Encyclopedia of Arkansas," in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* (Central Arkansas Library System, November 13, 2018), <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/civil-rights-movement-4704/>.

<sup>420</sup> Jody Beck, John Nolen and the Metropolitan Landscape (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>421</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

commercial areas and newly developing suburban residential communities.<sup>422</sup> After World War II, the City of Little Rock aggressively examined traffic challenges and projected opportunities for improvement. From 1948 on, almost all transportation plans for the city included variations of an east-west connector route in the general area of I-630.<sup>423</sup> In 1956 Little Rock's Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (greater Little Rock metro area's chief civic planning organization) initiated a study of Pulaski County roads that further emphasized the need for an east-west route.<sup>424</sup> Work towards establishing this undertaking in Little Rock began in the late 1950s as racial tensions and urban renewal efforts intensified in the city.

Throughout the 1950s, westward migration and social changes accelerated public interest in the possibility of this highway. After financing extensive neighborhood analysis, in 1958 the Metroplan group released a proposal for recommended city improvements which included an 'Eighth Street Expressway.'<sup>425</sup> In September 1958, the Little Rock City government petitioned the Arkansas State Highway Commission to add the Eighth Street expressway into the state highway system and to incur responsibility for construction costs.<sup>426</sup> A year later the Highway Commission incorporated the Eighth Street expressway into the state highway system with aims to construct the project as funds became available. Route location study reports by engineering firm Garver & Garver were published in 1961, contentious and well attended public hearings

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<sup>422</sup> John Nolen, *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages* (New York, NY: American City Bureau, 1919).; John Nolen, *City Planning: A Series of Papers Presenting the Essential Elements of a City Plan*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1929).

<sup>423</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>424</sup> "Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area," Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area § (n.d.).

<sup>425</sup> Harry T. Williams, *Metroplan: the Formative Years 1955 to 1970: an Analytical History of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission of Pulaski County* (Little Rock, AR: The Metroplan Commission, 1989).; "Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area," Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area § (n.d.).

<sup>426</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

were held where all aspects of the freeway project were debated, and proposed routes were ultimately approved by the Metroplan group, City of Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas Highway department and Federal Highway administration officials in March of 1962.<sup>427</sup> The Arkansas Highway Department and the federal Bureau of Public Roads designated the route's official name as the Little Rock East-West Expressway in April of 1961.<sup>428</sup> Newspapers in late April 1961 projected city resources could purchase the necessary right-of-way for initial construction plans with state and federal governments set to pay half of the construction costs. One year later, in April 1962, Garver & Garver submitted a preliminary report on the design of the expressway for Arkansas Highway Department's review. Construction costs not including right-of way expenses was estimated at \$13,819,186 and the Garver report also divided the construction routes into three sections.<sup>429</sup> Once completed, each section would serve as an independently functioning roadway until crews finalized the project and linked all the segments. In April of 1963, the Highway Department began construction of the first phase (or middle segment), which ultimately stretched from University Ave. to Dennison St. and opened to the public traffic in May of 1973. The second phase (or western segment) stretched from US Interstate 430 to University Ave. and was scheduled to open for traffic by 1978.<sup>430</sup> Right-of-way claims for this segment disrupted fewer citizens compared to the more populated eastern areas. From there, the second section stretched two miles from Park Street to what was to become I-

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<sup>427</sup> Harry T. Williams, *Metroplan: the Formative Years 1955 to 1970: an Analytical History of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission of Pulaski County* (Little Rock, AR: The Metroplan Commission, 1989).; Pumphrey Darcy Atwood Baskin (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2013).; "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>428</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>429</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>430</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

30.<sup>431</sup> The third and final section slated for construction ran from Dennison Street to I-30, cutting through downtown Little Rock's well-established neighborhoods like the Quapaw Quarter, and business districts, like the Ninth Street African American business district.<sup>432</sup> Preliminary mapping for the expressway included plans to save key city historical landmarks and institutions including Mount Holly Cemetery, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the Arkansas State Capitol, Philander Smith College, and MacArthur Park from demolition, but the thriving black business district around the Ninth Street community known as 'the Line,' and homes of many middle to low-income, mostly black residents lay squarely in the route selections for the new highway.<sup>433</sup> This downtown section would prove to be the most controversial and time-consuming portion of the freeway's development.

Development of the middle segment of the project (from University Avenue to Dennison Street) began in 1964 and also continued at a slow pace. Funding remained insufficient and public criticism presented significant challenges to completing the middle and eastern sections of the project. Private and state funding for the expressway and necessary land acquisitions had exhausted, joining the federal highway program would prove a strategic necessity because it provided a '90/10' capital match, or for every \$1 of state/local spending, \$9 would come from Washington DC. I-630's inclusion in the federal highway program was initially denied, but in 1970 U.S. Congressman Wilbur D. Mills intervened becoming the largest component for the project to receive funding for completion.<sup>434</sup> Mills, a Harvard educated native of Kensett,

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<sup>431</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>432</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>433</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>434</sup> Kay Collett. Goss, Mr. Chairman: the Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills (Little Rock: Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Publishers, 2012).

Arkansas was engaged to bring Little Rock's fledgling east-west expressway into the federal interstate construction program by local interest, including long-time civic leader George D. Millar Jr., recruited to specifically lobby for Mills' support.<sup>435</sup> Mills, Millar and city fathers aligned to create a new brand for the capital city, a fresh legacy distanced from the fraught history of racial violence. Kay Goss' gave clarity to the life of Wilbur D. Mills in *Mr. Chairman: The Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills*. Mills spurred I-630's execution and for whom the freeway came to be named. Serving in the U.S. Congress for seventeen years and chairing the powerful House Ways and Means Committee earned Mills the title 'most powerful man in Washington,' he was strongly considered a viable candidate for the 1972 U.S. Presidential election. In 1970, Mills pressed federal officials to accept the east-west expressway into the federal interstate system.<sup>436</sup> After strategic lobbying from local business interest, the federal highway agency changed its decision and included I-630 into the federal system on November 12, 1970, accelerating the construction rate exponentially.<sup>437</sup>

As the I-630 project neared completion throughout the mid to late 1970s, community advocacy groups such as the Arkansas Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) became very active in the dispute against the freeway. ACORN is an advocacy organization founded by Wade Rathke in 1970, in Little Rock, Arkansas. ACORN supported local communities in numerous health and welfare efforts, advocated for Veteran's needs, assisted with clothing and furniture,

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<sup>435</sup> Jimmy Jones, "Millar Leaves LRHA, Takes 50 for Future Job," *Arkansas Gazette*, October 24, 1969.; Kay Collett. Goss, *Mr. Chairman: the Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills* (Little Rock: Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Publishers, 2012).

<sup>436</sup> Kay Collett. Goss, *Mr. Chairman: the Life and Legacy of Wilbur D. Mills* (Little Rock: Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Publishers, 2012).; Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). 157

<sup>437</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).; "Acorn Asks Permanent Jobs For Poor If Federal Grants Used," *Arkansas Gazette*, August 29, 1982.; James E. Jones, "Mills Freeway," *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, August 13, 1975).

and campaigned for schools to deliver healthy, affordable lunches.<sup>438</sup> ACORN opposed completion of the eastern segment, because of its unfair impact on heavily minority neighborhoods in this section of the interstate's track and the African-American business district. ACORN's legal struggle with I-630 made minimal traction through litigation, but the organization gained a major victory in 1975 by federal district judge J. Smith Henley's ruling that the Environmental Impact Statement filed by the Arkansas state highway department to the federal government was insufficient.<sup>439</sup> Upheld by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1976, the ruling led to a new environmental impact study sanctioned by federal judge G. Thomas Eisele in 1979, eventually permitting the project to continue. The final eastern segment of the highway opened to traffic on September 29, 1985.<sup>440</sup> In addition to displacing large portions of Little Rock's black residential and economic communities, the interstate was and is still criticized for creating divisions in city by encouraging regulated migration to the northern and western outskirts of the city.<sup>441</sup> Populations north of the interstate are heavily white, relatively affluent and well educated, while census data shows the populations south of the highway are majorly comprised of black and brown communities and challenged by key performance indicators. Forecasters of city demographics argued that I-630 would remain a potent mental and physical demarcation for the social composition of Arkansas' largest city.<sup>442</sup>

I-630 exhibited a consistent approach by coalitions of engineers, city planners and government oversight to reconstitute Little Rock's urban spaces to the aims of Jim Crow segregation, using

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<sup>438</sup> Claire Suddath, "Acorn," *Time* (Time Inc., October 14, 2008), <http://content.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1849867,00.html>.

<sup>439</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>440</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

<sup>441</sup> John Kirk, "The Roots of Little Rock's Segregated Neighborhoods," *Arkansas Times*, July 10, 2014.

<sup>442</sup> Jay Barth, "Interstate 630," Interstate 630 - Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6587>.



the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Planning and environmental impact statement documents for I-630 espoused the coolly orchestrated qualities of the urban renewal language and objectives, including the desire for economic advancement through slum eradication and greater accessibility between locations in the central core and growing outskirts.<sup>443</sup> Little Rock's urban development model was consistent with mid-20<sup>th</sup> century redeveloping cities around the country, where new sprawling interstate roadway projects remade formerly longstanding communities and was cautiously redirected away from others.<sup>444</sup> Currently, the state of Arkansas' capital reflects this description according to any socioeconomic markers. A foundational aspect of urban renewal was to provide a better standard of life for cities and their residents, but Little Rock may unveil ulterior objectives as was the case with I-95 in South Florida. After defeating the Germans abroad, white American liberal and conservative policymakers alike struggled with assimilating minorities into the national experiment, the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways proved an opportunistic path to maintain the exclusionary goals of white supremacy. Land acquisition for much of the inner-city residential and commercial space necessary for I-630, was acquired between 1950 and 1966 during the height of Little Rock's urban renewal program.<sup>445</sup> The Federal Housing Act of 1949 allocated \$1 billion in federal assistance to local governments for clearing and redeveloping slum or blighted areas. Standardized housing was an emphasis of the 1949 Act, as the legislation established goals for "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American

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<sup>443</sup> Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the United States City* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

<sup>444</sup> Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the United States City* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971); RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019); Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway-Super Hoax* (USA: Doubleday, 1970); Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York, NY: Viking, 1997).

