Space and Governance in the Baltimore DIY Punk Scene
An Exploration of the postindustrial imagination and the persistence of whiteness as property

by

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July 1996, Lexington Terrace bleeds the dust. Forty years before, high-rise public housing seemed to offer a solution to the problem of “slums.” Will new housing re-concentrate poverty and reinforce racial segregation? Or will new types of public housing open throughout the metropolitan area? Photo by Jay McCullough.


Expressways and waterfront as developed between 1825 and 1879.

Introduction

The first Do-it-yourself (DIY) music show I ever went to was in my senior year of high school. I went with two other friends from my private high school in Baltimore County to see two local bands; a punk set from Dope Body and a hip-hop duo called The Rap Dragons. We drove from my friend’s white wealthy suburban enclave called Homeland toward east Baltimore, not too far from Johns Hopkins University. Her neighborhood, Homeland, was constructed in the early 1900s as part of a national trend of suburbanization.\textsuperscript{1} The Baltimore County suburbs located north of the city are steeped in a history of carefully guarded upper class white Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Methodist exclusion from three main groups: the Euroethnic population from southern and eastern Europe and within this category the extra-marginalized Ashkenazi Jewish people (who were not considered white at the time), and finally African Americans.\textsuperscript{2} The Roland Park Company, creator of many exclusive suburbs in Baltimore county including Homeland, used covenants and screening tests to exclude Jewish and black people in the name of protecting real estate prices and attracting a white and wealthy clientele.\textsuperscript{3} In the wake of the great depression of 1929, The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) assigned Homeland an “A” grade neighborhood encouraging banks to extend mortgages to homeowners looking to buy

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[2] I get the term Euroethnic from Sacks, Karen Brodkin. "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" \textit{Race}. By Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994. 78-102. There was class variation within these groups as some families were able to accumulate wealth although they were largely barred from the white protestant housing market. I discuss these racial categories later in the thesis.
\item[3] Ibid
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
in that area. At the time, HOLC was creating a real estate map of American cities, determining which neighborhoods were fit for mortgage loans and public investment. Baltimore city, although only 20 minutes away by car from Homeland, suffered a drastically different fate. HOLC “redlined” the city’s neighborhoods with the highest concentration of African Americans deeming them too risky for bank loans. This essentially prevented the availability of mortgages and home ownership in these areas, as well as neighborhood expansion, leaving the working class black population to remain concentrated in inner city slums. These neighborhoods were left to deteriorate as the state actively invested in suburbs like Homeland.

As we drove toward the city, Homeland seemed to fade from the bucolic suburban fantasy known for its ornamental lakes and red foxes, into anonymous and somewhat dingy row houses. There was a slight thrill and fear for us county kids of crime and being in a “dangerous” or “bad” neighborhood. Although we weren’t too far from where my friends lived, shopped, and went to school, we had crossed over an invisible barrier. We were tiptoeing through blight, visibly marked by its lack of resources. Our destination was made obvious by the bearded men and the girls with short haircuts hanging out on the sidewalk and visible through the door. I also remember two little black girls with pigtails playing jump rope on the sidewalk as late as 2am. I assumed lived in one of the row houses sharing the street with the show house.

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4 Ibid, 67
The young woman on the stoop collecting donations for entry was beautiful and edgy, like Karen O from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs\textsuperscript{6} or something. She had a short blond haircut meant for a 12-year-old boy, a couple of piercings, red lips, and funky vintage clothes. She was what I understood at the time to be a hipster: someone who dressed uniquely and exactly how she wanted. There were no brands or designers to control the body, but the person controlled and created their own look. I tried to dress cool too. I was wearing an enormous shirt with haphazardly cutoff sleeves and tights. We drank cheap rum out of the bottle hidden in a paper bag. As I got drunker the two little girls were still playing jump rope as if it was midday.

The row house was furnished and decorated as if someone truly lived there. It felt bizarre to be in a stranger’s house. My friends and I went down the narrow staircase to the concrete basement where the show was happening. It was hot, and dingy with a rudimentary sound system. Being in a basement there was no separation between the musicians and the show-goers. Everyone shares the dark how space as one unit. There is an intense interaction and synergy between musician and spectator. The bands were playing experimental indie rock with electronic loops. They seemed very humbled and happy to have crowd before them. The mood was light and fun. Every person in that dark basement had participated in fun creative night. The show goers brought their energy and a couple dollars for donation. The city provided a cheap row house in a discreet section of the city. The musicians brought their ideas and rudimentary equipment.

\textsuperscript{6} American Post Punk / Indie Rock Band from New York City formed in 2002
This type of community fascinated me. I felt a sense of thrill in a variety of ways. My excitement derived in part from the transgressive aspect of the event. I did not know who owned the building if anyone, and I doubted the legality of having a music show in the basement of a row house. Crossing the threshold at the doorway was literally an entrance into a quasi-legal art and music culture. After attending more DIY shows during and after High School I understood this feeling of ambiguous legality to be a hallmark of DIY run events and spaces. With a low budget and minimal resources to spare, creativity and an exploitation of the existing infrastructure become tools of survival. One comes to see the city not as a failed zone of abandonment but as rife with opportunities in the youthful postindustrial imagination. Additionally, the combination of limited resources and a perceived lack of police surveillance allowed for a breach of disciplined citizenship and slip into quasi-legal activity. Despite the transgressive uses of space, it is important to note that the DIY space I entered was majority white and contained within private property, both of which provide protection from policing. Access to a row house provided a physical cover from surveillance, while the whiteness of the scene also deterred cops from assuming illegal or threatening activity.

Watching a group of whacky-looking twenty-somethings pull together an experimental music show felt inspiring. Their collaborative approach to organizing a DIY based community transgressed normative schemes of hierarchical leadership. Operating with limited resources necessitated a highly cooperative and participative community that must pool its resources and energy to keep the scene running. The scene was also clearly not established to accumulate profit as suggested by the young
woman at the door who simply asked for a donation of any quantity. Without necessarily intending to do so, the show organizers’ collaboration facilitated a space oriented towards equal status and equal power. The existence of the DIY show itself demonstrated to the audience that experimental art and music could be organized and performed right here, right now, without waiting for private economic assistance or approval from mainstream institutions. In this way, I experienced the subversion of some forms of hierarchy within the space—especially around acceptable forms of governance and leadership, I experienced a subversion of acceptable forms of art and music, and I experienced a subversion of life oriented towards profit accumulation. I hoped this momentary disruption of capitalist culture was intentional, and for that reason felt attracted to the underground DIY music scene. In the moment I felt that I had been inserted at the very edge of time and was watching newness happen before my eyes. There was satisfaction in being a part of something new, creative, and non-corporate. I loved the sweat, the creativity, the grime, and the people. They were beautiful people, but they were unpretentious in their approach and seemed to be enjoying life as it were.

**Methodology**

When I first began my fieldwork I hadn’t yet settled on the punk scene as a niche in the Baltimore DIY arts community. Before orienting myself towards this particular scene I attended some underground raves and hung out in neighborhoods I knew to be centers of DIY arts and culture. By June I had settled on the punk scene as my primary focus. For the remainder of the summer of 2013, I attend at least one DIY Punk show almost every weekend. I visited a variety of venues in central Baltimore.
Most were licensed venues in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District (Station North), but I also attended two house shows just outside of this district of artist live-work spaces, galleries, rowhomes, and businesses. When I attended shows I used the time to discreetly observe the dynamics of the show space. I was interested in how these musicians were crafting their community, and the particular principles or diving forces behind the culture in the punk scene. I was also interested in the inconsistencies between the different venues and the ways in which various actors in the scene would shape each show space differently. I also attended shows to try and establish contacts and friendships so I could record longer interviews in person at a later date. I tried to pursue this route because I felt uncomfortable approaching people in the moment. I initially found my shyness as well as my physical appearance as a young black woman and thus an outsider or abnormality in the punk DIY scene to be a significant roadblock. The scene was predominately white and although women attended the shows, it was men who usually played in bands. I felt that the white male-dominated atmosphere prevented my participant observation if I felt too uncomfortable at any given moment and the opportunity for casual interviews in the field felt stunted. Simply being a woman in a deeply male subculture left me vulnerable to uninvited flirtation despite my need and desire to be taken seriously.

From my High School experience attending some DIY shows in Baltimore City, I knew I was entering a small community who were most likely familiar with each other and were habituated to seeing familiar faces at shows and around town. I also assumed that this particular musical subset, punk and metal, would probably attract

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7 "About - Station North Arts and Entertainment District.” StationNorth.org, Web. 21 Mar. 2014
many young white males. For most part I was correct, and at times this reality left me feeling paralyzed and unable to summon the courage to come up to people and ask them questions. I was also entirely alone in my fieldwork and entering spaces that for others were familiar and habitual. Being a woman of color in the space only seemed to heighten the fact that I was indeed an outsider, or a new comer. For these reasons I spent my time attending shows observing and attempting to blend into the shadows.

Baltimore City is about twenty to thirty minutes east of my home by car. This geographic distance affected my fieldwork over the summer as I felt like a commuting member of the scene rather than a local. In this way I was an outsider, or as some people in the scene call it, “a county kid.” In this vein, my socio-economic class was also a marker of difference. While I come from an upper middle class background, the DIY punk scene is made for and by middle class to working class youth. I was forced to confront the internalized classism I harbored, especially around legitimate forms of knowledge as I plunged into this urban underground music scene. Furthermore my status as a student at an elite university was perhaps my largest marker of class difference. A college education could have signaled upward mobility, a pedestal of intellectual legitimacy, elitism, and an exotifying interest in the activities of the poor and working class, among others. I noticed this difference early in my research around the (alienating) language I was using to speak with people when conducting long interviews and explaining my project. Upon adjusting my questions I noticed a remarkable difference in the ease in which I was perceived. Despite my various “outsider” statuses, I did feel like an insider in some ways. Although I am not a Baltimore City local, musicians and other people interested in punk music from
surrounding counties were an important part of the scene in its early years and in its current form. I was an insider as local resident of Maryland, and distinct from a young gentrifier looking to set up shop in a cheap warehouse space in the city.

Upon returning to school in the fall I realized I had documented and cataloged a lot of information about the neighborhoods and physical spaces I visited. This soon became central to my thesis as I contemplated the different atmospheres and possibilities various show spaces gave to their participants. I also became interested in the history of these deeply segregated neighborhoods in Baltimore City and its consequences for the DIY punk scene. It is widely acknowledged that has inadequate public transportation. The public amenities that initially declined during post World War II white flight paradoxically force the city inhabitants to live hyper-locally. I thus spent a lot of time getting lost while driving and walking to my final destination. I was able to take in the geography of the city, the changes in neighborhoods, and the divisions between them. I hope to feature these unintentional wanderings through the city as I consider Baltimore City as a postindustrial landscape. I work both from memory and field notes to bring the reader into my field site and understand the particularities of Baltimore City; especially feelings of smallness and creativity. I also frequently used Google maps to take virtual tours in some of the neighborhoods that feature prominently in my thesis.

I also have a historical component to my thesis as I discuss the history of Baltimore City and its structure of racial segregationist housing policy. I contrast feelings of smallness and creativity within the punk scene to historical narratives of struggle from the African American community in Baltimore City. This history
oscillates from being buried or lesser known within the Punk to being a focal point in my own analysis. I did not have a chance to speak with any African American residents who lived near any punk venues, thus the historical narrative serves as a sort of background to buttress the reality of the white privilege that the punk scene enjoys and also the invisibility of this privilege. The invisibility of black voices from the community both in my thesis and in the punk scene is a demonstration in itself of the insidious nature of white privilege. However, I challenge this silence by intentionally working critical race theory into my analysis, especially as it pertains to access to private property, neighborhood formation, and the construction of place and space. I use Cheryl Harris’s concept of whiteness as property as a way to discuss white claims to property, citizenship, and prestige.

In addition to my observation I recorded five interviews with musicians in the scene. I arrived at Wesleyan feeling defeated only having gotten two interviews over the summer. I considered not even doing a thesis because I did not have the long conversations and interactions I desired. However, over the course of my first semester I did three more interviews over the phone, giving me significantly more data and personal accounts to deal with. My brief summer in the field limited my relationships with musicians and show-goers, as well as any intentional breadth of people to interview. I came away with were five main characters that surface throughout my thesis: Oliver, Red, Shane, Cam, and Samira. All five of these people are white. All of my interlocutors were between the ages of 20 and 25 at the time of my interviews except for Samira and Oliver who were both in their 30s. Samira is the

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8 Names have been changed to ensure the privacy of my interlocutors.
only female identified person I interviewed. I ultimately sought to understand what it was these musicians were doing and why they were using DIY ethics. I separated my questions into four main categories: personal history, DIY venues and their physical situation in Baltimore, Punk scene dynamics and demographics, and the meaning of Do-it-Yourself. I wanted to be able to weave a detailed story and allow the reader to follow these recurring characters as they introduce themselves and place themselves into the scene. As I conducted my interviews I noticed that some questions had probably never been vocalized and took some mulling over before they could be fully answered. Sometimes the initial responses to questions would change over the course of the interview as my interlocutor considered my questions. I personally found it fulfilling to watch my informants really consider my questions and come to realizations on the spot. The questions I asked loosely followed my initial inquiries around the reclamation of space that sustains the scene, the connections between poverty and creativity, and the history of the Baltimore punk and metal scene.

I did my fieldwork in Baltimore and wrote this thesis because I had my own interest in governance in postindustrial landscapes. I wanted to gain an embodied experience of subcultures thriving within postindustrial landscapes in cities in the United States. After I decided to do my fieldwork in the DIY punk scene in Baltimore City, I wanted to understand the possibilities nested within the community as well as the limits to realizing an underground experimental music scene. I also wanted to know to what extent the spaces forged within the scene were liberatory, and if so, for whom were they liberatory? As I conducted my interviews I aimed to understand the following: the positionality of my interlocutors and their reason for being in the
scene, which areas of Baltimore and physical spaces did punk musicians use the most, what kinds of people were involved in the scene and why, and what is the significance of DIY. Following these inquiries, I used the voices of my interlocutors to tell a story about punk music and DIY culture in Baltimore City.

In this thesis I argue that the governance of the DIY punk scene asserts communal and horizontal governance and in doing so challenges normative understandings of citizenship and belonging within the state; however, this subculture within the Baltimore DIY arts community still rests on entrenched structures of whiteness as property, especially with respect to the availability and usage of physical spaces for concerts and events. I organized my thesis into the following two chapters. The first is divided into three sections each with a respective focus on common sense, citizenship and horizontalism. The second chapter frames the significance of Baltimore as a cheap and postindustrial city with the following sections: social history and cheap space, the effects of neoliberalism in Baltimore, and the persistence of whiteness as property. I found the idiosyncratic two-chapter structure to be necessary for my project because my interlocutors discuss space and governance with fluidity. I found that it made more sense to discuss space and governance together in one chapter, and use the second to offer a historical perspective and framing in order to understand the larger social and political context of the DIY punk scene. These two chapters work together to paint a complicated picture of arts oriented communities in U.S postindustrial cities.
Chapter I

Common Sense, Citizenship, and Horizontalism: Governing a Punk Scene In The Neoliberal Era

I parked my car on Maryland Avenue on the bridge feeling nervous about my first day of fieldwork. It was June 2013, and the sun was beginning its descent. I looked in the mirror examining myself and gathered my recorder, notebook, and cigarettes before closing my door and walking up the street to my destination: Charm City Art Space (CCAS) located in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, commonly referred to as Station North. I spent some time browsing the Internet for DIY music spaces in Baltimore and quickly found CCAS. I was enticed by the collective members’ detailed manifesto that outlined their ideas about the function of do-it-yourself and photographs of lively and packed shows. The collective also posted local news coverage on their front page boasting accolades as the best all ages venue, and fertile ground for Baltimore’s arts, music scene. It appeared to be the perfect place to begin my research.

I also decided to visit CCAS because of its location in the Station North. This historically African American neighborhood received its city officiated title and mixed residential and commercial zoning status only after artists and musicians began taking up residence in central Baltimore in the early 1980s. In 1983 Charlie Lankford bought the industrial Copy Cat building located about six streets away from CCAS. As industrial tenants dwindled and disappeared from the building and former cork-sealing factory, he converted 6,000 square feet into studio space. The Baltimore

City paper ran a story in July of 2013 entitled “Can Station North Save the City?” tracking the inception of burgeoning arts and music scene in Station North. The article highlighted Lankford and the Copy Cat building as a key figure and arts space respectively, in the neighborhood’s formation:

Charlie Lankford first moved into the Copy Cat building with his typesetting company. He eventually bought the building in 1983, and as the industrial tenants left, he ‘ran an experiment,’ as he put it at the artists and neighborhood change conference. ‘We took 6,000 square feet and turned it into studios,’ Lankford says. ‘It was only supposed to be workspaces, but they realized they were spending 15 to 18 hours a day there, so they decided to move there.’ Eventually Lankford’s attempts to change the zoning so that people could legally live there were realized when he received a Planned Unit Development (or PUD) for the building. When the Greenmount West neighborhood became part of the Arts and Entertainment district in 2002, it made it easier for others to get PUDs and enabled artists like Stewart Watson to team up with like-minded people and buy a former brewery and factory and, with tons of ‘sweat equity,’ to turn it into Area 405, a residence/workspace for artists.12

Instead of just working in these spaces, these artists broke the barrier between productive space and living space and began illegally taking up residence in the building. Lobbying for the interests of his artist-tenants, Lankford successfully worked to change the zoning for the neighborhood. The city granted him a Planned Unit Development essentially creating a residence/workspace building in center of the city. Although I never attended any shows there, the Copy Cat also has its place in the history of the DIY Punk Scene as a show space and thus a public meeting location to create art and forge connections. Since the inception of the Copy Cat, Station North has grown to include the neighborhoods Charles North, Greenmount West, and

12 Ibid
Barclay. Developers have plans to expand the district even further north. According to its website, Station North Arts and Entertainment Inc., “promotes the activities of the District's artists and businesses, while also managing several high-profile projects intended to elevate the profile of Station North, connect artists and performers with new audiences, and engage Station North's residents.”\(^\text{13}\) The title itself of the City Paper article is significant as it demonstrates the increasing attention on Station North. Baltimore City officials as well as private developers are progressively occupied with officially incorporating Baltimore’s “quirky” arts and music scene into the city in order to attract more residents and business. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake was quoted saying, “The vibrancy we see in Station North is what we need in order to grow Baltimore by ten thousand families over the next decade.”\(^\text{14}\) The vibrancy Rawlings-Blake is describing is a mostly white and young community where the rent for one-bedroom apartments ranges from $700-$900 per month.\(^\text{15}\)

I found out about the music show I was attending at CCAS from a Baltimore DIY music blog called Showspace.\(^\text{16}\) Each week they post a list of DIY music shows to attend in the city, along with their favorite concert poster of the week. The bands playing that night were Arab Spring, Neoteric, Warm, and Max Power. They were all somewhere along the punk, noise, and metal music spectrum. I wanted to attend a show that fit with my interests of intentional collective spaces, and thus chose to check out CCAS. After checking out their website I learned that the Charm City Art

\(^\text{13}\) "Projects - Station North Arts and Entertainment District." Projects - Station North Arts and Entertainment District. 09 Feb. 2014.

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid


\(^\text{16}\) “SHOWSPACE.” SHOWSPACE. Web. 22 Feb. 2014.
Space is a collectively run arts and music venue that began in 2002. There are two main positions as a collective member: a promoter or a staffer. Promoters pay an annual due of $30 and have the ability to book shows and events. Staffers can join the collective after working at least two shows. Members are also expected to volunteer for administrative roles such as treasurer, calendar/website maintenance, gallery curator, and head of maintenance. Over the course of the summer I found that these systems of collective and non-hierarchical governance at punk music venues to be common, although they may not be articulated so blatantly like the Charm City Art Space Collective’s manifesto. Local music venues like the Hour Haus or Club K support local musicians and act as an incubator for creativity empowering individuals to become musicians and interact with other like-minded people. Music shows held at private homes necessitate a culture of mutual aid in order to function, and thus teaches collective responsibility just through existing. Through my interviews and participant observation I noticed a larger culture of responsibility permeating the whole DIY punk scene. The goals of CCAS and what it seeks to promote and embody as a space are the following:

To act as a creative outlet for DIY performance, music, and art. To work as a center for independent thought, constructive discussion, and creative expression. To thrive as a headquarters for autonomous education and as a resource for community awareness. To survive as a place to talk and meet new people of like mind in comfort and tranquility. To focus our energies as a buffer to filter out negative influences including but not limited to: racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ageism, violence and judgmental fundamentalism. To provide a space free from drugs and alcohol where all are welcome. All decision making shall be a collective effort with equal weight given to all.\textsuperscript{17}

I realize that I am perhaps painfully early— that part at a show when there aren’t quite enough bodies in the room yet, so you awkwardly stand alone in the corner. Or at least I do. As I walk up, I notice that everyone is standing outside and they begin to notice me. My hair is natural and I am wearing a bright red and chopped up anti-fascist T-shirt with a black flag. I thought that the non-conformist edge would be appropriate for a punk show. I realize I perhaps don’t look like a “normal” black Baltimorean woman to them. This would entail a woman with straightened hair, clothing that could be read as poor, and would certainly not be attending a show at CCAS. Attending Middle and High School at a Baltimore County private school, I was familiar with prevailing assumptions that black Baltimoreans were low income and thus dress to appear more middle class. Additionally, as a woman of color I am also constantly aware of how I present myself and how I am read, and so I expected some sort of examination as I neared the venue.

As I begin to slow my pace and search for the door the seven or so white males stare at me with a deafening and confused silence until finally someone goes, “are you here for the show?” I reply “yes.” A young white male in his 20s leads me inside so I can pay and get my hand Xed. This was my first encounter with Cam who I talked with over the course of the summer. He is currently involved in a solo musical project called Arab Spring. Using various descriptors like art-punk, lo-fi, new wave, noise rock, and post-punk synth, he uses a drum machine to program loops of beats and records guitar melodies, riffs, and his singing on top of it. In March of 2007 after seeing the Baltimore based band Double Dagger, which many have hailed as a seminal band of its time and emblematic of the Baltimore sound, Cam found his niche.
in art rock and post punk. The spectrum of experimental rock with a hard gritty edge is wide, and a continuous expansion of genres is encouraged in the Baltimore punk scene.

While talking with Cam, he seemed to resonate with my academic language about autonomous spaces. CCAS is an actively constructed space that seeks to promote norms about unlocking individual creativity all while creating safe spaces of equality. The collective posts accessible literature about its mission, location and calendar. Under the “manifesto” tab the collective details their ideal show space. For them, the path towards a supportive community is one that deconstructs bigotry and discrimination and uses non-hierarchical decision-making techniques. In practice, the space’s energy and spectrum of bands brought to the space can vary depending on the night, and on the current collective members.

CCAS is a grungy art space, almost resembling an extended garage. The grittiness of the space almost seems to invite transgression and beg for destruction. Graffiti plasters the walls, guiding the eye to the makeshift and paint splattered stage. Glaring tungsten lamps light up the black banner in the back that says Charm City Art Space, in High School sports-team font. The concrete walls and floor make the space feel indestructible, and capable of containing much fury and energy. While paying for my ticket I survey the posters, pamphlets, and postcards promoting different shows and artists in the area. It certainly feels like Baltimore in here: makeshift, dirty, and crude but exuberant, prideful, and functioning, marching ahead and doing life however it can.
CCAS is also one of many DIY venues and sites of punk musical creativity and autonomy in Baltimore City. Throughout my time attending shows in the city I noticed a desire, although it was expressed in different terms by different people, to stake out a space for creativity—to achieve a certain autonomy that is otherwise unavailable in mainstream music scenes. There was certainly disgust and eschewing of sell-out musicians controlled by PR firms. In the Baltimore music and arts community, a shared disdain and boredom of the civilized produced an anything goes mentality. Although show-goers and musicians fell into the scene for different reasons, all lent their energy to create a musical subculture in the face of a highly commoditized world.

