The Missing Designers:
A History of Activists Designing for Racial Justice

by

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B.A. African & African American Studies
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Submitted to the
Department of Architecture
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ABSTRACT

Design precedents are often de-historicized, de-politicized, and de-raced. By starting at the margins, what lineages can designers uncover for seemingly apolitical design tactics? Intervening in the genealogy of race and design, this thesis locates design creativity within Black resistance movements and complicates the narrative of who is credited with transforming and repurposing the built environment. As critics of the status quo, Black activists did more than just fight and dismantle. They designed and created alternatives to the systems that aimed to diminish them. Two case studies offer a closer look at design interventions for self-determination by Black communities in the late 1960s. In Chapter One, I consider the Black Panthers as tactical urbanists who reshaped the environment in low-cost, temporary, and participatory ways. In Chapter Two, I examine the New Communities land trust and their design charrettes as a democratic intervention in an often professionalized planning process. Chapter Three considers how Critical Race Theory decodes images in these cases that seem natural, inevitable, and race neutral.

Thesis Supervisor: Timothy Hyde
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In memory of Ali

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Introduction

"Good" design has often failed to account for the needs of marginalized people. But the marginalized design back. They have agency and creativity. This thesis locates creativity within resistance movements to show that as critics of the status quo, activists did more than just fight and dismantle. They designed and created alternatives to the systems that aimed to diminish them.

This thesis explores two case studies between 1968 and 1972. The first case focuses on the Black Panther survival programs in Oakland, California. The second case focuses on the New Communities, Incorporated (NCI) land trust in Albany, Georgia. Both cases offer a closer look at design interventions for self-determination by Black communities in the late 1960s. Both articulated a visionary transformation of their built environment. Neither the Black Panthers nor NCI are considered designers in the historical canon; thus, this thesis is an opportunity to explore their methods. I wanted to show activists in positions of creativity, not just anger. Black activists did not only participate in spontaneous protests; they designed also for the long term. Professional designers at that time defined national planning problems with the terms blight, urban crisis, and Southern poverty. These terms constrained the planners' subsequent solutions. The Black Panthers and NCI offered alternative ways to define these problems.

Too often, the late 1960s is the era associated with Black communities' being overwhelmingly designed "for" as passive objects of housing projects and urban renewal, being punted around to the corners of grand modernist renewal plans of white, professionally trained designers. Here, then, are alternate narratives where Black Americans are the designers, no longer the designed for. In this active role, I can better understand their visions and their responses to white supremacy.

As historian Robin Kelley writes, plans, dreams, and visions are important because they give us an idea of justice to strive for. Kelley discusses the value of looking at dreams, which I extrapolate to plans:

> [T]oo often our standards for evaluating social movements pivot around whether or not they "succeeded" in realizing their visions rather than on the merits or power of the visions themselves. By such a measure, virtually every radical movement failed because the basic power relations they sought to change remain pretty much intact. And yet it is precisely these alternative visions and dreams that inspire new generations to continue to struggle for change.[1]

Design Genealogies: A Critical Race Theory Intervention

What is design? According to architectural historians Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley, design connects to the very essence of what makes us human: "Design is the most human thing about us. Design is what makes the human."[2] Compelling for its inclusive flavor, this "all humans design" approach falls short as a definition because it fails to grapple with design systems that systematically dehumanize people based on race.

This thesis introduces case studies that problematize design genealogies. Unstated design genealogies that default to racially neutral obscure racial dynamics and afford legitimacy to a limited range of creativity. The cases of the Black Panthers and New Communities are not another step in the lineage leading up to the design concept today; rather, they challenge the conventional design genealogy. I draw my term "design genealogy" from urban historian Karilyn Crockett's use of the term "fight genealogy" and the way it honors the legacy of resisters who fought to keep their city a home that valued people before highways.[3] Crockett's use of the term

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[1] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), vii.

[2] Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley, *Are We Human? Notes on an Archaeology of Design* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2016), 12.

[3] Karilyn Crockett, *People before Highways: Boston Activists, Urban Planners, and a New Movement for Citymaking* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018).

genealogy recovers a rich lineage of resistance from fading into obscurity. For further explanation, I turn to Foucault's "history of the present"; that is, problematizing the present by tracing the erratic ways a design concept has evolved.[4] Genealogy traces overlooked connections between people and power, as legal scholar and sociologist David Garland says of Foucault's work, "by presenting a series of troublesome associations and lineages—that institutions and practices we value and take for granted today are actually more problematic…than they otherwise appear."[5] The field of design takes for granted how terms such as tactical urbanism have privileged white people, failing to account for a backdrop of sanctioned violence, financial discrimination, and white supremacy. Therefore, in searching for images of tactical urbanism, a group of Black people "taking over" a public space comes across differently than a group of white people "repurposing" a similar spot (*Figure 1*).

Fig. 1. Left: Kron 4 News coverage of "BBQing While Black" at Lake Merritt in Oakland, CA, 2018. Right: Parklet in parking spot in Minneapolis, MN, 2008. By SV Johnson. Creative Commons. The photograph on the right comes up in searches for "tactical urbanism," providing a glimpse of the strategy's racialization in published design blogs.

[4] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 31. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1991), 83.

[5] David W. Garland, "What Is a 'History of the Present'? On Foucault's Genealogies and Their Critical Preconditions," *Punishment and Society* 16, no. 4 (2014): 372.

Genealogy is less about looking at the essence of things and more about understanding how something has emerged in discontinuous ways. Colomina and Wigley trace a genealogy of design themselves and examine the "Empire of Design" that enforces its own universalism and goodness: "The word good no longer even needs to be said. The very word design already means 'good'—as if we don't need to think about the fact that the same concept is active in weapons, surveillance, invasions, and terrorism."[6] While Colomina and Wigley complicate the inherent goodness of design, more remains to be explored in redefining design. This is a project to redefine design and further complicate those binaries through the following case studies.

In what ways does race play a role in whose design activities are considered disruptive and whose creative? When considering ideas of citizen intervention in planning, I came across terms such as tactical or DIY urbanism, design charrette, and participatory or advocacy planning. When I looked into the histories of design strategies, I found examples only in ancient Rome or by contemporary licensed architects.[7] What was missing from this genealogy were actors who responded to racial assumptions and oppressions. Design genealogies consign the work of marginalized people to the informal and the vernacular and the spontaneous—anything but design and planning. Intervening in the genealogy of design terms is useful because it dismantles the design profession's assumptions as to who counts as historical actors in western and modernist planning perspectives. Ultimately, by considering a new cast of planners and designers, this project values the dreams and visions of otherwise marginalized creatives. The Black Panthers and NCI expand the scope of what is considered architectural and urban design.

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[6] Colomina and Wigley, *Are We Human?*, 58–59.

[7] Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, *Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action for Long-Term Change* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015). Emily Talen, "Do-It-Yourself Urbanism: A History," *Journal of Planning History* 14, no. 2 (May 2015): 135–48.

Critical Race Theory decodes images that seem natural, inevitable, and race neutral. Racism did not end with civil rights legislation; rather, racist language merely became illegal or socially unacceptable. For example, even though the term blight seems race neutral, it gave the government the power of eminent domain to destroy Black neighborhoods they deemed undesirable. Race-neutral terms obscured how a racial system not only produced Blackness and otherness—it also produced whiteness as the norm. The opposite of racial justice is not racism; it is racial neutrality. Being indifferent to race doesn't make circumstances more fair; it only ignores the continuing systemic issues. Race-neutral terms disguise the design choices that have disproportionate consequences for Black people. In the new collection of essays *Race and Modern Architecture*, the editors contend that scholars need to "write race back into architectural history."[8] This means questioning race-neutral norms, questioning "natural" images, and revealing assumptions when writing the history of the built environment, especially given "the architectural theoretical tropes once thought of as 'race-neutral.'"[9]

According to Khiara M. Bridges, this means keeping certain tenets in the foreground when analyzing design case studies. Critical Race Theory is about the relationship between the law and racial inequality, particularly in how the law "constructs, naturalizes, [and] justifies" racial inequality.[10] This can be applied to the structures, processes, and actors that shape the built environment. Critical Race Theory focuses on systems rather than bad actors, and contends that "racism is a normal feature of American society (and not a deviation from an otherwise fair and just status quo), and that institutions, like the law, have worked to perpetuate racial inequality."[11]

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[8] Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, and Mabel O. Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 4.
[9] Cheng, Davis II, and Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 5.
[10] Khiara M. Bridges, *Critical Race Theory : A Primer* (St. Paul, MN: Foundation Press, 2019), 8.
[11] Bridges, *Critical Race Theory*, 11.

Bridges shows that using Critical Race Theory means changing the type of questions asked and reviewing some of Critical Race Theory's essential commitments.[12] Critical Race Theory means treating racism as systemic rather than individual, disaggregating racism from race consciousness (one is in service of white supremacy, one is in service of justice), prioritizing substantive equality over formal equality, shifting understanding of the evil of segregation to that of white supremacy, and being skeptical about neutrality.[13] If designers want to design for racial justice, they cannot continue being indifferent to race. Black histories matter—especially for designers. The term "designer" has been slow to include women and minorities, although the body of scholarship is growing. The term "designer" could be more inclusive throughout history, particularly in accounting for different types of expertise.

Case Studies

The case studies I will present provide an alternative to the genealogy of participatory design. How did the profession come to value these ideas? What form have these ideas taken? By highlighting Black activists fighting for self-determination as designers, I begin to trace the ways Black power changed ideas of participation in city planning. This new set of designers improves the genealogy of self-determination and participation in planning and design.

In Chapter One, I consider the Black Panthers, public space, and tactical urbanism. The Black Panther survival conference is an example of a design strategy that is overlooked in the history of tactical urbanism. Tactical urbanism encompasses low-cost, temporary modifications to a built environment that bypasses formal planning processes and is often initiated by everyday

[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] Ibid., 10–14.

people. Examples include crosswalks, bike lanes, and small free libraries.[14] While tactical urbanism does challenge the slow, unresponsive pace of formal planning, it has yet to be inclusive of race, politics, and power. As an example of tactical urbanism, the Black Panther survival conferences used local parks to change the public ownership of space, given that Oakland's Black residents were overpoliced in public space.

This is important because the Black Panthers are not the "foundational" origin of tactical urbanism. The development of something like tactical urbanism—a design intervention—is more "erratic and discontinuous" than a linear timeline.[15] What the Black Panthers did was question whether design plans (lauded as "good" in their modernity) actually meant progress for their neighborhood communities. They challenged city planners and residents through their newspapers and survival programs, calling out the disproportionate racial impacts of plans and policies that made no mention of race. The Black Panthers designed interventions to reveal and meet people's needs, demanded better housing, jobs, and health care, and used the survival conferences to change ownership and safety of public space.

In Chapter Two, I examine the New Communities land trust and their design charrettes. The NCI land trust design is another example of a design strategy that has been overlooked in the history of participatory planning and offers a narrative that grounds participatory planning to be more inclusive of race, politics, and power. In Georgia, despite civil rights victories, Black farmers did not receive loans and were often evicted from farms for their political activity. NCI created a more democratic design process that gave Black, low-income residents of southwest Georgia options for their agricultural futures. NCI wanted to give people land, which, in the South, meant power. NCI farmers developed work-arounds through collective ownership of land.

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[14] Lydon and Garcia, *Tactical Urbanism*, 25.
[15] Garland, "'History of the Present,'" 372.

They also researched agriculture options and owned the means of production. NCI's contribution to the planning of the built environment added the "community" to "land trust." Land trusts have historically operated in the genre of environmental preservation. By creating a new kind of land trust, NCI prioritized accountability to a marginalized community.

In Chapter Three, I compare the cases using Critical Race Theory. I situate them in broader historical movements. What assumptions and "natural" images does Critical Race Theory reveal? Writer Ross Gay reflects on how popular media often portrays Blackness as "inextricable from suffering, and suffering from blackness… Which is clever as hell if your goal is obscuring the efforts, the systems, historical and ongoing, to ruin black people. Clever as hell if your goal is to make appear natural what is, in fact, by design."[16] What binaries around informality, design, and race do these case studies complicate? How do the cases disrupt the silos of architectural design and urban planning? And finally, how do these cases build toward a new, race-conscious definition of design?

In the Epilogue, I consider a more recent example in the Moms 4 Housing Campaign, launched in 2019 in Oakland, California, a story that weaves together the home-base and direct-action methods of the Black Panthers with the land trust model of NCI. I also reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 and current conversations about racial justice in the planning and design worlds that give directions for future work.

I was looking for designers throughout history who confronted racism and designed with racial justice in mind. The usual line up of twentieth-century designers—in city planning and in architecture—was not yielding much. My search for these missing designers revealed how narrowly the canon is defined. I knew there were people designing better futures against racism.

[16] Ross Gay, *The Book of Delights: Essays* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2019), 220.

But my definition of designer was too narrow. It relied too much on criteria that had been systematically denied to people of color over the past century. If I picked up any case study, I would find people transforming their homes, neighborhoods, cities, and land with justice on their minds. I just needed to use a different lens to see them.

Chapter One: Black Panthers, Public Space, and Tactical Urbanism

A grid of thousands of grocery bags foregrounds a Victorian mansion in West Oakland, California. Young children, men, and women step carefully through the grid and place provisions for families into the bags, including eggs, dried milk, butter, and flour. The patchy grass of the ten-acre park disappears beneath the feet of hundreds of people gathering for the Black Community Survival Conference for Body and Soul, captured in a local news reel from 1972 (*Figure 2*).[17] The grocery giveaway is directed by Black Panther members, some in signature leather jackets. Their weeks of organizing have come to fruition as families carry bags of groceries home. They have arranged for a large truck of donated frozen chickens not far from tables stacked with voter registration forms. It has taken weeks of preparation for the Black Panthers to plan the conference and set up the space. The Black Panther newspaper advertised the conference, calling on the people of Oakland to congregate at DeFremery Park, later renamed Bobby Hutton Memorial Park by the Black Panthers.[18]

Many people across the country had first learned of and joined the fledgling party in 1969 when the Black Panthers attracted national attention by marching into the State Capitol building

[17] "Black Community Survival Conference II," originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, March 30, 1972. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA. "Black Panthers Distribute Free Groceries," originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, March 28, 1972. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.
[18] "In Unity There Is Survival," *Black Panther News*, April 1, 1972.

in Sacramento to advocate for the right to bear arms, loaded rifles propped against their leather jackets.[19] This afternoon, it was not guns but groceries that drew people to the park.

The Black Panthers reshaped the environment in low-cost, temporary, and participatory ways. They were responding to what the nation had termed the "urban crisis," as racial protests and entrenched poverty failed to evaporate with the passage of civil rights laws.[20] The Panthers brought parks to life, installed a stoplight at a dangerous intersection near an elementary school, created breakfast programs for children, and rented space to create factories.[21] In 1972, the Black Panthers called these "survival programs," designed to tide people over "pending revolution." Since the party's founding in 1966 as a response to police brutality in Oakland, the Black Panthers implemented programs to help people transform their streets and move through them unencumbered. They put Black power in action by defining it through community control of resources, and as historian Robert O. Self writes, self-determination "emerged as an organizing framework" for the party.[22]

This chapter complicates the narrative of who is credited with transforming and repurposing Oakland's built environment by examining the Black Panthers' design interventions. The use, transformation, and repurposing of the built environment was shaped by more than architects and city planners. The Panthers disrupted the entrenched racism of their environment through their provisional community survival programs. The Black Panthers argued that white

[19] Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 58.
[20] Wendell E. Pritchett, "Which Urban Crisis? Regionalism, Race, and Urban Policy, 1960–1974," *Journal of Urban History* 34, no. 2 (January 2008): 266–86.
[21] The traffic light is located at Market Street and 55th Street in Oakland. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 355.
[22] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 219.

Fig.2. Volunteers distributing groceries at the March 1972 survival conference. Archival newsfilm. CBS5 KPIX-TV.

supremacy was more than a social prejudice; it was embedded in the built environment and affected how everyone accessed, used, and repurposed that environment. The story of the Black Panther Party as designers reveals an alternative narrative to the urban crisis, which had been characterized by federal and state interventions. While these interventions vaguely called for a "community" practice, the Black Panthers implemented it.

Overall, the Black Panther survival programs reveal unifying design principles. These principles can be applied to analyze their other projects, including their plans for schools, factories, and other businesses. Their designs operated on multiple scales. On the individual level, they emphasized dignity and self-determination over charity. On the level of collective identity, they responded with an alternative to municipal and federal forces with inclusive, participatory processes. They also challenged the collective identity of blight imposed on their neighborhoods. These efforts, many led and staffed by women, stand in stark contrast to the individual male personalities often associated with the party. Their modifications were often low-cost and temporary, both to make collective change accessible as well as iterative. Finally, their designs connected the Black Panther cause with a global struggle for liberation.

Even though urban renewal exacerbated rather than improved the so-called urban crisis, it was praised in professional design circles. At the annual California convention of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1969, Oakland won the Urban Award. A troubling affirmation of this legacy, the Urban Award congratulated architects who, at the last few conventions, had puzzled over what to do about the urban crisis. As the *Washington Post* reported, "[Oakland,] a city working to overcome critical urban problems, was honored by the American Institute of Architects for excellence in community architecture."[23] The AIA gave the award on the basis of

[23] "AIA Urban Award Goes to Oakland," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1969.

the "outstanding new museum, sports stadium and arena, rapid transit stations, downtown mall, low-income housing and neighborhood renewal as well as office complexes."[24] AIA President Rex Whitaker Allen attributed the award to the previous decade of "community planning" and "outstanding architecture" that offered "a chance to remake the face of the city."[25] Indeed, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) tracks, sports stadiums, and housing projects had remade the face of Oakland—but at the cost of which communities?

In reality, the Urban Award was presented to Oakland at the end of a decade of devastating urban renewal programs. The City of Oakland had bulldozed entire blocks of low-income communities, failing to relocate thousands of displaced families, and failing to build sufficient replacement housing. "Numerous pioneering low-income housing projects" praised at the AIA convention did not meaningfully materialize. Tax dollars subsidized award-winning amenities while many of West Oakland's streets still lacked curbs or gutters.[26] Others had mounted major resistance campaigns to Oakland's redevelopment prior to the Black Panther Party.[27] Archivist Moriah Ulinskas has uncovered photographs from the beginnings of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency.[28] Federal and local officials called the unrest and poverty urban crisis and tried to increase social control through policing as well as anti-poverty projects. Many in Panther leadership had previously worked in federal anti-poverty agencies and had advocated for neighborhood control of various funds and projects.[29] Many had grown up in West Oakland, watching surplus war tanks demolish homes, BART tracks be cut over the historic

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[24] "AIA Urban Award Goes to Oakland," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1969.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Judith V. May, "Two Model Cities: Negotiations in Oakland," *Politics and Society* 2, no. 1 (Fall 1971): 61.
[27] Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 120–44.
[28] Moriah Ulinskas, "Imagining a Past Future," *Places Journal*, January 2019, accessed June 29, 2020, https://doi.org/10.22269/190122.
[29] Self, *American Babylon*, 225.