<sup>445</sup> Martha Walters, "Little Rock Urban Renewal," *Pulaski County Historical Review* 24 (March 1976): pp. 12-16.

family.” This goal was similarly expressed in Little Rock, by the late 1960s, an estimated 2,651 families had been displaced by urban renewal projects in Little Rock, 53% of which were families of color.<sup>446</sup> Academic studies like Gordon Wittenberg’s 1966 American Institute of Architects publication, “The Politics of Urban Design,” validated desires reshape modern Little Rock for economic improvement, “As studies of the urban area progressed,” Wittenberg argued, “it became apparent that we had an urban body with a sick heart. Our new growth areas would never reach their fullest potential until something was done to improve the heart itself, the control center...it was concluded that the best means available to attack the problems of blight and decay within the city was a massive, city-wide attack on the deficiencies from the past.”<sup>447</sup> Rebranding the city’s black communities as urban decay and blight was indicative of racialized justifications prevalent during urban renewal.

Little Rock aligned with these national planning strategies through the persistence of route selections for the phased construction of the I-630 project. One especially controversial ‘eastern section’ of I-630 was planned and constructed through the heart of Little Rock’s long-standing majorly black 9<sup>th</sup> street community, known as ‘the Line.’<sup>448</sup> The Line was the center of black Little Rock and was the setting for the brutal spectacle lynching of John Carter in 1927.<sup>449</sup> Five decades later, when members from these affected and displaced areas spoke out against the socioeconomic and environmental harm I-630 posed to their communities, they were joining a

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<sup>446</sup> Digital Scholarship Lab, “Renewing Inequality,” American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed November 3, 2019, <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/#view=0/0/1&viz=cartogram&city=littlerockAR&loc=13/34.7350/-92.2880&text=defining>.

<sup>447</sup> Gordon Wittenberg, “The Politics of Urban Design,” American Institute of Architects, October 1965, pp. 75-79.

<sup>448</sup> Berna J. Love, *End of the Line: a History of Little Rock’s West Ninth Street* (Little Rock: Center for Arkansas Studies, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2003)); Smith, Shanika. “The Success and Decline of Little Rock’s West Ninth Street.” *Pulaski County Historical Review* 67 (Summer 2019): 41–50.

<sup>449</sup> Guy Lancaster, *Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2018)

revolt occurring in cities around the nation where federal interstate projects were constructed. This drew parallels between the execution of I-630 and other federal interstate projects to demonstrate consistencies and examine innovative contentions in freeway studies. I approach the problem of Little Rock's overwhelmingly whitewashed social legacy, segregated reality and the destructive ramifications by returning to I-630 not to redrum past blistering, but to recontextualize the freeway's presence and impact on our current understandings. Analyzing I-630 from these alternative perspectives permits greater understand the utility of a highway as manifestation of state will and an entirely new technological tool. What if the state's will and agenda was to change a city's reputation, as was the situation in Little Rock? Following at least three decades of sullied national reputation and distrust among a significant demographic of the local population due to repeated escalations of racial violence, how does a city simply forget these incidents occurred and look ahead to save its economic livelihood?

Total acquisition and relocation costs for the I-630 route were \$23,940,000 by October of 1977, the majority of which was used to acquire property and aid with relocation resources.<sup>450</sup> Official reports reflected some consistent relocation challenges, older people and families with younger children were most vulnerable to issues of displacement, as well as those with business or personal affinities to their previous neighborhood. The city's efforts to clear and repurpose large sections of private homes were not hidden but touted through the language of economic improvement and promulgated through distribution of mass publications. Published relocation case studies for each of the impacted communities juxtaposed before and after images with more demographic statistics verifying the benefits of urban renewal to inner-city Little Rock, including indicators for race, family composition, income and economic projectors, education, juvenile and

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<sup>450</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978).

adult crime rates and even health factors like sexually transmitted disease rates.<sup>451</sup> A 1965 publication by the Urban Progress Association declared Little Rock's goal to be "The first capital city without slums," and was one of over 35,000 pieces of urban renewal literature distributed by the Urban Progress Association alone.<sup>452</sup> Leading civic philanthropist Raymond Rebsamen described the changes in Little Rock's social landscape...he affirmed, "Change is inevitable, we must anticipate and plan for it with every tool of knowledge and experience we have available to us. We must equip ourselves to become the managers of change...or most assuredly we will become victims of it." Rebsamen was no novice to urban renewal in Little Rock, in fact he was celebrated by J. William Fulbright to the United States Senate on April 28, 1965 as the "public-spirited man who made renewal work," in Arkansas. I-630's history was well documented by governing and public interest.

The route selections for I-630 intentionally cut through downtown Little Rock's well-established neighborhoods like the Quapaw Quarter, and business districts like the Line, Ninth Street's African American business district. Preliminary mapping for the expressway included plans to save key city historical landmarks and institutions including Mount Holly Cemetery, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the Arkansas State Capitol, Philander Smith College, and MacArthur Park from demolition, but the thriving black business district around the Ninth Street community known as 'the Line,' and homes of many middle to low-income, mostly black residents lay squarely in the route selections for the new highway.<sup>453</sup> Key locations like Albert Pike's settler home would be preserved, and an Urban Progress Association spokesman was also quoted, "The

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<sup>451</sup> "Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area," Neighborhood Analysis Report LR/NLR Metropolitan Area § (n.d.).

<sup>452</sup> George Wildgen, "First Capital City in the Nation Without Slums!," *First Capital City in the Nation Without Slums!* § (1965), pp. 1-10.; Dowell Naylor, "PROGRESS ACHIEVED," *PROGRESS ACHIEVED* § (1960), pp. 1-5.

<sup>453</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," *Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement* § (1978)

question we face today, is whether our fine new freeway and expressway systems are to be a quick and efficient method of getting to downtown ...or THROUGH downtown.”<sup>454</sup> Forecasters of city demographics argued that I-630 would remain a potent mental and physical demarcation for the social composition of Arkansas’ largest city.<sup>455</sup> Consequently, the interstate supported relocation of large numbers of Little Rock’s white residents to the west of the city and many argue these relocations are specifically detrimental to minority communities of Little Rock, limiting access to economic, education, health and wellness options. Political scientist Jay Barth contended Little Rock itself became a city of vigorous racial and class separation with the development of I-630 through the heart of the city, a key factor to separation.<sup>456</sup> This work builds upon recent contentions that in cities across America black populations were essentially locked into urban ghettos, with new freeway projects simultaneously serving both as channels of access and chains of confinement.<sup>457</sup> Intersectional assessment of freeway and segregation studies demonstrated *how* the goals of white supremacy evolved to match the capacity of the modern state. Early segregation studies engaged the relationship between white supremacy and state power, growing from positions that emphasized individual prejudices rather than state or local government coordination segregated modern cities.<sup>458</sup> Likely a result of victorious American postwar euphoria, these early perspectives deflected any intimation that the US government was anything beyond exceptional.

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<sup>454</sup> “Little Rock Looks Ahead,” Little Rock Looks Ahead § (1966))

<sup>455</sup> Jay Barth, "Interstate 630," Interstate 630 - Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6587>.

<sup>456</sup> Jay Barth, "Interstate 630," Interstate 630 - Encyclopedia of Arkansas, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6587>.

<sup>457</sup> Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), xxv.

<sup>458</sup> C. Vann Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 213.

The I-630 Final Environmental Impact Statement report provided an official state and federal narrative to understand the freeway's development. Numerous newspaper articles from the Arkansas Gazette chronicled the public debates over I-630's construction. Similarly, the Environmental Impact Statement included community opposition to constructing I-630, with more explanations given to dismiss concerns. John Vogler's public comments at a hearing on I-630 on June 2, 1977 indicated how intimately Little Rock citizens understood the ramifications of the freeway's construction. A resident of Ninth street for over 25 years, Vogler remarked, "I must warn you there's not much left of the East side now. First, Interstate 630 sliced off Hangar Hill. Now the Mills freeway threatens to isolate Macarthur park from the rest of the downtown residential area. A freeway is a psychological barrier. There is not one single mention of the possibility that the Mills freeway may encourage residential segregation in central Little Rock...the completed segment is already well on its way to becoming a racial boundary." Official responses to Mr. Volger's critiques further exemplified the dismissive nature of I-630 representatives, "No data has been produced to date which indicates that I-630 would create or encourage residential segregation. The relocation program is also carried out without racial bias."<sup>459</sup> People are moved from all types of neighborhoods and are relocated into neighborhoods that contain available housing which meets necessary criteria. Traditional boundaries should be altered very little and a freeway cannot create or erase any racial bias which may exist in society."<sup>460</sup> The blatant disregard for existing racialized statistics in urban relocation reports and the cavalier nature by which Mr. Volger's comments were summarily rejected, demonstrated a persistence by local, city, state and federal powers to maintain their chosen construction plans

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<sup>459</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978)

<sup>460</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978)

despite open appeals to revisit development strategies. This persistence was key to unlocking important insights to the unwritten objectives of I-630. The chronological parameters of this study concluded with a 1989 Urban Development growth report by the City of Little Rock, assessing the continued western expansion of greater Little Rock. Populations were projected to reach approximately 257,000 by 2010, with primarily western areas benefitting from influxes of commercial and residential interest.<sup>461</sup>

Freeway culture revealed how federal interstate projects like I-630 psychologically impacted communities and was consistent with the growth of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways in other cities across the country. Brighter economic futures may have been the publicly stated goal for modern urban redevelopment projects in Little Rock, but embodiment of southern conservative resistance to racial integration was a lasting heritage of I-630.

