

**MOBTOWN MEMORIES: TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S HISTORY
OF VIOLENCE IN BALTIMORE**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2017

This dissertation draws on the theories and practices of oral history, rhetorical criticism, and archival research to present a people’s history of violence in Baltimore throughout the war on drugs. Chapters One and Two draw from a set of oral histories collected from Baltimore Guardian Angels, a historically militant community watch group; the founding residents of Viva House, a local Catholic Worker community of war resisters committed to the cause of economic justice. Those chapters work together to present a complex and sometimes conflicting story of Baltimore’s history of drugs, race, poverty, and violence from the 1980s through the 2000s. In Chapter Three, I offer a close analysis of RIP T-shirts as objects and practice used for memorializing murder victims in the city. By placing these artifacts in the context of the histories that surface in Chapters One and Two, I unpack what is revealed about the individuals and communities most impacted by urban violence in terms of identity, resistance, and power. Throughout the dissertation, I pay particular attention to the relationship between state violence and street violence and how those connections contribute to identity formation and sense-making for those born on the battlefield in Baltimore under the war on drugs.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

For more than a century Baltimore was known throughout the nation under the unsavory name of ‘Mobtown.’ The title owed its origin to the speed and frequency with which the citizenry found excuse to riot. The Baltimore tough knew no peer. But there were also times when the best citizens took a conspicuous part in these public disorders. In the early days political feeling ran high and politics often was at the bottom of the trouble. However, when the populace was in the mood for going on a rampage almost any reason would do.—Francis F. Beirne, *The Amiable Baltimoreans*¹

This dissertation explores the rhetoric of violence in Baltimore throughout the war on drugs. In grappling with the ever-changing realities and representations of urban violence, my project has undergone a number of changes over time—largely the result of my simultaneous attempt to wrangle in its scope and follow new impulses of curiosity over the course of my studies.² My earliest research questions orbited around fatal street violence: I investigated modes of

¹ Francis F. Beirne, *The Amiable Baltimoreans* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1951), 142.

² It turns out that this is not the most expedient way to complete a dissertation.

memorializing victims of drug trade violence, policies and programs framing juvenile homicide as *epidemic*, new media technologies employed in the Stop Snitching campaign, and mediated reflections of Baltimore in *The Wire*. However, as my studies of street violence grew in depth and scope, connections between state and street violence reverberate through every fragment of my research: from the memorial dog tags made for those killed in the drug trade, the prevalence of battlefield language in urban street slang, critical turns in policing that militarized police force and framed even small-time corner drug crews as domestic insurgencies. These patterns shifted my focus as I began to see how Baltimore was transformed into a battleground under the war on drugs.

The Francis Beirne quote that opens these pages inscribes political violence into Baltimore's DNA: from the insurrections of the American Revolution, the infamous Gin and Bank Riots of the 1800s, the bloody labor revolts of the Industrial Revolution, the civil rights uprisings of the 1960s and 70s, through the historic rebellion that erupted in the aftermath of the killing of Freddie Gray and the ever-mounting casualties of the drug war. The city has a long-held reputation as a site of exceptional violence. Here, I draw on the voices and artifacts of everyday people to present an alternate, bottom-up telling of the history of violence in the city. In forming a populist account of life in Baltimore during the war on drugs, I hope to offer new insight into what makes the city and its people most volatile, vulnerable, and resilient.

MAP OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation has three chapters, each designed to contribute to a people's history of violence in Baltimore throughout the war on drugs.³ Chapters One and Two draw from a set of oral histories I collected with two distinct groups of activists: three members of the Baltimore Guardian Angels, a historically militant community watch group; and two founding residents of Viva House, a local Catholic Worker community of war resisters committed to the cause of economic justice. Those chapters are paired together to present a complex and sometimes conflicting story of Baltimore's history of drugs, race, poverty, and violence. In Chapter Three, I offer a close analysis of RIP T-shirts produced and worn to memorialize murder victims in the city. By placing these artifacts in the context of the histories of violence that surface in Chapters One and Two, I unpack what they reveal about the experience of urban violence for individuals and communities who are otherwise obscured, erased, forgotten, or ignored.