Black commercial district, and large plots of demolished land grow weeds for years as people remained displaced from their homes.

DeFremery Park, a launch point of the Panther survival programs, lay at the heart of the redlined neighborhood of West Oakland. This devaluing of Black neighborhoods in Oakland went far back into Oakland's history. Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps from 1937 show DeFremery Park between sections D8 and D9 (*Figure 3*). Accompanying notes state that it has a "security grade" of "red," and a form for "detrimental influences" states that it has a "heterogeneous mixture of all race[s]" and "infiltrations" of "orientals and negroes," and that the "trend of desirability" is "downward."[30] HOLC did not create this redlining but it is a marker of how much race was a part of these calculations. There was a complex web of actors who made redlining happen.[31] After World War II, financial institutions denied loans and funding to West Oakland residents and businesses due to racist zoning practices. Despite the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which made lending discrimination illegal, little changed and financial institutions continued to deny loans that disproportionately impacted Black people. Without access to credit, it was difficult for residents to maintain these neighborhoods, and many such redlining impacts continue to shape neighborhood outcomes and racial exclusion to this day.[32] Thus, the Black Panther design interventions had to work around these discriminatory lending practices.

[30] Robert K. Nelson, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed June 28, 2020, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/.
[31] Amy E. Hillier, "Redlining and the Homeowners' Loan Corporation," *Journal of Urban History* 29, no. 4 (May 2003): 414–15.
[32] Erika Kelley and Brian Watt, "Has Oakland's Fruitvale Neighborhood Ever Recovered from 'Redlining'?" *KQED News*, February 9, 2018.

The scholarship on Black Panther survival programs reveals an archive of the Black Panthers' challenging assumptions of racial neutrality in ostensibly "objective" spaces.[33] Images of police brutality had gripped the nation during the civil rights movement, but racism also existed in more sinister silences. Sociologist Alondra Nelson's *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* examines how the Black Panthers amplified racial disparity in the medical field.[34] Nelson explores the Panthers' survival programs of free medical clinics both as brick and mortar facilities and as an ideological challenge to the medical field's long history of experimenting on African Americans. Both critics and sympathizers paint the survival programs with a broad stroke, but Nelson's work wrestles with the complicated successes and failures specific to the day-to-day operations in the medical clinics. Nelson argues that the Panthers contested the historically anti-Black terms of American medical practice and the ways medical research reinforced racial hierarchies.[35] I argue that the Panthers contested the historically anti-Black terms of American design practice and the ways design interventions reinforced racial hierarchies.

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[33] David Hilliard and Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, eds. *The Black Panther Party: Service to the People Programs* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008). Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007).

[34] Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[35] Nelson, *Body and Soul*, 15–22.

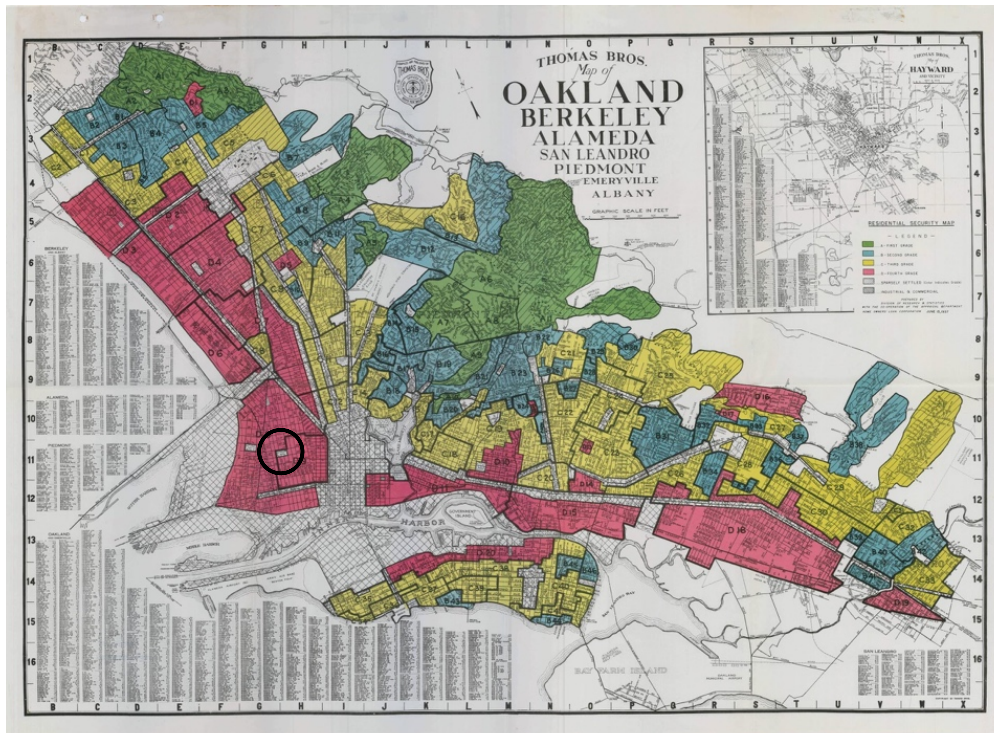

Fig. 3. Home Owners' Loan Corporation map of Oakland from 1939, DeFremery Park circled [my annotation]. From "Mapping Inequality Project" by American Panorama.

Advocates before Advocacy Planning

This chapter focuses on Black Panther design interventions as a turning point within the party, when the leadership splintered and members focused more on community programs and less on leadership icons. In 1968, facing increasing government repression and legal fees, and stretched thin across national chapters, the Black Panther Party reconsolidated its resources and organizing power back in Oakland.[36] They called on activists nationwide to come to Oakland and make it a "base of operations" and a "blueprint" for a new kind of American city with Black control over community resources.[37] The Black Panthers honed their critique of Oakland's infrastructure problems and launched local political campaigns and community survival programs to underscore the relationship between civic participation, community change, and public service. In 1972, the Black Panthers began a weekly supplement to their newspaper called "Oakland—Base of Operations," which focused on political, economic, and social analyses of Oakland's problems, and the potential for Oakland to serve as a base and blueprint for revolutionary change *(Figure 4)*. The *Black Panther News* emphasized both a new direction for the party and a return to its original purpose:

> We left behind our goal, which had been, from the beginning, to put together a practical program for our survival and to guarantee our right to life, manifested in the right to eat, have decent clothing and housing, etc. Having come away from arrogance, cultism, we have returned to our original aims, producing what we call the survival programs, the practical programs that serve the survival needs of the people. It is a return and a new beginning.[38]

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[36] "Reform or Revolution?" *Black Panther News*, March 3, 1969; Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 169–70.
[37] Murch, *Living for the City*, 203, 271. "Oakland—Base of Operations" ran as a series of thirty-seven supplements until June 1973 in their weekly newspaper.
[38] "In Unity There Is Survival," *Black Panther News*, April 1, 1972.

The announcement echoed the language of the original ten-point platform published in each edition of the newspaper.[39] Although the announcement suggested that the party's leadership had undertaken the survival programs as a united front, the reference to "arrogance" and "cultism" reflected the Black Panthers' internal debates about what revolution looked like in action; there was a tension between directing energy to confrontations with the police or focusing on community public service. The "Community Survival Conference" held in March 1972 suggested an emphasis on the latter. The organizers explained the concrete goals of this "new stage," including the distribution of 10,000 bags of free groceries, testing conference attendees for sickle cell anemia, and using the survival programs as the driving force behind the party's voter registration campaign.[40]

It is interesting to note that the AIA award mentions "community planning." The Black Panther design interventions need to be contextualized within parallel conversations on advocacy planning, key ideas shaping the field of design, and city planning. Growing social movements, including the Black power movement, forced design professionals to reckon with who should have access to the design process. The effect of these social movements cannot be underestimated. Planning historian June Manning Thomas writes about how community architecture, also known as advocacy planning, was in vogue, popularized by an era when the freedom struggle gained national coverage through civil rights and Black power activism.[41] Allan David Heskin, also a planning historian, describes how advocacy planning emerged out of

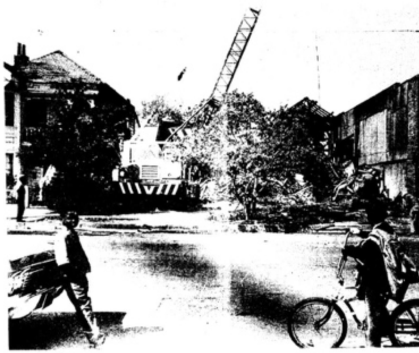
[39] Murch, *Living for the City*, 127–29.
[40] "In Unity There Is Survival," *Black Panther News*, April 1, 1972.
[41] June Manning Thomas, "Socially Responsible Practice: The Battle to Reshape the American Institute of Planners," *Journal of Planning History* 1, no. 24 (2018): 1–24.

OAKLAND- A BASE OF OPERATION!

WEST OAKLAND: BLACK COMMUNITY TURNING INTO GHOST TOWN

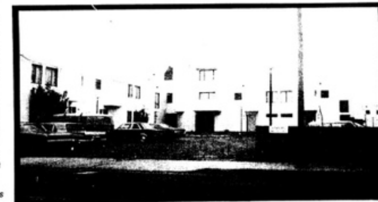
The Seventh Street Post Office hovers over West Oakland, a modern, strange eyesore that has caused 5,000 persons to be dis-located.

Over 65% of the population of West Oakland is Black. Between 1960 and 1966 (the year the Black Panther Party was formed) West Oakland's population dropped over 25%. WHY?



Sitting on the northern coast of America's most militarized, industrialized, most technologically developed state, California, OAKLAND, operates as a base for much of America's dirty work, with very little attention.

Not only did B.A.R.T. (Bay Area Rapid Transit) cause thousands of West Oakland residents the loss of their homes, but offering few, if any, jobs to Blacks, it will make only one stop in West Oakland!



After 10 YEARS (!) Acorn Project was finally completed; and the over nine thousand people who had to be forced out for Acorn can hardly remember why they had to move.

Fig. 4. An undated edition of the "Oakland—A Base of Operation!" series in the Black Panther News *showing urban renewal projects that caused displacement of West Oakland residents.*

the social movements of the 1960s and highlights planner Paul Davidoff's leading role.[42] This was launched by Davidoff's 1965 article "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," in that the planner is not just a "technician" with actions from a place of "value neutrality."[43]

The federal government had started incentivizing some controlled participation in city planning projects through the Model Cities Program in 1966.[44] Oakland was announced as a model city in 1967; from the beginning, there was much debate about how much control city planners would have over the process versus the amount West Oakland residents would have, when the residents rejected mediation roles and demanded direct representation.[45] The early phase of the Model Cities showed that people were hopeful about the positive role planning could play in shaping cities.[46] Robert Self notes that Oakland's Model Cities brought together a caucus of community organizations that leveraged power in the city and launched the careers of many organizers.[47] However, over time, Model Cities failed to alleviate poverty in Oakland. The Black Panthers pointed to the failures of federal programs such as Model Cities to show that merely calling for participatory planning did not create accountability for the residents of Oakland. In a 1973 television interview, a member of the Panther Central Committee, Elaine Brown, said, "It is very easy to see that the Model Cities Program, after three years of operations

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[42] Allan David Heskin, "Crisis and Response: A Historical Perspective on Advocacy Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 46, no. 1 (1980): 50–63.
[43] Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 3 (1965): 331.
[44] Rhomberg, *No There There*, 157.
[45] May, "Two Model Cities," 63.
[46] Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no. 1 (2012): 176.
[47] Self, *American Babylon*, 242–55.

in the City of Oakland and in West Oakland in particular, has done essentially nothing for the people."[48]

Panthers as Tactical Urbanists

There was also increasing citizen resistance, in the form of DIY or tactical urbanism, to large urban planning projects. Tactical urbanism comes in many forms, and designers Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia define it as an "approach to neighborhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies" that iterates over time.[49] An important element of tactical urbanism, according to Lydon and Garcia, is that "for citizens, it allows the immediate reclamation, redesign, or reprogramming of public space."[50] People grew gardens in vacant lots, painted crosswalks, and created small-scale modifications that made neighborhoods more habitable. On the surface, this seems like an excellent idea for everyone. But the politics of who was actually allowed to reclaim public or neglected space was made more complicated by race. For example, Lydon and Garcia describe an early example of tactical urbanism: park spaces designed by a San Francisco landscape architect Bonnie Ora Sherk. Implemented with a small grant from the Museum of Modern Art, Sherk's project created parklets in parking spaces and off of freeway ramps by arranging grass, furniture, and decorations for public use.[51] In "Placemaking When Black Lives Matter," Annette Koh considers the "racial limits of DIY optimism." She asks, "Who gets to 'disrupt' the public space paradigm, and who gets arrested for disturbing the peace?" Koh uses the term placemaking to describe the

[48] "Elaine Brown Discusses Shortcomings of the Model Cities Program," originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, October 24, 1973. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.
[49] Lydon and Garcia, *Tactical Urbanism*, 2.
[50] Ibid., 3.
[51] Ibid., 43–46.

variety of projects to modify public spaces. She calls for "politics of placemaking" because of the need to "explicitly address how the very presence of certain bodies in public has been criminalized and the color of your skin can render you automatically 'out of place.'" As she writes, "Urban design arguments for the activation of public space still take 'disorder' as a neutral category, rather than one shaped by legacies of vagrancy laws and Jim Crow."[52]

Journalist Amanda Kolson Hurley also writes on politics of tactical urbanism. Her interview with Washington, DC, Director of Planning Eric Shaw, is particularly revealing. Shaw offers some skepticism around the enthusiasm of city planners' adoption of tactical urbanism methods. He acknowledges, "I've told my staff that PARK(ing) Day is really nice… But if five black males took over a parking spot and had a barbecue and listened to music…would they last ten minutes?" Shaw suggests that the race of people implementing these interventions determines whether the public, law enforcement, and other city officials will sanction them.[53] Tactical urbanism isn't a permanent fix for things that need major investment, but it is a means of taking agency over an unresponsive environment.

This context is critical to understanding the genealogy of participatory planning and design. While both Sherk's San Francisco parklets and the Panther interventions were informal and sometimes illegal, whose creativity was sanctioned? The San Francisco parklets were considered "creative" whereas the Black Panther interventions were considered "criminal" or not even meriting media coverage.

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[52] Annette Koh, "Placemaking When Black Lives Matter," *Progressive City*, April 3, 2017.
[53] Amanda Kolson Hurley, "DIY Urban Planning Is Happening All Over the Country. Is it Only for White People?" *Washington Post*, October 27, 2016.

Design for Survival

The Black Panthers not only interrupted public space but also set out to create space. With the shift to community service programs in 1972, they coordinated logistically complex operations, far from the impromptu rallies featured in the news. In the months before the three-day conference of March 1972, local chapter members planned detailed budgets for venue rentals, guest accommodations for speakers, sound equipment for musicians, and freezer trucks for groceries.[54] Father Earl Neil, minister of the local St. Augustine church that hosted the breakfast program for children, signed the lease for the Oakland Municipal Auditorium with the City of Oakland.[55] The space and sound permits were secured under the name of the "Community Committee for Greater Voter Registration," underscoring the relationship between service and political organizing.[56] The Panthers brought productivity to a neighborhood place by amplifying its use value; it may not have been the most desirable real estate by business standards, but it was brimming with activities, organizers, and community bonding.

As the March conference approached, organizers sketched the layout of the auditorium, including the giveaway groceries, speakers, and sickle cell testing stations.[57] They delegated conference roles to hundreds of members and set up ninety voter registration booths across three venues. Panthers prepared thousands of grocery bags at nearby Laney College, and they transported two thousand chickens from San Francisco.[58] The conference display was planned

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[54] "Budget Request," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8.

[55] "City of Oakland—California: Rental Agreement," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 6, 1972.

[56] "City of Oakland: Recreation Department," Permit, HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 2, 1972; "Police Department, City of Oakland," permit to operate sound equipment at Greenman Field, HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 7, 1972; permit to operate a sound amplifier at San Pablo Park, HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 10, 1972; "Tentative Program Outline," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8.

[57] Central Committee Notes, "Sickle Cell Anemia Testers: Total Count of Different Workers," and "Statistical Data: Voter Registrars," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8; "Central Committee Report re: Black Community Survival Conference, March 29th at the Oakland Auditorium," "Grocery in Balcony Area: Description, Dimensions, Number of Bags," "Groceries Coordinated with Seats," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8.

[58] "Food Inventory List," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 25, 1972.

down to the stage and bag dimensions to maximize the number of bags that would fit on the stage. Utilizing heavy-duty rented equipment, the Panthers transported massive amounts of food (28,890 pounds of cream-style corn, for example) to be distributed among the giveaway bags.[59] The orderly distribution of groceries was necessary both for the flow of the conference and the safety of the attendees.

Although the distribution of groceries served to hold the Panthers accountable to the neighborhood, the corresponding voter registration drive indicated the Panthers' commitment to holding their local government accountable. In a video reel from the launch of the conference, Black Panther party cofounder Bobby Seale addresses the crowd, encouraging attendees to register to vote, in order to "[build] what we call People's Power, starting in the heart of the Black community, to the Chicano, to the Puerto Rican community, even to the poor white community, all over this country, building people's power all over the world in unity with other oppressed peoples and other revolutionary peoples throughout the world." The television camera then pans to voter registration tables, frozen chickens being distributed among various grocery bags, and finger bricks for sickle cell anemia testing. There are voter registration tables for Alameda County and Contra Costa County.[60] During the three days of the conference, hosted at the Oakland Municipal Auditorium, Greenman Field, and San Pablo Park, though the cameras captured The Persuasions singing a cappella, and the families and young Panthers in attendance, they recorded little of this behind-the-scenes coordination (*Figure 5)*.[61]

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[59] "Food Inventory List," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, March 25, 1972.

[60] "Black Community Survival Conference I," originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, March 29, 1972. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.

[61] "Itemized Budget for the Black Community Survival Conference," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8.