Manifesting the modern urban form through federal interstates was a result of measured synchronization and focused execution. New cities emerged from the neighborhood and demographic analysis reports that determined greater mobility and economic access for some was best for the public good, despite the displacement of many thousands of poor urbanites. The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways was utilized to maintain white supremacy as American cities transformed into the racialized urban landscapes we recognize today.

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<sup>461</sup> “1989 Urban Development Growth Report,” 1989 Urban Development growth report § (1988))

#### **Chapter Four – ‘Legacies of I-630: Our Berlin Wall’**

“That whole fiasco was a real true demonstration of the white supremacy mentality that governs this city and has governed this city since before 1957.” – Kwami Abdul-Bey

This research investigates the premise that I-630 segregated greater Little Rock. Research examined various data points including public mapping, archived public relocation and neighborhood analysis reports along with interviews from local historians and city officials to illustrate how racial prejudice influenced urban renewal and freeway development in Arkansas’ capital city. This project explored the impact of I-630’s construction including the physical and psychological devastation incurred due to displacement and ultimately segregated confinement. Lastly, the project revealed how federal interstate projects are used by American power systems to determine black geographies.

Little Rock’s example has certain specificities and local flavor to its version of twentieth century urban development. This dissertation investigated various aspects of the city experience since the construction of I-630 to discover the lasting ramifications of its creation and impact. I evaluated a variety of data sources including newspapers, community publications and relocation reports from city government and metropolitan planning groups, numerous geographic information systems datapoints, and interviews from an insightful cross section of Little Rock government officials, local historians and community members. Some of the information collected in this process confirmed preliminary premises and others challenged or redirected the initial hypotheses towards a clearer understanding.



## Publications and Planning Research

Newspaper articles corroborated the actions and perspectives of local Arkansans during various aspects of twentieth century developments in Little Rock, from John Carter's lynching to the public debates over I-630's construction and legacy. Americans around the country learned of John Carter's lynching largely because of the thorough coverage from both black and white newspaper outlets.<sup>462</sup> Carter's lynching was chronicled on the front page of newspaper outlets across the nation during the spring of 1927, which ran parallel to the extensive coverage of flood impact and relief efforts in the state.<sup>463</sup> The Arkansas Gazette and Arkansas Democrat newspapers covered Carter's lynching and incidents of racial violence and chronicled the hotly contested urban developments occurring in the state's capital. Activities of local entities that pushed urban renewal and redevelopment projects in the city forward were frequently covered in the two main organs.

Fifty for the Future was one important group that dominated the processes of modern urban development in central Arkansas. Their membership roster touted the city's most wealthy and influential city fathers, mayors and political leaders like mayor Byron R. Morse, Arkansas Business Hall of Fame member and local mogul Ray Rebsamen, and city Housing Authority director George Millar who was recruited to Fifty for the Future to lobby federal support for I-630's completion from Congressman Wilber Mills.<sup>464</sup> A 1969 article outlined Millar's connections to the then fledgling east-west expressway and his goals to expand the roadway project, delineating economic motivations to continue despite awareness of socioeconomic costs.

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<sup>462</sup> "LITTLE ROCK UNDER MARTIAL LAW TODAY," *The Brainerd Daily Dispatch*, May 5, 1927, sec. One.

<sup>463</sup> "HAVOC CREATED BY GREAT FLOOD STILL INCREASES," *Arkansas Gazette*, April 27, 1927.

<sup>464</sup> Scott and Scott, "Fifty for the Future," Little Rock Culture Vulture, February 23, 2019, <https://lrculturevulture.com/tag/fifty-for-the-future/>; "Walton College," Raymond Rebsamen | Arkansas Business Hall of Fame | Walton College | University of Arkansas, accessed 2021, <https://walton.uark.edu/abhf/raymond-rebsamen.php>; Jimmy Jones, "Millar Leaves LRHA, Takes 50 for Future Job," *Arkansas Gazette*, October 24, 1969.

William F. Rector, local real estate magnate and founder of Fifty for the Future, factored significantly into the urban planning for redevelopment in the capital city.<sup>465</sup>

Fifty for the Future, a nonprofit corporation founded “for the purpose of providing needed assistance for worthwhile projects without fanfare or publicity.”<sup>466</sup> The group was and continues to be seen by many locally as an embodiment of the good ole boy systems that allowed the exclusionary practices that promoted what they believed was the larger public interest.<sup>467</sup> Public donations and use of their political muscle provided a sterling business and development reputation for the organization, which was tabbed to organize the necessary civil planning studies to guide urban development projects for the city.<sup>468</sup> Fifty for the Future worked with other large and small governing entities including the Metroplan group, Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, Little Rock Housing Authority and the Urban Progress Association among others, members often filled positions on various overlapping planning boards.<sup>469</sup> Members in these groups served key roles in vital industries from realty appraisal to construction and sales, to policing and legislative policymaking, and collaborated to address the changing social and economic landscape for post-*Brown*, post-*Swann* Little Rock.<sup>470</sup> Governor Faubus lent his support to the Fifty for the Future group as they revitalized efforts to complete the initial east-west or eighth street expressway project.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>465</sup> Brenda Tirey, “Not Their Future: Blacks Oppose Fifty despite Record,” *Arkansas Democrat*, January 10, 1971.

<sup>466</sup> Brenda Tirey, “Not Their Future: Blacks Oppose Fifty despite Record,” *Arkansas Democrat*, January 10, 1971.

<sup>467</sup> Brenda Tirey, “Not Their Future: Blacks Oppose Fifty despite Record,” *Arkansas Democrat*, January 10, 1971.

<sup>468</sup> “\$35,000 Given City Chamber to Assist Industrial Program,” *Arkansas Democrat*, June 16, 1968.; Bobbie Forster, “‘Fifty for the Future’ Offers No Brags, Just Facts,” *Arkansas Democrat*, July 7, 1968.

<sup>469</sup> Bobbie Forster, “‘Fifty for the Future’ Offers No Brags, Just Facts,” *Arkansas Democrat*, July 7, 1968.

<sup>470</sup> “Advisers from Fifty Preview Plan: Discuss East End Shopping Center,” *Arkansas Democrat*, March 24, 1971.;

Bobbie Forster, “‘Fifty for the Future’ Offers No Brags, Just Facts,” *Arkansas Democrat*, July 7, 1968.

<sup>471</sup> “Civic Leaders to Meet With Pulaski’s Solons,” *Arkansas Democrat*, May 29, 1965.; “Chamber Adopts Program,” *Arkansas Democrat*, January 13, 1968.

Public organs like the August 1966 issue of *Scene Magazine*, were platforms to celebrate how Little Rock would reshape perceptions of the city using transformative urban renewal. This publicity which selectively captured Little Rock's history in photo, vowed that the progress of urban renewal would not come at the expense of the proud heritage of the southern city. George Millar, Little Rock Housing Authority president and key lobbyist to Congressman Wilber Mills, who greenlighted the original east-west expressway into the federal interstate project was quoted, "there are no easy problems to solve in urban renewal." It was understood that relocations would primarily hurt certain members of society. Miller continued, "many were inconvenienced, a few were hurt..." but a new southern model for urban renewal had now emerged.<sup>472</sup> Interestingly the city's historical narrative given in this piece skips completely over most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from 1912 to 1970, while promising urban renewal will save Little Rock history.<sup>473</sup> Key locations like Albert Pike's settler home would be preserved, and an Urban Progress Association spokesman was also quoted, "The question we face today, is whether our fine new freeway and expressway systems are to be a quick and efficient method of getting to downtown ...or THROUGH downtown."<sup>474</sup> The *Scene Magazine* article aptly promoted how the capital city would lead the way in accomplishing such an incredible feat. This publicity, which selectively captured Little Rock's history in photo, vowed that the progress of urban renewal would not come at the expense of the proud heritage of the southern city. George Millar, Little Rock Housing Authority president and key lobbyist to Congressman Mills was quoted, "there are no easy problems to solve in urban renewal." It was understood that relocations would primarily hurt certain members of society. Miller continued, "many were inconvenienced, a few were hurt..." but a new

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<sup>472</sup> "Little Rock Looks Ahead," Little Rock Looks Ahead § (1966))

<sup>473</sup> "Little Rock Looks Ahead," Little Rock Looks Ahead § (1966))

<sup>474</sup> "Little Rock Looks Ahead," Little Rock Looks Ahead § (1966))

southern model for urban renewal had now emerged. Interestingly the city's historical narrative given in this piece skipped completely over most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from 1912 to 1970, while promising urban renewal will save Little Rock history.<sup>475</sup>

Official summarizing reports such as the City Housing Authority's 1950 publication *'Little Rock's substandard housing,'* featured imagery of poor black families relocating to standardized homes and communities, as well as racialized socio-economic demographic statistics.<sup>476</sup> Efforts to fix urban blight began in 1951 when the Little Rock Housing Authority cleared a large section of the Dunbar neighborhood, the first of multiple historically African American communities sacrificed in the name of urban progress. Relocations also occurred in the Philander Smith, Granite Mountain and Westrock communities among others.<sup>477</sup> Brian Mitchell at UALR is doing wonderful work to uncover much of Westrock's relocation history.<sup>478</sup> Many of the impacted individuals and families were relocated to newly constructed standardized homes in designated areas or to public housing facilities. Relocation efforts were administered through field offices strategically placed in targeted communities to facilitate transition processes. Displaced individuals and families were provided access to government aid to help with relocation through these offices, however resources were limited and usually inadequate to support the long-term security for new placements.