With the construction of a “free” creative space comes the retching of normalcy like a violent cough, and the temporary birth of something outside the norm. In his disjointed and poetic way, Hakim Bey writes about chaos in *Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ)*. Hakim Bey is the alias of writer Peter Lamborn Wilson whose creative philosophical writings are inflected with anarchism, situationism, and deleuzian philosophy. His central focus in TAZ is the liberation of everyday spaces from discipline and control. He describes chaos as a desire to act on one’s creative impulses in spite of the expectations of society to behave “rationally” and to aim for productivity. Although these desires may be buried through societal obligations to be productive, human beings find ways to circumvent them: “No, listen, what happened was this: they lied to you, sold you ideas of good & evil, gave you distrust of your body & shame for your prophethood of chaos, invented words of disgust for your

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molecular love, mesmerized you with inattention, bored you with civilization & all its usurious emotions.”

Here, Bey describes chaos as the unlocking of an inner, free, animal self and in the process rejecting hegemonic power. In his description Bey also describes chaos as a process necessitating an unlearning of societal lessons around morality and good behavior. He calls on his readers to challenge the diffuse societal forces that produce docile and disciplined bodies and over come the “rational” order. In other words, Bey critiques the hegemonic capitalist culture and the many institutions that reproduce obedient workers and leaders who will continue to reinforce the current political-economic system. In doing so, he also asks the reader to begin imaging other freeing and non-coercive ways of organizing society and self-fashioning. The DIY praxis speaks to Bey’s challenge as it permits individuals to craft their own art and image without relying on the assistance of private music industries that intend to mold them into palatable and commoditized musical artists. Instead of relying on infrastructure and resources from a capitalist enterprise, young and economically limited artists look to each other for support and rely upon the affordable real estate in Baltimore City. In practice DIY punk musician do accept capitalist funding and infrastructure, especially in the aforementioned Station North Arts and Entertainment District. However, these musicians aim to maintain their creativity and resist co-optation at the same time. These practices contradict neoliberal conceptions of individuals as being economically self-serving in order to achieve freedom, while they rely on capitalists to fund their projects.

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Milton Freidman, one of the architects of the revival of 19th century liberalism in the discipline of economics pioneered the current political-economic order of neoliberalism. In his book *Capitalism and Freedom*, one of the foundational texts on neoliberalism, Freidman writes, “In a capitalist society, it is only necessary to convince a few wealthy people to get funds to launch any idea, however strange, and there are many such persons, many independent foci of support… It is only necessary to persuade them that the propagation can be financially successful…” In direct contradiction to normative conception individual action as profit driven, the musicians I spent time with that summer were not working towards wealth or widespread fame. Instead they simply wanted to produce the music that fulfilled their creative desires, have room to experiment with artistic expression, and finally to have the space to share it with others through performance. A Baltimore musician with roots in the Punk DIY scene explained to me:

I guess like there were a couple I knew from the county who were doing experimental music who decided they wanted to make a living doing art, they didn’t want to be rock stars but they wanted to make a decent living and not work some crappy day job to support their music to upgrade their amps, pay for gas. They wanted to be able to work as artists and live that kind of life.

Musicians in the punk DIY scene use affective labor as a path towards autonomy. Anthropologist Gabriella Lukacs theorizes affective labor as labor that privileges dignity and fulfillment over income. In her work on young novelists in Japan she writes, “the spectacular success of cell phone portals suggests that young

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22 Ibid, 17
23 Recorded July 2013
people are willing to perform work that they perceived as fulfilling, even if they are not paid for that work.”

I found parallels of this strong desire to pursue fulfilling work in the punk scene. Cam spoke about the legitimacy of his lifestyle as a DIY musician, “I’m doing just as much as an accountant or technocrat but society sees what I do as diverging, a hobby. The world has [demonized] what I do, not working to be paid for. I’m talented! It eats up my time and it would be nice to be compensated.” Cam defends his music and involvement in the DIY scene despite its misalignment with societal neoliberal pressures. He understands his choice to live for the sake of creating music rather than profit to be atypical but asserted the validity of his labor. I understood this to be an example of affective labor, where one pursues work for sake of fulfillment and redefines success to fit one’s own needs and desires. Baltimore DIY musicians work to unlock and exploit their inner creative energies to make a range of punk music. Working to reject or at least stave off unfulfilling work, an electric energy runs through DIY spaces as normativity is overcome through musical performance, being in spaces of creativity, through listening, and through acting.

That night I watched a graduate from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), who performs under the name Mike Powers, play the drums to recorded music. He made self-deprecating jokes about being a new and unknown artist in the scene. A metal band from Massachusetts also played a loud, noisy, metal set, flinging the sweat from their shirtless bodies into a crowd of about five people. The crowd was very male, with only one woman. The MICA grad was the only visible

person of color there that night and interestingly brought up race during the set although it wasn’t clear if he was joking or not. Although he talked about the lack of people of color in the DIY scene with a grin and nervous laughter, this stranger I was watching on stage could actually feel quite lonely as a racial minority in the scene. Between each set everyone went outside to smoke cigarettes and joke. I watched with a mix of amusement and confusion as the boys in the metal band harassed a passerby getting into the car with a person who was presumably his date. They chided him for being a consumerist yuppie and going out to buy expensive pizza. Using my fieldwork “trick” I held my pack of camel gold cigarettes knowing someone’s addiction would lead them over to talk with me. The only other woman in attendance eyed my nicotine and ambled over, offering me a dollar. I smiled and offered her a free cigarette and lit it for her. Pulling her into conversation she was rather open about herself. Kirsten was from the Dundalk/Essex area, a historically white working class area of Baltimore County. “It’s pretty shitty out there,” she said with a smile and purple circular John Lennon sunglasses. Kirsten had just moved to Baltimore and was sharing an apartment with an older Italian couple. She was looking to pursue graphic design and join the thriving arts community. She was certainly not an “urban outfitters” hipster, but was crafting her own aesthetic—a working class bohemian woman. Tonight she was going out to hear music with a friend.

Despite my easy interaction with Kirsten, this concert was one of the few moments during my fieldwork where I felt so uncomfortable that I felt compelled to leave. Most of the attendees of the show were playing sets that night, and were thus

25 Name has been changed
playing for each other. The MICA grad’s playful yet serious remarks that there were “too many whites in here” made me shrink as the only black woman in the space. This remark followed a series of silly and sarcastic comments about the DIY scene and self-deprecating jokes said with a smile and laugh. Sitting behind a drum set on the slightly elevated stage and stating the obvious fact that most people doing DIY punk music were white made me smile a little but look around nervously at the nearly all white space. I wondered if he saw me near the wall.

Although he stated this rather obvious fact jokingly, his very real discomfort at being a racial minority in the DIY scene resonated with me as a woman of color. One of the white males in the crowd playing in the Massachusetts metal band frowned and seemed annoyed with the repeated mention of whiteness and the coded mentions of white supremacy. He remarked something about not wanting to feel guilty, and I knew I could not remain there for the whole show. Despite the scene’s claims of being open and non-judgmental, I found myself having to navigate this majority white male middle to working class subculture with much discomfort. Upon my first visit, the principles promulgated by CCAS and the general ethics of the Baltimore DIY scene in general were not fully realized in this moment.

I begin this chapter with CCAS because its collective actively uses the language of autonomy and collectivity in its manifesto as it promises to be "a center for independent thought, constructive discussion," and to remain a "community headquarters for autonomous education and as a resource for community awareness." Before embarking on this project, I was long interested in exploring youth-driven DIY communities operating in

27 Ibid
postindustrial landscapes. I even considered living in Detroit for a summer but Baltimore was much closer to home and held much more personal significance for me. I understood the collapse of the industrial economy beginning in the post-war era and the disappearance of steady employment for the working class folks to be a main factor in the devastating blight of Baltimore City. However, I was also of young DIY driven communities cropping up in these devastated landscapes as early as the 1980s. My far left politics attracted me to their DIY framework and its ethical manifestations of cooperation, non-hierarchical organizing, and organic/ grassroots community structure. As opposed to market driven lifestyles that aim for the accumulation of wealth, DIY principles strive for autonomy through creative strategies and cooperation with like-minded people. I found resonance with my observations of the DIY scene with so-called horizontal political movements in global iterations of the Occupy movement, the 2001 political uprisings in Argentina, as well as my own involvement in social justice work.

I use a framework of autonomy and citizenship to contextualize and discuss the horizontal systems of governance and management that musicians use in order to sustain the scene and themselves. In particular, I discuss do-it-yourself ethics as assertion of common sense in order for those with minimal resources to realize their artistic goals. Doing-it-yourself implies realizing and creating art without dominating corporate forces molding one’s image and artistic vision. Forgoing the management of a music industry or Public Relations Firm also implies added work on the musicians part to organize their own shows, record their own music, and publicize their own concerts. Musicians in the DIY punk scene also realize that this work cannot be done alone, and rely on collaboration and mutual aid. I explore how artists’ dedication to their art pursuit of affective labor transforms normative
scripts of citizenship, and finally I analyze the structure of the scene, notably the leaderlessness and tendency to share power equally and organize collectively. I also draw parallels to the 2001 political uprisings in Argentina\textsuperscript{28} as well as global manifestations of the Occupy movement and situate Baltimore in a larger trend of movements and communities that challenge hierarchical governance and representation itself. Here, I describe do-it-yourself as a common sense approach to governance in a music scene largely comprised of middle and working class musicians. In my second section I conceptualize musician’s use of physical spaces as a form of insurgent citizenship and a grassroots approach to urban space making. Finally, I discuss the horizontal governance of the scene that produces empowered subjects who continually reproduce the scene.

I want to paint a picture of governance among young adults in postindustrial cities in the U.S. My analysis is not a definitive portrait and analysis of the Baltimore DIY punk scene, but offers personal insights and analysis about what I observed and what musicians said to me. My analytical categories of common sense, citizenship, and horizontalism are also in an effort demonstrate different planes upon which one can understand governance. Governance is not merely the function of elected officials and private institutions operating on the basis of power and hierarchy, but can also be a grassroots and collective project based on mutual aid, responsibility, and creativity.

I. A

DIY Ethics as a Working Class Common Sense Practice

Collectivity was an oft-repeated word during my interviews. The musicians I spoke to told me that a collective effort was necessary to sustain a community of broke musicians and trying to create experimental music. For them, collective organizing as means of growing a music and arts scene is not so much a policy decision implemented and maintained by a group of original founders, as it is a set of practices—a sort of working class common sense produced by the needs of punk musicians in Baltimore. The utilization of the DIY approach sprouted organically as a necessary to tactic for young resource strapped artists wanting to make music without restrictions imposed from corporate record levels looking to make a profit. This simple sounding and shared desire permeates the punk scene and is the basis for its ethical pillars of responsibility, resourcefulness, and autonomy over one’s artistic endeavors. The scene here must be specifically understood as being not just punk, but DIY punk. When I asked musicians how they understood DIY, I received strings of lived experience, sets of ethics, and word associations. Various understandings of the same set of practices point further to the notion that DIY is a praxis; a hybrid of practice and ethics. The guiding principles of the scene are understood as they are enacted and experienced by its musicians and patrons. The knowledge produced form the DIY punk scene is understood as it is embodied and performed. The punk scene can thus be transformed and re-made depending on who is active and making waves.

Oliver, a white male in his late 30s, offered me three specific points to explain his notion of do-it-yourself: self-sufficiency, economic structure, and aesthetic
diversity. He began making music in the Towson-Glen Arm scene in Baltimore County as a teenager in the 1990s. The first time he ever experienced a DIY punk show within the city limits, just south of the county, was at a show he played in 1991. In its early stages he watched DIY ethics take root in the DIY punk scene in the city. According to Oliver, suburban music venues that were previously supporting artists making experimental music were dying out and thus pushing young musicians into the city looking for space to perform and record their music. The availability of cheap space was a major factor in origins of the Baltimore DIY punk scene, as well as many other artistic art mediums that took root during this time. The loss of industrial sector, the departure of businesses from the city into the county after white flight, and the effects of the crack and heroine epidemic devastated Baltimore City residents, and disproportionately affecting African Americans. In the cycle of economic and social abandonment of the early 1990s, young artists began moving in. Without many resources themselves, the young musicians relied on (DIY) tactics and a collective effort to begin building a musical and artistic community. This implies that recording albums, promoting one’s work, finding space for concerts, creating a web presence, and all the others tasks that musicians must do, would be done by the artists themselves and/or with the help of other local DIY musicians. This also precludes that the musician’s particular sound and presentation would be autonomously managed in order to maximize creativity and pursue the extent of one’s artistic endeavors. The artistic freedom gained through pursuing the DIY path is matched in its accompanying labor and responsibility. Without a public relations firm, talent agency, or record label to manage the grunt work of a musical career, the musician
and the community must take control of their destiny. Perhaps the newness of this artistic and community experiment lent itself to asserting a non-judgmental ethos and openness to many different forms of art. Additionally, the blighted and economically depressed city furnished the cheap space and a lack of state surveillance needed for artists to live their life as an experiment guided by creative purpose.

Over the phone Oliver told me about some the early stages of the Baltimore DIY punk scene and specifically:

Somewhere around 1996 a lot of my friends from Baltimore County who weren’t playing punk but had DIY ethics in terms of how they promoted shows and stuff, they were starting to play gigs in Baltimore in bars that were not all ages, which was really unusual and really surprised me. There were performance artists and filmmakers displaying their work in the city, which surprised me. Around that late 90s era, at the turn of the decade, something began to change and people began to get a lot more-- having a more diverse perspective on the purpose of art. It was no longer ‘hey let’s try to follow the trends’ it was like, ‘hey let’s do our own thing now.’ So 96’ to the present I think that whole concept of everything, everybody having an equal say whether they’re punk rock or not, that attitude, that instance, has been the norm in Baltimore ever since.²⁹

The arts infrastructure that exists today was barren and certainly not actively supported by Baltimore City in the early to mid 1990s. Even the now highly commercial inner-harbor was not yet constructed to attract consumers and tourists. In Oliver’s words, “nobody was moving to Baltimore.” Perhaps even more of an obstacle, many of these artists had to navigate the experimental and non-commercial nature of their music. Many of them had no intention of becoming famous but instead sought to, “make a decent living and not work some crappy day job to support their

²⁹ Recorded July 2013
music to upgrade their amps, pay for gas…” In this vein, Oliver’s first tenet of DIY ethics self sufficiency was hugely important:

This almost goes without saying but self sufficiency: that’s really important because that shows if you can stand up for your own stuff and do your promotional records and whatever you really believe in what you’re doing, that matters. That in and of itself shows that you care about yourself and that matters. You can play all the awesome and crappy music you want but if you don’t actually like it, how is anyone else supposed to relate to that if you sit around going I don’t like my band? The best way to express how much you care is to be control of your own destiny. If you’re an artist it means a lot more because it’s so hard to make a living. *

Self-realization and the ability to craft one’s own body and music in one’s own vision were hugely important to Oliver and many others I spoke within the scene. Self-sufficiency is not only of monetary and artistic infrastructural importance but also psychological affirmations of one’s own self and art.

Success in this narrative is redirected away from material benefits but freely creating the art and music one wishes to make within a supportive community. This is perhaps even more important if there is no expectation to become recognized on a larger scale for one’s music; or in other words to become famous.

Oliver’s next point addressed the tension this re-routed narrative of success functions within a capitalist political and economic structure and the ambivalent feeling that artists have towards our existing political-economic framework as they strive for autonomy.

The DIY thing speaks to a lot of people’s feelings about economic structure in mainstream society as in the big elephant in the room: corporations and capitalism stuff like that. Usually [in DIY culture]

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30 Recorded July 2013
one person is doing something for themselves and they’re not incorporated or anything. There’s no chain or glob of bureaucracy surrounding them, it’s just one person doing they’re own thing. If you wanna learn about what they’re doing you can just ask them, it’s not like you have to call a 1-800 number and ask them and talk to a robot or something. But I guess that’s really important to a lot of people. If you avoid doing things in a way that resembles the capitalist economic structure you’re considered to be more sincere and more genuine. I have mixed feelings about that personally but a lot of people feel that way.\textsuperscript{31}

The norms posited here place a dual emphasis on community and forging connections with other people while still valuing individual artistic desires. Oliver’s assertion that “one person is doing something for themselves” is reminiscent of classical western notions of individualism. Many classical European liberal thinkers posited that, “the highest virtue of a society is the degree to which its individuals are allowed to pursue pleasure.”\textsuperscript{32} In the United States, liberalism is politically institutionalized in the constitution as negative liberty, or freedom from federal interference. Although the political application of liberal theories to economics have changed overtime, the reigning economic practice is neoliberalism: “Neoliberalism, simply defined, is an ideological rejection of egalitarian liberalism in general and the Keynesian welfare state in particular, combined with a selective return to the ideas of classical liberalism…”\textsuperscript{33} Liberalism as it is applied in our current economic regime privileges the whims of capitalists and other private entities to manage their money however they would like. It also renders the redistribution of wealth unethical or even immoral. Oliver asserts the classical liberal idea that individuals can direct their own lives but disaggregates this individualism from capital accumulation. Although Oliver

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\item Recorded July 2013
\item Ibid, 9
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is ambivalent about whether it should be presented as anti-capitalist, DIY in his view resists becoming incorporated into impersonal corporate entities. Oliver’s lived experience of DIY economics is local, personalized, and fits the needs of the artists and the community. The pursuit of capital is decentralized as the guiding principle of one’s labor and replaced with intersectional desires to pursue creativity and build community.

The third principle Oliver asserted addresses what he called “aesthetic diversity,” or the scene’s attitudes towards different musical styles, genre niches, and artistic meaning.

I think that aesthetic diversity translated to the way things work in the city because more people could be included. That’s a reflection of the value of social diversity on the whole—really the diversity of opinions and perspectives when you frame it in the context of art. Maintaining diversity is something that Baltimore really values.\(^{34}\)

According to Oliver, the Baltimore DIY punk scene embraces musical experimentation and resists stagnant genre categorization, or genre politics. Although the punk label unifies and identifies musicians as belonging to one local community, it is perhaps better understood as a heterogeneous collective of musicians pursuing different threads of punk sounds. Constructing an accepting punk community is also a practical solution in order to sustain a local music scene. Active exclusion could pose a serious threat to maintaining a relatively small community. Operating on the basis of acceptance entices punk musicians and patrons to enter the community and to remain active. Oliver cited one particular venue called the Small Intestine—located

\(^{34}\) Recorded July 2013
in Hamilton a neighborhood in North East Baltimore— as the paradigm for DIY music venues in Baltimore City today:

Punk bands would play but they were usually made up of people who didn’t identify themselves as part of punk culture. People were either drug free or didn’t do drugs very often and didn’t have that as a big part of their life. Everybody who went to the Small Intestine went there to enjoy and take part in the creative efforts of young people. So all sorts of bands played there and it was a really great atmosphere. There wasn’t much of a political conscience to it, which was something different from the Towson-Glen Arm scene I was involved in earlier and concurrently to that. They had a more esoteric and prospective nature whether it was punk or folk or indie rock or whatever, they were going for things that were harder to define. They didn’t want stereotypical stuff at the Small Intestine. So I think they basically set the bar. Ever since then, any all ages venue, even a lot of the bars and nightclubs in Baltimore have modeled themselves after the Small Intestine. The Small Intestine had art all over the walls by local kids, many of whom were the same people playing in bands. And that has been the norm since.

The value of aesthetic diversity manifested itself at the Small Intestine as a genre defying space that invited young musicians to experiment with sound and other forms of creative self-expression. The ethos of the musicians who managed the Small Intestine— to encourage musical experimentation and avoid mimicry of mainstream music— also serviced the creation of a socially diverse space.

If they were doing something creative and it wasn’t hateful or narrow-minded you could go there and do your thing. That was another thing – bisexual and gay people could hang out there and not get fucked with. When I say fucked with I mean not alienated or insulted. A lot of people of different races hung out there which believe or not in the late 90s which was unusual. At that time I would say the indie rock and punk scene was still dominated by white people basically—white people from upper middle class backgrounds. It’s kind of funny, [laughing] actually if someone is like extra dirty and gross and punk and dread locked and drunk you can tell that those are the rich kids. They don’t get it! They don’t get that poor people don’t like being poor [laughing] they have no clue at all! They romanticize poverty and drug addiction and stuff. You can tell those
people who rep that kind of lifestyle were usually the most spoiled rotten of all so they wouldn’t come around here much. They had their own separate thing. Everybody who came to the Small Intestine was either just really smart and intelligent even if they were rich or kids from more modest backgrounds who weren’t interested in proving their credibility as tough, gross punk punks or whatever.

The small intestine encouraged the creation of boundary pushing music from a variety of different people. Perhaps above all it created a positive space for middle-income youth living in the area. The space encouraged them to unlock their individual creativity and share it with other teenagers and young adults in the neighborhood.

To sum up Oliver’s vision, in order for experimental music artists to make a decent living through their craft and maintain their vision without many financial resources, the scene necessitates a hyper-local community based on autonomy, self-love, and acceptance. Sincerity in one’s music and social conduct are key in maintaining oneself in this postindustrial city.

Another Baltimore based artists I spoke to named Cam described DIY as a praxis born from the practical necessity of needing to make art without many resources:

DIY refers to a way of doing things. Really this way of doing things some people generally teenagers and the wealthy who don’t have to worry about such things attach a political meaning to the whole do-it-yourself thing. But the thing is, okay when you add that element to it, it gives it a certain sort of pride that certainly I take and certainly others take to the DIY scene, but people are DIY largely because it’s practical. A lot of what goes on in this world is born out of pragmatism.”

35 Recorded October 2013
For Cam DIY is simply a common sense approach to making music and art. He also stresses that this approach also allows the artist to have maximum control over their craft.