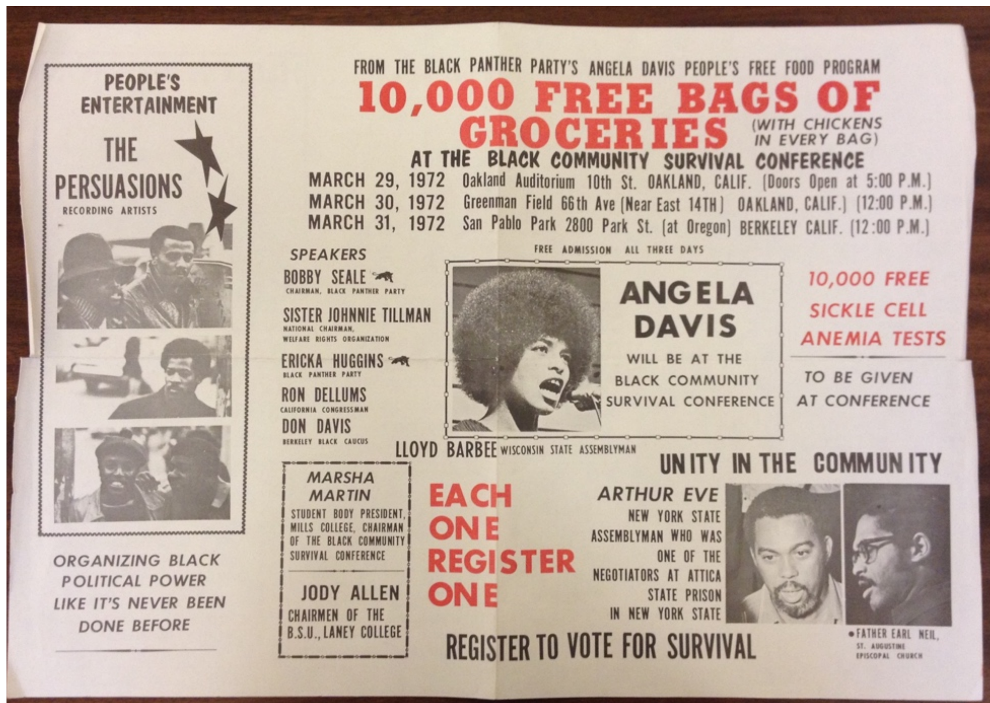

Fig. 5. Survival Conference Flyer advertising free groceries "with chickens in every bag." The lineup includes musical entertainment, government officials, and student leaders. 1972. HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8.

Fig. 6. Young volunteers fill grocery bags at the Black Panther survival conference. Note the name tags on the volunteers and the young members helping out in the family-friendly atmosphere. From Movements for Change: The Bob Fitch Photography Archive *at Stanford University*. 1972.

The March conference was held at DeFremery Park. The Panthers' renaming of DeFremery Park as Bobby Hutton Memorial Park appropriated one of Oakland's historical spaces and repurposed it as a central community location. The park was officially registered as DeFremery Park, but it had changed hands several times throughout the previous century as Oakland transformed.[62] Once a hub for servicemen, and later a charm school, the school ultimately lost funding. By the mid-1960s, however, DeFremery and the surrounding neighborhood of West Oakland lost funds, leadership, and local municipal support as a result of the rapid postwar deindustrialization of Oakland. In 1968, the Black Panthers renamed the park after Bobby Hutton, a young Black Panther fatally shot by Oakland police. The Panthers then set up DeFremery for their free survival programs: breakfasts for children, medical clinics, and mass grocery giveaways. DeFremery became a hub for Black Panther rallies, and they adapted the mansion and its park to serve their community needs (*Figure 6*). The Black Panthers' use of public spaces, such as the conferences at Bobby Hutton Memorial Park, were a way to make their ideas about liberating territory concrete and accessible within their own community. The conference was one of several mass grocery giveaway rallies in 1972, each featuring basic social services, free clothing and shoes, as well as a program that included Black elected officials, ministers, and musical bands alongside party speakers. Historian Donna Murch has documented how the Panthers launched their political platforms on the success of their survival programs, incorporating public service with campaign organizing. At the 1972 survival conference, Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown announced their candidacy for mayor and city council of Oakland.

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[62] "DeFremery (James) House" or "DeFremery Recreation Center," Historic Resources Inventory, Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks and Recreation, State of California. Dorothy W. Pitts and Sharon Taylor McKinney, *A Special Place for Special People: The DeFremery Story* (Memphis: Better Communications, 1993).

Conference organizers capitalized on the visibility and momentum of the conferences to execute mass voter registration drives.[63]

Despite the initial growth of the party revolving around the freedom campaigns for Black Panther political prisoners, the most famous being Huey Newton, assessment notes following one of the major conferences indicated that "[w]e proved at the conference that the people relate to concrete functional programs rather than personalities."[64]

With the Panthers' apparatus—the newspaper, chapter members, and partnerships with local institutions such as churches—focused on survival programs, they attracted the participation of many who were not members of the Black Panther Party. Although the groceries and medical tests that afternoon at the March conference had a limited impact on the well-being of the community, this carefully planned public display was an important way of repurposing the public space of Oakland and rendering the erasure of a constituency visible (*Figure 7*).

Artists and graphic designers Emory Douglas, Malik Edwards, and Gaye Dickson (known as "Asali") subverted this powerlessness in illustrations of the ordinary men, women, and children who attended these conferences, often with an armful of the signature groceries, underscoring the dignity of "Power to the People." The drawings would fill the entirety of the back page of the newspaper, which was widely distributed at the conference. The artists portrayed their characters not in the position of receiving groceries from someone else, but as individuals holding their rightful provisions. The subjects of the drawings gaze directly at the reader, and the woman exudes strength in a power pose, hands on her hips. They often wear buttons supporting the campaigns of Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown, highlighting the link

[63] Murch, *Living for the City*, 200–1.
[64] "Meeting Minutes Reviewing Survival Conference," HPN Papers, Box 18, Folder 8, April 1, 1972.

Fig. 7. Bobby Seale, holding microphone with fist raised, speaking at survival conference. From Movements for Change: The Bob Fitch Photography Archive *at Stanford University*. *March 30, 1972.*

between their platform and public service. Their illustrations captured the dignity of being visible on one's own terms (*Figure 8*).

The Panther design interventions uplifted the dignity of each person, affecting change on the most individual scale. Despite their public service orientation, the Panthers did not view themselves as a charity. As a visual statement, the conferences functioned as more than temporary exhibits of the Panthers' distinctive uniforms. The striking motifs of Panthers stamped onto grocery bags, for example, signaled that groceries were not simply charitable but part of political mobilization. When the party advertised their conferences and fundraised for their survival programs, the City of Oakland's Commission of Public Charities sent a notice warning Huey Newton to register the party's survival program activities and "comply" with the municipal ordinances of soliciting charitable funds.[65] An attorney for the party, Charles Garry, rejected the city's characterization of the party as a charity and responded that the Black Panther Party "is a political organization and has the same guideposts and procedures as the Republican and Democratic Parties."[66] The Black Panthers did not operate as a benevolent organization rescuing the residents of Oakland; they were part of the fabric of Oakland's communities, and the services they provided were made possible through the teamwork and buy-in of the people in the neighborhood.

By the second major conference in June 1972, the Panthers' desire for self-determination in the "destinies of our world communities" reflected how their criticism of spatial power

[65] Viola Taylor to Huey P. Newton, HPN Papers, Box 32, Folder 1, February 7, 1972.
[66] Charles R. Garry to Viola Taylor, HPN Papers, Box 32, Folder 1, February 14, 1972.

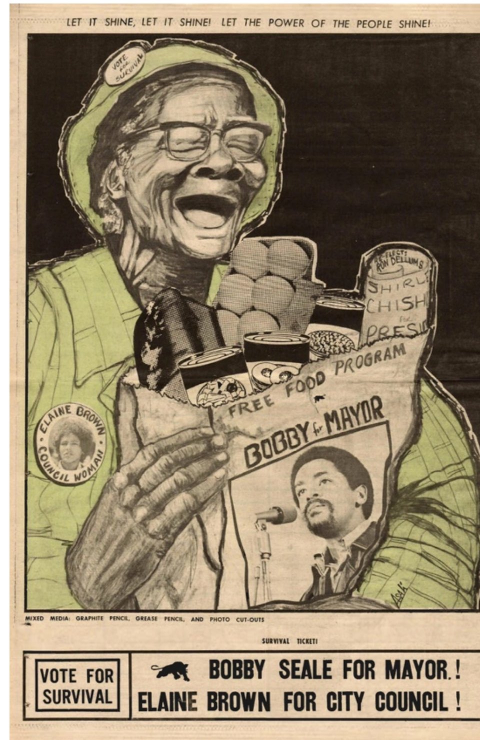

Fig. 8. Black Panther News *back covers. Artists Clockwise: Emory Douglas, Gayle Dickson "Asali," Malik Edwards, Gayle Dickson "Asali." From the* Black Panther Community News Service Collection at The Freedom Archives. 1972.

structures extended from their neighborhood beyond the nation, addressing imperialism, colonialism, and international liberation struggles.[67]

In May 1972, the Black Panthers announced the summer conference. Although the audio of the press conference in the newsreel is distorted, the footage shows Elaine Brown, Ericka Huggins, and Bobby Seale at the press table announcing the "Anti-War African Liberation Voter Registration Survival Conference" and answering reporters' questions. They discuss how their programs have been feeding and clothing people and registering them to vote, and that they aim to increase their efforts at a "massive, quantitative scale." They are planning to take city council seats. They intend to give away 10,000 bags of groceries, register 10,000 voters, and administer 10,000 sickle cell anemia tests.[68] Instead of focusing on the localized "body and soul," this conference called on the spirit of intercommunal solidarity by amplifying the anti-war effort. The gathering revolved around anti-war activism, African liberation movements, and voter registration, recognizing that "the survival programs are tools and institutions by which we unify our people. …[W]e are implementing something that Black people and all poor oppressed people have a right to… Politics, from now on, should mean to the Black community implementing programs for community control of those institutions."[69] The *Black Panther News* established the goal of the conference as more than just survival. It had become a significant anti-war gathering of Black, brown, and poor people.

Not everyone was a supporter of the survival programs, and when the Panthers pressured Black-owned businesses to donate to their programs, some did not take it well. In television

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[67] For how "intercommunalism" addresses spatial contradictions, see Robert O. Self, "To Plan Our Liberation: Black Power and the Politics of Place in Oakland, California, 1965–1977," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 6 (September 200): 762.
[68] "Huggins, Brown, and Seale Announce Conference," originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, May 22, 1972. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.
[69] "This Will Tide Us Over to Liberation," *Black Panther News*, April 8, 1972.

footage from 1971, a group called the Ad Hoc Committee to Preserve Black Businesses said they supported the motivation behind the programs but believed it was wrong to be pressured by the party to participate. One of the committee members, a minister, referring to the leadership of the Black Panther Party, said, “Mr. [Huey] Newton does not under any circumstances speak for us, as the absolute leader of the Black community.”[70] The fact that such a statement had to be made raises questions about the level of influence the party had in portraying a collective identity for the Black residents of Oakland. Even for the Panthers, participatory design was not a blanket statement that included local Black businessmen and clergy in the fold with low-income residents. The Panthers had shifted the locus of planning authority from the neighborhood’s conventional Black leaders. The minister continued his critique at the press conference, saying:

> While we do feel that any organization that contributed to the welfare of the community is vital, we abhor methods of coercion or intimidation, such as using a boycott with the determination of eliminating a business unless such businesses capitulate to various demands as made by the Black Panther Party.[71]

The video is interspersed with clips of the aforementioned boycott, which shows about a dozen people quietly walking in a long loop at a business entrance, carrying signs that read “Boycott. Don’t Shop Here: Black Businesses must support and donate to our community. A small minimal amount every week. Free Food Program. A People’s Survival Program.” Other signs say the same thing, some highlighting other programs: “Free Plumbing and Maintenance Service. Free Medical Clinics.” Ultimately, an agreement was mediated by Congressman Ron Dellums.[72] Dellums announced the creation of the United Black Fund of the Bay Area, Inc., and said,

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[70] “Community Members Speak Out against Panthers’ Tactics,” originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, September 24, 1971. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.

[71] Ibid.

[72] “Dellums Settles Panthers Dispute,” originally aired on CBS5 KPIX-TV, January 15, 1972. San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, J. Paul Leonard Library Department of Special Collections, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA.

> In an important sense, this has been a creative conflict, for out of it has come not only a new recognition of responsibility and respect on both sides, but a whole new organization created to respond to the desperate and special needs of the black community, which needs have often been dramatized by the Black Panther party.[73]

I have chosen to write my thesis about these organizations as collectives rather than individuals. However, it's important to put some names and faces to that collective. Focusing on the survival programs changes the cast of characters associated with the Black Panther Party, historically portrayed as predominantly high-ranking men. From the chairman of the party, Elaine Brown, who oversaw the increased efforts for survival programs, to Ericka Huggins, who worked closely with families to build a school (*Figure 9)*, to Gayle Dickson, who designed artwork for the newspaper and taught at the elementary school. As educators, grant writers, and psychologists, women spearheaded the agenda. A majority of those producing space in the built environment, directing the collective design process, and coordinating the community survival programs were women.[74] Moreover, the Oakland Base of Operations campaign that closed national chapters and redirected the most dedicated party members to move from across the country to Oakland created a vibrant hub of skilled activists, educators, and artists to the city. Scholars Mary Phillips and Angela LeBlanc-Ernest interview former party members who worked in survival programs to contrast with the portrayal of Black Panthers as "hypermasculine."[75] Phillips and LeBlanc-Ernest share interviews with Austin Allen, a teacher at the Oakland Community School, Reginald "Malik" Edwards, an artist who stayed up all night with Emory

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[73] "Unity Ends Boycott: Agreement Reached Between Bill Boyette and Black Community," *Black Panther News*, January 22, 1972.
[74] Ashley D. Farmer, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era. Justice, Power, and Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Janelle Harris Dixon, "The Rank and File Women of the Black Panther Party and Their Powerful Influence," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed April 3, 2020, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/rank-and-file-women-black-panther-party-their-powerful-influence-180971591/.
[75] Mary Phillips and Angela LeBlanc-Ernest, "The Hidden Narratives: Recovering and (Re) Visioning the Community Activism of Men in the Black Panther Party," Spectrum 5, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 64.

Douglas and Gayle Dickson to typeset the newspaper, and Steve McCutchen, who taught martial arts to the elementary students.[76] Each of these characters reflected on an embodied a future of self-determination. Among the rich recent scholarship on the rank and file of the Panthers, there is a sense of capturing their remarkable creativity. Historian Robyn C. Spencer writes, "Panthers described a joy in feeling like they were co-creating a new world that was almost so close that they could touch, feel, and breathe it. For many, it became their life purpose. Members describe a profound feeling of hope and possibility that complicates the traditional depiction of them as angry."[77]

Fig. 9. Ericka Huggins, teacher and former political prisoner, at the survival conference. Huggins would go on to direct the Black Panther elementary school, the Oakland Community School. From Movements for Change: The Bob Fitch Photography Archive *at Stanford University. March 30, 1972.*

[76] Phillips and LeBlanc-Ernest, "Hidden Narratives," 72–75.
[77] Mary Phillips, Robyn C. Spencer, Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, and Tracye A. Matthews, "Ode to Our Feminist Foremothers: The Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project on Collaborative Praxis and Fifty Years of Panther History," *Souls* 19, no. 3 (2017): 249.

Silent Blight

Conference organizers and volunteers gave life to public space written off as blighted by the City of Oakland. When West Oakland was designated blighted in 1949, the label suggested a lack of generative community organizing in the space, erasing the lives of the people there.[78] The images that characterized West Oakland were ones of structural decay, of blight, with dehumanized residents or simply devoid of people. Being designated blighted indicated more than substandard housing in a technical sense. It gave the city council the justification to obliterate "decay," to purge wholesale a community that was viewed as diseased. In other words, these spaces did not matter because they lacked exchange value. People only counted as relocation numbers and property costs at market value in urban renewal budgets; in contrast, the neighborhood survival conference focused on the "body and soul" of the neighbors, families, and friends in Oakland.

In theory, blight designations suggested a racially neutral approach to addressing the disparities of the built environment, but in practice, they reinforced the loss of self-determination in a neighborhood. Blight designations were not explicitly racial in their terms, reminiscent of the terms of the previous decades of redlining. Both blighted and redlined demarcations were racially coded to make Black neighborhoods visible without actually talking about race, evidenced by how poorly they correlated with the habitability of the environment or the financial viability of the neighborhood.[79] However, while redlined property lost investments, blighted property drew funding from the federal government in the form of specific grants. Though the

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[78] Robert Self writes of a 1949 report called "Urban Redevelopment in Oakland: An Initial Study to Determine the Extent of Blight in Oakland and to Recommend a Course of Aggressive Action for a Solution," which was prepared by the Oakland City Planning Commission and submitted to the city manager, mayor, and city council. Self, *American Babylon*, 139.

[79] Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 52.

funding could be used to benefit local homeowners, city governments often used that funding for urban renewal projects that displaced Black communities. Blight was less about what the label described in the present and more about what it could help facilitate in future projects; it could, for example, depress property values further and make seizure by eminent domain a viable option. Blight grants became grounds for contesting the allocation and control of federal funds that would shape the built environment. As anthropologist Elaine-Maryse Solari has argued, blight designations raised questions about who determined the value of urban space and how the state mobilized this apparatus at a local and federal level to control the built environment.[80]

The city sanctioned projects using the rhetoric of urban planning and design. By coding neighborhoods as blighted, the government could undertake its own projects with the added benefit of lower property values and the ready justification of rescuing a community. It was the language of blight in "planning discourse," as historian Eric Avila has written, that made low-income communities of color an "easy target" for federal contracts that subsidized the profit of private companies.[81] Less profitable but more sustainable options such as small, low-interest loans that could rehabilitate many of the aging Victorian homes remained untapped by the City of Oakland. Instead, in 1960, tanks bulldozed homes that might have survived as important artifacts of Oakland's architectural history and appreciated in value for low-income residents.[82]

The Panthers contended that "local heavies" who made the decisions about major design changes to Oakland's built environment were neither representative nor accountable to the poor of Oakland. Undertaking an investigative journalism effort, the Panther reporters mapped out the

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[80] Elaine-Maryse Solari, "The Making of an Archaeological Site and the Unmaking of a Community in West Oakland, California," in *The Archaeology of Urban Landscapes: Explorations in Slumland*, ed. Alan Mayne and Tim Murray (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28.
[81] Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
[82] Solari, "Archaeological Site," 28.

network of corporate leaders and politicians, the trail of contributions and profits, and the various stakeholders in key plans for Oakland's infrastructure and built environment.[83] The *Black Panther News* focused specifically on how anti-Blackness was perpetuated by a municipal system that appointed decision makers to key city commissions. They called out Mayor Reading who appointed people not living in the City of Oakland, but in Piedmont, because there weren't enough "qualified" Oakland residents to sit on the commission. The Panthers made the complicated conflicts of interests at the municipal level legible and accessible to the lives of the residents it affected. Companies such as Grubb & Ellis, a real estate corporation whose vice president sat on both the planning and port commissions, decided the "land-use policies for Oakland" and secured the lucrative government contracts resulting from those policies for its corporation. The appointments to these commissions were unrepresentative of Oakland's population—overwhelmingly white, male businessmen with personal connections to the mayor. The *Black Panther News* calls them the "principal perpetrators" of "'Urban Renewal,' or 'Black Removal.'"