The Interstate 630 Final Environmental Impact Statement report provided an official state and federal narrative to understand the freeway's development history. Similarly, the Environmental

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<sup>475</sup> "Little Rock Looks Ahead," Little Rock Looks Ahead § (1966))

<sup>476</sup> Housing Authority, "Little Rock's Substandard Housing," Little Rock's Substandard Housing § (1951), pp. 1-21.

<sup>477</sup> UR ARK 1-1, "Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project," Final Relocation Report - Dunbar Redevelopment Project § (1960), pp. 1-28.; Dowell Naylor, "Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project," Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project § (1960), pp. 1-6.; "Granite Mountain Final Relocation Report UR - ARK 1 - 2," Granite Mountain Final Relocation Report UR - ARK 1 - 2 § (1950).

<sup>478</sup> Brian K. Mitchell (February 5, 2019).; Dowell Naylor, "Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project," Relocation in the West Rock Urban Renewal Area Project § (1960), pp. 1-6.

Impact Statement included community opposition to building Interstate 630, with explanations given by the state to dismiss public concerns. John Vogler's public comments at an ACORN led public hearing regarding Interstate 630 on June 2, 1977 indicated how intimately Little Rock citizens understood the long-term ramifications of the freeway's construction. A resident of Ninth street for over 25 years, Vogler remarked, "I must warn you there's not much left of the East side now. First, Interstate 630 sliced off Hangar Hill. Now the Mills freeway threatens to isolate Macarthur park from the rest of the downtown residential area. A freeway is a psychological barrier. There is not one single mention of the possibility that the Mills freeway may encourage residential segregation in central Little Rock...the completed segment is already well on its way to becoming a racial boundary."<sup>479</sup> Official responses to Mr. Volger's critiques further exemplified the dismissive nature of Interstate 630 representatives, "No data has been produced to date which indicates that I-630 would create or encourage residential segregation. The relocation program is also carried out without racial bias. People are moved from all types of neighborhoods and are relocated into neighborhoods that contain available housing which meets necessary criteria. Traditional boundaries should be altered very little and a freeway cannot create or erase any racial bias which may exist in society."<sup>480</sup> The blatant disregard for existing racialized statistics in urban relocation reports and the cavalier nature by which Mr. Volger's comments were summarily rejected, demonstrated a persistence by local, city, state and federal powers to maintain their chosen construction plans despite presented alternatives and open appeals to revisit development strategies. This persistence was key to unlocking important insights to the unwritten objectives of I-630.

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<sup>479</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978)

<sup>480</sup> "Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 Administrative Action: Final Environmental Impact Statement," Interstate 630, Interstate 430, Interstate 30 administrative action: final environmental impact statement § (1978)

The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies published a very informative geographical map study, “Aftermath: Mapping Race and Politics in Central Arkansas, 1957 and Beyond,” that provided visual representation to the continued impact of Little Rock’s re-segregation, following the infamous 1957 desegregation of Central High School and Interstate 630’s subsequent completion.<sup>481</sup> The Butler Center’s study tracked the western spread of Little Rock’s white residents to the west and north of I-630 while black and brown populations are confined by the freeway. Local investigators and scholars have provided explorations into the construction and consequences of I-630’s development. David Koon published an outstanding article in 2011 entitled “Wilbur’s Wall” for the *Arkansas Times* chronicling I-630’s fraught construction and historical implications. Darcy Atwood Baskin Pumphrey did the same in her 2013 MA thesis “An Interstate Runs Through It: The Construction of Little Rock’s Interstate 630 and the Fight to Stop It.”<sup>482</sup> Koon and Baskin’s work contextualized the legacy of I-630, confirming it’s solidification of uneven urban development in the state capital. “Citizen Perceptions of Little Rock City Government: Findings from South of I-630,” a 2015 study published by the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service also delivers firsthand perceptions of the capital city government from those impacted by the expressways’ production and Little Rock’s re-segregation.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Jay Barth, *Aftermath Map Project, Aftermath Map Project* (University of Arkansas at Little Rock - Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, 2007), <https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/aftermath/search/>.

<sup>482</sup> Pumphrey Darcy Atwood Baskin (University of Arkansas at Little Rock, 2013).; David Koon, David Koon, and David Koon, “Wilbur Mills’ Wall,” *Arkansas Times*, April 26, 2019, <https://arktimes.com/news/cover-stories/2011/01/26/wilbur-mills-wall>.

<sup>483</sup> Molly G. Miller, Helen Grace King, and Warigia M. Bowman, “Citizen Perceptions of Little Rock City Government: Findings from South of I-630,” ed. Paola Cavallari, *Citizen Perceptions of Little Rock City Government: Findings from South of I-630* (University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, March 9, 2015), [https://www.academia.edu/11492347/Citizen\\_Perceptions\\_of\\_Little\\_Rock\\_City\\_Government\\_Findings\\_from\\_South\\_of\\_I\\_630](https://www.academia.edu/11492347/Citizen_Perceptions_of_Little_Rock_City_Government_Findings_from_South_of_I_630).

To further understand the impact and legacy of interstates on urban geographies, this research approached the city of Little Rock as a case study for deeper analysis. One significant opportunity for the continuation of this work is to contrast the situation in Little Rock with insights from urban planning officials and affected communities in urban spaces around America and beyond. This study features research interviews with informed community members and revealed profound insights to how the processes of urban renewal and freeway construction developed in Little Rock. This research was informed by leading city historians and urban researchers John Kirk, Jay Barth, Brian Mitchell, Stephanie Harp and Guy Lancaster to discuss the changes in twentieth century Little Rock, including the legacy of racial violence in the city and the impact of I-630's construction. Kenneth Brown, historian at the Mosaic Templars center, one of the last vestiges from the Line community also helped a great deal. Local community leaders contributed significantly to this research, including founder of ACORN Mr. Wade Rathke, Little Rock legend and Bates family confidant Mrs. Annie Abrams, and Mr. Kwami Abdul-Bey, a distant relative of Mr. John Carter to further contextualize the psychological impact of twentieth century transformations for communities in Little Rock. Lastly, I spoke with local government officials including the honorable Mayor Frank Scott, and manager for the City of Little Rock Mr. Bruce Moore to learn more about the necessary processes to erect urban infrastructural projects and gather their thoughts on the legacy of I-630 and freeway construction in the capital.

Early twentieth century southern urban landscapes were indelibly refashioned by black migration into cities. Growth in the capital had not reached beyond a relatively small downtown core until the outbreak of World War II.<sup>484</sup> Cities like Little Rock were certainly part of the Jim Crow

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<sup>484</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

South but residential housing patterns were mostly unsegregated, further contextualizing the shifting urban demographics since the freeway generations. Neighborhoods housed black and white residents all over the city, except for the Heights area which was exclusively white and the East end which was heavily black.<sup>485</sup> City Manager Bruce Moore observed that western expansion was also economically motivated by desires to expand tax revenue through annexation.<sup>486</sup> Kirk shared that Little Rock was one of the most aggressive and earliest pursuers of urban renewal funding following passage of the Housing Act in 1949, which accelerated the process of slum clearance.<sup>487</sup> Kirk noted, You need the money to be able to do it [urban renewal] with. The Housing Act gave Little Rock the money to do it.”<sup>488</sup> Bruce Moore confirmed the economic intentions prompting Fifty for the Future to assert control over urban changes, “I think those entities played a big role, a major role, Fifty for the Future and all those types in chambers played a major role in trying to ensure growth both from a business community and a population standpoint.”<sup>489</sup> Americans saw the changes occurring in higher education and early civil rights litigations in the 1940s, especially southerners. As Jim Crow was being dismantled, new forms of oppression were being structurally entrenched, Kirk shared, “I see it as one scaffolding for racial discrimination at the same time as, simultaneously, another one has been dismantled.”<sup>490</sup> Questions over the future of southern cities factored significantly into the implementation of urban renewal and freeway construction projects. Anxieties centered on what historians term a “Northernization” of the South, and uncertainty over whether the northern industrial hubs would

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<sup>485</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>486</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>487</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>488</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>489</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>490</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.



become more southern, or some amalgamation of the two.<sup>491</sup> Northern cities held a longer history of residential segregation, but southern smaller towns featured segregated economies that necessitated whites and black to engage for trade, labor and services.<sup>492</sup> Discussing the ‘Americanization of Arkansas’ along the lines of these larger concerns reveal connections between the Arkansas experience and other growing southern hubs. Northern perceptions of the South as barbaric and anachronistic during Civil Rights era turned to apathy over racial discrimination once southern cities began to resemble northern racist models.<sup>493</sup> Martin Luther King Jr’s struggles to open housing in Chicago in the mid 1960s is a clear indication of how entrenched resistance was to integrated neighborhoods.<sup>494</sup>

Insights to connections between the timelines for American desegregation and freeway construction was one question this research sought to learn more about. Kirk revealed that in preparation for school desegregation, Little Rock built new segregated high schools including Hall High School in the west and Horace Mann in the east. The intersections of roads, housing and education in Little rock is a key connection and method to track changes in each area over time.<sup>495</sup> Arkansas powerful congressional delegations in the mid-twentieth century also contributed to the multifaceted and confident approach to urban redevelopment, empowering local leaders to harness the reigns of change to their advantage. Community organizer Kwami Abdul-Bey articulated views that “a white supremacist mentality governed the city since before 1957...the only difference is in 1957 they were out in the open.”<sup>496</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>492</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

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<sup>494</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>495</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>496</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Kwami Abdul-Bey. Personal, January 6, 2021.