I open the first chapter by presenting a snapshot of life in southwest Baltimore, the section of the city where Guardian Angels and Viva House both operate, and offer a quick gloss of the narrators I interview for those chapters. From there, each of these oral history-based chapters proceeds with a similar structure. I lay out a brief history of the group's broader, national organization and then detail how and when they established local chapters in Baltimore. Next, I situate my narrators in relation to key spaces, institutions, and communities of Baltimore. I move through excerpts of the experiences they shared with me in interviews while highlighting

³ Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray *Literary Dollars and Social Sense: A People's History of the Mass-Market Book* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Howard Zinn *A People's History of the United States: 1492—Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).

what those stories reveal about violence and the city throughout the war on drugs. By tracing the Guardian Angels from their roots as outlaw vigilantes to their present-day partnership with police in Chapter One, I uncover key turns in theories and tactics of policing under the war on drugs. By following how the Catholic Workers adapt to the changing challenges and needs of their community, I explore the structural inequities behind poverty and the underground drug trade. At the close of Chapter Two, I explore the consonance and dissonance heard when the voices of these Angels and Workers are put into conversation, drawing attention to how the war on drugs generates violence in urban communities. The similar geographies and timelines of the Guardian Angels and Catholic Workers, along with their disparate perspectives, methods, and ideals offer a wealth of insights into the history of violence in the city under the war on drugs.

I open Chapter Three by addressing the situation of fatal violence and related memorial practices in Baltimore. Then, I lay out the history of the RIP T-shirt before placing it in the context of other memorial objects and traditions. Then I take up the lens of visual rhetoric to examine these shirts regarding image, style, and use. While unpacking the value RIP T-shirts hold for individuals and communities, I address the range of their cultural and communicative potential regarding representation, identity, resistance, and power. In keeping with the broader themes of this dissertation, I pay particular attention to the appropriation of military language and symbols in these shirts and explore what this reveals about identity formation and sense-making for those born on the battlefield in Baltimore under the war on drugs.

LIMITS AND SCOPE

This dissertation is focused on violence in Baltimore during the key decades of the war on drugs, from the 1980s through the present day. Just over the last decade, the city has been called both “Murder Capital of America” and the “Juvenile Homicide Capital of the World.” Baltimore reported 318 homicides in 2016 and to date in 2017, it has recorded 151 (June 6).⁴ These figures keep the city homicide rate at more than eight times the national average. These deaths are occurring within very specific communities-- most murders take place within a small range of city blocks in neighborhoods where populations are primarily poor and black, and nearly all of those victims have criminal records linked to the city’s billion-dollar-a year drug trade.⁵ As a result, Baltimore has developed an international reputation for its endemic poverty and violence.

⁴ Between 2006 and 2016, Baltimore had an average of 258 homicides per year, with 275 in 2006, 282 in 2007, 234 in 2008, 238 in 2009, 223 in 2010, 197 in 2011, 217 in 2012, 235 in 2013; 211 in 2014; 344 in 2015; and 318 in 2016. These numbers are drawn from a daily updated account of the homicide statistics for Baltimore City maintained through the *Baltimore Sun* website at <http://www.baltimoresun.com/homicides>. According to the 2010 census (<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Planning/2010Census.aspx>), Baltimore has a population of 620,961. Therefore, this means that one out of every 2,407 people are murdered in the city each year, roughly eight times the national average. According to a 2012 report by the FBI, the national average for victims of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter is 4.8/100,000. The statistics kept at the *Baltimore Sun* demonstrate that Baltimore’s rate is 38.2 victims/100,000. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012/tables/16tabledataadecpdf>

⁵ In a personal oral history interview with ex-Public Health Commissioner Peter Beilenson, he reveals that “nearly all, if not all” of the juvenile homicide victims had criminal records linked to the drug trade and that those findings would not be significantly different for the adult population. This supposition is supported by a comparative analysis between the list of murder victims in the city with up-to-date criminal records databases. I conducted this analysis by gathering lists of adult murder victims as reported by the *Baltimore Sun* and searching local court and criminal record databases online through the Maryland Judiciary Case Search website (<http://casesearch.courts.state.md.us/inquiry/inquiry-index.jsp>). I go into these issues in more detail later in this dissertation.

Many government officials, researchers, media outlets, and everyday people point the blame for urban violence largely at its most common victims--- poor young men of color employed in the drug trade. The arguments I lay out in these chapters offer a different framework, one that reflects on Baltimore's murder victims as casualties of the war on drugs.