[83] "Oakland—A Base of Operation! The City Structure's 'Anointment-Appointment' Process," *Black Panther News*, January 6, 1972.

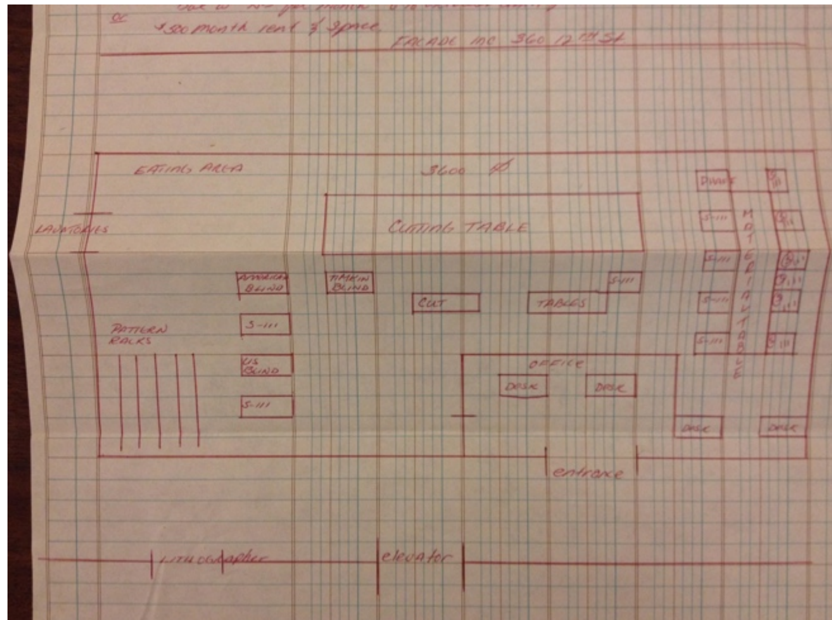
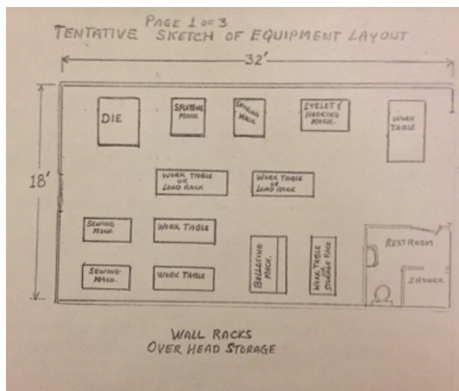
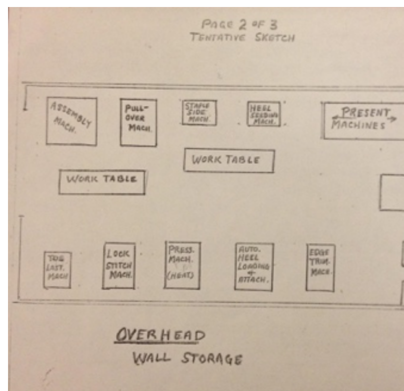


Fig. 10. Garment Factory Sketch. HPN Papers, Box 30, Folder 1. Undated.





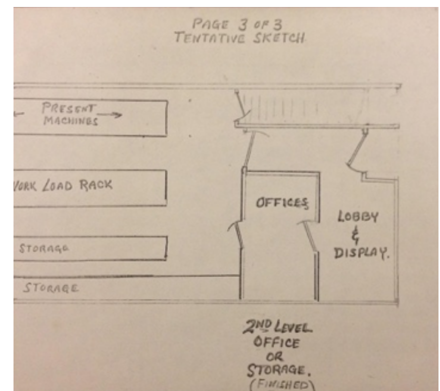


Fig. 11. "Tentative Sketch of Equipment Layout." HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1.

Archive Ghosts

Some provisional efforts, such as Panther factory projects, suggest the limitations in their models of self-determination. The Panthers planned to open a garment factory and a shoe factory. Early sketches of the factories show the arrangement of working tables, equipment, and material storage (*Figures 10 and 11*).[84] Austin Allen, the Panther charged with updating the central committee on the shoe factory project, visited a shoe factory in Santa Rosa and assembled an extensive report on what it would take to manufacture shoes, documenting the process and the necessary equipment down to the shoelaces. They secured facilities, signed three-year leases, paid rent and started searching for donated factory equipment. The Panthers aimed to undermine the state's total control over space with alternative sources of subsidized goods and employment. They planned to hire formerly incarcerated community members and donate goods to local neighborhoods. But the weekly updates by Allen cite obstacles to finding appropriate equipment within the city zoning of their rented facility. City officials would not budge on the commercial zone of the facility, thereby barring the Panthers from bringing in industrial equipment.[85] Other *Black Panther News* articles show that zoning was only static to protect the city's commercial interests; when it came to rezoning residential areas for the profitable middle- and higher-income housing in Mountain Village, zoning was dynamic.[86] Although the Panthers paid the rent each

[84] "Garment Factory Floor Plans," HPN Papers, Box 30, Folder 1.
[85] "Austin Allen, B. S. A. & Shoe Factory Report," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1, October 6, 1973; Oakland Zoning Summary, HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1; "Tentative Sketch of Equipment Layout," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1; "Shoe Factory Report," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1, May 10, 1972; "Oakland Shoe Factory Project," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1, February 18, 1973.
[86] "Oakland—A Base of Operation! Mountain Village and the Bedroom Tax," *Black Panther News*, February 24, 1973.

month, as a result of the zoning problems, the factory project faded, its floor plans now folded in the archives.[87]

The Black Panthers have a rich archival history for specific moments in their organization's history. But many other archives were destroyed or lost. It would be remiss to talk about Black Panther interactions with the government without mentioning COINTELPRO, the FBI program that targeted Black nationalist groups and, in particular, aimed to undermine the Black Panthers.[88] Historians Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. detail the extent of the FBI sabotage, which led to assassinations, destruction of offices, implantation of agents, constant surveillance, and manipulative tactics to embed distrust and create a mountain of legal fees.[89] The survival programs, including the free breakfast program, were seen as a threat by the FBI. Historians are left with tentative sketches and fragments from the archives (*Figures 10 and 11*). These fragments show a flicker of the likely larger design archives that once existed. What is clear from these archive ghosts is that creating public space was not a side note in the Panther story; it was a powerful act of self-determination.

The survival conferences served as a compelling example of how the Black Panthers counteracted the erasure of their communities through these public displays of community growth and sustenance. Scholars and journalists often mention the survival conferences in passing, as a moment of public service engagement, as a side story to the local election campaigns. But this interpretation overlooks the amount of coordination and the many hours volunteers dedicated to host thousands of people. The logistical operations show how the Black Panthers, through their community survival initiatives, accessed, organized, and connected

[87] "Shoe Factory Report," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1, May 10, 1972; "Oakland Shoe Factory Project," HPN Papers, Box 21, Folder 1, February 18, 1973.
[88] Murch, *Living for the City*, 168.
[89] Bloom and Martin Jr., *Black against Empire*, 202, 203, 211–15.

public spaces in new ways across Oakland, a city often portrayed as entirely contingent upon larger municipal forces. The Black Panthers not only implemented these survival conference series, but they also set up programs in parks, auditoriums, churches, schools, and other public spaces across Oakland. The Black Panthers changed how people perceived Oakland as a place by their use of its spaces. They forced people to train their camera lenses on spaces and their utilization, spaces otherwise seen as nonexistent or useless in the official narratives of design.

The Black Panthers argued that design is not a politically and racially neutral process. They challenged the anti-Black terms of urban design by creating provisional spaces in the form of community survival programs. The Panthers had agency in determining the need, the capacity, and the function of spaces, and it was through their creativity and innovation that they redrafted and augmented spaces in new ways. The Panthers were revolutionary in design because through tactical urbanism, they reconceived how the built environment could be repurposed and utilized by every citizen for racial justice.

Chapter Two: New Communities Farmers, Community Land Trust, and Design Charrette

A group of young women and men sat in teams, brainstorming a future housing development and sustainable farm. They annotated large drawings neatly pinned up with proposed designs that accounted for the needs of two hundred families, from single- and multifamily housing to crop yields from agricultural land to programming for an elementary school and cultural center. They sketched pedestrian routes and vehicle roads across the acres.[90] They may well have been design students in an MIT practicum. Instead, they were a group of civil rights activists. Some were farmers, some were ministers, some were students, and many had recently spent time in jail for daring to defy Jim Crow laws in Georgia. They were all designers. The teams had gathered over the weekend in a barn for a design charrette to reimagine more than five thousand acres of land in Lee County, Georgia. From 1968 to 1970, they designed the first iteration of the American community land trust (*Figure 12*).

They gathered as part of an organization founded a few months prior in Albany, Georgia, called New Communities, Incorporated (NCI). A land trust founded through the efforts of an interracial coalition of activists and farmers, NCI's first venture was raising money and purchasing the 5,735-acre Featherfield Farm in Lee County, Georgia. NCI's articles of incorporation established the coalition as a "nonprofit organization to hold land in perpetual trust for the permanent use of rural communities."[91]

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[90] *Arc of Justice: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Beloved Community*, directed by Helen S. Cohen and Mark Lipman (San Francisco: Open Studio Productions, 2016), film.
[91] John Emmeus Davis, "Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust in the United States," in *The Community Land Trust Reader*, ed. John Emmeus Davis (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010), 16.

Fig. 12. Design charrette on Featherfield Farm, 1970. Participants, mostly Black though some white, are wearing their winter coats and scarves. Chairs have been moved into a smaller huddle of eleven participants. Shirley Sherrod is seated at the back left, chin in hand. Some notable questions from the sheets pinned up along the back wall include: "Why don't they allow more dances at school?" "Why do teachers force you to take classes you don't like?" "Why are some teachers not interested in teaching?" "Why aren't some of the facilities wanted by the students obtained?" "Why do students become bored in school?" "Why are some students considered smart and some dumb?" Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

Planning historians cite NCI as one of the earliest examples of the land trust movement in the United States, "an object lesson" for later community land trusts.[92] The land trust was distinct in its governance model by creating collective ownership of the land, separating ownership of the land from ownership of the property on the land, and delegating decisions to a board of residents. It was developed to create collective power for tenant-owners.[93]

In Albany, Georgia, one of the epicenters of the civil rights struggle, Jim Crow laws forced African Americans to live in a complex and contradictory racial apartheid. In 1961, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) mobilized local groups to challenge Jim Crow. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. drew national attention to Albany when he was arrested there during a desegregation campaign in 1961. African American citizens of Albany marched, sang, demonstrated, and filled the jails while they faced brutal repression from the police, business owners, and their white neighbors.[94] Although the Albany protests contributed momentum toward the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, organizers still fought to materialize those legal gains on the ground. In 1969, organizers from the SNCC as well as local residents out of Albany formed the NCI.

While African Americans contested the discriminatory status quo in businesses and public space, private land, mostly still plantations, remained undisturbed as time capsules. In these fields, orchards, and mansions, racial exclusions hardly required Jim Crow laws to shape

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[92] Davis, "Origins," 17.

[93] Ibid., 4.

[94] From 1961 to 1962, the Black residents of Albany organized a nonviolent, mass protest movement against Jim Crow segregation and voter suppression. The Albany Movement included a broad coalition of local organizations including the SNCC, ministers, women's clubs, and the Negro Voters League. Hundreds went to jail from the town of 50,000 people. Eventually, Martin Luther King Jr.'s arrest and subsequent jailing during the movement drew national attention to Albany. See "Albany Movement," *King Encyclopedia* (Stanford, CA: The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute), accessed March 6, 2019, https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/albany-movement.

access to the land. Many African Americans were indebted to white landowners and had lost land in the past decades.

Despite these challenges, the late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of renewed connection to the land for African Americans who pooled resources to sustain their communities. They imagined new futures and gave form to new spaces. One of the cofounders of NCI, Charles Sherrod, captured the spirit and energy of the time: "It was some exciting times…planning all of these things, you basically [had] the chance to plan a life…and lives, and plan ways to help people."[95]

This chapter considers the formative period in which local farmers and activists designed the land trust. Of all the civil rights struggles I studied, I was drawn to NCI because it was a design-oriented solution to a political problem: political representation and voter registration. NCI shows the marriage of design and politics in a marginalized group, their creative solutions, and systemic limitations. NCI's design problems evolved over time. At first the design problem was the inordinate amount of power wielded by landlords over their tenants, who had little recourse for self-determination. When landlords disapproved of Black farmers' voting, they evicted them.[96] But as the civil rights movement progressed, the end goal of NCI seemingly evolved. It wasn't about just getting people to vote. Voting was simply a means to self-determination. NCI's goal was to build a base of self-sufficiency and community power—both to create a system that would meet people's most basic needs of having food, employment, and education, and to design a new power dynamic that land would afford them.

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[95] *Arc of Justice*.

[96] John Emmeus Davis, "The Backstory: Historical Background for Events Featured in *Arc of Justice*," in *Arc of Justice: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Beloved Community*, directed by Helen S. Cohen and Mark Lipman (San Francisco: Open Studio Productions, 2016), 9.

The call for justice had evolved into a design for justice. The goal of this chapter is to demystify these systems and better understand how and why NCI implemented their vision for racial justice. Furthermore, even if their project did not achieve unmitigated success, their work reveals key levers that shaped the ability to transform the rural built environment.

The Featherfield Farm project was spearheaded by several members of the Albany community, including Charles Sherrod. In this thesis, I write about NCI as a collective—partially because this is the ideal they embodied in their decentralized decision making, and partially because my information on their design process is not granular at the individual level. But I think it is important to name some of the individuals that do come up in the NCI narrative as key designers in the process. Slater King (a real estate agent) and C. B. King (an attorney) were brothers who cofounded the Albany Movement.[97] Their relationship with white peace activist and leader of Koinonia farms, Robert Swann, led to the origin of the land trust.[98] Shirley and Charles Sherrod, cofounders of NCI, have the most longevity, keeping up the fight for NCI from the initial phase until today, and the newest reincarnation of NCI as Resora Community (2011). Charles Sherrod, a young SNCC activist who came to Albany in 1961, stepped up to manage NCI when Slater King died in a tragic car accident just a few months after NCI was incorporated. Shirley Miller Sherrod was from Albany, and she dedicated her life to racial justice as a young woman when her father was murdered by white supremacists. MTamanika Youngblood, a recent graduate of New York University, managed operations, marketing, and sales for the farm. C. B. King drafted the bylaws. Fay Bennet, later elected secretary of NCI, joined NCI from the National Sharecroppers Fund. Another important figure was Father Albert J. McKnight, who

[97] Slater King was the president of the Albany Movement in 1962.
[98] For more on Robert Swann, Koinonia Farms, and a 1962 trip to Israel with Slater King, see Davis, "Backstory."

served as the first vice president of NCI.[99] Overall, these people were essential to managing the land trust design process and relationships and securing the funding for and farming the land. Thanks to some well-timed oral histories and news articles, there is a bit more information about them. But many of the stories of other participants are lost. The photographs show many more unnamed designers who were clearly engaged participants of the charrette process.

Previous scholarship covers the genesis of NCI and its role in a broader set of cooperative movements in American history and Black communities. There are references to the NCI land trust in Jessica Gordon Nembhard's *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*, in Russell Rickford's article "'We Can't Grow Food on All This Concrete': The Land Question, Agrarianism, and Black Nationalist Thought in the Late 1960s and 1970s," as well as in the memoirs of civil rights leaders and of NCI cofounder Shirley Miller Sherrod.[100] The NCI land trust also appears in urban planning materials relating to the origin of community land trusts in the United States, most notably in John Emmeus Davis's *Community Land Trust Reader*.[101] Some of this story is beautifully portrayed in a short documentary film about the land trust, *Arc of Justice: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of a Beloved Community*.[102] NCI is also discussed in legal journals as part of *Pigford v. Glickman*, a

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[99] Information on these individuals comes from Davis, "Backstory," 6–9; Shimon Gottschalk and Robert S. Swann, "Planning a Rural New Town in Southwest Georgia," *Arete, Journal of the Graduate School of Social Work, University of South Carolina* 2, no. 1 (1970); John Emmeus Davis and Greg Rosenburg, "Seeding the First CLTs: New Communities, Inc." ROOTS & BRANCHES: A Gardener's Guide to the Origins and Evolution of the Community Land Trust, accessed April 3, 2019. http://cltroots.org/the-guide/early-hybrids-breeding-and-seeding-the-clt-model/georgia-seedbed.

[100] Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014); Russell Rickford, "'We Can't Grow Food on All This Concrete': The Land Question, Agrarianism, and Black Nationalist Thought in the Late 1960s and 1970s," *Journal of American History* 103, no. 4 (March 2017): 956–80; Shirley Sherrod and Catherine Whitney, *The Courage to Hope: How I Stood Up to the Politics of Fear* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[101] John Emmeus Davis, ed., *The Community Land Trust Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010).

[102] *Arc of Justice*.

class action lawsuit on federal lending discrimination.[103] NCI's land trust existed from its purchase in 1970 to foreclosure in 1985. It was revived in 2010 after winning a $12.8 million settlement for loan discrimination.[104] The existing scholarship limits NCI's story to African American political and economic history. NCI's design process, however, offers useful insights for the interdisciplinary fields of design and planning.

Designers in a Barn: An Intervention

To search for planning history of the margins is to search for documents of dreams adjacent to the violence of municipal planning and architecture. Whereas historical documents offer us a record for what may have transpired in the past, historical planning documents and photographs reveal a vision for the future. Planning documents record what the authors considered effective action at a particular historical moment. The planning documents of the NCI process show evidence of careful deliberation.

NCI hired McClaughry Associates, Inc., an economic development consulting group based out of Washington, DC, after receiving a $98,000 planning grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), a federal agency established in 1964 to implement President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty programs. This grant allowed NCI to hire a staff of community organizers and work with McClaughry Associates.[105] With this support in place, NCI created the space to envision a setting for their future community.

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[103] Stephen R. Viña and Tadlock Cowan, *The* Pigford *Case: USDA Settlement of a Discrimination Suit by Black Farmers*, US Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, RS20430 (2005); Kelly Toledano, "Making Good on Broken Promises: How the Pigford Settlement Has Given African-American Farmers a Second Chance," *Southern Region Black Law Students Association Law Journal* 5 (2011): 68–90.
[104] Jessica Gordon Nembhard, "African American Cooperatives and Sabotage: The Case for Reparations," *Journal of African American History* (Winter/Spring 2018): 83–85.
[105] Robert Swann, "Peace, Civil Rights, and the Search for Community: An Autobiography," in *The Community Land Trust Reader*, ed. John Emmeus Davis (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010).