Again, it simply makes sense to [pause] you just have so much more control over what happens and you’re so much more able to control your own destiny when you’re putting out your records and booking your own shows versus having to do that through some sort of major label or management or talent agent type thing. Frankly, I don’t really see the point of a record label anymore! 36

In order to better understand and situate DIY ethics I turn to Marina Sitrin, editor of *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina.* 37 In her work Sitrin uncovers the surge of collective political tactics the poor and unemployed used in the 2001 uprisings to reclaim their communities and workplaces in the face of dire economic prospects after the national government defaulted on 95 billion dollars in foreign loans. This crisis came after two decades of structural adjustment programs including privatization, deregulation, flexibilization of labor markets, the opening of local markets to the world economy, increased foreign indebtedness, and increased dominance of business interests on policy making. Sitrin’s ethnographic fieldwork reveals that many Argentineans involved in the 2001 uprisings in Buenos Aires felt angered that neither the right nor the left adequately addressed their concerns. Despite the transition from military dictatorship to an electoral democracy, politicians across the political spectrum only offered neoliberal policies as the available economic framework. In other words, the general economic model of the nation was exempt from a democratic negotiating process. The neoliberal economic structure grafted

36 Recorded October 2013
onto the Argentinian democracy was recognized as being unjust and incongruent with the statist rhetoric of freedom. Sociologist and social theorist Nikolas Rose posits that freedom and liberty within a statist context must be understood as an artifact of freedom and contextualized in history:

Only a certain kind of liberty—a certain way of understanding and exercising freedom, of relating to ourselves individually and collectively as a subjects of freedom—is compatible with liberal arts of rule. And that kind of freedom—is compatible with liberal arts of rule. And that kind of freedom has a history. We can historicize that which we take for freedom today, and in the name of which we are governed. We can trace the relations between the history of this ethic of freedom and the history of government. We can analyse the practices that gave birth to freedom. And we can begin to understand freedom not simply as an abstract ideal but as material, technical, practical, governmental.38

The state offers its own iteration of liberty that produces certain subjects that are encouraged to participate in the reproduction of the nation-state and support its accompanying economic system. Freedom as defined by the state produces its own norms, principles, and knowledge. Furthermore, it is only through the mediation of the state that we are expected to experience freedom. In the context of a neoliberal economy, the state produces expectations of competitive subjects able to compete in a global marketplace while also becoming more self-sufficient and entrepreneurial. As the economy is “liberated” in the rhetoric of neoliberalism, interpersonal relationships also become increasingly marketized. I argue that activists in Argentina and punk musicians in Baltimore are realizing an embodied practice of freedom and autonomy in a context where statist assertions of freedom have been rendered illegitimate by its

citizens or as Rose writes, “liberal sense of freedom fell into disrepute.”

These new practices of autonomy are also not necessarily conceptualized of as protest or political action but necessary actions taken by the middle and working class to achieve their immediate desires.

Returning to the 2001 crisis in Argentina, the neoliberal policies I discussed above led to massive default on foreign loans and about triggering 20% unemployment and widespread unrest. As she details, “the people of Argentina have seen their pensions taken away, unemployment soar, inflation jump and their industries decimated.”

Many of the jobless and poor of Argentina rejected representational style democracy and began organizing locally to communicate with each other and survive locally. For Sitrin’s interlocutors this autonomous style of organizing seemed almost natural and the most practical method to self-organize. In particular she focuses on recuperated workplaces where unemployed workers simply return to their jobs and carry out the labor themselves without their bosses dominance or involvement. Sitrin’s central argument is that the transition away from hierarchical and representational style democracy toward prefigurative politics transformed social relationships and the activists’ understandings of themselves. Prefigurative politics is a way of organizing and enacting desired changes in the moment instead of lobbying for a higher power to bestow these changes. New networks of collective solidarity and popular power left spaces for all people to become leaders in their own right. She argues that the terms of social arrangements deeply affect how people relate to

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39 Ibid, 61
41 Sitrin, 2
each other. Consequently, if these terms are changed from capitalism and hierarchy to collectivism and creativity, then entire communities can be transformed.\textsuperscript{42} My interest in her work lies in our shared interests in collective forms of government and local actions taken by the poor and working class to achieve autonomy. In our respective projects, she and I each track this sense of among the urban middle and working class that autonomous organizing is the only practical way to live. In particular, I am interested in drawing parallels between the appearances of collective forms of government and self-representation that arise in the face of economic destruction from neoliberal policies and the personal transformations that musicians experienced within the scene.

Many of the workers spoke of their decision to occupy their workplaces as common sense or as a necessary choice to ensure their livelihood: “This wasn’t an occupation at first, but it became one without us intending it. We waited two months for the bosses to come back. We went to the unions, the Ministry of Work, all with the intention of getting the boss to come back and offer us a solution. He never came. So we decided to work.”\textsuperscript{43} The failure of adequate representation from these various institutions, as well as these Argentinians’ immediate material needs, forced these workers to operate autonomously and occupy their workplace. One female worker at an occupied factory said, “We aren’t political. We’re surrounded by politicians, but that isn’t the type of politics that makes sense to the women workers of Brukman. What we want is to work, and we struggle for our work, for our livelihood.”\textsuperscript{44} The

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\item \textsuperscript{42} Sitirn, 3
\item \textsuperscript{43} Sitrin, Marina. \textit{Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina}. Edinburgh, Scotland: AK, 2006. 68.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 69
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dissonance in this sentence of rejecting a political as a label to describe the workers’ resistance, but also searching for a new type of politics is important to highlight. The autonomous action taken by the workers didn’t align with their notions of what is political. At the same time she nearly lacked the vocabulary to describe the self-governing tactics she was using.

There was a sense among some workers involved in the autonomous struggle that all their activity was an experiment based on lived experience and the needs of people in the moment. Ideas around governance quickly shifted from diffuse theories coming from above to embedded in the lived experiences and immediate needs of the people. For example, some other Argentinians organizing in the unemployed workers movement began a school for young children. They stressed building a curriculum that reflects the reality of children’s experiences that empowers them to realize the power they harbor within themselves, “All the things that we’re taught are carried inside ourselves, and they’re difficult to remove later. We think that it’s more difficult to struggle with the enemy inside of ourselves. We want children to learn things that will really help them defend themselves later in life.”45 Autonomous governance necessitated an un-learning process and re-articulation of shared ideology and norms.

This shift in notions of governance toward a politic of empowerment and collective action also transformed many Argentinians self-perception. These changes in subjectivity were similar to inner awakenings of responsibility and empowerment that I tracked as DIY musicians matured in the punk scene. A few of the musicians I interviewed recalled single moments when attending a DIY show altered their life forever as it demonstrated that they too could manage and pursue their own musical

45 Ibid, 79
interests. Watching young musicians their own age perform experimental music and manage the entirety of their musical endeavors proved to them that DIY music making was possible.

Similarly, Sitrin found that autonomous organizing also produces new subjects that hold solidarity, equality, and local engagement among other characteristics, as their new core guiding values. This set of ethics can guide the working group, collective, or community where they wish to be. Interpersonal relationships are rerouted to follow this path and in the process capitalist cultural values such as competition and maximizing individual wealth and power are subverted. The experience of workers affiliated with the National Movement of Recuperated Workplaces best exemplifies this experience. As the factories and workplaces were shutdown and abandoned, workers simply occupied the buildings and began directly managing their occupations. Facing mass unemployment and few options many workers decided to do-it-themselves. Many workers in Argentina defended their jobs and transformed their workplaces to suit their own and the community’s needs. Through the recuperation of workplaces deemed worthless by bosses and the logic of neoliberalism, many people experienced personal transformations. In spite of structural barriers, workers used their tools and their knowledge to reclaim their workplace and divide power and responsibility amongst the workers. For many this process was an affirmation of autonomy and power that forever transformed them:

What we’re getting at with all of this—and this is how I explain it especially to people who are used to being managed—is that we’re developing as humans now… what happens is that workplaces run by bosses and managers have a ceiling, and they don’t let you grow
beyond it, they don’t let you advance, change or create, don’t you think? But what we’re doing is letting human beings develop, giving people the ability to think and contribute ways of resisting and creating.\textsuperscript{46}

Workplace recuperation had the unintended effect of empowering individuals to work in solidarity in order assert and realize their needs. These actions produced collective energy, excitement, and the confidence to transform their community through unconditional support and participation, “... there’s no leader that’s going to come and solve everything.”\textsuperscript{47} Recuperating a workplace created space for creativity and experimentation. Workers took charges of spaces, and used them to benefit themselves and the community. Some Argentineans became conscious of their inner-power through the experience of watching others defend and recuperate their workplace. The daring of some inspired others to follow suit and take charge of their destiny. These activists are not necessarily detached from the state, but redefine their position of power in society and decide for themselves how they will use resources like loans and grants from the government.

Oliver’s time spent in the DIY music scene gave him deeper insight into the human drive to realize creativity and the turbulent lifestyle of an artist.

On a personal level I definitely got to understood more about people in general about how people do try to mold their own destiny and if they can’t do that sometimes it drives them in ways they are incredibly negative in positive. DIY is like anything else awful cons and really great pro. It’s not a silver bullet if you’re trying to create art or your dream home.

He remarked on the transformation actualized through DIY ethics not just in the music scene but also in Baltimore at large:

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 77
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 75
As far as how DIY is applied to over things, things like the creative alliance in east Baltimore help people get into film making and videography and probably velosipied- people do a bicycle repair collective right near Charles Theater they teach people how to prepare bicycles out of spare parts for a tax deductible donations you can donate crappy bicycles. They’re a non-profit organization but you can join their collective and volunteer a specific amount of time to determine the type of membership you get. That really got people into bicycling in Baltimore and got more bicycle lanes. That’s a really tangible way in which DIY ethics changed the way Baltimore City runs from an infrastructural standpoint. That’s pretty major. Community gardening is definitely a big thing in Baltimore. Because that involves such a large amount of vacant lots in the city I think a lot of underprivileged kids and just people in general in more blighted areas in Baltimore city become involved in agriculture, which is kind of incredible to me on a personal level. When I was comin’ up, when I first started going to shows in Baltimore it was an actual, literal, shithole. I mean there was just tons of abandoned buildings and lots everywhere. Seeing those places transformed, seeing them produce food, is really, really awesome. It gives you chills. If you could have just seen the awful things that were happening back then, the open air drug markets, if you would get lost in west Baltimore you would see little children like 6, 7 years old walking around at 3 am barefoot walking around while we’re unloading our equipment out of this punk venue.  

In Oliver’s experience the do-it-yourself approach can provide lived experiences of empowerment and transformation that then produces ethical understanding of building local community. This is to say that the lived effects of the DIY approach produces a sense of a DIY ideology that inspires people to work collectively to recuperate and transform the space and resources that are already available in one’s neighborhood. Separations between ideology and lived experiences are deconstructed and in a fluid relationship with each other. The DIY approach can transform not only physical spaces but also the relationship that individuals have with the spaces they are in and with the members of their community. As Cam said during our discussion,

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48 Recorded July 2013
“when you’re comin’ up it benefits yourself, your art, and your community if you really take a DIY approach…It comes so naturally as the way to do things that I don’t even think about it.” Being honest with one’s needs as an artist and also involving the community in the art making process has a transformative power for both Oliver and Cam. This praxis straddles the political and practical as artists embody autonomous and collective forms of governance.

I. B

**Insurgent Citizenship and Grassroots Space-making**

I met Red outside of the Ratscape festival at the Hour Haus on the corner of North Avenue and Howard Street as he was chatting with Cam, who I had met earlier that summer. Ratscape is a 3-day punk, metal, and noise music festival organized by a volunteer based collective of “musicians, artists, and concourses of underground local music.” I attended the festival in July of 2013. The organizers intentionally scheduled the festival to take place during Artscape. The latter is a sprawling outdoor music and arts festival spanning genres and art mediums with corporate sponsorship from the likes of Wells Fargo and Toyota. The Ratscape collective positioned the festival as an alternative inverting “art” to spell “rat” representing the local gritty and underground music and arts community. Their announcement of the festival on Facebook was this:

> Ok crust mass is done time to start the long trip to hell we lovingly call Ratscape!! This year will be better organized with more awesome bands, food, booze and over all debauchery !! We have some great bands but there is room for more also need volunteers and vendors. we got a web site Ratscape.com that is slowly coming together. If you

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have any photos of last years fest please post them. this year is gonna be fuckin awesome hit us up. [sic] 

In between sets at the Ratscape festival everyone would come down the steps through the narrow doorway to hang out on the sidewalk. Being on the corner of North Avenue and Howard Street there was enough space for about 25 people to squeeze onto the sidewalk, smoke cigarettes, and talk. A row of 20 somethings had their backs against the storefront for Artist & Craftsman Supply ideally located to serve the art school students in the neighborhood attending the Maryland Institute College of Art. The Hour Haus was on the second floor of Artist & Craftsman Supply and accessible by a narrow and steep staircase. I paid seven dollars and entered the hot and dimly lit space. The only windows were on the right wall but through them my gaze followed the stretch of row houses and brick buildings of central Baltimore. The Hour Haus is a recuperated industrial building that serves as a music venue and recording studio in the neighborhood that is now referred to as Station North and is also sanctioned by the local government as an arts and entertainment district:

The Hour Haus is the cornerstone for Baltimore's Station North Arts & Entertainment District. This one time headquarters of the Ma & Pa Railroad located at the corner of Howard Street and North Avenue is an artists playground. Inside you will find rehearsal rooms for musicians, a recording studio, a large stage and a revolving cast of colorful characters. For over 25 years the Hour Haus has survived as functioning music and art space [sic]. The Schafer brothers have been managing the facility for the last 15 years but were present at the first shows in the mid 1980's. If the walls of the Hour Haus could talk there would be many a tale to tell. We are excited to be a part of the renaissance that is taking place in Station North, it's a great place to be. 

50 Ibid
Venues like the Hour Haus that intentionally support local musicians to both perform and create their music and allow festivals like Ratscape to maintain a visible space in the arts community. The Hour Haus is an example of a “legitimate venue” meaning a licensed music venue that operates within the realm of Baltimore City law. Located on North Avenue, a major artery of Baltimore City transportation, the Hour Haus is a highly visible venue, especially when all the show attendants spill onto the sidewalk. Zoned in the city sanctioned arts and entertainment district, the Hour Haus was able to publically announce and advertise the event and drew a large crowd from many different age groups. I was surprised to see what appeared to be a father with his 5 years old son bouncing on his shoulders.

Despite the visibility and accessibility of the venue, the music itself remained experimental and underground. The venue allowed each band to change the stage decor and lighting to match their desired ambiance. One band shut all the lights off, save for a small lava lamp that cast a yellow glow onto the lead singer while he moaned into the microphone. My favorite performance that night was called sexgender, a three-piece punk rock band. The lead guitarist is gender queer and always wears a skirt, ripped tights, a spaghetti strapped tank, and a black mask with a silver zipper going down the front. Their gender is unintelligible to the audience and directly confronts the sex/gender binary and the macho legacy of punk music. Before the set began, the lead singer, a cis male, ripped off his shirt and struggled to take his denim shorts off over his combat boots. Despite his small size, he controlled the stage almost daring someone to fuck with him. Tattoos and pubic hair visible, the chaotic frenzy of the noise entered his small frame. On all fours he shakes as the energy
builds inside him and is released into staccato shouts at the audience with his menacing glares—I loved it. It felt wonderful to see something daring, bizarre, and angry in a public space and share that experience with others. On a personal level, I was excited to see a queer-oriented group take the stage and directly force the crowd to confront their discomfort with gender non-conforming people. The legitimacy of the space certainly didn’t stop the local artists from pushing both musical and social boundaries.

I found the Hour Haus to be a successful example of a legal, yet subversive use of private property. Although The Hour Haus is technically within the realm of legal activity, it supports the underground music scene and acts as an anchor of support for musicians and artists alike to connect with each other and perhaps collaborate on projects that could take place anywhere in the city. In this sense the legal space of the Hour Haus is used to further collective and supportive relationships and expand the not profit making DIY community. Legal means are used to further build a local experimental music community. While Baltimore City officials and politicians profit from branding the city as quirky and supportive of artists, the punk musicians at Ratscape benefit from having a consistent meeting space to hold concerts and also to record and distribute their music. Additionally, the Hour Haus specifically caters to local artists ensuring they can represent themselves in their own vision. The aims of do-it-yourself ethics are still met despite the city-sanctioned legitimacy of the venue. Red proposed that even a venue like the Hour Haus is a component/piece of the DIY community: “I guess, even a venue like the Hour Haus is sort of a DIY venue… people don’t live here and it’s not their houses and it’s a
business [but] it’s a recording studio and a band practice space and every summer they have this festival. I guess that would fit into the sort of DIY category.” The independence afforded by the locally owned Hour Haus complicates ideas of state spaces as being ones of overarching control and dominance.

In order to contextualize city sanctioned show spaces as state spaces I turn to political scientist and anthropologist James Scott and his book *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.* Scott takes a historical approach studying hill peoples of the Zomia region of Southeast Asia from the time of coercive dynasties and kingdoms in the 1500s up to World War II. This mountainous, high altitude, and transnational region spans from Central Vietnam across to Northeast India and down to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Mynamar. In his work Scott theorizes the concept of state space as being one of appropriation and control in order to apprehend both a labor supply and the resources within that territory. Scott is interested in the people who evaded incorporation into pre-colonial and colonial governing bodies. He writes that, “The huge literature on state-making, contemporary and historic pays virtually no attention to its obverse: the history of deliberate and reactive statelessness. This is the story of those who got away, and state-making cannot be understood apart from it.” Scott is interested in understanding the state from the perspective of those who resist incorporation into its jurisdiction. He also deconstructs the negative categorizations of “primitive” or “backward” that dynasties, colonial regimes, and nation states alike have used to

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depict people who have avoided “coercive state making.”\textsuperscript{54} Scott draws demarcations between the governed and the un-governable as state space, “the sharp difference between a geography more amenable to state control and appropriation” and non-state space “a geography intrinsically resistant to state control.”\textsuperscript{55} Additionally, the role of the state for Scott is to civilize the people that fall within its borders. The process of civilization imposes fixed residence onto its citizens and renders those people a legible population with an extractable labor force.

In Southeast Asia as well, the idea of civilization was in large measure an agro-ecological code. Peoples who appeared to have no fixed abode, who moved constantly and unpredictably, were beyond the pale of civilization. Here the condition of remaining ‘legible’ to the state and producing a surplus that is readily appropriable is embedded in the concept of civilization.\textsuperscript{56}

In Scott’s research, those at the helm of governing bodies define state space by its dialectical relationship with its opposite; uncivilized or barbarian territory. In the context of Southeast Asia, rulers derogatively refer to populations that exist outside of the state’s jurisdiction as uncivilized or not-yet-civilized.\textsuperscript{57} Scott’s central argument is that traditional scholarship on state making and civilizational discourse is lacking in that it ignores the history of people who deliberately avoid state control and instead opt for a statelessness existence. He also posits that what is so often understood as barbarism or primitivism is instead the practice of people trying to avoid engulfment into the state apparatus. Scott’s work on the people of the Zomia region and their deliberate resistance to incorporation into state structures as a means to achieve

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, xii
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 48
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 101
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid, 99
autonomy is relevant to my work on Baltimore DIY musicians who avoid state surveillance and control in order to pursue music.

The nature of the state space that I depict here differs from Scott’s work in that it is a 21st century postindustrial city where the state halted the appropriation of labor and resources. The ensuing blight and abandonment has re-afforded local and mostly white musicians a sense of illegibility and autonomy over their art. Artists use the infrastructure from Baltimore’s industrial past to pursue collective and creative endeavors. What was once an important manufacturing neighborhood is now an arts and entertainment district with mixed residential and commercial housing. Creative spaces like the Windup Space a music venue, the Metro Gallery a bar and music venue, and the Strand Theatre are initiatives from below that serve the local community. What I observed in Baltimore were strategies for incorporating the unruly, or uncivilized into the realm of the governed. Musicians use venues that fall within state spaces—like the Hour Haus—to achieve a sense of sovereignty and community. The connections made at the Hour Haus help buttress connections that serve the DIY community in both legal and illegal activities. Contrary to semi-legal show spaces, legibility is also useful to protect against police crackdowns and provides a continuous foundational space where musicians can always return. This subversive use of private property could be understood as a subversive use of citizenship itself.

Anthropologist James Holston’s theory of “insurgent citizenship” explores the use of citizenship as realm of resistance, agency, and contestation in Sao Paulo Brazil. In his book *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in*
he focuses on state projects of modernity, urbanization, and industrialization in the 1970s that drew poor Brazilians to Sao Paulo looking for work. Living in the urban periphery of the city, they built their own homes and living spaces in the margins, guiding their own development and social belonging. Holston argues that their precarious living conditions in the urban periphery paradoxically provided the fodder for insurgent forms of citizenship and demands for equality as they built their own communities and forged new social connections. The process of transforming the margins in the urban periphery to their own domain of governance also transformed many of these working class Brazilians’ senses of agency and power as they began demanding full membership and inclusion using a framework of citizenship. Using Holston’s concept of insurgent citizenship, I argue that DIY Punk musician’s transformation of commercial space, private homes, and industrial buildings is an example of insurgent citizenship. These musicians use state spaces to realize their own desires as artists, and in doing so, assert the right to remain creative and base social relationships upon collectivity instead of capitalist notions of competition. I qualify insurgent citizenship in the DIY punk scene as the use of spaces for purposes other than its original intent while also subverting hegemonic scripts of productive citizenship. New subjectivities are created from the collective subversion and illegality of the space while DIY punk musicians create their own community norms and self-expectations. The particular transformation and experience of insurgent citizenship however depends upon the type of venue as well as the class and race of the patrons. In a legitimized or city sanctioned show space musicians are able to

organize punk shows and perform experimental music without fear of the police coming to shut down the space. House shows and warehouse venues are more precarious as show spaces, especially as the policing of quasi-legal spaces are on the rise in Baltimore City. The use of social media in the DIY music community is having the unintended effect of leading the Baltimore Police Department to quasi-legal shows. Noise violations and individual acts of petty crime have also attracted cops to shut down concerts and show spaces. While I was talking with Red outside of the Hour Haus he lamented the recent dip in show spaces:

The Copy Cat was a target of several police shut downs and landlord debacles. There was one that I actually played a harsh noise set at. We opened and there were like bands playing there. I was under the assumption that everything was smoothed over with the landlord or some shit because there had been problems before but it’s like, it had been smoothed over. But, what happened this time was someone went up the fire escape into the floor above where we were having the show, stole somebody’s laptop so the cops got involved and like oh, we’re having a that’s kind of illegal. It wasn’t even the cops that told us to jet, it was the landlord. Because he had to come over, because they had to file a police report and he had to be present for that and I wasn’t aware that he wasn’t aware of the show so it was shut down within an hour of it starting. And then, Dope Body, who I’m sure you’ve heard of—next to Double Dagger they’re probably one of the most well known bands from Baltimore—shortly after that they played a show at the Copy Cat. They’re more legit so I figured they had better connections and they were able to pull better strings with the landlord but even that shut down. The Copy Cat—I’ve been to a lot of shows there [and now] that’s a no go. That happened at the same time that the Bell Foundry got shut down so it got scattered. Everything ended up happening at either Charm City Art Space which is on the next block over or over at Club K on Maryland [Avenue]. I think Bohemian Coffee house is closing down too. They hosted a lot of indie shows. I’ve always wanted to play a really harsh like obnoxious set just to piss off the yuppie kids.

Mariama: You could have, like, a folk punk set.