The *Brown* decision took place largely around the same time as Eisenhower's push for the federal interstate system and temporal relationships legislators and urban planners factored significantly into the policies that were implemented. Lancaster noted, "...what's not a coincidence is the fact that these interstates do get directed through minority neighborhoods and that legislators and urban planners are using interstate construction to undermine minority property ownerships, businesses and communities."<sup>497</sup> Kirk confirmed, "most of the schools south of I-630 are predominantly black public schools, and most of the north are where most all of the white private schools are. You can plot the schools on the map to the different highways."<sup>498</sup> African American urbanization stoked fears of black political dominance and a return to the days of Reconstruction. This political motivation is a key dynamic to understanding the development plans for many southern cities. Insights from historian Michael Pierce confirm the efforts of Little Rock officials to shift towards city manager control to directly undermine connections between unions and black labor.<sup>499</sup> Efforts to dismantle street car programs, regional railway networks and encourage the rise of automobile traffic was profoundly identified as a concerted effort to undermine public gathering spaces post-World War II, in hopes to curtail or contain the spread of any revolutionary or anti-American ideologies.<sup>500</sup> Local city officials rarely resided in the communities that were displaced by urban renewal and freeway construction., this disconnect allowed local economic interest to bisect the city.<sup>501</sup> Scott offered, organizations like Fifty for the Future, organizations of power, did not have all the representatives of the city."<sup>502</sup> In the aftermath of the Central High School crisis, Little Rock was undergoing heavy

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<sup>497</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

<sup>498</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>499</sup> Michael Pierce, "The City Manager System and the Collapse of Racial Moderation in Little Rock, 1955-1957," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* LXXVIII, no. 2 (2019): pp. 166-205.

<sup>500</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

<sup>501</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>502</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

suburbanization. Citizens of means desired more exclusive space, bigger lots and access to city services while maintaining separate school districts.<sup>503</sup> Local real estate interest were among the most prominent lobbyist and proved instrumental to fulfilling these desires.

William Rector and other leading local real estate interest impacted where infrastructure projects were placed, and worked with county judges, property appraisers, tax assessors, and agents who directed the housing policies.<sup>504</sup> Their coordination made it possible to access individuals in the Democratic party who could access Congressman Mills.<sup>505</sup> Kirk affirmed Rector's prominence in leading education and residential segregation policies, "one of the useful things about Little Rock is it's such a small town, you can actually follow the figures who play these roles over time. You can track who the major players are and where they pop up over time. Those names are inscribed in the city and quite visibly."<sup>506</sup> Little Rock's smaller nature may have required the urban catalysts model to propel larger public desires for segregation into feasible development plans. These processes were replicated around the country as Rathke mentioned, "they've created racial and class divisions almost everywhere, whether it's Robert Moses in New York and everywhere else or right here in downtown Little Rock."<sup>507</sup> As the city continued to sprawl and desegregation began in the mid to late 1950s, calls for a quick way to get out to western suburbs increased and the expressway desires from the 1920s were finally realized.<sup>508</sup> Jay Barth confirmed city use of eminent domain strategies that preferred lowest property values and targeted communities that were the paths of least resistance.<sup>509</sup> The timing of racialized suburbanization is one point that was clarified. Ogletree's *All Deliberate Speed* outlined how southern states circumnavigated

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<sup>503</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>504</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>505</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>506</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>507</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>508</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>509</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

compliance with desegregation, Little Rock residents also “passively resisted” desegregation until the 1968 *Green* and 1971 *Swann* decisions prompted more emphatically segregated housing patterns.<sup>510</sup> Kirk affirmed, “people can only say, ‘well, that’s probably the way it always was.’ You can say, ‘no it’s not,’ and demonstrably see over time how that’s changed from being a certain kind of community to a very different kind of community in terms of race and ethnicity. It’s not a static neighborhood, and it has changed, and it has become less white. It’s become more impoverished. Those two things sit on that axis together.”<sup>511</sup>

As the United States pushed advances in civil rights legislation, it simultaneously bankrolled slum clearance through the Housing Act and freeway construction through the Federal Aid Highway Act.<sup>512</sup> Mayor Scott, himself a native of southwest Little Rock, shared his views on the changes in the city. Scott confirmed the roots of declining black neighborhoods stemmed to urban renewal and residential housing policies and were solidified by I-630’s construction.<sup>513</sup> “It [I-630] created segregation in the city of Little Rock which prevented community connections, corporate connections, and overall connections to provide some type of added value as you moved down the road. I mean it had lasting effects.”<sup>514</sup>

African Americans in the urban renewal and freeway generations rarely had positions at the tables of power according to Mayor Scott, resulting in a one-sided view of public good, equity inclusion and equality.<sup>515</sup> Community members including Daisy and L.C. Bates, Annie Abrams, Christopher C. Mercer, Mary Louise Williams, John Walker and Judge Richard Mays and others led the resistance against displacement and interstate construction as effectively as they could.

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<sup>510</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>511</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>512</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>513</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>514</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>515</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

Community members recognized that “good old boy” systems allowed officials to enact their own agendas and cloak decisions as public good.<sup>516</sup> ACORN organized on behalf of relocated families in many affected areas around the city. Rathke was especially critical of the supposed goals of shorter commutes for cross town traffic, “one of the hearts of our arguments against the Mills expressway was you are saving less than five minutes travel time. So, for three minutes of somebody living out west...you were going to disrupt the entire city, build a wall essentially between neighborhoods so that some jackass living out in Pleasant Valley would be able to drive into the city five minutes faster.”<sup>517</sup> It was evident to community organizers that the newly constructed housing projects and development of I-630 were less urban renewal than they were “enclosure areas, encampments of people they just didn’t know what to do with.”<sup>518</sup> Bruce Moore confirmed the economic intentions prompting Fifty for the Future to assert control over urban changes, “I think those entities played a big role, a major role, Fifty for the Future and all those types in chambers played a major role in trying to ensure growth both from a business community and a population standpoint.”<sup>519</sup> Kirk corroborated the brazenness of urban renewal officials in the city publications discussed earlier, “I interviewed, a long time ago now, some of the people who were involved in this. They were all pretty open about the fact that yes, they planned this segregated city because that’s what they perceived people wanted at the time. There was nothing stopping them from doing that. There were no federal laws that prevented using that money to segregate cities...it was in tune with the will of the people.”<sup>520</sup> City leaders during the time of urban renewal and freeway construction likely valued the limited perspectives of

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<sup>516</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Kwami Abdul-Bey. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>517</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>518</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>519</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>520</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

segregation supporters over the expressed reservations from the communities impacted by these policies.

‘The Line’ on West Ninth Street was truly a communal space for central Arkansas. Rathke recalled, “Ninth and High, that where it was hot. That’s where you wanted to be. That’s where it was, action central.”<sup>521</sup> The area was usually busy with all types of commercial activity, it was the center of the black community in Little Rock, but everyone went downtown for shopping. Rathke believed city officials wanted to appeal to a different demographic by encouraging western migration. “Some of these malls out west, they wanted a different class of people. [So] do I think it was racially motivated? Sure.”<sup>522</sup> Longstanding black communities were deemed an expendable sacrifice to the altar of progress during urban renewal. Growth in western suburbs and more televisions in homes began the decline of central commercial and entertainment districts like West Ninth Street. I-630’s construction demolished what was left in many of these areas finalizing the process of their permanent demise.<sup>523</sup>

When discussing the impact of urban renewal and I-630’s construction on black communities in the city, Lancaster recalled touring a BBC journalist through West Ninth Street and envisioning the houses and businesses that laid right in the path of I-630 between Mosaic Templars and Philander Smith College. “The interstate’s presence so reduces property values because it’s that constant strain on emissions...suddenly Philander Smith isn’t situated within the neighborhood, and if you’re a student it’s hard enough to experience it...”<sup>524</sup> Historians believe the destruction of traditionally black communities like West Rock was designed to promote a modern image for

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<sup>521</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>522</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>523</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>524</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

the city.<sup>525</sup> In terms of memory, Kirk shared that the erasure of West Ninth Street erased a memory of black success and black entrepreneurialism, “I think [the legacy of black success] was an important thing, and if it still existed today in a substantive sense would be an important way for a downtown black presence to be felt and a black entrepreneurial district to continue.”<sup>526</sup> The conversations were insightful for historical context but the current impact of I-630’s legacy was palpable for residents and historians alike. Historians believe freeway construction is a continuing concern in Little Rock during the twenty-first century. The widening projects for I-630 and future construction work on connecting route Interstate 30 (I-30) pose greater opportunities to exclude the communities who cannot afford the costs to remain in newly gentrified spaces. Lancaster noted that new urban development projects often renovate previously unused spaces but purpose them for uses that are not connected to immediate community needs, “...you don’t need another microbrewery on East Sixth Street.”<sup>527</sup> Rathke indicated the climate implications are additional stressors to the racial and economic barriers interstates represent. Continuing freeway expansion is seen as further entrenchment of automobile culture and community organizers highlight the prevalence of gas stations and parking spaces as opposed to health clinics and recreation centers.<sup>528</sup> Kirk testified in federal court regarding the expansions to I-30 in east Little Rock, and shared views that these new roadway developments thickened the lines of segregation in the city.<sup>529</sup> Mayor Scott indicated that he did not see continuing freeway construction as having the same intended segregation effect because current projects are developed with the lessons of I-630 in mind.<sup>530</sup> Scott shared,