I deploy this framework in resistance to the traditional rhetoric of disorder that marks urban violence as a constellation of *random* and *senseless* acts. I argue that terms like *senseless*, *monstrous*, and *unthinkable* are used to mark violence as aberrations committed by deviants, an unfortunate but rare result of a mutation of humanity. This structure of sense-making affords us the ethical and emotional distance necessary for coming to terms with these acts, not just as witnesses or observers, but as potential victims and perpetrators as well. This project then endeavors not to focus on these acts as sensational, but as largely predictable, commonplace, and everyday realities of the city. In doing so, I hope to shrink the distance that lives between outsiders and the communities most impacted by violence. I see this as an important matter of clarity—not just to alleviate some of the burden from the most vulnerable, but so others are better positioned to see where they stand in relation to the institutions and structures which are complicit in this confederacy of violence.⁶

⁶ Waverly Duck offers useful ethnographic evidence on the problematic construction of fatal violence as “senseless.” Through his study of a set of unrelated crimes in an unnamed northeastern city he codes as Bristol Hill, he unravels the way in which police and prosecutors impose a narrative in order to connect the five unsolved crimes together for ease of prosecution. He argues that little or no evidence links the crimes and that each individual case had an explainable reason that was known to the community in which the murders took place: that each was motivated by a specific violation of a community code and, while not marking these deaths as justifiable, he situates them as predictable. This distinction between predictability and randomness is of course key to understanding the current state of violence in the city. Throughout this dissertation, I address the discrepancies between such distinctions and argue for the importance of accuracy and clarity of descriptive language around such crimes. Waverly Duck, “‘Senseless’ Violence: Making Sense of Murder,” *Ethnography* 10, no.4 (2009): 417-34.

METHODS AND APPROACH

This dissertation is grounded in the fields of Rhetoric and Cultural Studies and draws from theories and methods that approach communicative products and actions as holding unique and meaningful information about culture and humanity. I mine oral histories and subcultural products as primary sources in this project to fill in important knowledge gaps about life in Baltimore that are inaccessible via top-down studies. I present the communicative products and acts that happen informally among the people of the city as *vernacular* modes of resistance and counter-discourse, which often dispute and disrupt the dominant representations of violence in the city generated through *official* discourse articulated through the body and voice of authority.⁷

The field of urban communication is particularly well-situated for understanding the psyche, problems, and potential of the city. While much research exists on the geographic, economic, and demographic makeup of cities, little is understood about how residents assign meaning to these places. Therefore, this project about violence in Baltimore uses oral histories as well as rhetorical analysis to unearth valuable information about the stories, practices, structures, and people that make up our cities. In keeping with the trend towards a sharpened focus in Urban Communication, oral history allows the researcher access to individuals and groups who can shed light on the history and practices of cities. But, beyond its usefulness in terms of access to previously ignored, cloistered, or coded practices and groups—oral history broadens our sense of what can be conceived of as information about people. As oral history turns a person's experience of social and political networks, spaces, and institutions into usable data for

⁷ Gerard Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008).

understanding the practices and problems of the city, it reveals not just “what happened” in our cities, but how these historical events transform the people there.⁸

I collected oral histories from five narrators for these chapters.⁹ The nature of these interviews varied with each instance, but focused on gathering information related to the individual experience of violence in the city from the past through the present. While oral history informs my approach, archival work augments it, especially in areas where oral testimony cannot recapture dimensions of the past critical to the representational history of violence.¹⁰ Guided by

⁸ I received formal training in Oral History theory and method from Professors Ron and Mary Zboray in a graduate course titled *Voices of Remembrance* conducted in the Communication Department at the University of Pittsburgh during the Spring of 2007 and, later, in a directed study led by the same instructors in 2009. I also draw from a number of key texts to navigate the practices, procedures, and juridical safeguards of Oral History. Alessandro Portelli, *The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); John A. Neuenschwander, *A Guide to Oral History and the Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press, 2005).