Actually I did do that one time with my buddy Tom when we started this project. We had some rough sketches in mind, we had never rehearsed. We just got together, me, a saxophonist, a guitarist, and
himself and we just played this obnoxious belligerent set with these hippy bands. Like these hippy acoustic rock bands that were like from California. I was doing vocals running around and just screaming at them, I picked them up by their shirts and yelled at them and threw them back into the booth and shit. It was really fun. We played for an audience of like 5 people. Like two of them worked there and the other three were in bands. But that place is closing down now—venues kind of rise and fall.\textsuperscript{59} 

In a later conversation I had with Red he expressed confidence that despite the ephemerality of the show spaces, “people are resilient and find spaces to play.”\textsuperscript{60} 

Other people in the punk scene told me that police could care less about their activities. Shane, who helped me navigate the house show scene, told me that the shows he frequents rarely get shut down, “police don’t come to shows because they got better stuff to do, but recently they have been more active around the bigger venues. This one space called the Broom Factory gets shut down frequently. Police keep shutting it down because it’s mostly frequented by black people.”\textsuperscript{61} The Baltimore Police department’s harassment of this people of color owned DIY venue even sparked an article in the Baltimore City Paper published in July 2013. The author as well as artists spanning the DIY arts community from punks to hip-hop artists acknowledged the invalidity and prejudice of this particular police raid. The article reads:

In the early-morning hours of Monday, July 1, around 1:45a.m., according to several people on the scene, three Baltimore City police cars with red and blue lights flashing and a paddy wagon swopped down the hill outside the Broom Factory, a burgeoning DIY music venue in Remington, effectively dispersing attendees at that night’s event: #New Baltimore, a mini-rap festival featuring OG Dutchmaster, Al Rogers, Dee Dave, and several other performers from Baltimore’s

\textsuperscript{59} Recorded July 2013 
\textsuperscript{60} Recorded September 2013 
\textsuperscript{61} Recorded October 2013
young hip-hop scene. While there were no arrests, witnesses say police questioned some present for up to 45 minutes after approaching the venue. Police department press officer Jeremy Silbert told City Paper he had no record of any police activity at that time and location, suggesting that no report was filed in the incident. As show attendees spilled out of the highly attended hip-hop event around 1:30 a.m., police seized the moment to raid the space. Whiteness—and the perceived validity of white spaces—affords security from police harassment in the punk scene and allows the community to continue unmolested from coercive forces. It also affords the scene a sense of continuity as spaces remain intact and are handed down through the scene. These spaces are preserved and accrue a sense of history and importance for punk rockers. The Nerve Center, a punk show space not far from the Broom Factory, has never been shut down according to Shane: “In Remington things don’t really get busted up—it’s secluded and people have been more careful about not posting addresses on the Internet.” He added that, “white spaces probably get shut down less…the police are racist and more interested in policing black people. There’s definitely something happening there.” Rjyan Kidwell a Baltimore based hip-hop performer and witness to the July raid at the Broom factory highlighted race as the motivating factor behind the police shutdown and drew a stark contrast between policing of the very punk scene I’m writing about and DIY venues mostly frequented by people of color.

I’ve never heard of a full-on ‘raid’ happening to a mostly white-kid venue in my whole life of going to shows [in Baltimore] since 1995,” Kidwell observes. “I guess saying this publicly would probably spurn cops to want to shut down more honky-punk show than it would get

them to re-evaluate their reasons for flexing on [BFF], but it’s brutally hard to ignore.\textsuperscript{63}

With this in mind, it is those who the city has already afforded a greater sense of belonging, that realize that fruits of insurgent citizenship. In the U.S, the historical paradigm of white supremacy reserved full citizenship for white people.

Whiteness conferred on its owners aspects of citizenship that were all the more valued because they were denied to others. Indeed the very fact of citizenship itself was linked to white racial identity…This racialized version of republicanism – this Herrenvolk republicanism – constrained any vision of democracy from addressing the class hierarchies adverse to many who considered themselves white.\textsuperscript{64}

The basis upon which insurgent claims to citizenship are made is still tied to whiteness especially as these transformations take place in historically working class neighborhoods.

Baltimore itself is a city struggling to redefine its purpose and place within the United States in the post-industrial era, and in particular find new ways to make use of its abandoned properties. Between 1947 and 1963 Baltimore lost 123 industries and 17,000 manufacturing jobs.\textsuperscript{65} As white flight intensified, the commodity consumption driven economy that marked the post-war era, grew in ever expanding Baltimore County. As Baltimore city lost businesses, Baltimore County absorbed its hospitals, colleges, corporations, and churches. The termination of war time jobs and the economic investment in Baltimore County had serious detrimental effects on city employment; “Baltimore’s fortunes turned after World War II ended and armament

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid
manufacturers scaled back, retooled, and terminated tens of thousands.”66

Immediately after World War II Baltimore’s economy began to decline as the federal
government drained its resources from the city. Between 1955 and 1960, sixty-five
industries moved to Baltimore County from Baltimore City.67

Massive white flight between the 1950s and 1970s left the city majority black
and lacking a stable employment base. Unemployment reached 10.3 percent in the
1970s, while black youth suffered from 50 percent unemployment by 1979.68
Disinvestment in Baltimore City had devastating effects on the poor and working
class—especially for African Americans who bore a disproportionate amount of
unemployment and were trapped in urban ghettos. In 1974 Baltimore became a
majority black city for the first time in history: “When [white] migration stopped in
the 1970s, the city’s population began shrinking. The city grew more black; they
county remained nearly all white. An astonishing 83 percent of the white growth
occurred outside the city while 83 percent of the black growth occurred within the
city.”69 Disinvestment in the city left a plethora of abandoned industrial buildings as
well as cheap real estate. Baltimore City in its entirety has an estranged relationship
with the Nation as a black and abandoned city dotted with abandoned homes and
industrial buildings. In this way, Baltimore City acquired a differentiated citizenship,
or differentiated belonging to the United States as a black and crime ridden space.

White attitudes toward the city often charged the rise in crime with the increase of

67 Ibid, 221
69 Pietila, 217
black people and racial integration.⁷⁰

In the wake of this devastating economic decline in Baltimore, I suggest that these conditions of abandonment furnished the possibilities of a new kind of citizenship where urban residents redefine their relationship with the city as well as expectations for good social conduct. Spaces of disinvestment and fiscal discipline like Baltimore City force networks of collectivity and mutual aid in order to survive. Now that these local networks of belonging are already established I ask; what is the citizenship of the broke artist living as cheaply as possible and making experimental noise music? Whereas Scott identifies a binary notion of state space and non-state space in the context of his research, I propose that in Baltimore the DIY punk scene is instead on a continuum and transforms the boundaries and possibilities of citizenship and public space.

For developers and city officials, welcoming unruly punk rockers into visible public space like the scene at the Hour Haus and into the local economy is a viable option for increasing revenues streams and to assert Baltimore’s importance and belonging within the U.S. At the same time, although DIY musicians may not intend to further the hegemonic capitalist project of the nation state, or perhaps even aim to subvert it, they will nonetheless promote Baltimore as a quirky city with a vibrant arts scene. Venues like the Hour Haus attract young people to participate in the creation of the Station North Arts District and what local blogs call the “renaissance” of Baltimore City. What is clear, however, is that the distinction between the legal and the illegal, the government and the governed, is blurred in Baltimore City as

⁷⁰ Ibid, 139
musicians use the law to further their own DIY projects. Living in a periphery, whether it is the outskirts of Sao Paulo or in Baltimore City, places its residents into a realm exclusion yet also produces space for subversion. The norms of a good and productive citizen are remade in Baltimore as mostly young and white musicians use Baltimore’s economic decline to their advantage.

Taking both Holston’s and Scott’s theories into account, we can understand citizenship as a complicated arena of access to rights and privileges, but also subjection to state power and control. Nation-states have used various strategies to implement combinations of incorporation and domination onto their territory. Holston argues that historic usages of citizenship in Brazil differentiates its population and legitimates systems of inequality as opposed to rendering citizens equal under the law:

Independence and republican government in many nations signal the development of movements for the equalization of rights. Yet the onset of Brazil’s republic marked the beginning of even greater disparities among citizens. As a result, most Brazilians have received unequal distributions of citizenship for centuries under colonial, imperial, and republican regimes.71

In a context where capitalist nation-states exist in part to regulate claims to private property, the ability to obtain and own private property is an essential aspect of citizenship and legitimacy in the eyes of the state. Citizenship acts as a dual system of legibility and management while it provides a sense of social membership, material comfort, social services, or excludes people from them. Although differentiation of social membership affects the city’s residents differently, especially on the basis of racial and socio-economic class hierarchies, Baltimore itself faces barriers toward

realizing full citizenship as an economically disenfranchised city. At the same time however, this federal abandonment creates the space for subversions and new understandings of citizenship. Punk musicians challenge normative scripts of citizenship though their self-directed uses of property that do not further hegemonic expectations of capital accumulation. Instead, their usage of private property fosters a local and collective community that simply seeks to create experimental punk rock music. In particular I want to highlight the creation of the Station North Arts District as an example of a successful incorporation of DIY ethics into the public and legal sphere. As I mentioned earlier, Charlie Lankford owner of the Copy Cat, successfully worked to change the legal status of the land under his building. The city acquiesced to his lobbying to allow his residents to sleep in their art studios and granted him something called a Planned Unit Development. According to the Baltimore City website a Planned United development (PUD) “does not establish new zoning, but is intended to create a development ‘in which residential and/or commercial uses are approved subject to restrictions calculated to achieve the compatible and efficient use of land, including the consideration of any detrimental impact upon adjacent residential communities.’” Holston calls the legalization of the illegal insurgent citizenship and an inversion of hegemonic civility:

As insurgent citizenship disrupts the differentiated, these dominant formulations of inclusion wear thin and the inequalities they cover become intolerable. Increasingly exhausted, they get replaced in everyday relations by in-your-face incivilities and aggressive aesthetics… From this perspective, incivility appears necessary as a public idiom of deep democratic change.73

73 Holston, 275
Lankford used his own citizenship and his access to landed property for insurgent aims that increased the autonomy of the artists living in his building. In this context, insurgent uses of citizenship contested the hegemonic cultural and political order of the state through irregular or new uses of land and public space. The subversion of the Copy Cat’s former role as a private industrial building to a mixed-use space open to public involvement, eroded certain norms of the ideal citizen as one that consumes the surplus products of capitalist production as well as the citizen that meets the entrepreneurial demands of the city. Reorienting social spaces towards collectivity, spontaneity, and art disrupts normative scripts of citizenship as musicians and participants in the punk scene assert the right to bring DIY values like collective organizing and affording dignity to the experimental music of working class and middle class young adults. Holston’s concept of everyday incivilities is a useful frame to understand DIY punk culture in the public sphere, “If civility is a code of behavior associated with participation in public life of a particular paradigm of citizenship, then incivility offends its principles and disrupts its practices. Disrupting assumptions about paradigm of citizenship is not an abstraction. It has powerful individuating effects that get under people’s skin.”\(^{74}\) The effect of these erosions of hegemonic scripts of citizenship is the production of new subjectivities and senses of local belonging. David Harvey author of Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution\(^ {75}\) calls these transformations of urban landscapes, “asserting a right to the city.”\(^ {76}\) He suggests that changing and reinventing the city reflects desires to

\(^{74}\) Ibid
\(^{75}\) Harvey, David. Rebel Cities. London: VERSO, 2012
\(^{76}\) Ibid, 4
transform the self and social relations. Harvey writes, “…the question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kind of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we want to cherish, what style of life we desire, what aesthetic values we hold.”\textsuperscript{77} The transformation of urban spaces must also be understood as a transformation of the self and of the collective.

Like many other entrance stories I collected during my fieldwork, Red was inspired by the responsibility and action of young people his age making experimental music. “DIY is non-corporate and small time. It’s blood, sweat, and tears. Kids fresh out of college pouring money into their bands.” He was enticed by what this offbeat experience offered and also the shared feelings of empowerment. Similar to a venue like the Hour Haus, the Ottobar is another legitimate venue that supports both local and national acts. The venue opened downtown in 1997 but has since moved uptown to a neighborhood called Charles Village near the Station North Arts District. Red saw his first local Baltimore punk band at the Ottobar, a show that subsequently pulled him into the punk community as a musician and spectator:

I saw Dope Body in 2009 and I was really impressed and sought out other performances. It was really happy in a way that most heavy music isn’t. It had the energy of punk but had the percussive wrecking ball of industrial music. The sound was interesting and gritty. I saw them at the Ottobar. It was cool and professional and small enough to not feel suffocated.

Red mentioned that the punk DIY scene had given him a sense of belonging and a way to find people who desire alternative music and spaces, “It showed me how grassroots organizing can be used and how art can be revolutionary. I have a home

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid,
where I’m always welcome and can be understood. It made me open minded about music and receptive to experimental music like noise.” Seeing a local band at a legitimate concert venue incorporated into the city’s infrastructure inspired Red to join this underground DIY music scene, and begin making music himself using DIY ethics. Although the Ottobar is technically a business it can still be used to organize a non-corporate community. Shared moments of chaotic artistic expression creates community and social connections that continue long after the festival is over. While I was talking with Red I briefly felt a sense of community and belonging. Unlike a house show where all the activity is hidden behind the walls of private property, it felt empowering to be public with our subversiveness and unwillingness to conform to societal standards of presentation and work ethic. According to Red, working to get a license or officiating a concert venue is possibly the most empowering DIY action to take:

In particular I think looking at the Bell Foundry—that was probably a really good example of bunch of kids working hard to get their venue—it got busted by the cops and then they took it upon themselves to legitimize the space. It’s sort of like turning the pull yourself up by the your bootstraps thing on its head. It’s like spitting in the space of the authorities, fine we’re gonna legitimate but we’re still gonna be the bell foundry, still gonna be one of the best underground venues in Baltimore.

At the same time that spaces like the Hour Haus, Copy Cat, Ottobar, and Bell Foundry are subversive, they are also entangled in legal systems that accept some forms of illegality and reject others. Holston argues that although various expressions of citizenship may be contrary, they are not dichotomous. Instead, they become
entangled and mixed with the desires of governing bodies and elite forces. \(^{78}\) Since I talked to Red that July, I checked back in with Shane in March of 2014 to see how the owners of the Bell Foundry had maintained their show space. Using commercial licensing and health codes as a form of the policing, the Baltimore Police Department unfortunately halted concerts at the Bell Foundry for the time being. At its height the Bell Foundry was a physically large DIY show space, a rarity for an underground music scene that relies on discretion, and forged an energetic shows space for local punks and newcomers to Baltimore City. Shane told me about his experiences at the Bell Foundry:

I’ve played a bunch of shows there. When it was good I went pretty often. Now I pretty much go to see some friends who live there but I’ve been there a lot since like the end of [college]. I feel like the initial group of people moved in there—I would say maybe like 2010. It was getting pretty big for a while, they were getting shows really regularly and they were extremely well attended and the space is pretty big. I think it was like Vice magazine or MTV or something did some sort of thing where they were going to DIY spaces across the country and they did one there. That was like weird. People felt different ways about that. I still don’t really know who chose to do that, or who okayed that. It’s been pretty oversaturated for a basically not-really-legal kind of thing.

Shane attributes the development initiatives in Station North as the main cause of increased policing of DIY show spaces. He explained that although city officials use Baltimore’s reputation as a burgeoning artistic community to attract developers, the police department has increased the policing of show spaces that have no profit making ability.

The whole Station North revitalization thing the city is doing is strange because a lot of those [DIY] spaces are centered around that area so the city will selectively allow certain places to go on like the Copy Cat

\(^{78}\) Holston, 275
building which has been around forever but its mostly rented by MICA students or exta MICA students who are using it as an art and living space. They used to have shows there. Now that it’s become such a big part of that part of the city, and the city’s art and music scene in general you can’t have shows there at all because the city knows about it. It’s being rented out illegally by the dude who owns the building and they won’t do anything about it because they don’t want to get rid of it. They actually just put a billboard on top of it that’s like ‘this is the copy cat!’ They’re using the fact that all these kids live there as advertising space to get interest in building that part of the city up. That comes with certain other things. You can’t be loud. You have to play the game I guess. The bellfoundry’s right next to it so even though it’s not really related I think it initially started as more of a punk thing when they were having lots of shows so those two scenes didn’t really intermix as much. They do now but in general with all of that its become more like a lot of new spaces have opened up but they’re all in bars y’know and things like that.

Although the Bell Foundry did succeed in momentarily transforming the margins of Baltimore City and repurposing a warehouse—a physical relic from Baltimore’s industrial capitalist past—gentrification is proving to be an obstacle for the punk scene. Finding a space within the legal structure of the City as a non profit making entity is becoming harder as the city continues to focus its efforts on attracting investment. Punk shows are increasingly held in profit accumulating spaces like bars, effectively minimizing the DIY element of the subculture. Four out of my five interlocutors joined the DIY punk scene because the attended a show where the musicians organized the show themselves. Erasing the musician from the construction of the space itself could have a serious detrimental impact on the scene. In addition, city officials selectively allow the most palatable art forms, while actively disrupting other subcultural niches deemed unfit for the Station North brand. This disproportionately affects DIY art niches predominately made up of working class and middle class youth like the punk scene. The unmarketability of experimental
punk, noise, and metal render it useless in a capitalist schema. Shane, however, is hopeful that the scene will continue, but will just have to change as city officials seek to revamp Station North.

As far as like the big DIY show scene goes it’s not gonna go away or anything its just gonna change because it’s always gonna be started by young people who are willing to take a risk. Maybe its gonna start happening in east Baltimore instead of closer to the center city. Wherever people can get spaces… I think development doesn’t really care about the punk scene. The punk scene is just a thing in Baltimore that will just work with whatever it has. There are times where it will be the big thing, be written in the City Paper or whatever but recently the City Paper got strange things happened with an article they posted and ownership is changing but that’s as much as you can ever do, there’s no money to be made out of that. All the people in that group who stay doing it are just fringe-lifers. None of that shit really affects them to a certain point, they’re always gonna be outside of that its not like marketable.

The transformation of the margins will most likely spread further into underdeveloped areas of the city as musicians try to maintain their subculture. Although it is growing more difficult as police surveillance is strengthened and public officials direct their entrepreneurial energy toward making the city attractive for investment, insurgent space making will continue for “fringe-lifers” who dedicate themselves to forging creative and open spaces.

I. C

**Horizontalism: Leaderlessness and Empowerment**

For all the time I had spent with my private school friends going to movies and restaurants in the largely developed and gentrified Charles Village, I had never been to Remington. I parked my car in Charles Village and decided to walk to the show. The row houses on this street were colorfully painted. The identical
architectural design was broken as columns changed from pink, to green, to gold, as I walked down St. Pauls Street. Perhaps this was the gentrifiers compulsion to mark their presence and paint the blight away. I had time to kill so I walked east toward a historically black working class neighborhood called Loch Raven. Although the general row house design remained, I immediately noticed the change in quality. The houses seemed more run down, and there were far fewer cars lining the street. I nodded hello as some sat on their porches in the humid Baltimore weather. I soon ended my wanderings, walking back to St. Pauls Street, and then walked west with my recorder and notebook bouncing in my backpack. The colors began to fade once more as I entered the historically white working class neighborhood of Remington. Although neoliberal political and economic ideology had forsaken providing relief and reliable employment for low-income people here, I noticed that this neighborhood seemed to be a bit more stable than Loch Raven. I saw people walking on the sidewalk with grocery bags in hand. More cars lined the street. Shane, my neighbor growing up, told me about this spot. The annual Punx Picnic had been relocated to the Nerve Center—a house in Remington. This venue on the punk DIY circuit belonged to an older gentleman who opens up his backyard for grilling, cheap beer, and music in his basement. He greeted me at the entrance to his yard: “C’mon in!” In the concrete walled backyard there were stumps and couches were people sat to hang out. Everyone here seemed to know each other. The crowd was mostly young and in their twenties except for a scattered few in their 30s and the home owner who was in his 40s or 50s. I asked an older guy about the neighborhood and mentioned that people here seemed to be doing okay. “Okay? I dunno about okay…” I revised
my thought, “Well, it seems more stable than other places.” He conceded to that, “Yeah, yeah, that’s true.” He also added, “Before, you know, it used to be a little racist around here. There used to be the KKK and stuff but now they’re gone I think.” I looked up at the sky. It was getting dark. I think? That made me nervous. The crowd at the Nerve Center was multi-racial although it was predominately white. People wore cut-off jeans as fray ed shorts. They rocked piercing and tattoos. My initial reaction to the space was that it embodied an open community vibe. It was free and thus accessible to low-income people. The intimate setting of a backyard barbeque created a disarming and comforting community space. I was curious to know how people knew to come here. How did this scene get started and how is it sustained? I decided to ask Shane these questions since he led me to this space.

Shane, who is a white male, felt alienated growing up. He sought solace in playing and listening to indie and alternative rock music. He and I grew up on the same cul-de-sac in Howard County, about 20 minutes southeast of downtown Baltimore. In this adjacent county to Baltimore, we lived in a planned middleclass suburb called Columbia. With a population of about 99,000, Columbia is 55% white, 25.3% black or African American, .4% American Indian, 11% Asian, 7.9% Hispanic or Latino and 4.4% two or more races. Unlike my experience attending a private Baltimore County middle and high school, Shane told me that his most formative years were spent here in Columbia. What we did have in common however was the amount of time we spent alone in our suburban homes surfing the Internet. We both raked the digital world for life beyond the cul-de-sac. Shane found alternative leftist

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politics like green anarchism and read blogs like the CrimethInc. ex-workers collective. His browsing also led him to punk and experimental rock music. A computer screen mediated his introduction to punk music; “I got into it on my own in a lonely way, on the computer downloading music and finding stuff…” The Internet exposed Shane to music beyond the mainstream and also led him to larger venues like the now closed Sonar/Talking Heads Club\(^80\) in downtown Baltimore and the 9:30 club in Washington D.C.\(^81\) Shane’s entrance into the local DIY punk scene however had to be facilitated by friends who already had inroads into the community, “The real punk shows I first went to were High School events in community centers but some older kids showed me the house show scene. I went through friends, people I knew after high school. I started putting some on myself, then I gradually met people—and in other states too. For the past six years I’ve really been getting into it.” Shane’s desire to leave his alienation behind and find others that sought alternatives to the mainstream led him to the Baltimore DIY punk scene. He explained to me that the scene was much more than just a collection of punk musicians, but that is was highly local alternative community: “The DIY show extends outside of the punk realm. There is a Baltimore sound—a crossover of punk and metal music. People embrace the gritty rep Baltimore has.” The DIY scene is also a collective artist project to embrace and experiment with individual artistic desires, but also reflect Baltimore City as a location. A large component of this sound, as Shane explains, reflects a low income and working class America striving for alternatives to the oppressive


mainstream, “It’s a train hub. Lots of traveling punks, y’know, crusty punks who opted out of mainstream society, come through Baltimore. That style of music, folky working class music, is a constant part of the scene.” Red also mentioned an inherent working class component to the scene:

Baltimore’s a hub for national bands that tour through here but I usually only come to [local] shit like this. In the hipster scene there’s definitely more white middle class people from the suburbs, a lot of MICA kids and some kids who live around here. The punk scene seems to be a lot more proletariat in a way… but at the same time they still overlap.

In addition to the exciting music Shane stumbled upon, he was also struck by the empowerment and organization of young punk musicians. The act of attending a DIY show interpolated him into the scene as an empowered subject capable of self and collective governance.

Initially I went to have a good time because I spent a lot of time alone learning about music. When I first found out about the scene, those bands were a big deal for me. There was a whole thing and you had to go there to see it…. I wanted to see what was happening. It was like a controlled chaos and I liked all of it! I found out about all this music and watched people trying to run their space illegally or quasi-legally. It’s a lot of work and responsibility—you have to control the space. You have to negotiate the freedom of the DIY and you have to lead at some point.

As Shane fell into the scene he noticed that the collective artistic community mirrored the collective modes of governance. The exuberant nature of the music was exciting but needed to be collectively governed in order to sustain itself. This tension between explosive creativity had to be managed horizontally, or in other words, without any designated leader. It is the onus of the people in physical show spaces as well as in the general DIY punk scene to manage it and communicate with others.
As our conversation progressed I asked Shane how he experienced the mix of individual artistic exuberance from his peers, the self-empowerment needed to put on shows, and also the need to communicate and organize with others. I asked how being in the DIY punk scene changed his self-perception and also how are political labels are perceived, represented, managed and negotiated.

Some places are against drugs and drinking. Some people are politically active. They cared about social politics. It was open and safe for that. Other places were chaotic, more stereotypical, and political in their own way.