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<sup>525</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

<sup>526</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>527</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

<sup>528</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>529</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>530</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

“I-30 is not diminishing black wealth, or brown wealth. It’s not disrupting neighborhoods. It’s not disconnecting people in community with another. It’s actually creating economic and transformable ways for us to do more commerce.”<sup>531</sup> This sentiment was affirmed by Moore, who expressed that city engineers worked closely with the Ease Little Rock community to avert the problems of I-630.<sup>532</sup>

The psychological toll interstates take on urbanites is among the most critical components of the freeway generations legacy. Lancaster indicated insights that the practices of white supremacy actually undermined the aspirations of white people. He recalled a friend who moved to the city and purchased a fix-up home in the Hillcrest community for well above the actual home value, all because of the neighborhood’s affluent reputation and location north of I-630. Moore observed that lack of home ownership substantially decreased property values in communities south of I-630.<sup>533</sup> Minimal healthy shopping options is one reality for city residents south of I-630, Lancaster even noted the difference between the quality of grocery stores in communities like Hillcrest compared to others, despite the fact that most of the laborers in these stores live south of the freeway. I-630 and interstates were identified as a form of social control similar to philosopher Charles Mill’s racial contract, where institutions are employed for racialized agendas. Lancaster noted, “it’s cutting off a large parge of the city so that you’re not responsible for them. City leaders aren’t responsible past this point really.”<sup>534</sup> Barth believes the freeway itself reinforced other social factors like the return to local schools that compound the overall experience of urban segregation.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>531</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>532</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>533</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>534</sup> Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).; Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020

<sup>535</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.



Another underexamined psychological factor is the location of communal spaces in proximity to urban interstates. Thoroughly integrated spaces such as the Community Bakery, Arkansas Zoo, UAMS, Children's and St. Vincent Hospitals, Jim Dailey Fitness Center and shopping malls are located just off of the interstate, "the places that have that kind of mixture are right along the interstate. The further you get away from it, the more emphatic the division is."<sup>536</sup> GIS data will confirm that the majority of violent crimes occurring in urban areas are within the confined spaces that have been ostracized through 'social othering.' Kirk shared that the memory of racial violence was important to civil rights activists in Little Rock, who could leverage the negative attention of lynchings and violence to pressure local officials.<sup>537</sup> Abdul-Bey worked for Little Rock MEMS for nearly a decade and discussed the differences in neighborhoods on either side of I-630, "when I get a call and I go to an household in a neighborhood south of I-630, it looks totally different day and night from when I get a call going out to Chenal, and going to a neighborhood and a household there."<sup>538</sup> Abdul-Bey continued, "the clear demarcation is I-630. I-630 is our Berlin Wall, where you have East Berlin and West Berlin, we have south of I-630 and north of I-630."<sup>539</sup>

This research also sought to discover to what extent improving the city's reputation and whitewashing a history of racial violence factored into the urban development projects like I-630. Historians contend lynchings in the city and elsewhere profoundly impacted the experiences for black residents. John Carter's mob murder obviously still resonated with black residents in 1957, who were also coping with the murder of Emmett Till just two years prior.<sup>540</sup> Carter's

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<sup>536</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020

<sup>537</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>538</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Kwami Abdul-Bey. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>539</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Kwami Abdul-Bey. Personal, January 6, 2021.

<sup>540</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

lynching is “still a deeply embedded piece of folk memory in the local black community.”<sup>541</sup> However, some historians challenge the notion of this long memory of racial violence in the white communities of Little Rock.<sup>542</sup> Connections are easily made to the desegregation crisis at Central High School and desires to use I-630 as public image recovery, but the barbarity and heinous nature of Carter’s lynching is a memory that some historians believe white residents also recalled and others believe had been willfully omitted by 1957, merely thirty years later.<sup>543</sup> It was puzzling to hear that one half of the city could vividly recall Carter’s spectacle lynching and the other half did not, but this illustrated that the true privilege of power is the luxury of forgetting. Stephanie Harp also disputed this notion, indicating the wide range of white publications that published, “accounts, interpretations and opinions” regarding the Carter lynching.<sup>544</sup> Mayor Scott indicated that every city wants to protect a positive atmosphere and reputation, “when something happens you want to do whatever possible to find that solution. Whatever you deem that solution at the time.”<sup>545</sup> Rathke contended that the freeway construction and urban redevelopment projects were ultimately “still about trying to put a coat of paint on a very steamy, nasty kind of history we had here.”<sup>546</sup> Kirk indicated that it has taken the city a long time to grapple with its history, more recently indicated by embrace of the Little Rock Central High integration narrative and investment into maintaining a memorial space near the campus.<sup>547</sup> Ironically, the national historic site is among the only city maintained areas of the longstanding

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<sup>541</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

<sup>542</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>543</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.; Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Stephanie Harp. Personal, January 4, 2021.

<sup>544</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Stephanie Harp. Personal, January 4, 2021.; Guy Lancaster and Stephanie Harp, “Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950,” in *Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950* (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2018), pp. 195-221.

<sup>545</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Mayor Frank Scott. Personal, January 6, 2021.; Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>546</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>547</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

Dunbar community where Central High is located. Kirk also shared cynicism about whether city officials cared about the legacy of Carter's lynching during I-630's planning. He points to the route selections as taking a path of least resistance but confirms an ethos of denial regarding racial violence and the intent behind modern developments.<sup>548</sup> Moore was open to the notion. He spent significant time with the Little Rock nine as chief coordinator for the 50<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Central High School's integration and shared their recollections of Carter and Till's murder. Moore noted, "I think it [Carter's lynching legacy] weighted heavily. Again, 30 years, that's a short timeframe from a historical perspective."<sup>549</sup> Harp and Abdul-Bey attested that Carter's lynching was part of city folklore that was passed from generation to generation; however, to Harp this memory could have been diluted over time because memories of the lynching were conflated at the time.<sup>550</sup> Moore confirmed Mayor Scott's sentiments that cities vie to attract business, which desire vibrant growth trends and business-friendly climates.<sup>551</sup>

Lancaster connected the lack of recollection about racial violence such as Carter's lynching to the effect that confining infrastructures have on urban residents, "for so many people down here, you talk about that lack of memory in the black community about John Carter, I wonder how much of that is due to seeing oneself as the problem here...they look at their neighborhoods and probably internalize the idea of themselves as the problem."<sup>552</sup> Rathke contextualized the perspectives of many white Arkansans who made concerted efforts during the early twentieth century to revise the legacy of race in America, "in that period was the same time you had a

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<sup>548</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

<sup>549</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>550</sup> Guy Lancaster and Stephanie Harp, "Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950," in *Bullets and Fire: Lynching and Authority in Arkansas, 1840-1950* (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2018), pp. 195-221

<sup>551</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: City Manager Bruce Moore. Personal, November 17, 2020.

<sup>552</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Guy Lancaster. Personal, December 9, 2020.

revival trying to wipe away the existence of the civil war. And let's pretend reconstruction never happened...that deliberately tries to erase the worst excesses of racism and white supremacy.”<sup>553</sup>

In conclusion, to corroborate the insights gleaned from publications and interviews, this research established collaboration with sociology and criminology professor Grant Drawve to evaluate if various GIS data points confirm the perceived experiences captured in research studies.

According to the 2010 census records, I-630 remains a geographic barrier between capital residents of differing ethnicities More than 75 percent of white capital residents reside outside the confines of I-630, whereas a similar percentage juxtaposition applies for black and brown residents majorly confined south of I-630.<sup>554</sup> Similarly, street level gun violence studies for Little Rock from theTrace.org indicate that the vast majority of gun violence incidents occur within the confined region south of I-630.<sup>555</sup> The freeway acts as a containment device for violent crimes in the city. Violent crimes are not the only social factors confined to the south of I-630. The Opportunity atlas study, based out of Harvard University in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and Brown University, indicated deficiencies in social success markers for black and brown communities for household income rates, employment rates, education rates, and neighborhood diversity, while demonstrating increased levels of incarceration, poverty and single parent households for the areas south of I-630.<sup>556</sup> Air Pollution reports for I-630 from resources including the Environmental Protection Agency provide necessary GIS data and absence of this information is a limitation at this point of the study. There are additional connected conversations needing further investigation, including the impact of urban

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<sup>553</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Wade Rathke. Personal, December 3, 2020.

<sup>554</sup> “2010 Arkansas Population Change.” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, 2010.

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/census/>.

<sup>555</sup> *TheTrace.org*, *TheTrace.org* (Gun Violence Archive, 2014), <https://www.thetrace.org/2018/12/gun-violence-interactive-shootings-map/?place=Little-Rock-Arkansas>.

<sup>556</sup> The Opportunity Atlas, The Opportunity Atlas (Harvard University, US Census Bureau), accessed 2021, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>.

development policies and their sustenance of exclusionary ecosystems that keep black communities void of economic, health and wellness, and education options.

The sources for this project illuminated the evolution of social and economic developments for Little Rock residents. They also demonstrated larger connections to questions of citizenship and revealed key insights about the impact urban renewal and interstate projects have on determining the proper place for black and brown bodies in urban America.