⁹ The records, recordings, and transcripts for all of the oral history interviews for this project are on file in the Department of Communication at the University of Pittsburgh. Interviews for these chapters were conducted with Brendan Walsh and Willa Bickham of the Viva House Catholic Worker Community; and three members of the Guardian Angels community watch group who (as detailed in the transcript and analysis of the interview) are coded with the street names Taxman, Strider, and Taps. In the course of this project, I also collected oral histories from Father Richard Lawrence, Pastor of Saint Vincent DePaul Church and Doctor Peter Beilenson, former City Health Commissioner of Baltimore. Though they are not quoted in these chapters, they continue to inform my work and will be highlighted in future iterations of this project. Oral histories are excluded from oversight by the University of Pittsburgh’s Institutional Review Board.

¹⁰ The expansion of digital news archives over the past decade has contributed significantly to my research and databases accessed through the University of Pittsburgh, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Ancestry.com, and Newspapers.com have made available and searchable massive archives of news articles, images, census data, and other public records useful for looking at the historic transformations of the city. A number of archival sources are available for such use in this project. The *Baltimore Sun* is fully indexed with full text searchability from 1837 to present day with the exception of a gap between 1985 and 1990. Issues published during that period are held at on microfiche at the Enoch Pratt Central Library. The Pratt also holds a number of other Baltimore historic and contemporary Baltimore print news sources including the *Baltimore Afro*

the systematic methods inherent to the fields of rhetorical criticism and public address, I analyze rhetorical objects and communicative acts.¹¹ RIP T-Shirts made and displayed in remembrance of homicide victims in are the primary visual artifacts of this study, but I also apply my training in rhetorical analysis to the oral histories collected from my narrators.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Thanks in part to my training in the wildly freeform curriculum of Hampshire College, experiences as a student of Interdisciplinary Studies at Hopkins, and years in the masters and doctoral programs in Cultural Studies at Pitt, I'm about as un-disciplined a scholar as they come.¹² This research draws liberally from sources across the humanities and sciences. However,

American, News American, the Daily Record, and Baltimore City Paper. ProQuestHistorical Newspapers also provides online access to pertinent articles in the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Judicial and criminal case searches are also pertinent to this work and available through the Maryland Historical Society, the Baltimore Historical Society, and the Maryland State Archives.

¹¹ I received formal training in rhetorical criticism and the theories and methods employed in visual rhetoric from Professor Lester Olson in graduate courses offered through the Communication Department at the University of Pittsburgh including: Contemporary Public Argument: Visual Rhetoric (Spring 2007), Rhetoric and Human Rights (Fall 2007), American Public Address (Spring 2009), and Rhetorical Criticism (Spring 2010). I engage more thoroughly with the literature of these fields in the "Previous Scholarship" section of this dissertation, but my work is largely informed by the following works: Carl R. Burgchardt, ed., *Readings in Rhetorical Criticism, Second Edition* (State College, Pa.: Strata, 2000); Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, eds., *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008); Diane S. Hope, ed., *Visual Communication: Perception, Rhetoric and Technology* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2006); and Lawrence J. Prelli, ed., *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

¹² Though, as time goes on, I realize that my mental meandering started with growing up in a house that held as many National Geographic issues as poetry volumes, and where my ever-

this project is fixed in the fields of Communication and Rhetoric. Though the facticities of murder cannot be ignored, nor isolated from, its representations, I concern myself foremost with the latter and conceive of myself here primarily as an interpreter. That said, I aim for a piece of writing that makes use of the wealth of knowledge and theories that came before it and contributes unique perspectives and insights applicable to other studies of rhetoric and culture, that may also prove useful and interesting to readers beyond these disciplines and the academy. A few key theories and texts form the framework for my thinking about urban communication, rhetoric, and Baltimore.

Leo Jeffres' 2002 reader, *Urban Communication Systems* lays out some key concepts for the study of communication, community, and neighborhoods.¹³ He argues that communication "represents the symbolic activity that allows people to form associations, groups, and societies," that our need for affiliation and search for community is a driving foundational human need, and that neighborhoods are a "manifestation of the search for community." Jeffres opens with an unpacking of the historical and contemporary concept of the *neighborhood*. He attends to how technology and other social and economic shifts alter the shape and function of the neighborhood, but ultimately argues that its essential purpose remains the same. Tracing the history of neighborhoods in the US from the 1800s through today, he lays out a few key frameworks used for understanding the neighborhood concept: the "social area perspective" which explores neighborhoods in terms of sociopolitical and demographic changes and the "interaction view," which is primarily concerned with the modes of interaction within

wandering brain was just as likely to land on Jerry Rubin's *Do It!*, a compilation of Gary Larson comics, or *Macbeth*.