There are two main archival reports that provide insight into the NCI planning process for their Featherfield Farm project: the Phase One Report (November 1969) and the Phase Two Report (April 1970), both prepared by McClaughry Associates.[106] Both grant reports are valuable because they describe the discussions held before and after the design charrette process. The charrette process is a team collaboration exercise that helps people brainstorm, prioritize, and sketch ideas. Spanning several hours to several days and oriented around specific objectives, the planning process is intense and often takes place on the design site itself.

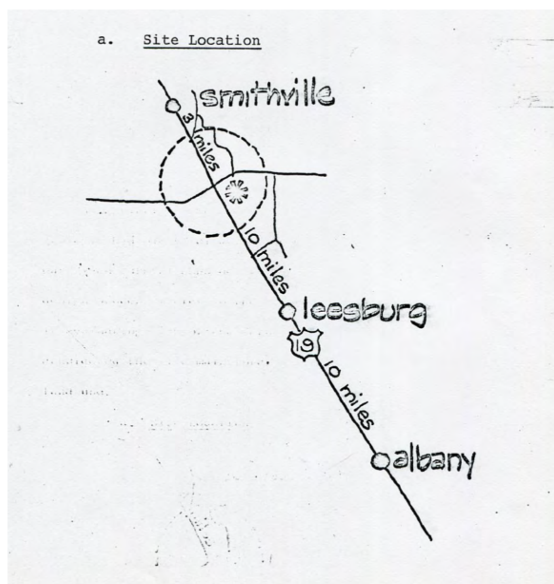

Fig. 13. Location of Featherfield Farm in between towns of Leesburg and Smithville, roughly 20 miles along Highway 19 outside of Albany, Georgia. In "A New Community for Southwest Georgia" at Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

Figure 1

Fig. 14. Model of the Featherfield Farm site, 1970. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

[106] The Phase One Report is "Featherfield Farm Project: Phase One Report," prepared for New Communities, Incorporated, by McClaughry Associates, Inc., November 21, 1969. The Phase Two Report is "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," submitted by McClaughry Associates, Inc., April 1, 1970 (Great Barrington, MA: Schumacher Center for a New Economics). Pagination was difficult to establish for both documents. I will use pagination of the Schumacher Center Archival PDF.

Before the Charrette (November 1969)

NCI and McClaughry Associates compiled the Phase One Report, dated November 10, 1969, before the community design charrette process. The consultants prepared the report in order to provide enough background information to the NCI board so they could fully participate in the charrette process as designers. In this way, the charrette was designed to reflect the goals of the NCI members.[107] The report assessed the responsibilities of the stakeholders in the design process, including the NCI staff, the McClaughry consultants, and the future "settlers." Consultants posed issues, questions, and alternatives for NCI to consider and discuss.[108] Throughout the report, the consultants wrote "is this understanding accurate?" to indicate which points to clarify through discussion.[109]

Even from this preliminary report, the scope of the project is vast. The consultants presented several alternatives that involved a spectrum of ideas about using the land for agricultural, industrial, and housing purposes to stimulate discussion among the NCI members and illuminate "the wishes of the people."[110] The planners imagined how Featherfield labels could brand sweet potatoes processed on the farm, how a Featherfield construction company could unite skilled craftspeople building right on the property, and even how Christmastime could look different in town if they sold holiday goods. The range of options highlight that ownership offers choices—choices, from catfish aquaculture to a custom furniture line.

Each phase of the planning process further distinguished the role of the client and the consultant. The six-month process had three proposed phases: discussion and identification,

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[107] This Phase One Report sets out the intention that the future planning document "accurately reflects the planning goals and basic desires of the people living in the area. We will not compromise this objective in carrying out our assignment." From "Featherfield Farm Project: Phase One Report," 310.
[108] "Featherfield Farm Project: Phase One Report," 310.
[109] Ibid., 317.
[110] Ibid., 402.

preliminary planning, and budget and financial projections. Both the client and the consultants prepared content for the upcoming design charrettes, with the consultants creating the printed materials and providing technical assistance and the client gathering stakeholders and organizing the office space for daily logistics.

Design as Power, Choices, and Feasibility

One significant discussion in the Phase One Report was the land trust's organizational structure and distribution of power. It is useful to note the activists' background in SNCC, known for its highly decentralized, nonhierarchical leadership structure, which launched local groups across the South. The decentralized nature of SNCC influenced how NCI approached the distribution of power from the outset. Their goal was to "ensure that the power remains in the hands of the poor."[111] They aimed to achieve this through the composition of the NCI membership and the NCI board, the main coordinating and decision-making body of the trust. Membership would be composed of residents "all…below the OEO poverty guidelines." Members would elect a board of directors for the community development corporation with a majority from the residents and the rest "split between representatives of religious, civic, and educational groups and from the public at large."[112] There is no mention of race here. There is, however, a reference to class and how the technicality of distributing power could privilege the professionalized.

The Phase One Report also showed that NCI saw itself as a "catalystic [*sic*] agent" whereby NCI launched the project, facilitated the planning process, and then transferred the

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[111] Ibid., 319.
[112] Ibid., 320.

project to the "control and ownership of local groups."[113] The consultants discouraged a "closed" community: "We recommend that Featherfield be planned as a major land resource for the poor of the twelve-county area, rather than as a self-sufficient community which benefits only its residents."[114] NCI deliberated this matter, as resources were limited and such a broad scope could spread them too thin.

While the ambitious scope of the proposal seemed utopian in scale, the supporting evidence showed how each element of the land trust was a direct response to an urgent community need not satisfied elsewhere. The report detailed the physical assets of the Featherfield Farm property, including the conditions of the soil, water, and timber, relying on information and interviews with the Soil Conservation Service as well as with the previous owners of the land, the McKinney brothers, who had produced two sets of crops in the two years they owned the land. The report made the case that farming decisions should account for how well the enterprises meshed together: "[O]ur projected plan will surely be like a mosaic, made up of clusters of enterprises that fit well together."[115] There are also extensive notes about how to start a corn and hog production. The report's authors calculated the labor, crop land, capital investment, and number of sows necessary to make this happen on Featherfield Farm.[116]

Farming itself was not the most profitable undertaking. Rather, marketing, packaging, and processing the farm products would increase profits. NCI's plan shows careful consideration for how farm labor was valued and dignified, from careful selection of crops based on soil quality, to community need, processing, branding, and distribution. The report emphasized the "basic marginal nature of the farming business" and advocated for connecting the stages of

[113] Ibid., 317.
[114] Ibid., 319.
[115] Ibid., 362.
[116] Ibid., 362.

product development through vertical integration "for two reasons: (a) to sell more of their labor advantageously, and (b) to do so in the more lucrative food production fields than in the field production of primary crops."[117]

NCI considered several farming enterprises in a detailed section, backed by extensive research and inspired by neighboring Black farms.[118] They built much of their knowledge from USDA data, the McKinney brothers, and the previous farm manager. NCI examined peanuts, cotton, and soybeans as primary crops. Another option was "a moderate sized Grade A Dairy Enterprise." What's interesting about this option is that it is a values-based choice that prioritized people over profits. NCI listed three criteria for the selection of the farming enterprise: "(a) to support good nutrition in the community, (b) to retain as much trade as possible within the community, [and] (c) to generate a maximum amount of stable employment for settlers."[119] The last option was for "Beef Production, Alone and with a Pecan Enterprise," which allowed for cattle grazing and fertilization of the soil for a future rotation of crops.[120] This particular beef and pecan enterprise was investigated down to the type of grass that would be the lowest cost and highest yield for the cattle.

The concept of feasibility was expanded on the appendix of the report. Importantly, the appendix showed how NCI broadened and changed the metric of feasibility. For example, the report criticized the prevailing metrics of feasibility: "[F]easibility is measured in terms of capability to make a profit—and the human factor receives minimum consideration." The report further cited "two central purposes: (a) to create an economic and employment base for as many

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[117] Ibid., 393.
[118] Ibid., 378: "It is of interest to note that the black Muslim group who have undertaken farming at the east edge of Lee County are evidently discontinuing dairying as a main enterprise, and are rather going into beef and vegetable crops."
[119] Ibid., 374.
[120] Ibid., 375.

new families as possible, and (b) to improve the social, civic and community services of these and other facilities."[121] The measure of the project's capacity was not just how many crops the land could yield but how many families the land could support. The authors supported this claim with an example of the dairy enterprise, which at a small scale was not profitable but would provide milk to the children on the farm and the surrounding area, and was therefore a worthy investment in the "human factor." The authors used capital investment calculations to arrive at the conclusion that their land could support one hundred families, with an average of two working individuals per family, and a goal of reaching this target number in five years.[122]

In the appendix section "Timing, Transition and A Sound Calendar of Growth," the authors considered how to populate the land trust in a sustainable manner. The goal was to create enough employment to sustain the families before they moved onto the land, such as by prioritizing families who had "building trades skills, or the potential to learn [them]." The planners' logic was that "the employment created by the construction work would offer a sound economic base for the first families."[123]

One of the surprising suggestions in the report is for the land trust to attract a major corporation partnership. Possible candidates included corporations already located near Albany: Foremost-McKesson, Goodyear Tires, Johns-Manville, Blalock, Firestone Rubber, and Star-Commanders. The authors noted that supporting NCI could appeal to corporations that wanted to demonstrate "good corporate citizenship by relation to a minority economic development."[124]

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[121] Ibid., 337.
[122] Ibid., 344.
[123] Ibid., 360.
[124] Ibid., 399. President Nixon had just established the Minority Business Development Agency through the United States Department of Commerce. "Minority Enterprise and Expanded Ownership: Blueprint for the 70's," US Government Printing Office, 1971. Submitted to President Richard Nixon by the President's Advisory Council on Minority Business Enterprise.

Race as Visible + Invisible Blueprint

How did the report address race-based assets and obstacles? On the surface, there was little language distinguishing the settlers racially. At no point were NCI members referred to as "Black," "African American," or "Negro" settlers. Rather, the authors referred to the settlers' economic class, framing them as the deserving poor, who through sheer willpower would overcome their obstacles. "When planning with poor people is concerned," the planners wrote, "there is often a tendency to underestimate their capacity to accept and utilize an opportunity to improve their lives."[125] The authors noted all the disadvantages the poor have accumulated in their lifetime, "health, dental, [and] dietary," among others. The authors also emphasized that despite these disadvantages, "we are dealing with a strong human potential—that the human assets will be good."[126] Given the pervasive stereotypes that existed about the rural poor living in the South, especially about poor Black people, it was critical for the report to show confidence in the people's potential. In perhaps one of the more explicitly anti-racist statements in the report, the authors noted that "[a]chievement is the result of training and expertise, rather than any innate human resource."[127] This sentiment, while obvious now, defied the mainstream white supremacist conception of Black people as inferior and untrainable. The statement was more than a passing reference to the gift of education; it was part of an entirely different way of thinking about dismantling systemic obstacles by increasing access to resources and building internal capacity.

While racial identifiers were not used to delineate the settlers, race was implied. How did the authors factor race into their preliminary planning, if at all? In a statistical section of the

[125] "Featherfield Farm Project: Phase One Report," 345–46.
[126] Ibid., 345.
[127] Ibid., 381.

report that covers the overall race and demographics of southwest Georgia, particularly in the twelve counties outlined as the "impact area" for the purpose of their planning report, it was noted that "[i]n 1960, 40.1 percent of the population was Negro. This compares to a percentage of 28.6 for the State of Georgia and 11.4 for the United States."[128] Despite high rates of migration of African Americans from Georgia to the North, a significant proportion of Georgia's population remained Black. In the biggest understatement of the report, an awful history of racial violence and discrimination was quietly mentioned as "past economic and social structures [that] tend[ed] to be relatively unproductive."[129]

This brief allusion to systemic racism had marginal elaboration in the appendix: "We suspect that the leaders of this new community may doubt their ability to claim, for example, full agricultural subsidies and benefits if the payments of these are under the jurisdiction of a rather hostile county committee."[130] This was one of the few admissions of the systemic racism that the operation of the farm faced in implementing its planning process. However, there were hopeful case studies, and the authors were encouraged by a neighboring Black Muslim farm that had been welcoming and had served as another source of information and data.[131]

The only point where Black outcomes and white outcomes were compared is income. The study cited major income gaps and poverty rates in southwest Georgia and among the Black population specifically. In 1959, the median family income for the impact area was $3,217, "as compared to $4,208 in the State and $5,417 in the United States." And in southwest Georgia, 47.4 percent of all families had less than $3,000 median income, compared to "35.6 percent for

[128] "The most significant trend in [the] Southwest Georgia area has been the out-migration of population from farms. For example, between 1940 and 1960, the farm population decreased 41.9 percent." Ibid., 329.
[129] Ibid., 330.
[130] Ibid., 339.
[131] Ibid., 348.

the State, and 22.7 percent for the United States." Moreover, "[m]edian Negro family income for the area was $1,892 in 1959 compared to $4,313 for the remainder of the population."[132]

In the appendix, the authors considered the feasibility of using Featherfield Farm for recreation, highlighting the race issue:

> A notable feature of the U.S. cultural and racial situation is an almost complete absence of recreation facilities—in many areas—that can be utilized by black people. Seashores, forest resorts, riding ranges, camping places, farm hunting and fishing preserves, etc. are closed to black people. The demand for recreation facilities by all American people is mounting; the demand among black and other minority people is especially urgent.[133]

It is critical to understand the racial climate of southwest Georgia. At a SNCC fiftieth anniversary conference that took place in southwest Georgia in 2010, Charles Sherrod shared the pervasive fear that characterized Georgia due to the racially charged harassment and death threats people often received, saying, "So if you can't deal with the fear of death, I don't need you to come work with us because we are dealing with death."[134] Tracing the genealogy of the community land trust to the Black farmers of southwest Georgia reveals that the design of the community land trust was inextricably linked to dealing with a racially hostile environment. The development of the "community" component of the community land trust was a direct response to *confronting* systemic racism and white supremacy.[135]

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[132] Ibid., 332.
[133] Ibid., 388.
[134] "Southwest Georgia: Do You Want to be Free," Volume 12 in "SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference," produced by Natalie Bullock Brown and Ascension Productions, CA, newsreel, 2011. *Alexander Street*, film, https://video-alexanderstreet-com.libproxy.mit.edu/watch/southwest-georgia-do-you-want-to-be-free.
[135] On Robert Swann, Davis writes, "One of the earliest supporters of the CLT movement was Robert Swann. This was a direct legacy of Swann's involvement with Koinonia and New Communities.… He had worked beside Slater King and other civil rights activists in seeking representation from 'almost every Southern organization concerned with the land problem of blacks' in planning and establishing New Communities. These activists understood that such a radical experiment in racial advancement could only survive in the hostile environment of southwest Georgia through the continuing participation of sympathetic outsiders who might never live at New Communities themselves." Davis, "Origins," 26.

Their decision to retain McClaughry Associates made their project legible through grant reports and write-ups. McClaughry Associates was cited in the government's anti-poverty research reports. While NCI wanted to create a model of self-sufficiency, the reality was that American agriculture required the subsidy of the government in order to be sustainable, and that it had always been that way. Their grant report includes a long list of local and federal programs that NCI could rely on for funding, technical assistance, and other support.[136] Founded by John McClaughry, who joined the project through supporter Robert Swann, McClaughry Associates remained in the gray area of collaborator and transcriber. In Swann's biography, writer Stephanie Mills describes Swann's friend McClaughry as a "crusty libertarian Vermonter who would become a decentralist intellectual buddy and loyal supporter of Bob's work."[137] McClaughry was a Washington insider who managed to help obtain the initial OEO grant. In the early 1970s, around the time of the NCI project, McClaughry's consulting group was active at the federal level. Although McClaughry would go on to become a Nixonite and Reaganite, surprisingly he supported Black power, which he described as "the power and the means to build the kind of community your people want and deserve to have, and the sole right to benefit from the profits that result."[138]

[136] "Appendix C: Catalog of Federal and State Programs," in "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 228–308.
[137] Stephanie Mills, *On Gandhi's Path: Bob Swann's Work for Peace and Community Economics* (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2010), 97.
[138] Geoffrey Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, from Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 178.

After the Charrette (April 1970)

The report from April 1970 offered an expanded sketch of the plans that emerged in the Phase One Report of November 1969. Throughout the six-month planning process, NCI homed in on their priorities as well as on what they believed would be persuasive to securing what they needed most to make the project a reality: funds. Hence, this document, in the format of the grant report, was as much a documentation of vision as a testament to the immense amount of effort needed to make the case for why the project deserved investment.

The document was written in third person, not in the voice of the consultants nor of the client. In a few portions of the document, however, the consultants' voice was more explicit, indicating that after reviewing the design charrette material, they (as consultants) had come to the following recommendations for NCI. But in the remainder of the document, the voice of NCI was mediated through the grant writers.

The grant opened with the objective of offering the "rural poor" a third alternative to the back-breaking poverty of the South and the overcrowded welfare system of the North. This alternative provided for both the "needs" and "choices" of the rural poor, with the important distinction of offering both within the framework of "democratic control."[139] NCI's objective was stated as follows: "[T]o secure large parcels of land in trust for the rural poor."[140] This raised the question: how did NCI use the design and planning process to define "trust" and "democratic control"?

As the report was written in response to a federal grant, understanding what rural poor connoted for this audience is critical. Beginning in 1964, President Johnson's administration initiated War on Poverty programs across the nation. In 1970, at the time the Phase Two Report

[139] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 3.
[140] Ibid., 8.

was written, President Nixon had been in the White House for a little over a year when he created a Rural Affairs Council at the cabinet level and a Task Force on Rural Development.[141] The rural poor contrasted with the portrayal of the urban poor, who were often blamed for crowding cities and burdening the welfare system. There was a hope that solving rural problems would slow and reverse the tide of African American migration to cities as policy makers and planners talked about the "Southern Roots of the Urban Crisis."[142] The years 1969 to 1970 were a time of national reflection solving the problem of rural poverty.[143]

On Featherfield Farm, one hundred and twenty-five participants came together for two weekends of collaboration and cocreation in February 1970.[144] The charrette participants included low-income residents from across the twelve-county impact area.[145] This concerted, intensive effort at planning was a welcome shift for activists and residents who had had to remain in a reactive and vigilant mode for survival in the hostile environment of southwest Georgia.

The report defined the charrette as "a process of decision making that deliberately involve[d] the various agencies and groups of the State and community that will inevitably share in the building of the new town—for good or ill—as well as the professional consultants who serve those agencies and groups."[146] The design charrette, a relatively new design strategy, had migrated from the architectural world to the planning world, so it was considered new and

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[141] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 494, 496; James M. Naughton, "Nixon Asks New Agencies to Spur Executive Work," *New York Times*, March 13, 1970.

[142] "Rural Jobs Urged to Relieve Cities Report by Nixon Warns," *New York Times*, March 11, 1970.