**Conclusions:  
The Language of State Will**

Intersectional assessment of freeway and segregation studies demonstrated how the goals of white supremacy evolved to match the capacity of the modern state. Early segregation studies engaged the relationship between white supremacy and the power of the state, growing from positions that emphasized individual prejudices rather than state or local government coordination segregated modern cities. Likely a result of victorious American postwar euphoria, these early perspectives deflected any intimation that the US government was anything beyond exceptional. Segregation scholarship mirrored social anxieties in the decades following the freeway generation, with analysis expressly connecting America's destiny to questions of race and urbanization. Social anxieties and public disillusionment during the 1960s transitioned to the reemergence of conservatism in the 1970's, and a change in executive administrations afforded insights solidified the need for state intervention to eradicate urban blight. The example of I-630 exhibited a consistent approach by coalitions of engineers, city planners and government oversight to reconstitute Little Rock's urban spaces to the aims of Jim Crow segregation, using the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. This dissertation attempted to highlight several revelations and clarified important misconceptions regarding the relationship of Interstate 630 to Little Rock history. Urban renewal processes in Little Rock reflected key similarities but also notable distinctions from other redevelopment models in cities across America. This research revealed the methods by which urban renewal and federal interstate construction occurred and will further unpack the greater implications of these processes on modern societies.

## **Interstates Resegregated American Cities**

Little Rock is clearly divided along racial and class lines, with Interstate 630 serving as the primary demarcation of separation. Sociological and GIS data explicitly reflected this reality, while research and interview discussions with city historians revealed the context for how black communities in Little Rock shifted over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first major deduction is that I-630's construction did not begin the destruction of Little Rock's traditionally black communities, but it completed the demise of formerly bustling black spaces such as The Line on West 9<sup>th</sup> street.

Prior to urban renewal in the mid-century, Little Rock's peppered communities created a more liberal and appealing location for rural Black Arkansans. The Line reflected the Jim Crow social order of the city, however, the economic and political success of traditionally black communities rebutted notions of white supremacy and presented serious anxieties for city officials. With more migrants entering city populations to adjust to shifting New South manufacturing and non-agricultural industries, city officials employed Progressive era strategies to address the social ramifications of this influx. The Progressive movement in America responded to the anxieties brought on by rising immigration numbers as well as growing wealth inequalities of industrial capitalism.

Progressivism was a loosely connected movement but the ripples of this movement permeated urban renewal and planning designs for generations afterward. Progressive influence on urban renewal is demonstrated by a reliance on experts and advancements in technology to improve urban efficiency. City managers were increasingly employed during the twentieth century to initiate the work of modernizing and enhancing urban spaces. Urban planning experts use of modern geographical information systems observation tools and strategies reflected the Progressive era influence and included practices such as, but not limited to land based

geographical surveys, and particularly use of aerial based perspectives. Urban planning appropriated physical science theories to approach city design as social science to be understood through statistical analysis, application of probability mathematics and conversion of population groups into manageable averages.<sup>557</sup> Noted city architect John Nolen explained that human migration impacted the reconstruction of cities. Replanning efforts began with careful consideration of current underlying physical, economic and social conditions – a ‘city study.’<sup>558</sup> Primary goals for these city managers and urban planners were to budget decisions in such a way that protected life, health, and property, advanced civilization and ameliorated social inequality, injustices, and dissensions.<sup>559</sup> New techniques and technologies provided urban planners more data to craft their understandings of present metropolitan layouts and shape new visions for the future of American cities. The ‘Olympian view’ model favored by high modern city planners.<sup>560</sup> For centuries this view gave urban planners a powerful, detached, and strategic vantage, but in the twentieth century it was delivered through modern tools such as airplanes, helicopters and satellites.<sup>561</sup> Aerial views gave survey renderings clean, logical symmetry and compelling geometry.<sup>562</sup> These new images elevated city planners and their lobbying interests’ ability to communicate their visions and create the necessary buy-in to execute their agendas.<sup>563</sup>

Challenges and anxieties onset by urbanization at the turn of the century empowered city

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<sup>557</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). p.436

<sup>558</sup> John Nolen, *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages* (New York, NY: American City Bureau, 1919). p.11

<sup>559</sup> John Nolen, *New Ideals in the Planning of Cities, Towns and Villages* (New York, NY: American City Bureau, 1919). p.23

<sup>560</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). p.125

<sup>561</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). p.125

<sup>562</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). p.125

<sup>563</sup> Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). p.126



officials to plan with standardized and scientific techniques, thereby transforming citizens into categorical units that could intellectually quantified and ultimately displaced with relative social impunity.<sup>564</sup>

Urban planning and freeway construction scholars alike recognized the role of key individuals in sometimes overlapping power systems that steered urban renewal and interstate highway development. Highway engineers and urban planners were catalysts and lubricated the gears of government to achieve their desired objectives.<sup>565</sup> Urban catalysts acted as agents of the people, implementing reform measures for the benefit of greater society. The coalescence of public interest with government responsibility placed this reality into further Progressive context. In Little Rock, George Millar served this role in guiding the process of securing funding for the fledgling east-west expressway to ultimately become I-630. However, how these urban redevelopments occurred followed traceably similar patterns in cities around America, from Interstate 5 in Los Angeles to Interstate 95 in Miami. The Eisenhower administration reasoned that traffic jams threatened to grow increasingly severe without the construction of new freeways and localities seized this opportunity to reshape cities.<sup>566</sup> Numerous public, private, federal, state, and local agencies were connected through urban renewal and highway planning, construction, and operation efforts. Their political autonomies overlapped at the edges, and public controversies concerning highways reflected the complex political and decision guiding structures of each group. Highway lobbyist were among the most powerful political interest and routinely influenced policy at every governing level.<sup>567</sup> Public opposition to highway

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<sup>564</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). p.437

<sup>565</sup> Wayne Attoe and Chris Logan, *American Urban Architecture: Catalysts in the Design of Cities* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989). p. 42-73; Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971). p.15

<sup>566</sup> Albert Benjamin Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: D.W. Brown, 1971). p.6

<sup>567</sup> RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019).p.xxxvi

construction plans was vehement in communities across the country.<sup>568</sup> Resistance to these urban policies reflected the absence of local participation in planning decisions made, as well as the narrow scope of desires which fueled their intentions.<sup>569</sup>

As highways were constructed around the country, their routes targeted the paths of least resistance which primarily were in black communities. To modernize national travel and ease the issues of automobile overproduction, the homes and families, history and memories, neighborhoods, and futures of some were sacrificed at the altar of capitalist progress.<sup>570</sup>

Interstates facilitated white flight and added convenient new markets along its exit ramps through easy access shopping malls.<sup>571</sup> Lacking the political capital necessary to prevent these processes, black and brown communities were converted into the cold, barren landscapes we understand as America's inner cities. These areas are void of access to quality food sources, banking and education systems, and are hyper-policed rather than protected and served. In Little Rock and numerous other cities, highway planners severed access to navigable riverways, the country's first interstate superhighway and life source for many of the urban underclasses.<sup>572</sup> Secretary of State John Volpe's decision to support public outcry to cancel to the Vieux Carré expressway project in New Orleans was a watershed acknowledgement of the previous urban development practices which selectively targeted poorer communities.<sup>573</sup> I-630 ultimately redrew

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<sup>568</sup> Frederick Gutheim, "Urban Space and Urban Design," in RFF Forum on The Future Use of Urban Space (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, Inc., 1962), pp. 103-122. p.338

<sup>569</sup> Alan Lupo et al., *Rites of Way: the Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1972). p.186

<sup>570</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). p.ix

<sup>571</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). p.x

<sup>572</sup> Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013). p.x

<sup>573</sup> RICHARD O. JR. BAUMBACH, *SECOND BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS: a History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront Expressway Controversy* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2019). p.xxxviii

The Line of racial and class segregation from West 9<sup>th</sup>'s street through the heart of Arkansas' capital city to its current parameters.

### **Interstates As Public Relation Tools**

Federal interstate construction continued New Deal legacies of government exclusion of African Americans. The discriminatory history of New Deal legislations is long recognized, but it is important to understand that as these economic improvement measures were implemented through racially selective practices, they established further precedent for future government policies that empowered white Americans and excluded poor African Americans from first class citizenship.<sup>574</sup> City planners were reimagining urban landscapes such as Little Rock's during the 1930's when Roosevelt's post-Great Depression plans were administered. Increasing anxieties over the status and mobility of subaltern black agricultural labor dominated political concerns during the decade, pointing to desires for economic solutions that would reaffirm the southern social hierarchy.<sup>575</sup> It is established that the public policies crafted and administered during the New and Fair Deal eras were intentionally discriminatory, as seventeen American states and the nation's capital city were still legally segregated at the time. Social security, the G.I. Bill, and key labor legislations were developed to incubate the growth of a modern white middle class, while maintaining the limits of black freedoms.<sup>576</sup>

This dissertation refined an initial hypothesis that I-630 and interstate construction was intended to redefine urban narratives away from the negative aspects of Little Rock's racial history, and that this notion applied to numerous cities around America. While this is generally true for

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<sup>574</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006). p.139-140

<sup>575</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006). p.59

<sup>576</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006). p.17

metropolises across the country, in Little Rock it is important to note that the incidents of racial violence at Little Rock Central High School's integration in 1957 played a significantly larger factor on the interstate construction push than the lynching of John Carter in 1927.<sup>577</sup> The memories of Carter's 1927 lynching lived with the communities of Little Rock well into the present time and presented great anxieties for the desegregation generations and beyond.<sup>578</sup> Local historians confirmed the economic concerns that arose amid the crisis at Central High School, jeopardizing the city's relatively friendly business and social reputation.<sup>579</sup> Urban renewal and interstate construction efforts were effectively largescale public relations projects to deliver new narratives for the histories of urban spaces. As civil rights and other social movements continued through the midcentury, their legacies were reified by the freeway revolt generations who resisted the state incursions into their living spaces and the destruction and displacement of their communities. This intangible link also is found by tracing the psychological impact of urban renewal and interstate developments on the people within these social spaces.