What I found most interesting about the governance of the DIY punk scene is the leaderlessness of it. I wondered why these musicians seemed to so naturally subvert (some forms of) hierarchy and create a collective arts scene. I wondered what about Baltimore, what about this time period of the 1990s until the present day, and what about the culture of the scene made this happen? In David Harvey’s Rebel Cities he examines urban landscapes as sites of political struggle and revolutionary potential. Even as neoliberal policies hyper-individualize our consumption and places capital surplus in the laps of private and corporate actors, “collective and non-profit maximizing modes of social solidarity and mutual support,”\(^{82}\) continue to arise. Perhaps the city incites a distinct local belonging and infrastructural ability to create common spaces. Shane even remarked that Baltimore city as a physical space is conducive to enacting DIY ethics: “People in the neighborhood do come to shows. People are attracted to that, you can walk… people in the neighborhood are a big part of it. The area lends itself to doing DIY music. It’s small and easy to get to know

people.” The horizontal nature of the scene may reflect a larger desire to reclaim Baltimore as an economically failing city, and recreate it in a new vision. Oliver has witnessed a considerable physical transformation of Baltimore city since he began performing there in the early 1990s. DIY ethics are not limited to the punk scene but permeate many sub cultures in the city.

As far as how DIY is applied to other things, things like the creative alliance in east Baltimore help people get into film making and videography and probably velosipated- people do a bicycle repair collective right near Charles Theatre. They teach people how to repair bicycles out of spare parts. They're a non profit organization but you can join their collective and volunteer a specific amount of time to determine the type of membership you get. That really got people into bicycling in Baltimore and got more bicycle lanes. That’s a really tangible way in which DIY ethics changed the way Baltimore City runs from an infrastructural standpoint. That's pretty major. Community gardening is definitely a big thing in Baltimore. Because that involves such a large amount of vacant lots in the city I think a lot of underprivileged kids and just people in general in more blighted areas in Baltimore city become involved in agriculture, which is kind of incredible to me on a personal level.83

The sum of many Baltimoreans grassroots actions’ to enact local changes has physically transformed the city.

Within the culture of the DIY punk scene there was certainly an aversion to being represented rather than representing one’s self. A frustration with bureaucratically organized and corporatized music was a clear rallying point and perhaps the antithesis of DIY ethics. Through my interviews I noticed a deep desire for self-determination that for the bohemian is perhaps only realized from action from

83 Recorded July 2013
below. Red mentioned outright that the DIY punk scene was a reclamation of creativity and a justification of experimental music:

They’re definitely spiteful of your Arcade Fire and Vampire Weekend and that sorta shit. Not so much in the hipster side of things but as far as the punk rock scene goes there’s an attitude of reclaiming indie. That’s what’s so important about the noise rock scene here. It’s still indie and it’s still weird but it’s not in a pretentious way, it’s in a belligerent way.\(^{84}\)

The politics of representation, and in particular a desire as well as belief in self-governance were certainly present during recent global Occupy movements. The name itself signals a movement of reclamation, although particular reclamation projects took several localized forms in the global movements. While reading reflections on the Occupy movement I was struck by the formation of Occupy Slovenia depicted in Maple Razsa and Andrej Kurnik’s article, “The Occupy Movement in Zizek’s hometown.”\(^{85}\) The movement in Slovenia aligned with general Occupy sentiments that nation states had become too aligned with corporate interests and were not meeting the basic material needs of its citizens. The Slovenian occupiers saw democracy itself as increasingly illegitimate and bought out by corporations, and even a meaningless performance of the nation state. However, the particular iteration of Occupy Slovenia privileged the empowerment of silenced minority voices. Activists intentionally constructed forums and assemblies to reflect ethics of autonomy, empowerment, decentralization, and creativity. Rejecting authoritarian decision models were central to both asserting sovereignty and working through different needs and subject positions. As Razsa and Kurnik explain in their case

\(^{84}\) Recorded July 2013
study, “…when I asked activists about their impressions of the democracy-of-direct-action model, two themes came up repeatedly: that the form empowered minorities and that it unleashed energies that were otherwise dormant or even actively blocked in their daily lives”

Razsa and Kurnik described the ethnic minorities in their site as living in poverty and also subject to the precarious existence inherent in illegal immigration. This is to say they truly did not have a place in society or many viable mechanisms to communicate their needs to the state. Direct democracy as a collective governing tactic was as much a tool of empowerment as it was of insurgency. The occupiers using this tactic asserted local and direct governance, actively challenging representational democracy and corporate control of politics. The occupiers repositioned minority voices as important and powerful. It actively transformed public space to become one of dialogue and collective action. People engaged in direct democracy can create the space, ethics, and tools to articulate suppressed desires and collaboratively act upon them. These goals take work and are not immediately met, but possibilities are opened when “our collective capacity to manage our own lives and reconstruct society from below” is unlocked and power and decision-making is taken into local hands. In the Baltimore context, Red echoed this notion of hard but gratifying work inherent in self-representation at house shows, “At punk houses people create a showspace in the basement. They make an effort to make things smooth and organized. The vibe depends on who’s there, each show is different. Some parts of the scene have more or less energy.” The result of the showspace or concert is always dependent upon who is there and how people negotiate the

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86 Ibid, 244
87 Ibid, 252
space. I argue that the DIY punk scene resembles direct democracy in that musicians are free to organize shows on their own accord if they can find a space themselves or collaborate with others in the DIY community. This organizational technique leaves space for individual initiative and cooperation to take form and also privileges experimental music that wouldn’t have any crossover commercial success. Musicians avoid imposing restrictions on musical style and self presentation. During my fieldwork I also noticed that the directness of the Punk scene also opened up space for social encounters on two levels. DIY shows tend to foster intimate settings where the barrier between the audience and the performer is subverted. In contrast to large commercial venues where there may even be security guards and barricades between the patrons and the performer, DIY shows often have minimal physical distance. Artists also sell their own CDs, handle their own booking, and have no added managerial team, and are thus readily available for personal interaction. I felt that this constructed intimacy permeates the entire social setting at punk shows, and thus fosters a hyper social atmosphere.

To understand the notion of horizontalism I will return once more Marina Sitirn’s work on the 2001 uprisings in Argentia. According to Mitirn, horizontalidad seemed to “appear practically overnight.” In order take charge of one’s local community, organize with one’s neighbors, and simply survive in the dramatic economic crisis, organizing horizontally from the ground up as both a tactic and set of ethics arose. Similar to my queries about collective ethics in the Baltimore Punk community, Sitrin prodded people about how and why they organize horizontally.

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88 Sitrin, 38
Through her fieldwork and participation in the uprising Sitirn describes *horizontalidad* as an all-encompassing way of being and organizing politically:

*Horizontalidad* is a word that has come to embody new social arrangements and principles of organization of these movements in Argentina. As its name suggests, *horizontalidad* implies democratic communication on a level plan and involved—or at least intentionally strives towards—non-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian creation rather than reaction. It is a break with vertical ways of organizing and relating.\(^89\)

In contrast to alienating electoral politics, horizontalism embraces leaderlessness or a subversion of hierarchy, which thus creates space for varied interpretation and praxis. There is not one way to be horizontal, but there were common threads and ideas circulating among the Argentinean activists. Collectives coalesced around affinities or common interest projects. The activists chose to associate with each other and would divide tasks and responsibilities based on interest and ability. It was assumed that each person had different skills and abilities that could be used to be benefit the common interest of the group. Common interest, however, does not imply conformity. On the contrary horizontal organizing welcomes a plurality of opinions and instead seeks to live with difference instead of coercing individuals to become good subjects of a central governing body.

Decisions within the groups were based on consensus decision-making practices. This necessitated active involvement from empowered individuals who could share their perspective and listen to their comrades. The following quote from a participant in a neighborhood assembly crystallizes the ethics in horizontalism and consensus decision-making:

\(^{89}\) Ibid, 3
...the rejection of all forms of representation, and the search for a way to make decisions—with equality. These things have come together in such a way that I don’t think they can be separated. Maybe *horizontalidad* is the concept of equality, for everyone to be on the same level, in all things... *Horizontalidad* is much more than an organization form. For me it’s a culture.90

Beginning with an emancipated base and guiding ethics of consensus and equality, horizontal decision making springs forth as a spontaneous type of politic.

Horizontalism is like lighting bolt against the dark sky of coercive “representative” government and a rupture in history that can become whatever the people decide. Sitrin’s ethnographic account of *horizontalidad* is reminiscent of my discussions about Charm City Art Space with Cam. He first explained to me how the space functions:

Usually about once a month I’ll volunteer either working the door or doing sound, basically running the PA, and then I also book shows there from time to time. Those are typically my duties there. There’s also bi-monthly meetings where we sort of go over stuff like ways the space can be improved, issues people are having. [When bands play] there’s money owed to the space and once that money is paid off you split up the rest among the band. Sometimes I have to pay touring bands out of pocket... eventually you hope that the sort of karmic sense comes back to you ultimately. It’s a collective but there are definitely more senior members.91 It’s been a space for 10 years and the more senior members of the collective definitely have a lot more say in what goes on and they generally do things like manage finances and pay the rent, run the meetings, supervisory figures. As for booking if you are a dues paying member- it’s 30 bucks a year for dues- you can pretty much book whoever you want.92

When I asked Cam why it runs this way, he simply told me it was the best way to run a local DIY space. While I was waiting for some type of political


91 Recorded October 2013
92 Recorded October 2013
declaration and philosophy he asserted that collective governance was simply a common sense practice.

It’s simply practical. It’s simply the best way to run a space like this. We are pretty strict about not having drugs or alcohol at shows because we don’t want to cause trouble y’know what I mean? Look at how the bell foundry got shut down. Look at how the Copy Cat was sort of goes through phases, they’ll have a lot of shows and then there will be a clamp down. Charm City Art space is run that way because it’s simply the most pragmatic way to run a space like that. It makes it a hell of a lot more accessible for people who might be kinda new to the scene. Certainly for me after my band broke up … I started really booking a lot, volunteering a lot in the interim between when my band broke up before I really got my solo project off the ground. And definitely as I was able to say ‘hey do you guys wanna come play this show with me?’ it definitely helped my solo project a hell of a lot. The space has been very, very good to me. They were very good to me back when I had a band. Whatever meaningful level of success I had, definitely a large part came from them.93

Keeping a sense of continuity of the space, bringing bands of personal interest, and dividing limited resources are priorities for the CCAS collective. In Cam’s view, a modified horizontal structure was simply the best practice to realize the interests of the collective and the larger local punk community. Cam also referenced a sense of mutual aid he received from the collective in an unexpected time of need. In a culture where musicians have minimal resources and unpredictable lives, a stable and welcoming community that also affords autonomy was shown to be useful.

Additionally, Mitrin tracked changes in self-perception as the resisting Argentines embraced a politic of empowerment and collective action. These changes in subjectivity were similar to inner awakenings of responsibility and

93 Recorded October 2013
empowerment that I tracked as DIY musicians matured in the punk scene. Some of the musicians I interviewed recalled single moments when attending a DIY show altered their life forever as it demonstrated that they too could manage and pursue their own musical interests. Watching young musicians their own age perform experimental music and manage the entirety of their musical endeavors proved to them that DIY music making was possible. Shane’s experience in the house show scene produced expectations of participation and a continued preoccupation with the needs of the collective DIY punk community. For example, the home-owning elders who inherit punk houses are expected to keep those spaces open as music venues and recreate the community they were afforded in their younger years. These venues and punk spaces are only kept alive, however, from contributions by anyone who enters the space. Shane explained to me that, “older folks keep it going but houses get transferred. There’s an unspoken pact that a person should have shows there and you have to give them money. They have a responsibility to keep those places functioning and people have an obligation, you have to contribute to the scene.” There is a mutual responsibility on the part of the homeowner, young musician, and spectator to contribute to the scene with their respective resources. For a property owner this may be opening up one’s house as a show space, for a musician it could be regular performances at a certain venue, and for a spectator this could mean donating 5 dollars and a six pack of Natty Boh beers.

Additionally, navigating horizontalism is a lived experience that can only be learned in practice as well as moments of conflict. Shane added, “I put on a show in Arbutus and some older dude came by and neighborhood kids came in. They tried to
start fights which is rare but the older guy calmed them down. People step up and become accountable for each other. Shared responsibility makes the scene do-able—everyone is in charge."

Similarly, Mitrin found that horizontal living also produces new subjects that hold solidarity, equality, and local engagement to name a few, as their core guiding values. Interpersonal relationships are rerouted to follow this path and in the process capitalist cultural values such as competition and maximizing individual wealth and power are subverted. The experiences of workers affiliated with the National Movement of Recuperated Workplaces best exemplify this experience. As the factories and workplaces were shutdown and abandoned, workers simply occupied the buildings and began directly managing their occupations. Facing mass unemployment and few options many workers decided to do-it-themselves. Many workers in Argentina defended their jobs and transformed their workplaces to suit their own and their community’s needs. Through the recuperation of workplaces deemed worthless by bosses and the logic of neoliberalism, many people experienced personal transformations. In spite of structural barriers, workers used their tools and their knowledge to reclaim their workplace and divide power and responsibility amongst the workers. For many this process was an affirmation of autonomy and power that forever transformed them:

What we’re getting at with all of this—and this is how I explain it especially to people who are used to being managed—is that we’re developing as humans now… what happens is that workplaces run by bosses and managers have a ceiling, and they don’t let you grow beyond it, they don’t let you advance, change or create, don’t you think? But what we’re doing is letting human beings develop, giving
people the ability to think and contribute ways of resisting and creating.\textsuperscript{94}

Workplace recuperation had the unintended effect of empowering individuals to work in solidarity assert and realize their needs. These actions produced collective energy, excitement, and the confidence to transform their community through unconditional support and participation, “... there’s no leader that’s to come and solve everything.”\textsuperscript{95} Recuperating a workplace created space for creativity and experimentation. Workers took charges of spaces, and used it to benefit themselves and the community. Some Argentineans became conscious of their inner-power through the experience of watching others defend and recuperate their workplace. The daringness of some inspired others to follow suit and take charge of their destiny. These activists are not necessarily detached from the state, but redefine their position of power in the state and how they will use resources like loans and grants from the government.

The activists’ use of horizontalism represented and responded to peoples’ localized needs and also had the power to draw out individual desire and creativity. In the Baltimore context, horizontal organizing is entrenched in desires to represent oneself and to build a collaborative community that can work together to sustain a local music and arts community. Social relationships are thus built on mutual aid as well as mutual empowerment to continue doing-it-yourself. The emphasis on individual initiative to produce and perform music stimulates an active local culture that can change rapidly from year to year. The governance of the scene is thus a daily

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid, 77
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, 75
and lived experience. Horizontalism as an experiential mode of governance can have unexpected or unintended effects like empowerment or the realization of new desires and responsibilities. As Oliver once told me, “DIY is not a silver bullet” in terms of empowerment but many, DIY Punk musicians and other localized politics movements have seen great success and positive social transformation using direct and local self-determination

I. D

Conclusion to Chapter I

In this chapter I argued that do-it-yourself ethics are understood in the punk community as a set common sense practices to assert control over one’s sense of self and artistic expression. Musicians resist being managed and instead manage their own musical endeavors. DIY also necessitates collectivity as artists pool their resources and energy to support each other and build the music scene together. I use the word common sense to describe what I witnessed in Baltimore in particular because many interlocutors stressed that it was the only way, or the most practical way, for them to make the music they wished to create. The shared practice of balancing self-sufficiency and local cooperation came so naturally to musicians that it barely seemed to be a choice, but a product of social and economic circumstance. Do-it-yourself ethics speak to a culture of self-management and a way to be true to the self and maintain honest relationships with others. Emphasis on self-sufficiency in Baltimore’s white working class communities is long standing. Despite federal initiatives like the National Industrial Recovery Act, Veterans Affairs home loan guarantees, and local privileging of white workers for the most skilled industrial jobs,
working class white people in the 1940s and 50s often attributed self-sufficiency to the stability of their neighborhoods:

It was with some justification, then, that working class whites attributed social and economic well-being to community-based initiatives rather than government programs or more broadly based “civic” efforts. The flip side of this doctrine of self-sufficiency was a tradition of voluntarism often publicized by papers.\(^6\)

Esteem for DIY ethics did not just appear with the punk scene, but is historically situated in Baltimore City’s white working class communities. However DIY certainly has a distinct character in the scene today. The current conditions of Baltimore City both necessitate DIY praxis and leaves space for experimentation in collective community building. Seriously devastated by deindustrialization, white flight, and federal disinvestment one in four Baltimore residents are currently living in poverty. There are an estimated 16,000 vacant or abandoned buildings in the city. Despite the devastation, these empty lots, vacant industrial buildings, and cheap real estate, supply the infrastructure needed to sustain a local arts community. Be that as it may, the onus is upon the individual and the community to transform them into spaces of creativity, empowerment, and human connection.

This transformation is not purely a grassroots project that is operating autonomous from the state. As the larger Baltimore DIY arts scene grows, Baltimore City officials and private developers have certainly taken notice. As I mentioned in my introduction, the Baltimore City Paper recently ran a feature length article titled, “Can Station North Save the City? A loose Coalition of Nonprofit and Commercial Developers Think That the Kind of Arts Ecosystem the Neighborhood Provides is the

City officials are currently seeking to support and promote the grassroots arts infrastructure in an effort to remake and rebrand Baltimore into a new youthful and quirky city. I claim that at times institutional support for the arts through public-private partnership and urban development allows the DIY punk scene operate publicly. Venues like the Hour Haus in the Station North Arts and Entertainment district is an example of insurgent citizenship. The Former location of the general office for the Maryland Pennsylvania railroad, the owners of the Hour Haus uses the venue’s location in Station North to create a stronghold for the non-profit accumulating DIY punk scene. Legitimate venues like this one gain a staying power through using city-officiated spaces to grow the collective and grassroots punk community. On the other hand, too much legibility and surveillance on the punk scene could be detrimental. The Copy Cat, which was one of the first major infrastructural anchors of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, is used less and less as a show space and gathering space for artists. Increased interest in Baltimore City officials to allow some artistic expression and suppress others could seriously diminish the vitality of the scene.

Despite this double-edged sword of increased attention from local government, the social effects of DIY organizing have created an empowered culture for musicians to take control of their destiny, an oft-used phrase in the field, and realize the art they want to make. DIY punk musicians produce a local praxis as they construct their community on principles of mutual aid, responsibility and empowerment. As the DIY punk scene creates empowered subjects that are able to

communicate and organize with each other on a local level, there is much evidence to show that they will find ways to continue the community.
Chapter II

Baltimore as the Setting of the Punk Scene: Cheap Space, Neoliberalism, and Whiteness as Property

We made a right onto North Avenue and found ourselves at the border of development and under-development. The urban third world was just before us on the other side of the street. I was dragging my High School friend and her two flat-mates from the local art school, MICA, to a house show on the margins of the Station North arts district in a black neighborhood. My friend and her flat-mates were white and middle to upper middle class women in their early twenties. While I was upper middle class like my High School classmate, my physical and personal identification as black marked me as different. Although I had never personally experienced economic struggle, I maintained an internal sense of affinity with the African Americans living in this area—more so than anyone else sharing my economic bracket. I felt my companions’ bodies’ tense in fear around me as we slipped from Station North, to a low-income black neighborhood. This border crossing was also the passage from a zone of legality, enthusiastically supported by the Baltimore city government into a different zone associated with illegal activity, abandonment, crime, addiction, and vast blackness in all senses of the word. It was literally darker on the other side of the street as the crumbling infrastructure lacked adequate street lamps and public lighting. They city did however invest in crime cameras that cast a blue glow on street corners designated as high crime areas. From the street corner I had the perspective of standing at the margins of two distinct worlds. On the other hand, the Station North Arts District had been incorporated into city planning in order to
“support and promote artists and cultural organizations.” The Station North official website it boasts the following:

Located in the heart of Baltimore, Station North was the first area in Baltimore to receive the State designation as an Arts & Entertainment District in 2002. Spanning the communities of Charles North, Greenmount West, and Barclay, Station North is a diverse collection of artist live-work spaces, galleries, rowhomes, and businesses, all just steps away from Penn Station, Mount Vernon, Charles Village, the Maryland Institute College of Art, the University of Baltimore, and Johns Hopkins University. There are now twenty Arts & Entertainment Districts in Maryland, and similar programs in dozens of states. Station North continues to serve as a national model for Arts & Entertainment Districts.

The differences between the edges of Station North and the beginnings of East Baltimore are astonishing and immediate. The neighborhood changes drastically with just the barrier of one street. The lights are dimmer, the row houses are boarded, and peoples’ feet drag in a distinct wandering gait walk of unemployment. If we wandered a bit further down North Avenue we would find abandoned administrative buildings with marble columns. The bluish lights at street corners indicating the presence of police cameras and “high crime” neighborhoods would dot the streets, a physical and institutionalized demarcation of danger and undesirability for several blocks at a time. My group of young white women did not wander nearly this far as we stayed in the border area of Station North and east Baltimore. We turned left into the adjacent neighborhood and passed a vacant lot. Having never walked in the neighborhood I was surprised to find evidence of new construction of condominiums alongside Baltimore’s iconic city of brick row houses. This architectural choice harkens back to the “rapid growth of cities during the early industrial age,” and also

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99 Ibid
facilitated the historical practice of ground floor rentals.\textsuperscript{100} Despite my friend’s constant protests about her safety and the darkness, we continued walking. About a block away, we began to hear the low thrashing of distorted guitars and followed the muffled noises to a doorstep. This discrete row house had been in the hands of the punk community for years, serving various waves of young musicians playing in punk and metal music. After knocking on the door, we were greeted by a white man in his mid to late twenties wearing flannel pajama pants. He asked us for seven dollars for entry. As my group and I searched for our wallets, I noticed some people in the kitchen pulling cookies out of the oven. Aside from the contrast of freshly baked cookies and the screaming metal in the basement, I realized that the man at the door was welcoming me to someone’s home. It felt a little unsettling to suddenly be in a stranger’s house, but I was met with kindness right away. Unable to find my wallet after digging through the backpack I’d been using all summer, the man at the door lets me enter for free anyway and enjoy the show in the basement. “It’s OK, go ahead,” he said. This moment of welcome into the show house made me pause and immediately appreciate the accepting atmosphere that my interlocutors spoke of. Perhaps it was the working class element in the DIY punk scene that countered the shame around poverty. At any rate, it was clear that the point of this show was not to make a profit, but to invite people into this row house to enjoy a night of music.

The concrete basement was well suited to house the crowded and sweaty mosh pits and thrashing metal music. A black and white pentagram flag hung over the

drum set. I noticed that the bassist of the metal band before me was a white woman with a prominent role. It wasn’t always obvious that she was a woman until she flipped her jet mane up classic metal-hair style and I could see her red lips and black lined eyes. There were also a couple young black males in the back nodding their heads. They stood out not only because of their race but their discreet white t-shirts and jeans. We made eye contact with each other, with that sense of recognition that people of color share when encountering each other in certain spaces, but I didn’t venture to say anything to them. My shy personality often made talking to people in the field difficult, and I also did not want to bring any unwanted attention and scrutiny to the young black men. The presence of the white female base player and men of color in the audience certainly made me feel more comfortable than usual. For the first time during my fieldwork I also knew about four others attending the show. It was a happy moment in my fieldwork being present at a somewhat socially diverse show and connecting with musicians and friends I had previously met. I was happy to be there that night in this somewhat clandestine underground DIY punk and metal scene, observing the sizeable community that had come to enjoy the music.