[143] A digest of contemporary opinions on the rural issue appears in this report's appendix: "Appendix D: Rural America: A Digest of Opinions and Proposals," in "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 499. Quote is from Roger Beardwood, "Southern Roots of the Urban Crisis, *Fortune*, 1968.

[144] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 12.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., 21–22.

"unorthodox," according to the Phase Two Report.[147] It was considered unorthodox to give this much authority to nonprofessional, low-income stakeholders. Social movements in the 1960s pushed public planning agencies and private consultants to adopt a more formal process for community input and accountability. The grant report discussed the significance of undertaking design charrettes as part of the planning process. The charrette process was "designed specifically to involve local residents in the planning process: the important result of this involvement was that planners obtained first-hand knowledge of area needs."[148] For NCI and McClaughry Associates, this type of decision making was not only more democratic, it was more efficient, as valuable input from residents could be more "readily implemented."[149]

Rather than immediately diving into intensive planning sessions, the NCI board and consultants facilitated workshops preceding the charrettes in order to build background knowledge on land use, health, education, finances, and the farm so that participants could go into the process with more context. Participants had the chance to read the consultants' Phase One Report assembled and distributed to them at the end of 1969.

Figure 15 shows the design charrette taking place in a barn with a metal roof on Featherfield Farm. A note taker has filled the flip pad with people's questions and hung the pages around the room under headers such as "education" or "community development

[147] Ibid., 22. For the history of the term "charrette" in the city-planning context, see Bill Lennertz and Aarin Lutzenhiser, *The Charrette Handbook* (Chicago: Taylor and Francis, 2017). Lennertz and Lutzenhiser discuss how it was a term that originated in nineteenth-century Beaux Arts schools in France and was often used by architecture students, slowly making its way into the planning discourse in the 1980s. "The evolution of the collaborative, multiple-day, inclusive, on-site charrette is not a linear one. Its roots may be found in a variety of projects and processes.… We looked for processes that were held on-site in the United States, and were stakeholder inclusive (collaborative), multidisciplinary, 'groundbreaking,' and helpful in advancing the field of public collaborative design processes for community planning.…" Until the 1960s, public planning agencies and private consultants made many land planning recommendations about the future without the input of the people who lived there. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and other rights movements that followed, all based on making democracy work for everyone, had an effect on the way public planning decisions were made.

[148] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 13.

[149] Ibid.

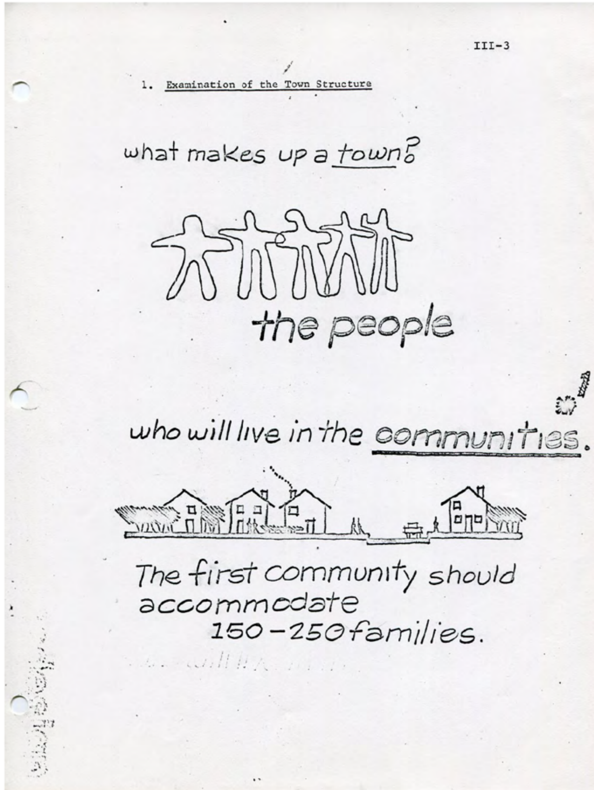
corporation." In Figure 16, it is powerful to see the design charrette in context of this farm site that is very much in progress and taking place on land owned by the people in the barn, their farm equipment and a tractor in the foreground.

This grant report demonstrated how NCI designed the concept of democratic control and self-determination through several themes: (1) conducting feasibility studies of a wide range of options, (2) prioritizing people over profits, (3) developing internal capacity, and (4) moving the needle on health, education, and employment in the entire twelve-county impact area.

Fig. 15. Inside the design charrette at Featherfield Barn with a metal roof, 1970. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

Fig. 16. Outside the design charrette at Featherfield, 1970. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

Fig. 17. Raw questions from the design charrette flip pad:
“Can a man with two wives live on the land? (woman with two husbands)”
“What is the role of the woman in the new community?
“Can a person have more sayso [sic] on the values if they own a home or not?”
“Will a class system develop? (managers, foremen, etc.)”
“Will a child have a vote equal to an adults?”
“Will a housewife have a right to an income?” Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.



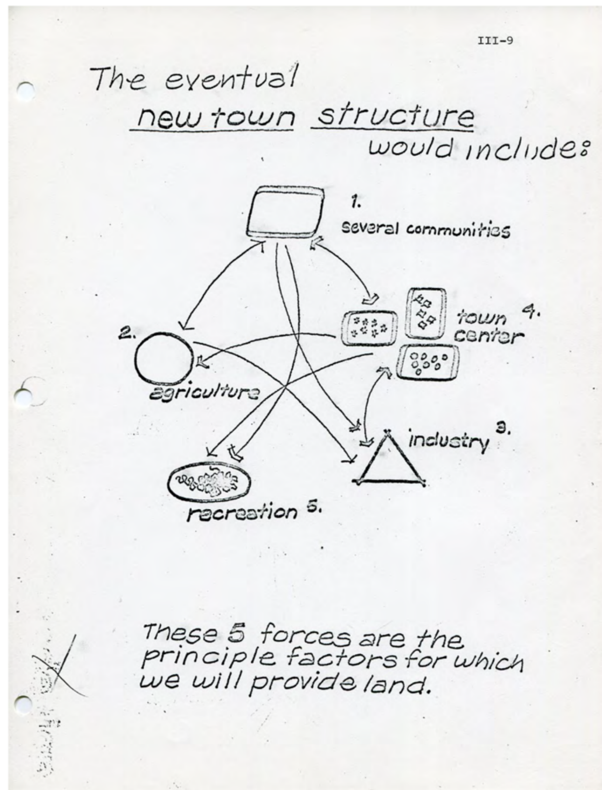


Fig. 18. Charrette sketches that show what makes up the town, the capacity, and the land use categories. In "A New Community for Southwest Georgia" at Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

Choices

Integral to any plan for self-determination is choice. For many of these farmers, prior to NCI, their choices for how to live on and cultivate the land were constrained by the landowners. In this new structure of pooled resources, they considered expanding their operations in the first four years to pork and corn, beef, milk and dairy products, pecans, shrubs and flowers, and vegetables.[150] The early stage of the design process allowed them to see various pathways through a "cafeteria" of both farm and nonfarm options for the use of the land.[151] The board selected a moderate agricultural path with substantial industrial and nonfarm projects.[152] This increased the opportunity for vertical integration of their products, which was suggested in Phase One, as a means of extracting more profit from their labor. For example, Featherfield farmers could cultivate sweet potatoes, and also process and market the product.[153] Vertical integration was presented as an option for more equitable profit. In the agricultural system at the time, the farmers performed the hardest labor but received the least financial benefit, with the middle men taking a large cut of the processing markup.

Throughout the report, the ways NCI aimed to put people over profits emerged. Agriculture, housing, and health all had phased development programs in order to incrementally pilot and grow their projects in a way that prioritized the financial stability of the residents of the land. NCI recommended a schedule for developing the farm enterprises in a sustainable way, considering how many families they would be supporting and how much capital and machinery they would need. Their goal was that by 1974, their farm development would employ fifty families.

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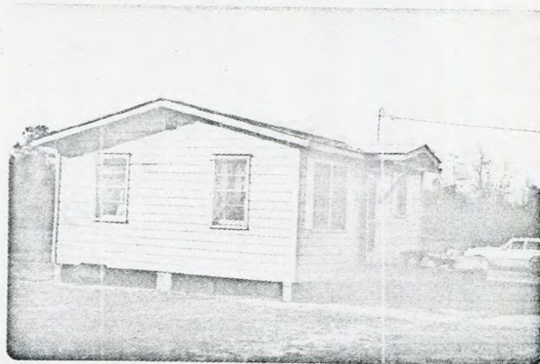
[150] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 47.
[151] Ibid., 23.
[152] Ibid., 22–23.
[153] Ibid., 20.



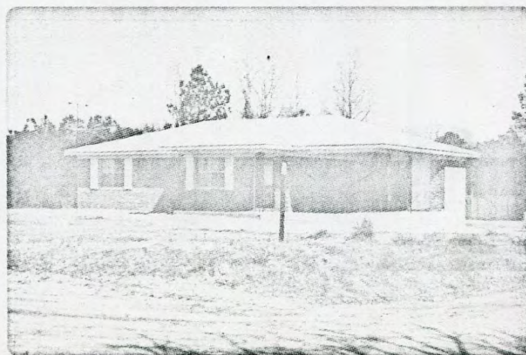


Fig. 19. Photographs that were part of the charrette exercise to create benchmarks for the types of homes members currently lived in, what they would accept, and what were ideal. They used these photographs as a way to gauge what kind of houses community members could plan to live in. In "A New Community for Southwest Georgia" at Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

NCI cared about their members' health outcomes, labor conditions, and improved economic opportunities across the twelve-county region. For example, they prioritized dairy production even though it was not profitable, and potentially even a loss, because it was "essential" for internal food supply, nutrition, and "upgrading" people's diets.[154] Their statistical reports showed that all twelve counties in the impact area were categorized as "hunger" counties. In terms of land use, NCI wanted to locate the industrial developments so that the prevailing wind direction would not carry pollution and highway and railroad smog toward the living communities.[155] NCI also wanted to change the poor treatment of seasonal farm laborers by providing better housing, childcare, and profit sharing for the workers.[156] NCI specifically noted concern about "slave labor situations" and wanted to "avoid substantial drudge of labor at very low wages" by using "modern technology."[157]

NCI prioritized building the internal capacity of the members. Training was seen as an important part of self-determination so that "local residents [could] band together to solve their own problems."[158] Each facet of the land trust was an opportunity for this capacity building such as jump-starting a construction company with local tradesmen and small builders by starting out with assembling prefabricated homes.[159] For NCI, building internal capacity did not discriminate by age or professionalization. NCI encouraged that the "learning process should continue from birth to death,"[160] insisting on the "spontaneous participation from all members of the

[154] "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 49.
[155] Ibid., 135. On the creation of an environmental health director position, see Ibid., 164.
[156] Ibid., 46.
[157] Ibid., 33.
[158] Ibid., 165.
[159] Ibid., 126, 129.
[160] Ibid., 149.

community" in the education process.[161] The goal of the community land trust was to "develop a reliance on planning rather than merely reacting to crisis," according to the report.[162]

Many projects for the poor involved planners who parachuted in as saviors, creating a flashy design that received a coveted grant with little input from the people who had to sustain the effort, and then quickly moved on after reporting initial outcomes. In the report section on "Community Development," NCI wrote that a portion of future funds would be dedicated to continuing to implement social services, including securing health care and education, navigating business ownership, and developing recreational facilities.[163] The report recognized that raising the standard of living for the rural poor was part of sustaining meaningful community planning.[164]

Despite the constraints on capital and resources, the ambition of NCI was to move the needle on outcomes for the whole twelve-county impact area. The land trust was not a closed utopia. Rather, NCI attempted to change the standard of living for a broad swathe of the population.[165] For example, NCI cared that peanut processing (a cash crop) was monopolized by a few big farms. Providing more accessible peanut processing would help many smaller farmers in the impact area.[166] In addition to cultivating the farm to improve the food security of the local region, they aimed to create educational and recreational facilities open to all. They wanted to use the natural resources of the land to develop supplemental resources for all students in the impact area, especially for those studying biology and ecology.[167] Their physical education

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[161] Ibid., 157.
[162] Ibid., 181.
[163] Ibid., 184.
[164] Ibid., 184.
[165] Ibid., 162.
[166] Ibid., 63.
[167] Ibid., 150.

Fig. 20. Design charrette, February 1970. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

Fig. 21. Design charrette continued, February 1970. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

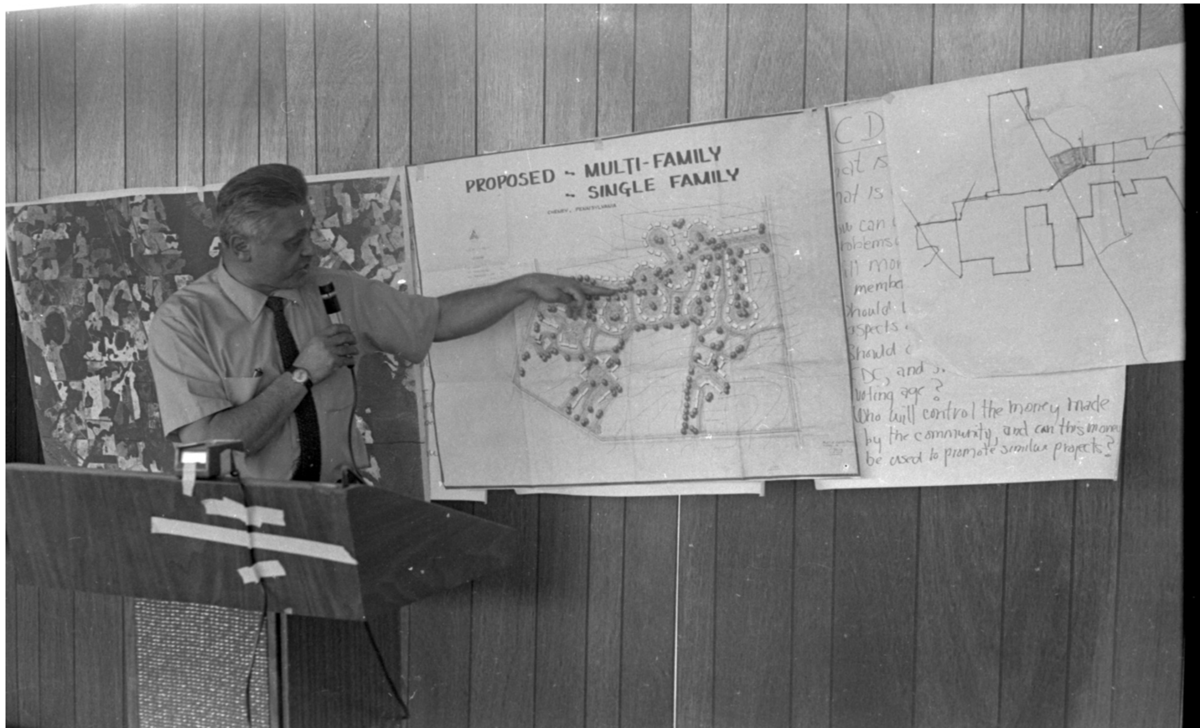

Fig. 22. McClaughry consultant provides an example of a multi-family and single-family housing development in Pennsylvania. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

Fig. 23. NCI Supporter Marylyn Feaver. Photograph courtesy of New Communities, Inc.

classes could have space for hiking, boating, swimming, and camping.[168] The land trust aimed to serve a major gap in "recreation, resort, and outdoor experience accommodations and facilities" for Black communities.[169] The hostility the Black population still faced in a post–Civil Rights Act Georgia was exacerbated and more threatening in rural isolation. The peaceful serenity of nature was a privilege NCI desired to create.

Race

NCI only defined itself racially once in the Phase Two Report—and that was as a passing reference to a "black oriented business entity."[170] The report characterized few obstacles as explicitly racial but briefly mentioned the segregation battles paralyzing schools.[171] In most cases, NCI's role in racial dynamics was broad and vague such as "striving to create bridges of understanding and mutual benefit between various social, economic, and racial groups in the area"[172] or that NCI's land was open to "all races and incomes."[173]

From the report, it appears that race was only appropriate as an identifying term when the land trust came to business matters. There was discussion of "utilizing trade relations with minority communities," of "rural black folks" tapping into "urban inner city markets," and of "ethnic factors [that] have mounting commercial importance."[174] So for the rural poor, the density of the urban markets held some promise for their goods. NCI noted a Chicago-based company that was Black owned and willing to contract with them, which would be a

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[168] Ibid., 154.
[169] Ibid., 56.
[170] Ibid., 68.
[171] Ibid., 148.
[172] Ibid., 184.
[173] Ibid., 108.
[174] Ibid., 33.

"comparative advantage for black producers" and "ethnically oriented" for selling clothes.[175] They cited a Detroit food distributor that was "black owned and operated" and interested in "buy black" campaigns.[176] They hoped to rely on values-based partnerships such as distribution through "minority firms in the north."[177]

There was a surprising twist in their business plans: the goal to work with a major US corporation. Given their communal cooperative model, corporate buy-in seemed an unlikely business strategy. However, they wanted to attract a subsidiary unit of a major US business.[178] They noted that the Heinz company had an interest in solving "basic social-civic problems," that Campbell Soup had a "fair racial employment policy," and that Western Electric was "actively interested in constructive business relationships with black groups and companies."[179] These companies were examples of viable partners because they would be interested in the plight of the rural poor and, at least verbally, amenable to working with a Black organization. The report noted, however, that while most major companies were "open" to working with "minority businesses," the actual occurrence of it was "rare."[180] NCI spelled out its "mutual interests" with corporations: "It is our belief that mutual interests actually exist between such organizations as NCI and major U.S. companies. NCI has a trading position of strength due to: (a) possession of good land and a good labor pool, (b) possession of ethnic business relations and marketing assets, and (c) a sound location in relation to expanding local, regional and big city market[s]."[181]

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[175] Ibid., 36.
[176] Ibid., 34.
[177] Ibid., 20.
[178] Ibid., 20.
[179] Ibid., 74–76.
[180] Ibid., 76.
[181] Ibid., 77.

The most devastating note about race was in the health statistics. Stark, clinical bullet points listed health inequities in the impact area, where medical resources were “woefully inadequate,” and where eight of twelve counties were classified as hunger counties according to national indicators, and two of twelve counties had no physicians whatsoever.[182] The nonwhite, post-neonatal death rate in the impact area was four times the US average, and in Clay county, it was seven times the US average.[183] The statistics in the appendix described Georgia’s poverty as a state and included statistics disaggregated by race as well.

Conclusion

The NCI story is much bigger than the design charrettes of February 1970. The project flourished despite further discrimination. The governor of Georgia, Lester Maddox, blocked the use of OEO funds to further develop NCI. NCI members continued farming anyway, for fifteen years, weathering drought, but eventually foreclosed. Despite the end of their land trust, their model was documented. As early as 1972, the International Independence Institute published *The Community Land Trust: A Guide to a New Model for Land Tenure in America*, and the main case study enumerated in detail is the that of NCI. This publication helped disseminate the ideas launched at the NCI charrette far beyond Georgia. The idea to focus on “needs, choices, and democratic control” as mentioned in the grant report became an integral part of developing a community land trust, thanks to NCI.