### **Interstates Reshaped Urban Social Psychology**

Interstates significantly form our understandings of ourselves and our relationship to urban spaces. I-630 reshaped the social psychology of Little Rock, and federal interstates largely define social psychologies in urban spaces around the country. While this process also is found in rural settings through some other physical delineators such as a railroad tracks, in urban areas interstates overwhelmingly determine what we understand as the 'good' or 'bad' sides of town. In Little Rock, verbal terminology such as 'south of I-630' confirm common awareness of who

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<sup>577</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.

<sup>578</sup> Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: a Memoir* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2007). p.62

<sup>579</sup> Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: Jay Barth. Personal, November 24, 2020.; Hughes, Airic. I-630 Dissertation Interview: John Kirk. Personal, January 25, 2021.

belongs where, and how these spaces are designed to feel and function. Living south of I-630 is a psychological and physical manifestation of second-class citizenship. It's harder to exist in these spaces by most every sociological success marker, from education, to income, to incarceration and hope.<sup>580</sup> It is also well understood that black and brown populations are set to live in these spaces for several reasons. Underlying the era of urban renewal and federal interstate construction were anxieties onset by social changes in America. Concerns over black geographies – black population locations and their changes over time - heightened in the fifty years following Reconstruction, as prior to this time black populations in America, and especially in Arkansas, were largely circumscribed by soil conditions.<sup>581</sup> As African Americans resettled into urban spaces and created thriving communities, they exposed the fallacies of white supremacy and Gilded Age ideologies like social Darwinism that permeated society. The same energy that motivated southern governments and political factions to redeem their societies and reestablish white supremacy, equipped urban renewal planners, facilitators, and legislators with the framework to recast these spaces to their own political objectives, similar to the recasting of American history during the concurrent Lost Cause generations. To better understand how these policy makers executed their objectives, it's important to outline that the processes of urban renewal and interstate construction aligned with the policies of the state at large towards black people. Black bodies are dehumanized, continuing the legacies of the peculiar institution. Black capacity and potential are doubted and diminished, concluding with the devaluing of black land and ownership. Dehumanizing black bodies through reduction to statistical averages facilitated the ultimate devaluing and demise of culturally black communities and spaces.

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<sup>580</sup> The Opportunity Atlas, The Opportunity Atlas (Harvard University, US Census Bureau), accessed 2021, <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>.

<sup>581</sup> Ben F. Johnson, *Arkansas in Modern America, 1930-1999* (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2000). p.243

Segregation historians note this conversation of ‘necessary space’ as the context for white supremacists to fulfil their objectives. During and following the institution of slavery, culturally autonomous spaces that African Americans carved out for survival became the target of assault and identity defamation. Protective measures blacks employed to avoid potentially deadly confrontations included masks of simplemindedness, sycophancy, and loyalty to whites and their desires.<sup>582</sup> These survival masks that blacks used formed the reality of their existence to white Americans, and became a key tool in the overall justification of white supremacy.<sup>583</sup> This premise motivated white supremacists’ push to evolve the segregation policies on which the nation was founded, in the face of changing twentieth century social landscapes.

Urban scholars further illuminated these concepts through the lens of colonization and Cold War ideology. As urban renewal housing policies and interstate construction displaced traditional black communities, new black and brown colonies emerged in American cities. Generations of African Americans that migrated to urban areas had been maneuvered and resettled into more desirable and less visible locations through state power. African Americans were viewed, as and intended to be, an equilibrating rung on the nation’s socioeconomic ladder, set for the worst jobs and only advanced as leverage in periods of labor conflict and shortages.<sup>584</sup> Black bodies were deemed as extractable commodities, confinable to certain types of work and therefore containable into certain spaces.<sup>585</sup> Viewing black geographies through the lens of colonial exploitation gives clarity to the lack of investment into those numerous socioeconomic success markers mentioned previously. Extraction of black labor as a buffer for state economies makes it

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<sup>582</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999). p.16

<sup>583</sup> Grace Elizabeth. Hale, *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1999). p.17

<sup>584</sup> Tabb, William K. 1970. *The political economy of the Black ghetto*. New York: Norton., p. 26

<sup>585</sup> Tabb, William K. 1970. *The political economy of the Black ghetto*. New York: Norton., p.27

easier to understand why urban ghettos feel like barren alien lands. When exposed for extended periods these feelings have devastating psychological results, or what Oscar Lewis referred to as a ‘culture of poverty.’<sup>586</sup>

Historically situating the era when Highwaymen worked to help control reconfiguring populations in American cities with the underlying values of Jim Crow, and the empowerment to clear urban blight through modern planning and federal sanctioning is essential to understanding the solution of removal and displacement. During and after America’s participation in World War II, the burgeoning civil rights movements posed real problems to government officials that wanted to prioritize national foreign policy issues such as the Cold War. Additionally, postwar economic prosperity encouraged whites to push full scale into suburban development.<sup>587</sup> Thus the challenges of urbanization and desegregation were met with the Cold War ideology of containment.<sup>588</sup> Targeting black and brown populations for urban renewal and interstate construction projects, contained them into predetermined standardized housing units and neighborhoods that lessened the strength of national social justice movements and ultimately destroyed the viability of these communities. Containing poor communities out of the eyesight of freeway commuters eased the psychological othering necessary for the wheels of capitalism to smoothly flow. It also placed definable barriers on the spread of subversive influences, both for communism abroad and civil rights movements at home.<sup>589</sup> How the other half lives are

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<sup>586</sup> William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: the Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). p.13

<sup>587</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). p. 141-143

<sup>588</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). p.138

<sup>589</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). p.138

physically and psychologically is not a concern for modern suburbanites, outside of the social awareness to refrain from ‘south of I-630’ whenever possible.<sup>590</sup>

### **Language as Reflection of State Will**

Out of all these varying dynamics, segregation studies, urban development and renewal policy, and federal interstate construction, a common language emerged that revealed how history has tied these factors together. From the start of the twentieth century, increasing government influence on the everyday lives of citizens was facilitated with deliberately uneven results. At local, state, and federal levels, policies such as the Fair Labor Standards act intentionally excluded African American laborers through the language of the legislation which protected only narrowly defined workers engaged, ‘in commerce or in the production of goods for commerce,’ and that black exclusion was necessary for the political expediency and passage of the bill itself.<sup>591</sup> Progressive ideologies undergirded the framework for the language of urban renewal and federal highway construction projects. Urban scholars point to the use of terminology such as but not limited to ‘right of way,’ and ‘eminent domain,’ as evidence for Progressive influence in urban renewal and federal interstate construction policymaking generations. Governments were authorized by federal courts with the ability to decide between public and private interests, which sanctioned the constitutionality of redevelopment and renewal laws.<sup>592</sup> Devalued black owned land therefore could legally be sacrificed for the greater good of real estate interest, urban planners, and highwaymen who worked for the public good.<sup>593</sup> The same public yearned for

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<sup>590</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). p.213

<sup>591</sup> Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: WW Norton, 2006). p.58

<sup>592</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). p.311

<sup>593</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1961). p.311



governments to help ease the tensions of urbanization and desegregation, and to restore the southern way of life to cities across America.

Segregation scholars highlight the reality that Americans have engaged in this reclassification of injustices so much that euphemisms are created to eliminate the embarrassment of our national policies towards black citizenship. Terms such as inner city replaced ghetto, which accurately describe the state of these urban ‘containment zones’ and often feature physical exit boundaries in the form of interstates.<sup>594</sup> Rothstein offered, “Before we became ashamed to admit that the country had circumscribed African Americans in ghettos, analysts of race relations, both African Americans and white, consistently and accurately used ghetto to describe low-income African American neighborhoods, created by public policy, with a shortage of opportunity, and with barriers to exit.”<sup>595</sup> He underscored this reality by juxtaposing that affluent whites who migrate to gentrified formerly black communities are rarely considered within the definitions of ‘inner city.’<sup>596</sup> White Americans have viewed African Americans as inferior and therefore any descriptive terminology used eventually becomes a marker of inferiority, establishing a secondary caste that geographically separated and exploited black communities through government policies.<sup>597</sup> Although the processes were not identical, urban renewal and federal interstate construction charted similar paths in cities across the nation. Just as northern and southerners coalesced post-Reconstruction under the umbrella of white supremacy, private interest, legislators, and urban planners around the country conjoined to relieve national growing

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<sup>594</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018). p.XVI

<sup>595</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018). p.XVI

<sup>596</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018). p.XVI

<sup>597</sup> Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018). p.XVII

pains through Jim Crow principles and modern urban planning techniques. Use of strategic language in these policies was key to their legalization. Freeway protesters knew interstates were resegregating cities because their communities were being destroyed and they were being confined into zones of containment, while white flight suburban communities sprang up all around them. The cool, calm rationalizations provided to John Vogler in the I-630 environmental impact statement documents were key to understanding the persistence of state will, despite the overwhelming evidence supporting public dissenters. Lasting impact from this strategic language remains evident through the words we use to describe the social designations in urban America to this day.

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