¹³ Leo W. Jeffres, *Urban Communication Systems: Neighborhoods and the Search for Community* (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 2002).

neighborhood communication networks. Of further note is his outlining of the shifts in thinking on neighborhoods as territorial structures to approaching them as “symbolic communities.” Other theoretical contributions in this work include his offerings on how the linear hypothesis, “that size leads to diversity and differentiation” and pluralism theory, “that communication networks are constrained by the social structure and distribution of power in society” speak to the relationships between social structures and communication processes.

A close analysis of empirical data on the relationship between communication variables and community linkages moves Jeffres’ text into an argument about the impact of media technologies on neighborhoods and communities. Discussion of mass communication variables moves into changes in interpersonal communication networks in neighborhoods and communities. Jeffres draws out the co-effecting relationship between communication and neighborhood/community bonds: that communities utilize communication to form, identify, and strengthen identity and bonds and such identity formations then feed the need for (that is, strengthen) modes and media of communication. A look at neighborhood newspapers offers an example of how neighborhoods and communities form, mediate, and sustain their own networks and identities. In addition to this discussion of the ways in which media and community fundamentally bolster one another, is a brief outline of concerns about the ways in which certain media, in this case the internet, has the potential to weaken community identities and bonds.

Jeffres’ focus on the hyper-local functioning of communication networks is a significant contribution to the field of urban communication and of great value to my research. The recognition that cities are comprised of distinct and different neighborhood networks begins to take a practical and methodological shape in the sections where Jeffres concerns himself with the “private home societies” and “street corner societies” that comprise our cities. His emphasis on

neighborhoods as the primary conduit of identification in the city lays the basis for his overall argument which insists that social change in the city most effectively occurs at the neighborhood level (an argument which is reiterated later in Burd, Drucker, and Gumpert).¹⁴ This emphasis on grassroots movements, hyperlocal networks, and neighborhood communication systems is quite useful for those of us committed to studying and impacting change in our cities.

The 2007 volume by Burd, Drucker, and Gumpert articulates the need for a cohesive field of study for urban researchers dealing with processes and impacts of communication and communication technologies. The essays and theories laid forth clearly build from some of the early ideas of the urban studies scholars, but draws from a broader range of methods and a more comprehensive interdisciplinary. This work is born out of an NCA/Emerson college initiative to formulate a field of study under the umbrella of urban communications, breaks down into three sections: historical and methodological perspectives, contested spaces, and future urban communicative practices and technologies.

This set of essays is built around the idea that cities are best studied and understood in terms of the relationships between their various social, political, and economic systems and institutions: the transformative relationship between modes of transportation and wireless communication, the integration of new technologies within traditional urban communities and practices, and the tensions between virtual and geographical spaces as well as old and new medias. These researchers concern themselves with the lack of communication both in and about new failed public spaces and see the potential for their research to impact practical urban reforms. The populist approach in these works as also shifts our attention to vernacular culture,

¹⁴ Gene Burd, Susan J. Drucker, and Gary Gumpert, *The Urban Communication Reader*, vol. 1 (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2007).

“people’s art” and other social and cultural practices of everyday people. Further, these studies ignite a discussion on the potentialities of new communication technologies- some arguing their potentially equalizing or even imperialistic capabilities and others cautioning against what is positioned as an historical miscalculation of the impacts of any new cultural or technological force. Overall, these pieces argue that the traditionally situated communication scholar or communication department, with its narrow area of focus or marriage to a particular methodology is inadequately equipped to deal with the complexity of the problems of the city.

Communication scholars are certainly not alone in their endeavor to approach the problems of the city. Issues of the city are commonly addressed from a variety of research perspectives including those from public health, sociology, anthropology, criminal justice, law and political science. But, not unlike the classically trained communication researcher, the training and methods of each of these groups of scholars alone are too limiting to fully understand the complex interconnectivities of the issues and problems of the city. However, the communication scholar is uniquely positioned in an essentially broader and more interdisciplinary field than many others. If she is trained beyond the traditional specificity of, for example, classical rhetoric, media, or argument she will be able to approach these issues with a broader scope and a deeper bank of theories and tools than many of her academic counterparts. She has the potential to create a more complex map of problems and tell a richer story of the city by combining such traditionally specialized approaches as media studies, oral history, visual rhetoric, and discourse analysis. In this way, we can understand that it is not necessarily the unique tools of the field communication that make possible a better understanding of the problem of the city, but an integration of the tools and findings of multiple fields of research that make it so. However, Leo Jeffres argues the importance of urban communication in another, most basic

level: since most people live in urban areas, and some agreement among people is needed to effect change, and communication systems are required to campaign for public agreement on issues, urban communication is the field of studies most appropriate for and equipped to understand and solve problems of the city.