The NCI project was a milestone for using a design charrette for a more democratic design process with nonprofessional stakeholders. Their work provided a foundation for land trusts across the country. They cooperatively owned and managed the land and the debt by

[182] Ibid., 159–60.
[183] Ibid., 160.

making decisions through a board of residents. Their vision was to distribute power through a formal convening board, documented minutes, board members, articles of incorporation and bylaws, and applications for federal help. The goal with the NCI land trust was to create a sustainable, long-lasting organization and a model that could be replicated elsewhere. While based in a formal, legal apparatus, NCI also tapped into informal networks and conversations about how to deal with land tenure. The NCI board worked with real estate agents, lawyers, and cooperative farmers in the region to get an idea of land they could purchase and how to finance it. They realized that they had to do these things through informal networks and connections in order to be taken seriously at the formal level.

This community land trust case study shows how African Americans challenged racial segregation in ways in tandem to public protest, and perhaps as a result of witnessing and organizing more confrontational encounters. As much as they were trying to dismantle, they were trying to build. As a collective they documented and dreamed up visions that are captured in the two reports. Most importantly, the reports show the range of choices they were envisioning for themselves.

Their technical expertise, detailed research into farming enterprises, and distribution of power in the organization were debated and discussed in the forum of the charrette. They changed the way design processes consider participation, self-determination, feasibility, and priorities. And while their plans were clearly rooted in an organization that stemmed from multiple racial justice movements, the language of race or a Black power ideology explicitly is noticeably absent. This tells us less about the racial ideology of the group and more about what was acceptable solution in the eyes of the government officials that would read these grant reports.

It is reductive to understand the civil rights movement based on marches, speeches, and the spontaneous bravery that suddenly changed laws. Extensive scholarship in the field of American history and Black studies has shown the rich complexity of social movements. But in the field of design, this level of detail is missing because it is relegated to special minority history. When I came across these grant reports, they allowed me to "attend" the design charrettes with the activists and farmers. Emerging from the throes of the civil rights movement, steeped in the anti-war movement, at the height of the urban crisis, when design and planning was wreaking havoc, these people were trying to design differently.

This thesis's contribution locates design and creativity in resistance. My thesis considers how rapid protests that stretched across the country for self-determination had behind-the-scenes brainstorming and building, a slower process where it was harder to claim victory. Both process and protests have been catalysts for change. It is critical to expand where creativity is enacted by locating design as a type of agency beyond professionalized settings.

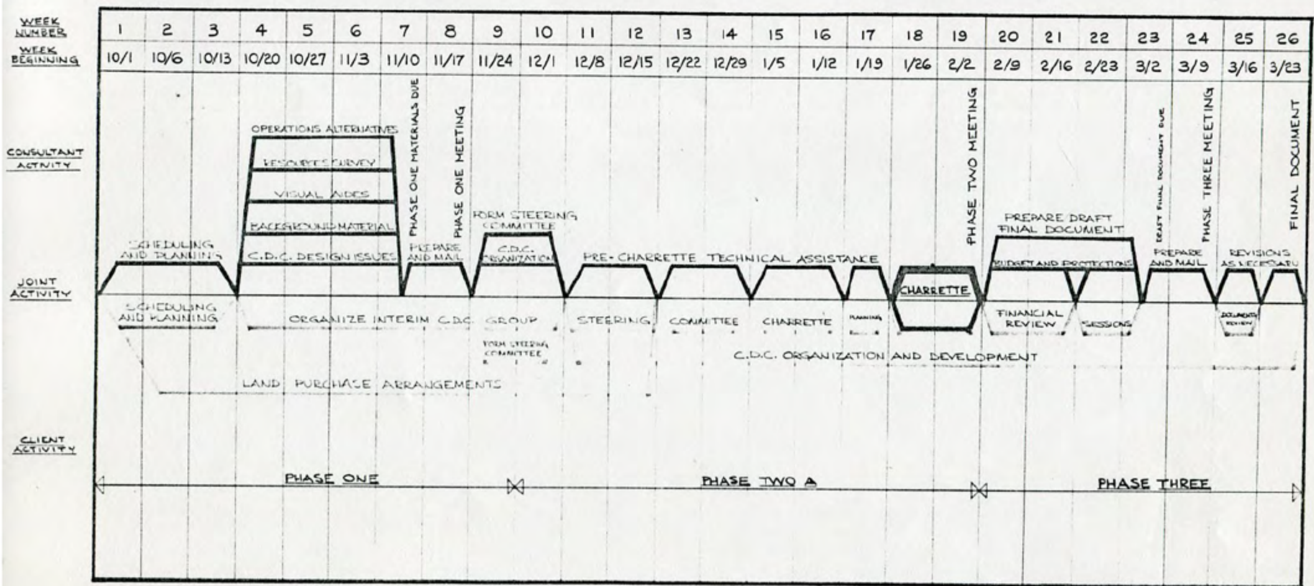

Fig. 24. NCI planning schedule that is at the beginning of the final report. Three-part schedule: first horizontal is consultant activity, middle line is joint activity, and the lower horizontal is the client activity. Note the charrette at the end of phase two and the final document at the end of phase three. The design charrette was a small part of a much larger process. In "A New Community for Southwest Georgia" at Schumacher Center for a New Economics.

Race and Modern Architecture begins the work of exhuming the racial logics embedded in our most canonical histories, uncovering missing histories, and writing race back into our understanding of modern architecture.

—Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, and Mabel O. Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*

Chapter Three: Writing Race Back into Design Projects

By 1972, Black Panthers had brought the rallying cry of Black power to national attention, calling for community control of their cities. Meanwhile, in Georgia, the NCI community land trust was the largest tract of land owned by African Americans in the country. The Black Panthers and NCI designed avenues for self-determination in the places they lived, worked, and organized. For their efforts, both collectives faced immense violence and repression. Both rejected the prevailing notions of how to design for the crisis of poverty. The two case studies serve as counter-memories in the genealogy of participatory design. The Black Panthers and NCI are counter-memories that contest the lineage leading up to design genealogy today. They showed that design is not a politically and racially neutral process. By writing race back into tactical urbanism, design charrettes, and land trusts, I use these counter-memories to redefine "design." My definition of design is historically rooted in how the call for justice had evolved into a design for justice.

Redefining Design

Black freedom struggles have been a vanguard for inclusive, design-based justice. I invoke "counter-memory" through the work of scholar and theorist George Lipsitz. According to

Lipsitz, counter-memory starts from the particular and personal; that is, the "localized experiences with oppression," which then "reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experiences."[184] Lipsitz's use of counter-memory is different from that of Michel Foucault, who emphasizes the singularity of counter-memory. Lipsitz rejects singularity as a characteristic of counter-memory, writing that "no single story can be understood except in relation to other stories."[185] The case studies presented here are not meant to be exhaustive but rather a provocation of counter-memory to challenge universalizing, race-neutral design genealogies. Counter-memory changes the definition of design that this thesis employs.

Definitions of design are often predicated on some kind of neutrality, either based on a body of laws and normative practices or based on universal human impulse. Design books frequently open with how the definitions of "design" are ambiguous and far ranging, "which makes everyone a designer,"[186] or that "every human being is a designer."[187] Designer Victor Papanek captured this sentiment as well, opening his book *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* with the sentiment that "[a]ll men are designers… Design is basic to all human activities—the placing and patterning of any act towards a desired goal constitutes a design process."[188] The theme here appears inclusive yet feeds into the idea that obscures how different humans engaging in design are perceived and treated—even criminalized, because of their race. Unfortunately, even when these authors address the lack of professional designers of color, they consider it an issue of individual prejudice that will likely disappear as the racial

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[184] George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 213.
[185] Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, 214; Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 139, 144, 150.
[186] Jessica Helfand, *Design: The Invention of Desire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 22.
[187] Norman Potter, *What Is a Designer*. 4th ed. (London: Hyphen Press, 2002), 10.
[188] Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), 23.

diversity "naturally" increases.[189]

My definition locates design as a type of agency beyond professionalized settings, one that acknowledges and affirms a different type of technical expertise. This expertise includes the ability to design for self-determination, human rights, and racial justice based on lived experiences of oppression. Marginalized people expand the scope of what is considered architectural and urban design. Redefining design today must include these core values, the criteria that value the principles of "everyday urbanism" in material ways.

Designing for Dignity

Cultural theorist bell hooks has written about the visual politics of space and has shown how the aesthetics of space is inherently political for poor and working-class Black people, for whom racial inequity "overdetermined" the built environment and "created a sense of entitlement for some and deprivation for others."[190] Decades of zoning, racial steering, and discrimination had entrenched neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. Preexisting structures, such as the design of the city, the distribution of resources, and the resulting disparities were racialized as inherent to the poor and to Black people. The artistic and creative intervention of the Panthers in public space countered the often predetermined environment of the poor, where the "standardized" design hooks describes "meant that one was powerless, unable to intervene in or transform, in any way, one's relationship to space."[191] What hooks speaks to, and what the Black Panthers underscored in the implementation of their survival programs, was the dignity in design, the power that came with determining the aesthetics of a space. The March and June 1972 survival

[189] Alice Rawsthorn*, Design as an Attitude*, (Zurich: JRP | Ringier, 2018), 79–80.
[190] bell hooks, "Black Vernacular: Architecture as Cultural Practice," in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: New Press, 1995), 146.
[191] hooks, "Black Vernacular," 150.

conferences posed a challenge to standardization and a rebuttal to erasure by the official city planners. Transient, local, and widely broadcast, the survival conferences served as a liminal space. It is in these liminal spaces just outside the boundaries of overcrowded and underresourced living arrangements, according to hooks, that the oppressed can "stretch the limits of desire and imagination."[192]

The Panthers' informal engagements created a lower barrier of entry for other people to get involved and opened the door of expertise to the people who already had knowledge from life experience in their communities. They exercised principles of "everyday urbanism," to borrow Margaret Crawford's term, that design has to start with people's daily needs in a way that often "goes against the grain of professional design discourse, which is based on abstract principles." Crawford writes that "everyday urbanism demands a radical repositioning of the designer, a shifting of power from the professional expert to the ordinary person."[193] The Black Panthers designed their programs in a way that was exciting and accessible and signaled a provisional effort that required full participation for the revolution. Some of their survival programs such as the Oakland Community School in East Oakland, or their free breakfast program, adopted at the federal level, did lead to lasting institutional change. The Black Panthers and NCI offered a way of designing for dignity, while contextualizing the racialization of design and the production of race.

Breaking Binaries

The objective of my two case studies is to recover race in these otherwise neutral terms

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[192] Ibid., 145–51.

[193] Margaret Crawford, "Excerpts from Everyday Urbanism," in *The Urban Design Reader*, ed. Michael Larice and Elizabeth MacDonald (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 347.

such as urban crisis and Southern poverty. These terms shift the professional designer's gaze in a particular direction. The terms themselves do not explicitly mention race. They do, however, suggest an inevitable, natural state of affairs that could benefit from administrative and technological progress. This march of technical progress obfuscates the need for the redistribution of power. In Timothy Mitchell's book *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, he critiques how planning experts and government officials define an "object of development" by making it natural or technical rather than political. This is achieved by using a term such as urban crisis to seem "natural rather than political" so that "questions of social inequality and powerlessness [disappear] into the background."[194] This framing transforms a power struggle into "a question of the proper management of resources,"[195] which is how systemic racism is written out of analysis. Problems defined by the design profession tend to naturalize the conflation of race and poverty. This suggests that the solution is technology and resource based; if planners and policy makers simply connect the right resources to the right people, poverty would fade away with no discussion about systemic racism.

However, the two case studies in this thesis reveal three assumptions about this naturalized image of poverty, design, and race. One assumption is that only the wealthy have access to design and that this design is intrinsically good. In contrast, the cases show that inequality itself is produced by design. The counter-memories of Black Panthers and NCI disrupt the notion of design as universally good. Design does not just operate in silos of wealth, nor in the silos of city planning and architectural design. Architectural historians can complicate the web of actors and power behind the designs of daily life that people may take for granted or as

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[194] Timothy Mitchell, "The Object of Development," in *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 221–22.
[195] Mitchell, "Object of Development," 226.

inevitable. Architectural historians can demystify the ways inequality is engineered into the built environment. The "who" is just as important as the "how"; that is, examining design as an instrument wielded by an agent rather than a passive "has been" designed. The "who" offers fresh prospects for architecture and planning historians as the general shift in the field grows beyond the lone white male designer.

The second assumption is that the marginalized produce at best informal design solutions to their problems. Rather, the legal system produces and sanctions both informal and formal design. Critical Race Theory was developed to examine the law in context of race. Design as a profession is structured in relation to the law as a set of formalities. Formal design is not only executed by professionals; it is sanctioned by the state. However, as planning scholar Ananya Roy argues, both are produced by the state as a way of exercising control over social difference.[196] The state chooses whose planning to sanction. The state has the power of discretion over whose claim to the land is honored and whose is criminalized. Legitimacy is conferred based on social differences; in the case of redlining, whiteness confers that legitimacy. The naturalized image of informality and spontaneous protest makes it seem that no designers exist in this picture. When design scholars see these citizen interventions as informal, who benefits? The concept of spontaneous citizen intervention elides discussions of power, structural racism, and repression. Black Panthers and NCI made their interventions legible in the bureaucratic systems that also worked for race-based oppression. Although potentially perceived as informal, these acts of design were structured just as much in relationship to formal structures.

The third assumption is that race only produces Blackness. But race also produces whiteness. Relegating systemic racism to Black designers displaces white supremacy from the

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[196] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: The Production of Space and Practice of Planning," in *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Planning*, ed. Randall Crane and Rachel Weber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

main design discourse. In reality, race shapes everything, including the privilege to claim race neutral. Scholars of Critical Race Theory have shown how whiteness is a functioning norm in all kinds of social, political, and economic systems, and this extends to design. Legal scholar Cheryl Harris describes how the construction of race has changed in the last century: “The old definition creates a false linkage between race and inferiority, the new definition denies the real linkage between race and oppression under systemic white supremacy.”[197] Architectural historian Dianne Harris applies these concepts to her study of post–World War II housing and the development of white racial identity: “White Americans see themselves as entirely unracialized, their spaces as race-neutral.”[198] In *Race and Modern Architecture*, the authors refute the claim that “race is only operative in nonwhite or subaltern spaces” and instead contend that “architectural historians must take account of the whiteness central to the universal mythologies of Enlightenment discourses.”[199]

Racialization of Design

The image of urban crisis in the late 1960s can be summarized as a brief and mournful list: the assassinations of Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, President Johnson’s Kerner Commission confirmation that the United States was racist, the plethora of advisory commissions, the crumbling War on Poverty programs, and a devastating war in Vietnam. The era was punctuated with incidents of civil unrest and race riots. These 1960s touchstones suggest a national confrontation between the racists and the not-racists. The

[197] Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1768.
[198] Dianne Harris, *Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 13.
[199] Cheng, Davis II, and Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 19.

hopeless images of poverty, blight, violence, and racism obscure power, responsibility, and creativity. This list has little room for the critiques, creativity, and agency by Black scholars and designers that occurred simultaneously. There was virtually no discussion on how to dismantle white supremacy at the institutional level, in the field of design and urban planning, from the 1960s until today. Scholars of color typically bear the disproportionate burden of challenging these narratives and exert tremendous energy on taskforces and committees with little power.

As the Panthers distributed groceries and NCI pinned up posters for their charrettes, there was increased civilian resistance to centralized planning, which has been documented in the works of Karilyn Crockett, Brian Goldstein, and Eric Avila.[200] Crockett has analyzed twentieth-century urban planning as a technical body of knowledge "designed to convey objectivity and political neutrality." The specialized language for the structure of everyday places "renders the field all but impervious to nonprofessionals and their potential critiques."[201] As a reaction to the struggles of fragmented urban life, there was a new interest in communal living, but it was also a convenient way for white people to leave the city and its civil rights issues behind.[202]

What is important about this moment is that even though discrimination was becoming further entrenched, the language was being sanitized. While racist language was less socially acceptable, sanitized language "paradoxically led to the masking of racial thinking in postwar and contemporary architecture."[203] In *Dispossession: Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights*, Pete Daniel refers to this as "passive nullification"; that is,

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200 Crockett, *People before Highways*; Brian Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle over Harlem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Avila, *Folklore of the Freeway.*

201 Crockett, *People before Highways*, 15.

202 "Causally or coincidentally, hippies left the city at exactly the moment when civil rights and urban issues became virtually synonymous. Those who went to the new communes turned their backs either deliberately or indifferently on both." Steven Conn, "Back to the Garden: Communes, the Environment, and Antiurban Pastoralism at the End of the Sixties," *Journal of Urban History* 36, no. 6 (2010): 843.

203 Cheng, Davis II, and Wilson, *Race and Modern Architecture*, 10.

the pledging of support for civil rights but undermining opportunities for Black farmers. The USDA's modernist agenda was "flavored" with discrimination against minorities.[204] The modernist and mechanized vision of agriculture didn't have room for small or Black farms.[205] Well-established farmers were not able to get credit if they were involved with the NAACP, especially after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that outlawed racial segregation in public schools.[206] Black farmers' stances for social equality could further jeopardize their financial stability.

The rise of the term urban crisis tells a story about how the federal government racialized planning problems over time. Legal scholar Wendell Pritchett has described how the term urban crisis came to symbolize the divide policymakers had over the extent that the government should resolve city problems. By the late 1960s, the term had come to be synonymous with racial conflict.[207] Political scientist Timothy Weaver has created a genealogy of the term urban crisis and how it was "deployed in certain geographical spaces as a way of constructing particular kinds of 'knowledge' about urban problems."[208] Weaver highlights the ways the term was deployed, whether praising or critiquing government intervention, and whether attributing the term to social control or a culture of pathology.[209] In the end, the term urban crisis provides an image of a crisis without people. The term does not clarify who bears the consequences of disinvestment, displacement by urban renewal, and policing. The term holds no one accountable. The Black Panthers called this out, declaring: these systems you are enacting are harming us, and

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[204] Pete Daniel, *Dispossession: Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 25.
[205] Daniel, *Dispossession*, 9.
[206] Ibid., 17–18.
[207] Pritchett, "Which Urban Crisis?" 266–86.
[208] Timothy Weaver, "Urban Crisis: The Genealogy of a Concept," *Urban Studies* 54, no. 9, (2017): 2041.
[209] Weaver, "Urban Crisis," 2042.

we will respond to the needs of our communities.