My contentment was short lived however as my wide-eyed high school friend begged me and her friends to leave. “I just don’t feel safe and I don’t like this,” she kept repeating. My shot at a great night of fieldwork was shattered by the normalized desire and privilege of a white middle class girl to be returned to her normal and safe environment where tattered clothes are worn in moderation and by choice. Although the space was like a white oasis in a black neighborhood, it was a space made and maintained by specifically white working class and low-income people. In my
experience at my predominately white and wealthy High School, my classmates used the word “white trash” which I found to be an offensive slur towards white working class people, with ease and frequency to describe low-income white people in Baltimore. The few white students from working class backgrounds in my grade of 92 students were always silenced and invisibilized. The idea of whiteness being conflated with poverty seemed strange to many of my classmates and perhaps even revolting as they spat coded words like “hick,” “trailer park trash,” and “white trash,” in order to describe working class white people. I was painfully aware that my High School classmate had probably never spent any time in a white working class space. Her instinctual white and upper middle class habit to privilege her safety and property above others’ was blatant as she repeatedly asserted her safety concerns and distrust of the people in the room. While I had experienced kindness, having been let in to a house show for free and conversed with audience members, my friend raised in Baltimore County only expressed suspicion, concern, and fear. The poverty and grittiness of the space overwhelmed her senses and so, out we went back down the street and across the border to the city sanctioned Station North arts district. One of my former classmate’s flat-mates, who in fact was from the same middle class suburb as I am mentioned, “I like these people, I like their clothes and their music. I liked it,” as we left. My friend offered silence as a reply.

II. A

A Brief Social History of Baltimore and Housing Segregation

“Why Baltimore?” I asked this question in all my interviews. The response was always, “well, Baltimore is cheap.” Cheapness was a major attraction for Punk
musicians and is perhaps the primary reason why Baltimore has become a hub for experimental art. For most of my life I took this descriptor of cheapness as a scientific and an objective calculation of the market. Prices and value determinations were so omnipresent that they almost slipped under the radar as something unworthy of further inquiry or deconstruction. At the same time, cheapness still harbored negative connotations for me. Cheap things were abundant and dilapidated, while expensive things were scarce and durable. Cheapness thus was a contradictory market calculation that was also laden with culturally constructed negative associations. Furthermore, as I began my fieldwork I noticed that Baltimore City as a cheap space was in fact a valuable asset that artists needed to protect in order to continue their creative paths. This naturalization of Baltimore as cheap was ubiquitous in my interviews and described matter-of-factly, yet it was hugely important in DIY punk musicians’ lives. My neighbor and interlocutor Shane told me, “the area lends itself to doing DIY music. It’s small, easy to get to know people, and it’s cheap.” I needed to make sense of this idea of cheapness. Why Baltimore was so cheap? Why does Baltimore suffer from chronic vacancy? How did Baltimore’s neighborhoods arise as distinct pockets of culture and space? What about the history and development of Baltimore City make the landscape so uneven?

In order to explore this question I turned to Antero Pietila’s book, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped A Great American City.* Pietila traces a history of racial segregation and subjugation in housing practices in Baltimore City. He begins this history as early as the mid-1800s. Although Baltimore does not
necessarily evoke images of white’s only signs and back door entrances in the southern system of racial apartheid, Baltimore City officials as well as private real estate brokers, used different techniques to entrench white domination into the housing market and control the movement of black people. In 1880s white residents and business owners enjoyed implicit ownership of all main streets, forcing blacks Baltimoreans into two main slums: east and west Baltimore. A major dividing line between white and black Baltimore was McCulloh Street, which falls just outside of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District. Although Jewish people with origins in Eastern Europe were legally able to rent and purchase real estate on McCulloh Street, their presence was not socially acceptable from white non-Jewish people who began to flee to the suburbs or other parts of the city. Once white gentiles saw neighborhoods as Jewish and thus stigmatized, black residents were able to rent homes in these neighborhoods. This wave of white flight in early 1900s however produced much abandoned housing and also created a three tiered housing market:

It is impossible to estimate how much of this collapse was due to suburbanization and how much to aversion to Jews and fear of blacks. This much is known: the white abandonment was so severe that of a city wide total of 5,655 vacant houses, 1,407 were located in a west Baltimore district that included McCulloh Street… McCulloh Street introduced a succession pattern that would shape Baltimore: neighborhoods first transitioned from non-Jewish to Jewish and then to African American.102

This linkage of black people to instability and unvalued space that was entrenched in the private housing market was soon codified in a city council ordinance. In December of 1910 implicit racial segregation became explicitly codified in the law,

102 Ibid, 15
institutionalizing the notion that black people cheapen real estate and unsettle public space:

The residential segregation bill won the City Council’s approval on December 9, 1910. The very title of the bill suggested that African Americans undermined neighborhood stability: *Ordinance for preserving order, securing property values and promoting the great interests and insuring the good government of Baltimore City.*

Pietila describes east and west Baltimore as an inner city vacuum of development, where black people were continually forced through the double pressure of racist real estate practices as well as segregation ordinances from the city. This trend was further exacerbated by the federal practice of redlining. The federally backed Home Owner’s Loan Corporation (HOLC) mapped urban America, designating which neighborhoods were worthy of mortgage loans, and which were too risky.

Homer Hoyt set the tone at the HOLC after becoming the affiliated Federal Housing Administration’s chief economist in 1934. He wanted to improve the accuracy of real estate appraisals so that the federal government could avoid undue risks in insuring lenders against losses in the event of homeowners defaulting on mortgage loans.

Neighborhoods that HOLC redlined could not receive bank loans, which essentially prevented the people in those neighborhoods from becoming homeowners. In Baltimore City, almost all black neighborhoods were redlined, leaving African Americans in an already disinvested inner city with no chance of legal routes towards homeownership. As the Federal Housing Administration subsumed HOLC’s duties, the federal agency promoted white home ownership in the suburbs, segregating non-whites across the United States in cities.

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103 Ibid, 22
104 Ibid, 62
The postwar era made the housing situation for black people even worse. During World War II, Baltimore experienced a massive influx of workers during wartime manufacturing:

Twenty-eighth in population, Maryland ranked as the twelfth state in the value of its war contracts. Its factories produced huge numbers of ships, aircraft, iron and magnesium castings, radar and communication gear, x-ray machines, rockets, shells, cartridge cases, fuses, cannon, power, piston rings, railroad brake shoes, steel chemicals, cotton duck, and heavy-duty tires. Bethlehem Steel mills and ship-yards employed 58,000 men and women in Baltimore, Glenn L. Martin’s aircraft factories another 53,000.105

The population surge during wartime caused massive housing shortages and dangerous overcrowding. Landowners even ripped out bathroom appliances in order to create more space for renters. Once the war ended, the receding tide of people and capital created an opportunity for loan sharks to sell these dilapidated and unsafe homes to African Americans. Barred from receiving bank loans, African Americans relied on predatory and informal lending practices in order to achieve home ownership. White speculators would buy these dilapidated houses with no private bathrooms and running water, and sell them back at inflated prices to black Baltimoreans. These speculators also derived their profit from selling newly vacant houses left behind by white residents. A year before the end of WWII a black family crossed over the west side of Baltimore and began renting on a white street. Real estate speculators saw an opportunity to buy homes from white residents looking to re-locate, and then resell the property at prices up to 75% above market value to African Americans looking to finally own a home. The federal government’s redlining practices prevented most black people from taking out bank loans, leaving

105 Ibid, 75-76
real estate speculators as their only option. These real estate speculators or block-busters would also sell newly vacant homes to black people on a rent-to-buy basis, which often left potential homeowners in debt. The Baltimore City government took no interest in policing these predatory practices. Pietila writes, “Operations like the Forty Thieves flourished in a regulatory twilight zone where few rules existed.”

Furthermore, many African Americans who attempted to buy these homes had no accumulated wealth to manage the vast repairs needed. Others could not afford to pay the gas and electric bill. Although residential segregation had legally ended, it was simply re-created as cramped black ghettos expanded and white people fled to the suburbs in the hundreds of thousands.

This trend of abandonment and vacancy continued among businesses. Bureaucrats who worked in federal buildings downtown during wartime left their offices vacant, major department stores went out of business, and the city’s public transit system collapsed. Wherever white people fled, capital and esteem followed leaving poor black people in the city’s center. Pietila writes, “Working-class black families, who could not muster the resources to pay inflated rents or mortgages outside the central city, remained in overcrowded, decaying neighborhoods increasingly devoid of blue-collar industries.” Baltimore City and Baltimore County became solidified in a black and white dichotomy, the former black, abandoned, and jobless, while the latter was white and expanding.

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106 Ibid, 101
107 Ibid, 214
This history is crucial to understand as I write about the Baltimore DIY punk scene. Racist housing practices are not only important to understand the social construction of cheap space, but they also generated the opportunity for white home ownership. Although the white working class of Baltimore also suffered from de-industrialization and an inadequate welfare system in the post-war era, home ownership and the ability to purchase private property helped distinguish the white working class for their black counterparts. Punk houses, an important piece of arts infrastructure in the scene necessitate home owners who can purchase and maintain private property and also expect this property to be upheld by the state, including minimal interference from police. As the residential history of Baltimore shows, home ownership in particular was a product of white privilege where the transfer or property was often from white hands to white hands. Additionally, private investment from corporations like Station North Arts and Entertainment District Inc. continue to facilitate the white privilege of investment and positive expectations. African Americans in Baltimore city have been subjected to precarious living conditions in overcrowded slums, substandard row houses, and public housing. At the federal and municipal level the state has prevented black homeownership, especially within the inner city. The acquisition of cheap private property in Baltimore City is a product of institutionalized racism and not a natural or objective calculation of the real estate market. The Baltimore DIY punk scene thus owes its cheap space and punk houses to a historic trend of economic disenfranchisement of the black community.

This history of residential segregation in Baltimore, and the inability for African Americans to own property, is rooted in the historical fact of property being
an exclusive privilege for white people. In order to understand this American legacy of property ownership being contingent upon race, I turn to Cheryl Harris’s groundbreaking article published in the Harvard Law Review entitled Whiteness as Property.\(^{109}\) She shows how property law in the United States was established through the domination of black people and Native Americans, the former through their objectification as property, and the latter through the “annexation and seizure”\(^{110}\) of their land. This created the structural paradigm of African Americans as objects of white domination and also institutionalized whiteness as a prerequisite for the exclusive right to own property. In the context of the institution of chattel slavery, white people employed their whiteness in order to circumvent the harrowing decent to the bottom of economic oppression and the hyper exploitation of slavery:

Between 1680 and 1682, the first slave codes appeared, codifying the extreme deprivations of liberty already existing in social practice. Many laws parcelled out differential treatment based on racial categories: Blacks were not permitted to travel without permits, to own property, to assemble publicly, or to own weapons; nor were they to be educated. Racial identity was further merged with stratified social and legal status: “Black” racial identity marked who was subject to enslavement; “white” racial identity marked who was “free” or, at minimum not a slave.\(^{111}\)

Whiteness in this context means the ability own oneself and maintain autonomy. The white colonists who eventually established the United States justified the conquest and seizure of Native Americans lands through their perceived superiority as white people. This implied that the ability to possess, and the ability to own land, was

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\(^{110}\) Ibid, 1721

\(^{111}\) Ibid, 1718
predicated upon one’s identity as a white person. Conquest was also legitimated by the American government as a legal practice preserved for white people:

The law provided not only a defense of conquest and colonization, but also a naturalized regime of rights and disabilities, power and disadvantage that flowed from it, so that no further justifications or rationalizations were required...courts established whiteness as a prerequisite to the exercise of enforceable property rights.\(^\text{112}\)

White people maintained exclusive use of these privileges through its institutionalization in the constitution and the court system. As it was historically structured, whiteness was a treasured and exclusive bundle of rights that bestowed a set of material, psychological, and status privilege. Harris’s central argument is that whiteness itself is property as it preserves exclusive access to status and social entitlements and also because it meets the theoretical and social criteria to qualify as property. Drawing from classical notions of western liberalism, James Madison published republican notions of property in the National Gazette in 1792. He described property as, “that dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in exclusion of every other individual embraces. In its larger and juster meaning, it embraces everything to which a man may attach value and have a right...”\(^\text{113}\) Foundational notions of property in the United States encompassed not only land, but also the rights and expectations of citizens. The state’s function was to protect these propriety expectations and to prevent unlawful use of this property. However, the United States government reserved exclusive use of property, both tangible and intangible, for white people. In order to gain access to property, one must also be in possession of whiteness. If property is defined as

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\(^\text{112}\) Ibid, 1723-1724
“everything that is valued and to which a person has a right,” then whiteness is the right to autonomy, private property, and a host of other social privileges. Harris calls this institutionalization of white privilege a vested interest in whiteness as property. U.S law and jurisdiction regulates property through racial hierarchy and the subjugation of people of color. In Harris’s words, “American law has recognized a property interest in whiteness that, although unacknowledged, now forms the background against which legal disputes are framed, argued, and adjudicated,” meaning self-determination and citizenship are not natural rights but are acquired through white membership. Harris also illustrates four central ways in which whiteness functions as property: it is deployed as a resource, it bestows high esteem and reputation, and is guarded for exclusive use. Although whiteness cannot sold or traded in the market, it still maintains the quality of property and is perhaps more valued and treasured because it cannot be transferred from person to person. The effect of whiteness as property legalizes the economic subjugation of people of color and supports a white supremacist culture where the comfort of white people is often always privileged over that of the other.

I want to use this concept of whiteness as property to understand the drought of property ownership among African Americans and the construction of Baltimore as a cheap space as material outcome of white supremacy. I argue that the vested property interest in whiteness in Baltimore City preserved low-income white neighborhoods from predatory real estate speculation and population removal. Finally

114 Ibid, 1728
I argue that the municipal and private investment in the white space of Station North is an example of the persistence pattern of whiteness as property.

Before the Baltimore City Council explicitly passed a residential segregation ordinance, most real estate agents refused to sell homes to African Americans. In 1834 only .1% of the black population owned real estate.117 Real estate agents cited their reputation and the claim that black people reduced property value in their defense. The “Baltimore Sun” (The Sun) a white-owned city newspaper promoted an institutional need for housing segregation and worked to spread propaganda and fear of an encroaching black population. In 1910 The Sun ran an article entitled “Negroes Encroaching” that succinctly expressed the view that property ownership was only for the benefit of whites:

It is up to white people, without regard to political affiliation, to come to the aid of the city and State by wiping out the negro in the Fourth District of this city, and if for no other reason, it seems to me that every white man should come to the relief of the residents and property owners in the Seventeenth ward by passing the amendment and passing out the negro as a political factor in this city.118

The claims asserted in this article fit neatly with Harris’s concept of whiteness as property. She asserts that black people do not own the right to purchase property, which should exclusively belong to white people and also construes a sense of solidarity between whites of all classes in the shared right and duty to be property owners. Whiteness here is both valorized and employed to prevent African Americans from becoming property owners. This also codified the notion that black people cheapen property and ruin real estate.

117 Pietila, 17
118 Ibid, 21
The active prevention of black property ownership continued to persist. Private developers like the Roland Park Company evicted whole black neighborhoods to make way for the project of white suburban settlement and home ownership. Highway construction projects to facilitate private transportation from the suburbs to the city uprooted about 94,000 people, most black, between 1965 and 1980.119 At the federal level, The Home Owner Loan Corporation (HOLC) and The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) national mapping of neighborhoods eligible for mortgages left black neighborhoods across the country quarantined, signaling non-investment zones, “Negro residential areas (marked in red) and racially mixed areas were deemed undesirable investments; public policy throughout the 1950s thus supported racial homogenization of residential areas and the devaluation of black owned property.”120 Barred from receiving bank loans, poor blacks were corralled into undervalued neighborhoods and rented property from exploitative real estate speculators. In Baltimore, many row houses in the city were seriously dilapidated after a wartime surge in population, leaving African Americans in Baltimore with over-priced and derelict properties. The rent-to-buy method these real estate agents used often never amounted to any property ownership, and placed black people further behind in wealth accumulation.121

Public housing policy in Baltimore City also reinforced ideas of whiteness as property. Local policies around public housing in the post war era caved to white interests in the private real estate sector, the Baltimore City Council, and local

119 Ibid, 219
121 Ibid, 99
residents. This grouping effectively lobbied to keep black housing projects in the underdeveloped and racially homogenous inner city and effectively prevented the expansion of black overcrowded slums:

“While city council members eventually approved the program, they also restricted the number of apartments the housing authority could build on vacant land, thereby limiting new public housing to already impoverished neighborhoods. The city council action pleased white citizens who sought to keep their neighborhoods racially, ethnically, and economically homogenous and to protect their property values,”122

In addition, Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency (BURHA) led so called “urban renewal” projects which displaced many African Americans families living on private property:

“In the Broadway-Hopkins area, which was close to existing and proposed public housing complexes, more than 1,000 families, 90% of them black, were displaced, and only 124 replacement homes were planned…Of the more than 1,000 black families displaced by the Broadway-Hopkins redevelopment project, 25% percent relocated to adjacent black public housing complexes”123

The situation was no different in west Baltimore; “The clearance of twenty-seven acres near the Fifth Regiment Armory, adjacent to McCulloh Homes and bordering the predominately white Bolton Hill, displaced 1,000 tenants—95 percent of them black. About 60% of that area became home to the Maryland state office complex.”124

The net effect of BURHA led urban renewal displaced 75,000 people, 80-90% of whom were black.125 Attempts to integrate public housing through the 1950s and 1960s proved futile and only led to further segregation of blacks in public housing.

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123 Ibid, 101
124 Ibid
125 Ibid, 103
Housing officials only selected a handful of public housing complexes to integrate, and offered white tenants the option to relocate. By the mid-60s the public housing population in Baltimore was largely black, “7,910 of the 10,153 public housing families were African American. That was a far cry from the 1940s, when the racial composition was almost equal.”

This turbulent housing history for African Americans in Baltimore has had detrimental effects for neighborhood stability and property ownership. The local municipal response to the influx of 100,000 African Americans from 1940 to 1960 was to concentrate black people in dilapidated row homes or the limited public housing options in historically black neighborhoods. The persistent ghettoization of black people in east and west Baltimore since the mid-1800s continued to reproduce through morphing segregationist policies.

Baltimore city policy has always privileged the material comforts of its white residents over its black ones. Algonquian speaking tribes originally inhabited the state of Maryland, their territory stretching across what is now federally recognized as Delaware and Virginia. These tribes included the Nanticoke, Choptank, Assateague, Pocomoke, Patuxent, Conoy, and Piscataway, each containing numerous sub tribes. In 1632 the King of England granted Lord Baltimore a patent to colonize two-thirds of the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and establish a plantation of enslaved Africans. The English colonizers also sought to engage in the lucrative trade of beaver skins with Native Americans in the southern and eastern shores of Maryland. Lord Baltimore, the so-called Lord proprietary of Maryland never traversed his

126 Ibid, 113
colonized territory but sent his brothers Leonard and George Calvert in his place. The colonists landed in the mouth of the Potomac River, the ancestral homeland of the Piscataway, Pamunkey, Nangemeick, Potapaco, Yaocomaco, and Anacostank tribes.

Through the 1600s and 1700s English colonists used treaties as their preferred method of colonization to usurp land and autonomy from the indigenous populations. The English settlers enforced containment on reserved lands, taxation, racial distinction, and weakened autonomy through these treaties:

The policy of colonial Maryland toward its Algonquian-speaking Indians was to enter into formal treaty relations with them. By placing themselves under the protection of the colonial government, the tribes received guarantees for reserved lands and hunting and fishing rights, for which they were to (1) pay an annual tribute, usually consisting of bows and arrows, (2) return fugitive slaves and (3) have their chiefs confirmed by the governor.128

Early records from the library of congress show contact between the English aboard Lord Baltimore’s ships the Ark and the Dove and tribal leaders of the Piscataway, Yaomaco, and Patuxent tribes.129 Although only 13 white English men comprised the central leaders of the expedition, the Ark and the Dove also transported approximately 300 “men and handicraftsmen in the vessel” of which “the yeomen and servants were Protestants”130 onto Native lands. Despite their treaties, the white colonizers did not adhere to their own written agreements and intensified their colonization of native lands in Maryland. After 1676, the settlers continually drove the Patuxents, Chopoticos, and Yaocomacas off of their homelands and attempted to consolidate them onto reservations. Cecilius (Cecil) Calvert second Baron Baltimore

130 Ibid, 19
and son of George Calvert established Baltimore County in 1659.\textsuperscript{131} Some of the earliest records of the Baltimore County courthouse show that the jurisdiction over Baltimore County was used to discipline and punish the indigenous population:

It is stated in Johnson’s \textit{History of Cecil County} (p.62) that a court was held in Baltimore County on June 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1664, at the house of Mr. Francis Wright, for the purpose of examining into the case of a Seneca Indian arrested under suspicious circumstances, and the author says there is reason to believe that Baltimore County Court frequently met (in that part of the County which is now) on the Eastern Shore.\textsuperscript{132}

By 1752 around 200 colonists lived in a settlement they called Baltimore. They erected two gates in order to exclude the indigenous population on west end of what is now called West Baltimore St and on Gay Street near the Jones Falls River. These colonists used physical barriers and violence to settle the land, “In 1756 the Indians approached within 30 miles of Baltimore. The inhabitants of the little town, in expectation of attack by them, raised a considerable sum of money for the purchase of arms and ammunition, and would no doubt have built another stockade if the Indians had not soon withdrawn.”\textsuperscript{133} Baltimore City became even better armed in 1776 leading up to the American Revolutionary War. As of 1970 about 7,000 descendants of the Piscataway, Mattawoman, Nangemaick or Sacayo tribes were reported to be living in Charles County, Prince Georges County, St. Mary’s county, and other areas in the Washington D.C and Baltimore City metropolitan areas.\textsuperscript{134} The state of Maryland only recently recognized its indigenous population in 2012 when then

\textsuperscript{131} Ritchie, Albert, Judge. "Early County Seats of Baltimore County." \textit{Maryland Historical Magazine} Mar. 1906: 3-16.
\textsuperscript{132}Ibid, 5
\textsuperscript{134} Feest, 247
Governor Martin O’Malley signed an executive order to recognize the Piscataway Conoy Tribe and the Piscataway Indian Nation.\textsuperscript{135}

For African Americans in Baltimore City the social formation of whiteness as property served to ghettoize them in cramped and undesirable sections of the city. In the early stages of 1950s era integration in public housing, housing officials perceived white tenants as pillars of stability, and they were thus offered encouragement to settle in newly integrated apartment complexes. While city policies forced African Americans into crowded slums, white public housing projects had vacancies and extra space for tenants to live. Additionally, some low-income whites cited their race as grounds for preserving affordable housing and felt threatened by the arrival of black tenants in their buildings. Although white working class people in Baltimore also suffered from the loss of 17,000 manufacturing jobs, they didn’t suffer because they were black but in spite of it. The majority of working class whites were not removed from their houses through urban renewal and remained in historically white working class neighborhoods. Although middle class white people did lobby to keep low-income whites out of their neighborhood, those white families who were able to afford it, found homes in the suburbs. This history of racialized housing discrimination adheres to the notion of whiteness as property in terms of traditional forms of property, propertied expectation, and defined social relations. In the traditional sense, African Americans were prevented from acquiring property through a combination of outright residential segregation, redlining, block busting, and urban renewal, among others. Propertied expectations among white people in Baltimore

afforded them privileged access to property and moved them to actively prevent African Americans from sharing the same privileges. Finally, it shaped social relations, namely a continued discrimination and disinvestment in black spaces and neighborhoods.