Similarly, the term blight allowed the state to take action without ever using race as a justification. In practice, blight was weaponized against Black communities. Architectural historian Andrew Herscher writes that blight was an "architectural condition" of allowing the state to take a property from "seemingly negligent owners."[210] Blight suggested disease and dilapidation beyond repair and a moral failing on the part of the neighborhood. Responsible communities wouldn't encounter blight. But Herscher writes that the term was employed primarily by two new professions of the time: urban planning and real estate development, noting that "[e]ach profession recruited 'blight' as a name for one of the principal problems that it could solve or capitalize on."[211]

Blight is inextricable from race, as Herscher shows in his "genealogy of blight."[212] While white homeowners had access to credit and loans to purchase and maintain property, Black owners were denied the same credit. The Panthers fought against naturalized images of blight in the so-called ghetto and how it was a way of signaling race without using racial terms. Herscher writes about these race-neutral definitions of blight and how race could be "extracted" from them.[213] Some of this was based on the vicious circle of race and property values—real estate agents appraised homes in Black neighborhoods with lower values, available credit to residents living in these neighborhoods decreased, banks denied loans for physical improvements to the

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[210] Andrew Herscher, "Black and Blight," in *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, and Mabel O. Wilson (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 294.
[211] Herscher, "Black and Blight," 296.
[212] Ibid., 294. Herscher cites St. Clair Drake (who later went on to found Stanford University's African & African American Studies program) and Horace R. Cayton's seminal text *Black Metropolis*. Herscher writes, "*Black Metropolis* provided the first critical perspective on blight in the context of a professional literature: a perspective immediately signaled by placing the word 'blight' in quotation marks whenever it was used in the book.… In *Black Metropolis*, blight is no longer an unintended urban anomaly, but a product of the intersection of real-estate development, urban planning, and racism." Ibid., 301.
[213] Ibid., 302.

homes, and the homes further deteriorated, driving real estate values down. As a result, "the concept of blight also scientized, spatialized, and monetized white supremacy and racism."[214]

The image of Southern poverty similarly conveys a disconnect between structural racism and poverty. Even the NCI grant report blames poverty on "inexorable economic forces" and mass migration to the North. President Nixon framed the issue as one of population growth and migration, where "vast areas of rural America [were] emptying of people and of promise" and that "small communities have long been neglected in the great currents of society."[215] These images suggest that the crushing poverty of the South was due to its population change, technological deficiencies, lack of big cities, and lack of jobs. While these factors did play a significant role, nowhere in the NCI reports, except for a brief section, was white supremacy, the intergenerational impact of slavery, nor racial discrimination actually accounted for. In President Nixon's remarks on rural uplift, there was little analysis of why there was a Black exodus from the racial terror of the South.

Black Freedom Struggles: The Vanguard of Participatory Design

In *How Racism Takes Place*, George Lipsitz writes that "Black negotiations with the constraints and confinements of racialized space often produce ways of envisioning and enacting more decent, dignified, humane and egalitarian social relations for everyone."[216] The Black Panthers and NCI farmers designed their programs in response to major social problems of the

[214] Ibid., 297. Herscher writes, "The US Supreme Court famously overturned school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* in the summer of 1954 and then famously upheld the use of eminent domain to eliminate blight in *Berman v. Parker* a few months later. The conjunction of these decisions testified to the emergence of urban space—and to the blackness of blight—as the key medium of segregation in a supposedly post-segregation era." Ibid., 302.
[215] "Appendix D. Rural America: A Digest of Opinions and Proposals," in "A New Community for Southwest Georgia," 494.
[216] George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 95.

1960s and 1970s. One of their critical contributions was the way they framed those problems. While NCI's scale as a land project was unique, it was part of broader Black imagination around land rather than an isolated incident. Lipsitz identifies key components of the Black spatial imaginary "that finds value in devalued spaces, that elevates people over profits, that offers alternatives to hostile privatism, defensive localism, and competitive consumer citizenship."[217] NCI's core values to put people over profits and prioritize the financial stability of the residents of the land underscore the centrality of economic strategies to political and self-determination design strategies.

Russell Rickford has discussed "how pastoralism came to rival urbanism as the critical terrain of pan-African nationalist imagination during the early to mid-1970s—the heyday and denouement of the black power era—when more than 70 percent of African Americans lived in cities." According to Rickford, the "ideal of an autonomous land base" was an important countersymbol in Black political culture.[218] Rather than being a monolithic political entity, Black nationalism, community, and methods to achieve self-determination were "vigorously contested claims about the nature of black modernity and the future of black social organization."[219] For Rickford, the issue of land tenure brought "black America's relationship to the forces of production" to the fore and "reconnected local struggles to decolonization campaigns abroad."[220] The site of the Black Panthers' work in an urban neighborhood and that of NCI in a rural setting are both significant to the nature of their designs. People's aspirations are coupled with land in both urban spatial imaginaries and rural spatial imaginaries. Furthermore, while design activism is often studied in relation to public space, the case studies show that both public and private

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[217] Ibid., 124.
[218] Rickford, "'We Can't Grow Food,'" 958.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 973.

spaces are sites of intervention.

The important issue is not that these struggles were not solely internal to Black freedom struggles. Rather, Black freedom struggles also created change at professional levels that excluded them. Black freedom struggles changed the design and city planning professions to reconceptualize participation. June Manning Thomas has written that the planning profession changed because of these social movements for racial equality. Thomas highlights the planning profession during the period of racialized urban crisis. She writes that planners had to respond to the social upheavals of the civil rights movement, inner city rebellions, and Black power, and she examines the American Institute of Planners' "dissident spin-off," the Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO)." According to Thomas, PEO's critique of mainstream planning led to the "emergence of the concept of advocacy planning, which acknowledged the existence of multiple publics and the need to serve low-income communities."[221]

Thomas's timeline juxtaposes the Los Angeles Watts rebellion, President Johnson's creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Paul Davidoff's publication of "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning."[222] When it came to the OEO grants that went to planning projects, "phrases in the legislation referring to 'maximum feasible participation' generated political conflict as mayors struggled to ensure such participation and yet keep control over programming."[223]

Thomas's article is useful because it contextualizes a founder of advocacy planning—Davidoff—with how the Black power movement was formative to his ideas. Thomas's analysis is important because it shows how the profession's official body of code changed in 1972

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[221] Ibid., 3.
[222] Ibid., 4. On the Watts Rebellion, see Donna Murch, "The Many Meanings of Watts: Black Power, *Wattstax*, and the Carceral State," *OAH Magazine of History* 26, no. 1 (2012): 37–40.
[223] Thomas, "Socially Responsible Practice," 7.

because of these movements. Davidoff urged uprising for social justice and asked, “Where are the voices of the planners?”[224] Thomas notes that Davidoff’s language echoed that of Black power advocates, especially when he wrote, “[L]et us think militant thoughts, present militant ideas, pass militant resolutions and dedicate ourselves to militant actions.”[225]

The goal of this chapter is to juxtapose the design interventions of two Black projects for self-determination. This means challenging the conflation of race and poverty in the built environment and treating them as inevitable problems to be solved by the march toward technological advancements. The goal of historicizing the Black Panthers and NCI through the lens of design is to complicate the notion that design is inherently good and expand who gains agency as a designer. The design interventions of the Panthers and NCI also challenge binaries around formal and informal design by showing how institutions of legitimacy, such as the design profession or law enforcement, selectively enforce boundaries. The Black Panthers and NCI offer a way of designing for dignity while contextualizing the racialization of design and the production of race. With Black freedom struggles recognized as a vanguard in participatory processes, the genealogy of design evolves to be more inclusive for all.

bell hooks writes, “I learned to see freedom as always and intimately linked to the issue of transforming space. I have chosen to write about this concern with space in order…to document a cultural genealogy of resistance.”[226] hooks’s effort to document a set of cultural practices as a genealogy of resistance, particularly those revolving around space, animates my work. Transcribing these cultural practices not only generates an archive, it provides a foundation for new theories and new definitions. hooks writes, “Documentation of a cultural

[224] Ibid., 9.
[225] Ibid., 10.
[226] hooks, “Black Vernacular,” 147.

genealogy of resistance invites the making of theory that highlights the cultural practices…that resists reinscription by prevailing structures of domination."[227] By providing a few points of counter-memory, my thesis points to the urgent need to create a genealogy of resistance for design, architecture, and city planning—a vast project worthy of generations of future scholars.

[227] Ibid., 151.

Epilogue

Designers often call the most basic assumptions into question. This is what Dominique Walker, Sharena Thomas, Tolani King, and Sameerah Karim did on a porch only a fifteen-minute walk from DeFremery Park, where the Black Panthers once gathered. In fall 2019, just as I was beginning work on this thesis, these women gripped the attention of the Bay Area, where I grew up. They call themselves Moms 4 Housing. I call them designers.

They are part of a tradition of Black women occupying and transforming space in Oakland. The moms and their children moved into a house on Magnolia Street that had been vacant for two years. They had all been working full time but were nevertheless unable to afford rent in Oakland. Community members helped them move in and set up, getting the house in working order by cleaning, patching the roof, and installing a water heater, fridge, and stove.[228] They created a haven for their children.

Moms 4 Housing punctuated the housing crisis of the Bay Area, as the moms, previously unhoused, fought for the right to use a vacant home that was owned by a real estate speculator.[229] Over the course of the next few months, as Wedgewood, the corporate speculator, tried to evict them and took them to court, the moms, with the help of Carroll Fife from the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action, launched a movement declaring "housing is a human right."[230] Supporters formed a human barrier around the home at any sign of impending eviction.

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[228] Rachel Hahn, "These Moms Fought for a Home—and Started a Movement," *Vogue*, May 12, 2020.

[229] Molly Solomon, "Nearly a Decade Ago, This Oakland Mom Protested and Won Her House Back," *KQED,* January 22, 2020. KQED reporter Molly Solomon wrote about Gayla Newsome: "Nearly a decade before @moms4housing, there was Gayla Newsome. Her West Oakland home was foreclosed on and auctioned off to an investor. But then she did something extraordinary: she occupied it and won it back through public protest."

[230] Hahn, "These Moms."

Law enforcement initially criminalized their creativity and resourcefulness. The moms were told to leave the home by December 17, 2019, but they refused and planned to spend Christmas in the home.[231] The activists knew they were fighting a crisis bigger than their own. Their attorneys argued that the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights protected their right to housing. The judge ruled against them. But the moms would not leave. At their first press conference in November 2019, they said that there were more vacant properties than unhoused people in Oakland, and that "seventy percent of homeless residents are Black."[232]

On January 14, 2020, the Alameda County police arrived fully armed and in military-grade vehicles for the eviction.[233] Hundreds of supporters mobilized despite the early morning and protested as the moms were arrested.

Moms 4 Housing's fight is important because it underscores the racial impact of terms seemingly race neutral, such as speculation. Moms 4 Housing chose the house on Magnolia Street precisely because it was owned by Wedgewood, a real estate speculation company that owned at least 125 properties in the Bay Area at the time of the Moms 4 Housing occupation.[234] Speculation is not an accident or an innocent gamble. It is part of an intentional and coordinated effort to capitalize on race-based disinvestment. Speculation fuels an ecosystem of predatory lending to drive prices down, move Black residents out, and move wealthier residents in. This cycle is only intensified with "predatory inclusion," a term historian Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor

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[231] Melissa Colorado, "Mothers Who Took Over Abandoned Oakland Home Say They'll Stay Put Despite Eviction Notice," aired December 6, 2019, on NBC Bay Area, https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/mothers-who-took-over-abandoned-oakland-home-say-theyll-stay-put-despite-eviction-notice/2190757/.

[232] E. Tammy Kim, "Moms 4 Housing: Redefining the Right to a Home in Oakland," *New York Review of Books*, March 9, 2020.

[233] Hahn, "These Moms."

[234] Michael Bott and Sean Myers, "Examining Wedgewood: A Look at the Home-Flipping Giant in Battle with Homeless Mothers," aired January 6, 2020, on NBC Bay Area, https://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/examining-wedgewood-a-look-at-the-home-flipping-giant-in-battle-with-homeless-mothers/2208119/.

uses to describe the exploitative terms of financial lending that are based on the cumulative effects of racial discrimination but now obfuscated by race-neutral terms such as "subprime" loans.[235]

Katie Ferrari writes on the history of Magnolia Street for *Curbed San Francisco*, a history that begins with West Oakland's original industrial zoning in 1912, the Japanese American residents who lost their homes when they were sent to internment camps in 1942, and the subsequent purchase of the homes by African Americans who could not live anywhere else in Oakland due to racially restrictive covenants. Ferrari documents the interplay of discriminatory and predatory financial systems.[236] The struggle reached a new chapter with the 2008 recession, as private equity banks and investors used bank bailout funds, "making massive profits off of dispossession."[237] The residents once fighting bulldozers and highways in West Oakland were now fighting speculation and gentrification.

After the eviction, there was a turn of events. In a deal that involved Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf and California Governor Gavin Newsom, Wedgewood agreed to sell the house to the Oakland Community Land Trust for the moms.[238] The Oakland Community Land Trust "buys land off the speculative market that stays affordable and in community control in perpetuity—the trust can then transition ownership or rental of the building to the actual residents."[239] The agreement had repercussions beyond Moms 4 Housing, however, with

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[235] Keeanga Yamahtta-Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 17–19.
[236] Katie Ferrari, "The House on Magnolia Street: Even before Moms 4 Housing Was Evicted from 2928 Magnolia, Racism and Capitalism Shaped the Home's History," *Curbed San Francisco*, April 29, 2020.
[237] Ferrari, "House on Magnolia Street."
[238] Sarah Holder and Brentin Mock, "A Group of Mothers, a Vacant Home, and a Win for Fair Housing," *Citylab*, January 28, 2020, accessed January 30, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-28/the-oakland-moms-who-launched-a-housing-movement.
[239] Hahn, "These Moms."

Wedgewood's agreeing to give the city and affordable housing organizations the right of first refusal on its properties.[240] The moms' creative protest convened enough mass public support and media attention to sway the case.

These moms are a few of a growing body of unhoused families in the Bay Area who are transforming a system of built environment that has displaced them for too long. They amplified a national conversation about housing as a human right. Their website shows that this is the cause they continue to fight for, stating that "[t]here are four times as many empty homes in Oakland as there are people without homes. Some of these people are children."[241] However, it remains to be seen whether Moms 4 Housing will actually move back into the Magnolia Street house as the negotiations between the Oakland Community Land Trust and Wedgewood are still underway.[242]

As Mayor Schaaf said, "I cannot condone unlawful acts but I can respect them and I can passionately advance the cause that inspired them."[243] What does it mean to respect but not condone? Whose recuperation of space is deemed legal or illegal? Legality may not be the right criteria to judge these creative actions. Much police conduct, urban renewal, and displacement have been "legal." Whose designs are backed by the apparatus of the law?

There will be many more evictions as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates many people's precarious situation.[244] I write in the midst of a global pandemic that has

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240 Stella Chan and Darran Simon, "'Moms 4 Housing' Reaches Agreement for the Sale of the Vacant Oakland Home They Were Evicted From," aired on CNN, January 20, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/20/us/moms-4-housing-homeless-evicted-oakland-home-purchase/index.html.
241 *Moms 4 Housing*, accessed June 30, 2020, https://moms4housing.org.
242 Hahn, "These Moms."
243 Chan and Simon, "'Moms 4 Housing.'"
244 Nicole Karlis, "With Affordable Housing Already Scarce, Oakland Is Poised for a Post-Pandemic Homelessness Boom," *Salon*, June 14, 2020, accessed June 15, 2020, https://www.salon.com/2020/06/14/with-affordable-housing-already-scarce-oakland-is-poised-for-a-post-pandemic-homelessness-boom/.

disproportionately killed Black people in the United States and ravaged unhoused communities. The lives and deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd spurred massive national protests as I put these words to the page. I picture Ahmaud running along the Georgia coast in his last moments, Breonna sleeping in her bed, and George stepping out onto the sidewalk.[245] I remember how the Black Panthers started out by patrolling the police to prevent traffic stops from escalating into violence. I remember how NCI bought thousands of acres of land to create a safe haven for farmers and their families.

The Moms 4 Housing campaign has poignant historical echoes. The moms took over a house in West Oakland, and in doing so, carried on the tradition of West Oakland residents, such as the Black Panthers, who spoke truth to the power of city planners, real estate institutions, and the wealthy. The work of Carroll Fife and her husband, TurHa Ak, in organizing networks for spatial justice in Oakland builds on the legacy of the Black Panthers.[246] The resolution negotiated by the housing activists, the mayor, and the governor arrived in the form of a land trust, hearkening back to the farmers of Albany, Georgia. The moms' move into the empty home, selected for its ownership by a speculator, incorporates the strategy of tactical urbanism. Tactical urbanism and the question of who is allowed to be creative with the built environment is still highly contested.

There are critiques of urbanism's "cities for all" credo that neglect the dangers to ordinary Black life in public space.[247] The design of the built environment does not stop in the

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[245] Zak Cheney-Rice, "Never Stop Running," *Intelligencer*, May 8, 2020, accessed May 8, 2020, https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/05/ahmaud-arbery-death-and-joy.html.
[246] Kim, "Moms 4 Housing."
[247] Amina Yasin, "Whose Streets? Black Streets," *Tyee*, June 18, 2020, accessed June 22, 2020, https://thetyee.ca/Analysis/2020/06/18/Whose-Streets-Black-Streets/. Reflecting on George Floyd's death, urban planner Amina Yasin writes, "I invite all of us in urbanism fields, especially those who espouse 'cities for all' and 'open streets for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds,' to consider why Black people are harassed and dying

drafting file nor in the renderings. It continues into the moment people use and transform space, carrying the imprint of social beliefs—including racism. Conversations about removing Confederate memorials, abolishing prisons, and defunding police reveal a racialized layer that is far from politically neutral, which designers have to acknowledge to dismantle.

Perhaps what history offers is a lesson: design is all about creating beauty from constraints. Professional institutions need to redistribute power by affirming and paying those on the margins as designers.[248] It is important to elevate the voices of planners and designers who speak up for racial justice, and even more so to listen to those not licensed as professionals.

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in public spaces while jogging, riding their bicycles, walking, playing, bird watching in the park, having a barbeque, just existing in public space, or even—yes—driving their cars."

[248] The conversation about architectural licensure as an exclusionary tool with disproportionate racial impact continues. Princeton School of Architecture Dean Mónica Ponce de León says in an interview, "Calls for licensing for many professions emerged during Reconstruction and there is a great deal of scholarship about how licensing was used as a tool to discredit Black skilled labor. Architecture is no different, and within this legacy, the requirement of practical training is particularly disturbing. Apprenticeship was a key component of the Southern Black Codes." Antonio Pacheco, "Mónica Ponce de León on the Future of Architectural Licensure," *Archinect*, June 29, 2020, accessed June 30, 2020, https://archinect.com/features/article/150204718/m-nica-ponce-de-le-n-on-the-future-of-architectural-licensure.

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