“In Baltimore, segregation hovered around 90% every decade between 1940 and 1970. Islands of poverty also emerged. Personal circumstances, a shrinking industrial base, lack of economic opportunities, the legacy and ongoing practice of racial segregation, migration, local and federal policies, desegregation, and white flight conspired to create them.”

The vested property interest in whiteness produced detrimental effects, especially for the African American population. It left the entire city stigmatized as a poor, abandoned, and black city. Given the historical trend in Baltimore of white residents and policy makers linking black neighborhoods with undesirability, the entire city was cast with a pall of cheapness and worthlessness. Baltimore lost its esteem and instead became a troublesome city. It wasn’t until the 1990s that white families began moving in to Baltimore136 and is precisely where my collected oral histories begin.

II. B

The effects of Neoliberalism in Baltimore

The musicians in the DIY punk scene I spoke to also hinted that Baltimore is not only cheap, but malfunctioning. The city seemed broken at times and forgotten. Oliver who is currently in his thirties, told me what Baltimore was like towards the end of the Regan-era, an administration that choked off federal funds to suffering de-industrialized cities like Baltimore. I already used some of this ethnographic data

136 Pietila, 253
earlier in my thesis, but I think it’s worth revisiting to understand the environment in which the punk scene began:

Baltimore at that time it was a complete shithole, it as awful. The entire city was ridden with crime. No one really thought of going down there to play because of that. The only all ages venue was west Baltimore which is still one of the worst parts. A couple bars opened around 95-96 that weren’t carding and under aged kids could get in and drink. They wanted to go down there and plays shows because was a different environment, they could drink and no one would screw around with them. One venue was called Memory lane run by biker hillbillies in the city if you could believe that, and they were pretty racist, they had Nazi tattoos and stuff like that, but they would let punk bands who were anti-racist play. They just wanted to make some money.

In this era, Baltimore was marked by a sense of desperation and emptiness. The need for business was so dire it overcame racist business owners’ desire to control their clientele. Oliver’s anecdote also exposes the presence of a conservative white population living in Baltimore at the time.

Samira, who arrived in Baltimore in 2002 from Nashville, described Baltimore as a struggling city. I asked her what the Ottobar was like in the early 2000s. She said:

It seems very Baltimore to me, by that I mean like, kinda dirty and honest y’know? There was also a little bit of posing and some drugs and neither of those things interested me at all. And so, there were some things that could be deemed shady. But its like, people just wanted to have a good time and watch some good music and there were a lot of amazing shows being brought there because it was the old Ottobar space.

Other musicians I spoke to used words like gritty, urban decay, and economic disparity to describe what they saw and experienced in the city. In this section I further explore Baltimore history, and the expose the policies and post-war trends that contributed to its decline. I also want to show what
the lived economic conditions were like leading up to the formation of the punk scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The early economy in Baltimore in the mid to late 1800s was a mix of commerce and industry. White working class neighborhoods like Hamden and Woodberry in northern Baltimore were mill towns and an economic stronghold in the country for textiles and cotton duck.\(^{137}\) However, by the late 1930s, Baltimore’s economy expanded to encompass iron and steel manufacturing owned by the Bethlehem Steel Corporation.\(^ {138}\) Vehicle manufacturer General Motors and electric equipment manufacturers like Westinghouse, Locke Insulator, and Western Electric also had a strong presence in the City. The wartime economy swelled the profits of these manufactures and attracted 591,000 new people by 1943, “Although recent construction had doubled the plant’s capacity, Glenn Martin had a $110,000 million backlog by 1940. At the same time Baltimore’s shipyards had $80 million worth of orders to fill. Industrial expansion swelled payrolls across the city.”\(^ {139}\) The loss of these industries after the end of WWII caused the disappearance of tens of thousands of jobs, beginning the decline of the city’s economy and infrastructure. In the wake of deindustrialization, Baltimore relied on intergovernmental aid from the federal government. This practice was made popular under the Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson presidencies through targeted grants: “categorical grants, including programs earmarked


\(^{139}\) Ibid, 15
for antipoverty initiatives aimed at African-Americans inner-city residents, rose dramatically."140 In Baltimore these initiatives extended public sector employment to African Americans, raising employment and extending political leverage in the black community.141

However, the shift from new deal politics to the neoliberal order wreaked mass destruction, the effects of which are still visible and ongoing today. These politics disproportionately affected the African American community. In *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism* Jason Hackworth explores the effects of neoliberal policies on American cities. He defines neoliberalism as “an ideological rejection of egalitarian liberalism in general and the Keynesian welfare in particular, combined with a selective return to the ideas of classical liberalism.”142 Neoliberalism is both a global and local process of “freeing up” capital and allowing American business to relocate wherever profits margins will be the highest. At times, local and federal governments are persuaded to enact austerity measures to limit domestic spending on welfare programs.

Neoliberal destruction consists of the removal of Keynesian artifacts (public housing, public space) policies (redistributive welfare, food stamps), institutions (labor unions U.S department of Housing and Urban Development), and agreements (Fordist labor arrangements, federal government redistribution to states and cities), while neoliberal creation consists of the establishment of new, or cooptation of extant institutions and practices to reproduce neoliberalism in the future.143

141 Ibid, 30
143 Ibid, 11
Lacking federal government assistance, many American cities redirected their governance and revenue toward attracting business. With deregulation of capital control previously used to keep American businesses from relocating abroad, the risk of capital flight became a serious concern for many municipalities. President Nixon rehashed the intergovernmental aid and anti-poverty measures from the Kennedy years to instead become General Revenue Sharing (GRS) and community development block grants (CDBG). In Baltimore, this federal revenue that carried no stipulations for specified use, strengthened and centralized the political power of government officials rerouting power away from residents and people working in local social service agencies. Donald Schaefer, the mayor in Baltimore from 1971 to 1987, readily accepted these policies, and even enacted neoliberal measures at the city level, “Schaefer’s austerity was rewarded during the mid-1970s when Moody’s raised Baltimore’s credit rating from A to A-1”\(^\text{144}\). This trend continued into President Carter’s regime where he groomed the landscape for mass privatization. Carter stimulated public-private partnerships through the creation of the Economic Development Administration and Urban Development Action grants which, “subsidized private investment in distressed cities.”\(^\text{145}\) Baltimore received $37 million dollars in UDAGs, $10 million of which financed the development of the tourist-friendly downtown inner harbor.\(^\text{146}\) Federal funds that previously kept this postindustrial city afloat, and targeted racial inequality were now used to turn

\(^{144}\) Jane, 36

\(^{145}\) Berger, 38

\(^{146}\) Berger 39
Baltimore into a tourist attraction. The opportunities created for local employment through public-private collaborations were low paying service sector jobs, barely addressing rising unemployment nor creating livable and sustainable wages.

Meanwhile, from 1972 to 1977 the industrial sector continued its rapid collapse losing 136 industries and 16,100 manufacturing jobs.\textsuperscript{147}

The local culture of white supremacy in the working class community proved too entrenched to build a strong multiracial labor movement to combat these economic losses. Government officials capitalized on the long history of racial subjugation in Baltimore to garner support for austerity measures among the white working class.

In the early 1970s Baltimore’s Southeast Community Organization became nationally known as one of the most successful of the new grassroots, ethnically based community organizations. SECO and groups like it empowered white working-class people when they were experiencing mounting economic and social distress and searching for a new voice in local and national politics… [their] unity of opinion carried over to the subject of race, on which most working class whites shared a well-defined position. History taught them that compulsory integration, the main liberal solution to urban racial inequities, was ineffective, destructive, and, most important, unfair.\textsuperscript{148}

Many white working class residents in Baltimore voted against their economic interests, while paradoxically trying to protect their income from local African Americans. Instead of organizing against the detrimental neoliberal policies, many working class whites organized to halt the desegregation of schools and the workplace. Private law firms and developers boasted about the conservatism of the

\textsuperscript{147} Durr, 198-199

\textsuperscript{148} Durr, 151
white working class in order to allure business.\textsuperscript{149} Attempts to raise wages through AFSCME organized wildcat strikes in the 1970s ended in worker layoffs in the police and sanitation department.\textsuperscript{150} The distraction of racism allowed anti-union activity to flourish.

The effects of neoliberal policies worsened under the Reagan administration. The weakened federal revenues under the Nixon and Carter administration were all but decimated under the next regime. Regan discontinued GRS, CETA, and UDAGS while implementing tax cuts for the wealthy, free trade agreements, and increased military spending. The remaining intergovernmental revenues went to directly to states, leaving municipalities to vie for aid at the state level. These policies had devastating effects in Baltimore City. Although Baltimore contained 19\% of Maryland’s population, it contained 63\% of Maryland’s public assistance recipients.\textsuperscript{151} Pitting state municipalities against each other, the city’s budget shrank significantly.

Ultimately, Reagan’s policies took a huge bite out of Baltimore’s budget. The city lost a total of $569 million in federal funds for its 1982, 1983, and 1984 budgets alone. In a city in which half the population received some type of welfare benefit, and only a third earned enough to pay taxes, the cuts were devastating.\textsuperscript{152}

The African American communities shouldered the worst of these budget cuts facing high unemployment and were still largely segregated into inner city ghettos, “Blue-collar whites were hurt by the economic decline of the 1970s, but urban blacks were

\textsuperscript{149} Derr, 199  
\textsuperscript{150} Berger, 37  
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, 41  
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, 41
devastated. As whites fled, disparities between the city’s rich and poor grew… by 1979 unemployment among black youth hit 50 percent.” Additionally the continued trend of white flight from the post war era through the 1970s, eroded the city’s tax base.

A combination of neoliberal policies that withheld funds from America’s cities and the racism against African Americans contributed to the destruction of Baltimore City. This combination of capitalism and white hegemonic power contributed to the vacant, decrepit, and crime ridden reality that Baltimore faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The process of neoliberalism violently reinforced pre-existing racial disparities leaving the city bereft of jobs and human services. The forced entrepreneurship of Baltimore City replaced stable municipal jobs with low paying service sector jobs, or no jobs at all. The effects of neoliberalism are and were dire, and set the stage for the current trend of gentrification.

II. C

The Persistence of Whiteness as Property in Baltimore City and the DIY Punk Scene

The legacy and persistence of whiteness as property in Baltimore City is a long-standing structural paradigm that has legitimized the physical concentration and disenfranchisement of African Americans in east and west Baltimore for the past 160 to 200 years. Property law rooted in racial hierarchy produced the conditions of poverty and abandonment that punk artists saw in the early stages of the community’s formation. Samira, a white female punk rock musician who has been a member of the

153 Derr, 194
DIY punk scene for the past 12 years has witnessed the disenfranchisement of African Americans in the City as well as the expansion of the mostly white and young DIY arts scene.

Unlike my other interlocutors, Samira moved to Baltimore to join a band called Avec after opening up for them in Nashville, Tennessee. It was only after moving in with her new band mates that Samira began to explore the city and locate herself within Baltimore. Her first impressions of the city and the creative community were that it was a constellation of smaller neighborhoods and pockets of activity that together formed a larger arts community. The detrimental effects of neoliberalism were also central to people’s local identities and affected how they both navigated the city and formed community:

I think the things that I liked were just about the city specifically. That it was dirty and honest and not like be polite for no reason which definitely occurs in the south y’know? Backwards compliments and things like that are very southern. And so this just seemed like a real—because the diversity and the economic disparity can’t really be denied. And so what I did like is that it feels like a big city but geographically it’s pretty small. So I could feasibly live in Catonsville¹⁵⁴ and go see a show downtown and it wouldn’t take up my entire night. So, I like that you do actually have some choices and can get around in that way even though our public transportation kind of sucks. So, yeah I liked that there were all these little pockets of creative people doing things. People knew each other but they could coexist even though they might play different genres. That was my experience, that’s what I take out is positive experiences.¹⁵⁵

Her word choice of “economic disparity” and “diversity” points to the abject state of the city, and especially the disenfranchisement of African Americans, that necessitated do-it-yourself tactics in order to build the DIY arts and music scene. The

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¹⁵⁴ A suburb of Baltimore, northwest of the City
¹⁵⁵ Recorded October 2013
economic decline of Baltimore also provided the cheap property and lack of police surveillance for artists like Samira to reside in the city and pursue a life dedicated to the arts. Although claims to whiteness didn’t save the working class from deindustrialization and a corporatized economy under neoliberalism, the historical employment of whiteness as property kept white working class neighborhoods like Remmington and Hamden physically intact and also encouraged homeownership. Community continuity and private spaces provided the autonomy needed to build pockets of show spaces for concerts and community meeting spaces. The creation of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District is a prime example of the persistence of whiteness as property in Baltimore as I examine it in relation to the current punk scene.

In the midst of my summer fieldwork in 2013 the City Paper published a features article entitled Can Station North Save the City, an area in central Baltimore where I conducted almost all of my participant-observation research. The author, Baynard Woods, frames the article around a conference in Station North called Artists and Neighborhood Change: A Conference on Gentrification and Cultural Vitality in Transitioning Communities with sessions led by urban studies scholars, business owners in the arts and entertainment district, and private developers. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake was also in attendance. The central conflict guiding the discussion was how to properly maintain Station North as a creative and affordable neighborhood, while still investing capital and attention to continue the neighborhood’s “revitalization.” In other words, how can gentrification,

\[\text{Woods, Baynard. "Can Station North Save the City?" City Paper, 3 July 2013. Web. 01 Mar. 2014.}\]
meaning an influx of resources where there previously was none, be controlled to serve the community’s needs? Although young white people have been establishing DIY spaces and collectively exploring artistic mediums in Baltimore City since the late 1980s, private investment in the local arts scene and vested interest in the growth of an arts community from the local government is more recent. This raises questions both about the future and autonomy of the DIY punk community, as well as governance schemes in the postindustrial city. In particular, how can the Baltimore City government protect and maintain a grassroots arts and music community, while still allowing artists the space to remain creative? What is the significance of white artists guiding the local redevelopment of the City, while African Americans, historically the most disenfranchised group in the City, remain on the margins of development interests?

In order to situate the political and economic context of Baltimore as a postindustrial city, I first explore the effects of neoliberalism in urban America. In Jason Hackworth’s *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism*, he discusses the role that private real estate investment has played in guiding development in American cities in the neoliberal age. As federal support to cities wanes and the presence of stable industrial jobs disappears, real estate investment becomes an increasingly important revenue stream. The reliance to the whims of the private real estate market is characterized by what Neil Smith calls selected redevelopment, guided by profitability of investors and developers.

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Gentrification and urban redevelopment guided by private interests in thus a symptom of neoliberal governance in cities:

…the neoliberal city is increasingly characterized by a curious combination of inner city and exurban private investment, disinvestment in the inner suburbs, the relaxation of land use controls, and the reduction of public investment that is not likely to lead to an immediate profit. If public housing and middle-class suburban housing were icons of the Keynesian managerialist city, then gentrified neighborhoods and downtown commercial mega-projects are the icons of the neoliberal city.\(^{160}\)

An excerpt from the aforementioned City Paper article describes the practice of gentrification and its outcomes of displacement as neighborhoods are transformed into commercial spaces of consumption. His references to New York, Washington D.C. and Baltimore also illustrate a pattern of artistic use of cheap real estate that is later commodified by private investors:

We’ve seen it again and again: An area like station North creates a grassroots ‘vibrancy’ that comes from a mix of low rents, open space, and young artists. Whether Greenwich Village, Chelsea, Dupont Circle, or even Mount Vernon in Baltimore, the general model is gentrification. Let the ‘artists’ come in as ‘pioneers’ and make things all spiffy and stylish, by driving out those pesky original settlers. And then you price out the artists.\(^{161}\)

Wood’s language also invokes a settler colonial framework where settlers (young white artists in this context) expropriate the land of indigenous peoples, only to be pushed out by more affluent and organized settlers. The settlers are able to dominate and rearrange the landscape in claiming that native peoples are not entitled to posses the land or are not making proper use of their resources. The analogies to pioneers,

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\(^{160}\) Hackworth, 78
\(^{161}\) Ibid, 3
settlers, and natives are in reality young and mostly white artists, private real estate investors, and low income African Americans. Although settler colonial language is used as an analogy in the article, the process described is part of an ongoing process of settler colonialism that forced Algonquian speaking tribes from their ancestral homeland in Maryland. The gentrification of Station North is a moment within the long legacy of whiteness as property, and the privileging of private property for the usage of white people. The gentrification along North Avenue is perhaps especially interesting because unlike other neighborhoods in Baltimore that have been redeveloped, Station North is in a historically black neighborhood that for the first time in 50 years is growing with white residents. According to Wood’s article, Station North began as a grassroots arts community making use of the neighborhood’s industrial buildings and cheap real estate to engage the public and build a local community. Woods describes what these artists created in Station North as an arts infrastructure that has perhaps unintentionally created an attractive community for artists around the country to inhabit. In our recorded interview, Samira described the changes she has witnessed in Station North:

So, there’s been a ton a ton of gentrification in the last years that I’ve lived here. Even through the economic crash there’s been a lot of like white artsy communities spreading, so like anywhere on North Av. Like, Station North was not a thing that existed. To me its funny, it’s sort of like a made up thing. It wasn’t a neighborhood and you could be a little scared driving through there. But like MICA has been really pushing the boundaries on where the artsy crowd is living and socializing. And I am not an expert on whether or not that’s good or bad. It’s just something that I’ve noticed. I would say neighborhoods before, there weren’t— there’s definitely a lot more options now. There’s more clubs now, there’s more bands now. I don’t think that’s unique to Baltimore necessarily.
The commodification and investment of the white arts and music scene in Baltimore is not uniformly welcome, nor is it certain how the increased attention will shape the scene moving forward. The city government’s desire to address the vacancy of 30,000 properties versus artists and musicians desire to lead their lives creatively is not necessarily aligned, although there is room for collaboration and a shared vision.

What is clear however is that the creation of the Station North arts District through public and private partnership adheres to the social structure of whiteness as property. The title of the City Paper article could be more accurately named: Can White People in Station North Save the City? Or, can White People in Station North Revitalize the Neighborhood? The beginnings of Station North and the creation of the Copy Cat building illustrate the privileging of white spaces for public and private investment. After Charlie Lankford bought the Copy Cat building in 1983 converting it into an artist’s workspace, the city essentially rearranged municipal zoning law in order to allow Lankford’s artists to live in their workspaces. The bestowal of a so-called Planned United Development legalized the artists’ activities and conferred city sanctioned trust and autonomy to these artists. The city government codified Lankford’s expectations that his tenants should have autonomy to work and live in their workspaces. I argue that this trend at both the city and private investor level of conferring trust through autonomy and economic benefits is an example of the persistence of whiteness as property. Historically, whiteness functioned in the United States to legally define a person as either slave of free, and also allocated property rights over indigenous land.162 The investment in white spaces of Station North

performs both of these functions. In order to understand the racial hierarchies rooted in property law in Baltimore, one must begin with the domination of indigenous peoples lands in Baltimore. The colonization of Baltimore began in 1659 when Cecil Calvert second Baron of Baltimore issued a patent to the sheriff of Baltimore County to delineate the borders of Harford, Carroll, and Cecil Counties as well as the Old City of Baltimore, the seat of Baltimore County. The City’s original location was on the left bank of the Bush River, four miles above the Chesapeake Bay on the ancestral homeland of the Susquehannock tribes.\textsuperscript{163} Protest and complaints from English setters in the southern and western areas of Baltimore County persuaded the governor to move the county seat further south onto the Piscataway peoples ancestral lands.

The people in southern and western part of Baltimore County wanted the county seat removed from Bush River. They wanted their own property enhanced in value, and then came remonstrances, indignation meetings, but all of no avail. Westward the course of empire takes its way, and Bush had to yield to the Gunpowder and Patapsco.\textsuperscript{164}

Demanding more and higher valued land, the settlers relocated the town of Baltimore to its current location at the source of the Patapsco River and spread their settlement east toward a tributary of the Patapsco River they renamed Jones Falls. The land underneath the Copy Cat Building is thus the ancestral homeland of Piscataway tribe, taken by English settlers in the early 17th century. The ownership and jurisdiction over these lands was exclusively for the benefit of European colonists. Whiteness as property is persistent in the machinations of the gentrification in Station North as it


\textsuperscript{164} Leakin, 54
follows the American settler colonial framework of the usurpation of indigenous peoples’ lands for the benefit of white people.

Although the Indians were the first occupants and possessors of the land of the New World, their racial and cultural otherness allowed this fact to be reinterpreted and ultimately erased as a basis for asserting rights in land. Because the land had been left in its natural state, untilded and unmarked by human hands, it was ‘waste’ and, therefore, the appropriate object of settlement and appropriation.

While in the 17th century, white colonists justified their actions through biological claims of racial superiority, hierarchical claims to status and entitlement to land usage are still employed in the gentrification of Station North. For example in Baynard Woods’s article Can Station North Save the City, he quoted the owner of the City Arts Building, an artists’ living space in Station North, saying, “I don’t know how to preserve the full vibrancy of the scene. But a neighborhood with 50 percent vacancy needs people. We can argue about who are the best people to rebuild the neighborhood—I’d love to bring in 5,000 Michael Farleys—but I hope we don’t have to have the conversation about whether we should rebuild.” Charlie Duff, the owner of the affordable artists housing space, positions the white male artist as the prototype to rebuild the city. Coded words like vibrancy and revitalization are exclusively extended to young and mostly white artists as the saviors of Baltimore City in the ongoing colonization of Baltimore.

The persistence of whiteness as property is also structurally present in the creation of another artist’s living space in Station North—the Copy Cat. As the neighborhood surrounding the Copy Cat transitioned from a space housing working

165 Harris, 1721
167 Woods, 4
class African Americans in the era of Baltimore City as an industrial powerhouse, to
an increasingly vacant post industrial City, the municipal government chose to invest
in its white residents over is black ones. Once the Copy Cat building lost its industrial
workers in this historically African American neighborhood, Lankford, a white male,
bought the property and rented art studios to young and mostly white tenants. As the
artists began sleeping in their studios, Lankford successfully lobbied to essentially
change the zoning of the neighborhood to allow his residents to live in their
workspaces. After the Baltimore City government granted Lankford a Planned Unit
Development for the building, the City consequently granted the building’s residents
autonomy and creative license to continue their art and to use the building as they saw
fit. In this sense, the historical roots of property law and whiteness continued as the
city granted white people sovereignty over themselves and their residences. As the
neighborhood now known as Station North expanded through the conferral of more
Planned United Development grants, it blossomed into an established arts community
with resources like the City Arts Building, and Area 405 an artist owned
warehouse.\footnote{168} Whiteness as an esteemed status attracted the resources and trust to
build the Station North Arts and Entertainment District. The absence of references to
the agency of African Americans in Wood’s article detracts their value as community
members worthy of investment. Woods’s scant references to African Americans
living in the Station North area presents them as passively waiting for a
reinvigoration of their neighborhood.

With 30,000 vacant properties in the city, people like Graziano are interested in bringing in people. And so are at least some of the people who are now called ‘legacy’ residents—the ones who were here long before the artists. At the second day of the conference, Greenmount West resident Dwight Hargrave said his biggest concern was that a vacant house beside his house meant that his homeowner’s insurance was cancelled. He is African American, but he said he wanted people beside him, ‘whatever color they are.’

The racist legacies that caused the white flight and disinvestment of this neighborhood are not explored in the article, and subsequently erased. Wood’s usage of the label “legacy residents” construes the low-income African American residents as being of the past, and not necessarily active members of the neighborhood’s future. Furthermore, Woods does not entertain the thought of investing in low-income African Americans residents in the area. It is the young and white artists who bring capital to the city while black bodies repel investment and interest. The absence of the interrogation of whiteness as property and therefore white privilege in this article normalizes the young white artist as deserving of material investment and valorizes their artistic endeavors above others happening in the city.

The persistence of whiteness as property is also present in the DIY punk scene in the realms of wealth accumulation and home ownership. I argue that the historical privileging at the both the local and federal level of economic stability for the white working class during the New Deal era helped to establish a stable working class community and identity that eventually nourished the creative energies of Baltimore punk musicians. Churches, suburban homes, and white working class strong holds in the City helped create the foundations of the DIY punk scene that exist today in 2014. To examine this process I will revisit Baltimore history and population trends during

169 Woods, 3
WWII. The population of Baltimore swelled during World War II from 859,000 in 1940 to 1,250,000 in 1942. The following year the City received yet another wave of up to 200,000 workers mostly from the southern United States.\textsuperscript{170} As the population increased, so did average incomes. One white male worker laboring at Bethlehem Steel’s Fairfield Shipyard more than doubled his previous income doing defense work.\textsuperscript{171} This labor boom however was privileged for white workers who took the highest paying defense jobs, leaving black workers with low paying positions. By mid 1944, 40,000 African Americans were working in the defense sector but were largely prevented from taking skilled positions. White workers walked off jobs and threatened black workers with violence in order to preserve their higher paying industrial jobs.

In late July 1943 fifteen blacks were admitted to a training school for riveters at the Sparrows Point Shipyard. The news soon spread to the riveting department, and after white riveters walked out in protest, the company removed the blacks from the class. When eight hundred black employees gathered to demand that the company resume the training, management—with the approval from union leadership—complied. Meanwhile, white riveters marched through the yard gathering support. Thousands of whites ended up circling a group of black workers who had to be escorted out of the yard by police. State police and federal troops stood by for eight days; the shipyard workers did not return to work until the company and the union pledged to adhere strictly to seniority in promoting riveters.\textsuperscript{172}

Union leadership in Baltimore largely adhered to the white worker’s demands to reserve the highest paying jobs for white people. The structure of whiteness as property and thus white privileged helped to build what Kenneth D. Durr author of

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid 26-27
Behind the Backlash: White Working-Class Politics in Baltimore, 1940-1980 calls a “postwar elite working class.” White working class Baltimoreans enjoyed high percentages of home ownership, increases in their average incomes, and better working conditions during the postwar years. Wages outpaced inflation by 7 percent and rates of homeownership reached 57.9 percent. Manufacturing remained the largest source of employment for the white working class until the 1960s. Federal legislation like the National Industrial Recovery Act and VA home loan guarantees helped raise wages and promote home ownership respectively. The Federal programs did not extend to all working class Baltimoreans as many still suffered from loan discrimination. However, some white working class people were still able to take out loans using their local reputation as a hard and steady worker as currency. The sum of these material benefits had a net positive effect on community growth, stability, and infrastructure in white working class neighborhoods the pillars of which were churches, community organizations, and political clubs. By 1956 there were 163 neighborhood organizations many of which lobbied to improve the physical infrastructure of their communities. These groups also partnered with labor unions, political clubs, and local businesses to engage in larger community projects like fighting juvenile delinquency and building recreation centers.

The postwar era also marked a period where ethnic divisions between Polish, Italian, German, Lithuanian and other European nationalities began to dissolve and coalesced into a shared white identity category. White neighborhoods, churches,

173 Ibid, 30
174 Ibid, 58
175 Ibid, 59
political clubs, and community groups worked to reinforce this identify and create public meeting spaces for bonds and friendships to develop. Invoking a prideful white working class identity, these communities vociferously guarded the racial borders of their neighborhoods aiming to keep blacks out. In 1942 Black Baltimoreans – 20% of the city’s population – lived on only 2 percent of residential space. As African Americans began emerging from their cramped and sharply delineated ghettos, the white working class of Baltimore fought to keep their neighborhoods racially homogenous. “It was this reality – that white exclusivity could not be legally protected – that most angered whites. It seemed perverse that city leaders could not safeguard what they considered to be a cornerstone of urban life.”

The threats to white privilege enjoyed by the white working class population caused outright revolt in some cases, especially around school integration. Much of white population left and resettled their communities in the suburbs to reestablish their white working class communities.

The population of the city changed from 35 percent to 42 percent black in the early 1960s as areas of black settlement kept expanding. By the end of 1966 nearly all of the twenty thousand whites who had lived in the Edmonson Avenue area in 1955 were gone. Most had heeded to the invitation of suburban friends to “come out here with the white people.” Two years later some areas along the city’s western boundaries were 50 to 75 percent black.

My interlocutors that grew up in Baltimore City or just outside the city limits cited churches and suburban homes as important spaces that incubated their creativity and facilitated meeting spaces with other young musicians. Cam named two specific churches in East Baltimore that were important show spaces to him as a teen.

176 Ibid, 86
177 Ibid, 126
There were two protestant churches both called St. Johns. There was St. Johns City in Hamilton, which was such a cool space. That was probably one of my most favorite places to see a show back in the day. It was this huge, huge, church basement with a big beautiful stage. It sort of reminded me of CBGB or like the Tavern Club—it was pretty sweet. If I could still book shows there, I one hundred percent would. That was such a cool place. And it was a great location too, I mean Hamilton hell yeah East Baltimore yo! And then there was St. Johns in the county and that was a Lutheran Church out in Phoenix. They would put on youth dances or whatever the church elders—I mean I grew up Catholic so I had no idea what the older people in these churches were called—they would have youth dances and they would bring in the shitty pop punk bands.\textsuperscript{178}

Suburban house shows were also important to Cam’s entrance into the scene.

And then there were various house shows. Just like non-descript places in the suburbs really. If you took the I-83 corridor western bound, and then Bel Air road is your eastern boundary and pretty much went up through the city limits more or less or the state line those would be where pop punk shows would happen. There was a girl who had these things called Ham Fest. And it was a lot of the pop punk bands for sure. Whatever sort of art bands there were happened to get mixed in. We played. That’s were I would go when I was a kid and I was first startin’ out. Pretty much those locales.

Federal and State guided suburbanization developed and expanded the population of North East Baltimore. With a budget of 74 billions dollars, 43,000 miles of highway were built in Maryland between 1958 and 1974.\textsuperscript{179} In the Baltimore area this resulted in four major arteries into the suburbs, The Baltimore Washington Expressway, Interstate-70 connecting Baltimore to Frederick Maryland, The Baltimore Beltway, and Interstate-83 or the Jones Falls Expressway.\textsuperscript{180} Oliver, who played experimental rock music in the very early days of the scene, attributed suburban venues as the template and basis for the current DIY punk community in Baltimore. He was deeply

\textsuperscript{178} Recorded in October 2013
\textsuperscript{179} Holcomb, Eric L. The City as Suburb: A History of Northeast Baltimore since 1660. Sante Fe, NM: Center for American Places, 2005
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid, 234
engaged in the Towson-Glen Arm scene in Baltimore County as a High School student in the early 1990s before the DIY arts community relocated all its activities south the City. Oliver argues that venues in North-East Baltimore – at the limits of the city line – truly set the standard for the current DIY music community in Baltimore City today:

I was first involved in something, in this scene in Baltimore County called the Towson Glen-Arm scene and like that kind of … those people ended up playing a lot of gigs in the city for all the reasons I mentioned earlier—because more prestigious people and friends of friends were doing gigs there. So that was definitely a group of people who were there early on. It kind of broke open… it created the current template for the Baltimore underground and everything that’s come between now and 96’. The people who really did that were running a venue called the Small Intestine, an all ages venue. I think it started up in 97’ people who were booking that venue were extremely active in 1995 and 1996 they were high school kids from North East Baltimore specifically a neighborhood Hamilton which is practically in Parkville. Yeah, it’s almost in Baltimore in County. A guy named Ben, he had gotten a hold of a building to rent in Hamilton that I believe his grandfather owned. So his grandfather charged him a ridiculously low price. Ben’s mother, her circle of friends where he was growing up in Hamilton, she was friends with a large amount of police officers, so he know a lot of local cops. So basically the word went out hey my son running an unlicensed venue for live music. It doesn’t have a restaurant license or anything, he’s selling candy and sodas there and chips. And kids are selling homemade records there and home made records from other bands in other places and please don’t arrest him. Leave them alone. So literally this was a venue that was being protected by the established who the punks are supposedly against or whatever.

Using his, and his family’s reputation, Ben was able to run a DIY music venue illegally and provide a space for teenagers and young adults living in north east Baltimore to hang out and share their creative music. Oliver contrasts the suburban scene with quasi-legal DIY punk venues in West Baltimore. Unlike the intentionally positive space created at the Large Intestine that served the local north east Baltimore
community, some punks set up venues in low-income African American neighborhoods in order to hide from the police.

Ironically Ben really didn’t want punks involved in the venue because one of the reasons the loft was in west Baltimore was because these punk kids were smoking pot drinking and doing all this stuff that’s totally ridiculous. And they were moshing and people were getting hurt and stuff like that so they had to do it in a place like west Baltimore where literally peoples lives mean nothing. People die out there everyday for stupid idiotic reasons and the police don’t care cuz they’re just as corrupt as any other criminals in that area. There’s no surveillance out there because no one cares but the Small Intestine was in a nice upstanding neighborhood. It was a fairly diverse community. It was squarely as far as I know middle class y’know working class. So it wasn’t overflowing with homeless people or crime or slum lords. There was no one around there who would cause trouble. Ben was really aware of this and he knew if a bunch of people came and smashed beer bottle in front of his venue he would get shut down. So as long as it kept the punks out of it, everything would be cool and that’s how it went.181

The remaining white working class neighborhoods of Baltimore City like the Hamden-Woodberry area as well as Remington remain important in the scene today. Hampden, which is located north of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, was a former mill village in the 19th century. Local families owned the mills in foundry in Hampden, and were known for investing more wealth in their workers than other industries in the area. Factory owners often made up for their low wages with housing for their workforce:

Paternalism and the family concept was linked closely with company housing for workers. Company housing became a major part of the textile mill system of maintaining an acquiescent work force and as compensation for low wages… The owners in Hamden not only encourages some workers to live in mill housing at rents as low as 75

181 Recorded in July 2013
cents a week but also encourages many others to save their money and buy a house.\textsuperscript{182}

Today, Hamden bustles with employment for musicians, DIY culture, and music venues.

Station North is really the big area but you cannot discount Hampden for one. That’s where the Golden West is. That’s where Fraisers is. More importantly too, Hamden and the 36\textsuperscript{th} street corridor is sort of a big center for culture of the people into this sort of thing. There’s Atomic Books and inside Atomic Books you have Celebrated Summer records. Up the street on Falls you have Novelty House and then along 36\textsuperscript{th} street you have True Vine, you have this other record store way down on 36\textsuperscript{th} street whose name’s escape me… you have shops selling various ephemera like Marijuana head shops. You have a few antique stores which sell y’know antique-y stuff but they sell used vinyl records. You have Holy Frijoles which employs a lot of people in the scene. So the point is 36\textsuperscript{th} street in Hamden is a pretty big center too.

The entrenched structure of whiteness as property as it operated in Baltimore’s housing history encouraged home ownership for white residents and abetted their stable working class neighborhoods. Access to blue-collar jobs especially during WWII helped provide economic stability and wealth accumulation. Historically white neighborhoods in the suburbs and outskirts of Baltimore were incubators of creativity for high school students and young adults in the late 1980s and early 1990s that eventually established themselves as artists in the early days of the DIY arts community in Baltimore City. However, gentrification of neighborhoods like Hamden and Remington could displace the white working class as prices soar could be as detrimental to the black working class in Baltimore. In a recent installment of the Baltimore Sun’s series Exploring Baltimore’s Neighborhoods the

author, Andrew Zaleski, explored business and residential changes in Remington. Long established working class residents in the neighborhood expressed fear about the changes:

“Renaissance, to us, is like the cavalry coming in a bad way,” says Tom Culotta, 59, speaking about the longtime, working-class residents of Remington. Culotta first moved to the neighborhood in 1977, and for more than 30 years, the bulk of his time has been spent as a teacher with what is now called the Community School, a one-classroom school he co-founded on West 30th Street that became a state-certified high school in July 2013. Eight students between 14 and 17, who have all struggled in the city’s public school system, take the typical gamut of courses in math, science, English and more.\(^{183}\)

Gentrification in Baltimore City has the potential to be harmful for low-income residents of all races. Although the entrenched structure of whiteness as property has benefitted blue-collar white workers in the past, the ruthless scheme of neoliberal governance relies less on supporting the white working poor to legitimize its regime of governance. Perhaps as the standard of living for working class and poor people in Baltimore City worsens, resistance to the entrepreneurial city across racial boundaries will rise.

\[\text{II. D} \]

Conclusion to Chapter II

The availability of physical space is central to the functioning of the underground DIY punk music scene. Facilitating social connection and forging show spaces out of cheap space is necessary for the subculture’s survival. Furthermore, it is

also crucial for those musicians to maintain collective control over the space and to shape it in the vision of the DIY punk community. The physical space thus must be one that affords enough privacy to maintain a non profit maximizing community conducting experimental forays into noise, punk, and metal. It is imperative to avoid getting busted, and for quasi-legal venues to keep a low profile. Before re-locating to Baltimore City in the late 1980s and early 1990s to take advantage of the cheap real estate, the outskirts of Baltimore City and the adjacent suburbs served as an incubator for the DIY experimental music. Zones of white exclusion, escape, and capital flight initially forged the terrain where precursors to the punk thrived in neighborhoods like Towson-Glen Arm in the county and Hamilton in east Baltimore.

Once in Baltimore City, the musicians relied upon ample cheap space to build the scene. As I showed in this chapter, the cheapness of Baltimore City is far from a banal fact, but an entrance point into a complex story of economic decline and painful abandonment. The art, human connection, and empowerment forged in the shadows of the neoliberal city are a product of ongoing suffering of poor and low income people. The structural oppression of African Americans in particular—who were continually forced into high density ghettos and barred from accessing stable and well paying employment—have disproportionately suffered from the roll back of governmental programs, federal aid, and a social safety net. The ensuing chronic economic crisis cast a pall of unemployment and danger and a sinking devaluation of Baltimore City as a poor and black space.

I did not write the second chapter of my thesis simply to give an overview of Baltimore City history. The history I told was necessary to deconstruct the notion of
cheap urban space, which is a central pillar to DIY arts infrastructure. Evaporated industrial capitalism, racial residential segregation, and post WWII white flight produced the cheapness and vacancy that buttresses the DIY punk scene. By extension, the industrial capitalism that eventually abandoned and failed the people of Baltimore also produced the possibilities for a communal subculture based on boundary pushing punk music to thrive in its shadows. It is important to understand the ground upon which the punk scenes stands; as one that is continually being settled on Native American lands and one that continuously relies on whiteness as property. These spaces wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for the stealing of the Piscataway peoples land, and the corralling of African Americans into the disinvested inner city and low-paying jobs. The manifestations of whiteness as property in Baltimore afforded white people increased access to homeownership while actively preventing African Americans from accumulating wealth. In the punk scene the entrenched social structure of whiteness as property functions to provide continued access to space and privacy for white musicians. In addition, capital investment in neighborhoods like Station North demonstrates a continuation of whiteness as property as the presence of valuable white bodies attracts capital investment. The spatiality of money flows is contingent upon racist and classist machinations of access to property.
III: Conclusion

The Baltimore DIY punk scene as a subculture within the larger DIY arts community is unique in that it is mostly comprised of people born and raised in Maryland. Most musicians grew up in Baltimore City or in a nearby County. Show spaces forged from houses, industrial buildings, and commercial venues affirm the experiences and artistic expression of mostly white working class and middle class young adults. There is certainly a Baltimore “sound” – a low and distorted guitar thrashing along with a slower pace than that of 1980s hardcore punk. Some describe it as a crossover between punk, metal, and noise music. Overall, the effect is a brutal wall of sound and energy. Attending a DIY punk show is a visceral experience of distorted vocals and feedback reverberating off of closely packed bodies and explosive mosh pits. Although my language may convey an unforgiving and vicious atmosphere, the experience is not necessarily a violent one. Having a space to scream and tear into music can be a joyful event and a corporeal one at that. Although many bands and musicians consider themselves to be involved in the punk scene, genres are constantly deconstructed and manipulated as artists stretch punk music in new directions. Within the same show it is possible to experience a variety of interpretations of punk music.

Musicians assert collective organizing and self-sufficiency as a common sense practice to manage their music and maintain the scene. The scope of work a DIY musician must do goes far beyond making music. They must record and distributing albums, find show spaces, organizing festivals and concerts, govern show spaces, attend other events, and lend support to others when needed. In this respect, the work
and responsibility of the DIY musician is potentially much greater than a commercial artist that is surrounded by a team of professionals to maintain their career and construct their image. The increased responsibility of the DIY artist however allows greater room for creativity and experimentation, as the artist maintains control over their image and sound. As the DIY approach creates space for the individual artistic expression, it also encourages community involvement. Crafting a local scene is not possible without collaboration. From my participant observation and ethnographic data I collected, the DIY approach has a nourishing effect, proving with each show that it’s possible to be on the fringe and perform music with limited resources. It goads the community to rise and flourish together. One could say that the punk scene rose a generation of self-sufficient artists using working class morals with an anti-capitalist edge. The empowering structure of the punk scene also tends to subvert a hierarchical structure where a few actors control the local scene from the top down. Instead, artists are encouraged to take matters into their own hands and use grassroots organizing and rely upon each other to make music and establish show spaces. I describe the transformation of private property into a space of creativity and collective gathering as insurgent citizenship. The act of transforming the margins – insurgent space making – asserts the right for punk musicians to belong and on their own terms. DIY space transformations also tend to empower musicians as they realize their ability to create music and community from the ground up. My work opposes stereotypes of punk musicians as mischievous and destructive adolescents. What I witnessed were assertions dignity and belonging as so-called fringe dwellers, as well as a community structured upon empowerment and collectivity.
All of the white male musicians I spoke to prided themselves in being members of an open community that never consciously alienated people. “The scene is pretty open,” is what they told me. Although as a woman of color I did not feel actively aggressed and excluded, I found that many people neglected to understand was the discomfort in being an “other” in the scene. The moment of interpolation when a young musician attends a DIY show and realizes that they can also organize a show is so often white males empowering white males. If no one that looks like you is organizing and performing at DIY show spaces, then the empowerment effect can surely be diminished. Samira, the only female punk musician I spoke to, cited the riot grrrl movement\textsuperscript{184} of the 1990s as a significant source of empowerment. As a black woman, the afro-punk\textsuperscript{185} movement totally altered my understanding of acceptable performances of black art forms and disrupted stereotypical notions of authentic blackness. Although the punk scene may not actively harass non-white, non-male, non-straight people there does exist an unconscious alienation when most of the people on stage are white males, and thus empowering other white males to become involved in the scene.

The function of whiteness in the DIY punk community goes far beyond demographics. The entrenched structure of whiteness as property in the United States always privileges the property usage of white people over anyone else. The origins of the Baltimore City DIY punk scene lie in the white retreat to the suburbs and outskirts

\textsuperscript{184} Feminist grunge, punk, and alternative rock movement in the 1990s. Prominent bands include Hole, Bikini Kill, Lilith Fair, and many others. The movement was largely comprised of white musicians.

\textsuperscript{185} The afro punk movement coalesced after the release of James Spooner’s 2003 documentary \textit{Afro Punk}. The movement supports black people playing punk rock as well as those that subvert music industry led sounds and genres that people of color are shuffled into.
of Baltimore City. As musicians and artists relocated to the city in the late 1980s and early 1990s, they benefited from cheap property with roots in the residential housing segregation of African Americans. Additionally, as a majority white scene, the punk community is afforded more privacy than low income African Americans city. Predominately of color DIY venues are few in a city that is 63.7% black or African American.\(^\text{186}\) However, as city officials focus their efforts on attracting businesses and new residents with a disposal income, neoliberal governance continues to disrupt and degrade the lives of all low-income people. As a working and middle class subculture, the punk scene is increasingly policed, as it has no profit making ability for the “new Baltimore” ushered in through public-private partnership. As I’m ending this ethnography in the spring of 2014, it is becoming more difficult to maintain quasi-legal DIY show spaces in the increasingly gentrified Baltimore City. Artists are hopeful that insurgent space making will continue as young people forge DIY zones of creativity in other areas of the city.

Postindustrial cities like Baltimore foster non-profit accumulating communities and subcultures that subvert normative conceptions of top down leadership and decision-making. Ample availability of cheap space facilitates an opening for creative artistic expression and local discursive knowledge. The roll back of social services in the post-industrial city necessitates cooperative community formations, but also has unexpected consequences of empowerment and local self-determination. For some, the uncertainty of neoliberal era conditions produces an approach to forging community and a way of viewing the possibilities of urban space

that I term the postindustrial imagination. From my research I suggest that the postindustrial imagination has a dual nature of a futuristic and utopic approach to viewing the physical and social possibility of a city that also elicits cooperative and collective sub-communities. The postindustrial imagination is relational as an approach and vision to building life and community in economically disenfranchised cities. The social failures and destruction of capitalism makes room for some to re-imagine and re-structure their lives toward non-profit accumulating endeavors. The vacancy within the post-industrial city entices creative reconstruction that induces a proliferation of social spaces. For the young artist, the postindustrial city is like a canvas to paint creativity and social connections. In order to realize these creative desires the social tendency of the community is to value individual initiative and ideas realized through collective cooperation.

Post-industrial space however is inextricably bound to the entrenched structure of whiteness as property. I found that this creative restructuring of space and community in the DIY arts community was not only limited to young and mostly white people; it existed because of disproportionate economic suffering of people of color in Baltimore’s inner city. The usage of postindustrial space and the reaches of the postindustrial imagination are not departures from historic legacies of white supremacy and thus white privilege embedded in the social fabric of the United States, but in some ways replicate a vested interest in whiteness as property. Claims to social openness and acceptance of the punk community do not rectify entrenched systems of white supremacy and can in fact obscure the institutionalized racism functioning within Baltimore City. Even as musicians in the scene subvert some
forms of hierarchy, the bountiful and cheap space characteristic of the more economically devastated post-industrial cities in the U.S., is dependent upon the ghettoization of African Americans as well as the white social and economic abandonment of the city.

My critical perspective is not a disavowal of the punk community nor is it meant to paralyze artists living and creating in Baltimore or any other post-industrial city. The function of my critical race theory critique is to show that punk musicians as well as other artists in the larger Baltimore DIY arts community still rely upon whiteness as property in realizing their creative and cooperative initiatives. My work is not an attempt to devalue the vision of the DIY punk community but an acknowledgement that the utopia of some is built upon the degradation of others. In Baltimore City, the entrenched social structure of whiteness as property constrains the agency of the artist. If it is not directly confronted and dismantled, the entrenched structure of whiteness as property in the U.S. limits the reaches of change and transformation within a white supremacist framework. In the Baltimore DIY punk scene, the realization of new collective social spaces in the mindset of the post-industrial imagination still relies on the structure of whiteness as property. Although capitalist constructions may be contested, racial oppression rooted within legal and cultural structures persists and services the local punk subculture with cheap space, and some relief from police surveillance and discipline. As young white Americans increasingly gentrify cities across the U.S., it is important to recognize the terrain of domination upon which they stand.
Works Cited

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