This dissertation draws on the constitutive potentials of rhetoric to “call into being” a group composed and bonded by the rhetorical act itself.¹⁵ My work draws from a breadth of scholarship on identification and constitutive rhetoric, not only to understand how rhetoric constructs and binds our rhetorical communities, but how *deconstitutive* rhetoric disrupts and disjoins communities as well.¹⁶ Kenneth Burke’s *Rhetoric of Motives* offers key conceptual groundwork for understanding how identification is felt and formed in the process rhetorical acts, broadening the scope of rhetorical functions beyond persuasion and agonism.¹⁷ He offers a means of understanding the social role of rhetoric as something that can also form bonds and call people into recognition of their connection with others- and to recognize the sameness of others outside the self. His work on rhetorical consubstantiality allows for a view of rhetoric as a means with which strategic and tactical moves can be made to illuminate and amplify the kinds of connections that are essential to the work of strengthening associations within communities and

¹⁵ Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Quebecois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73: 2 (1987): 133–150.

¹⁶ Michael Vicaro forwarded the notion of deconstitutive rhetoric in his dissertation on rhetoric and torture while we were students together at Pitt. I’m grateful for the many hours we spent reflecting on this and the many other difficult intersections of our work. I’m equally grateful for all the time we spent just listening to and talking about baseball. [Michael Paul Vicaro, “The Subject of Torture: Rhetorical Investigations of Detention and Interrogation Policy in the Global War on Terrorism” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh: 2013); idem., “Deconstitutive Rhetoric: The Destruction of Legal Personhood in the Global War on Terrorism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 102.4 (2016): 333-352.]

¹⁷ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, California Edition ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

humanity. He marks identification as “compensatory to division”: as something that relies on the disconnects of subjects and listeners to compel the tightening of binds between them.

Michael McGee’s “In Search of the People: a Rhetorical Alternative” expands the nature of disciplinary thinking on how rhetoric constitutes and defines audiences through the process of identification.¹⁸ He argues that listeners must be, “seduced into abandoning their individuality” to join in a social union with humanity. This lays the basis for his suggestions on the relationship between rhetoric, the formation of a people, the development of political myth, and the process and impetus for social action. He concerns himself with how a constituted audience impacts movement: the movement of ideas and social reality as driven by an imagined “people.” This essay parses out the many contributions individuals carry into a constitutive rhetorical moment. A deconstitutive understanding of McGee’s processes might look at how individuals have baseline conflicting identities and experiences that either a) makes it impossible for the rhetor to form them into a “people” together, or b) allows the rhetor to locate an otherwise constituted or imagined people and tear at their social bonds by highlighting their conflicting individual realities.

In Maurice Charland’s “Constitutive Rhetoric: a Case of the People Quebecois,” the author puts forth a clear case study on the role of rhetoric in making and unmaking groups.¹⁹ He details how a people, or otherwise imagined group, is inherently fluid and unfixed, that such groups can be perpetually made and unmade through communicative acts. Moreover, of particular use for understanding the constitutive and deconstitutive, is his position that one

¹⁸ Michael McGee, “In Search of ‘The People’: A Rhetorical Alternative,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235-49.

¹⁹ Charland, 133-150.

cannot formulate an act of inclusion or creation of a people without concurrently and actively excluding others. This also helps us better understand the stakes in constitutive rhetoric: a reminder that it in the act of calling an audience into being, you are locking others out of the group.

As referenced in my section on methods and approach, Gerald Hauser's *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, is a valuable starting point for understanding the vernacular, by outlining the stakes for rhetorical criticism of vernacular discourses in the context of the public sphere. Moreover, he situates his claims about the vernacular amid the essential functionality of democracy, setting up a conceptual framework for publics theory that explicates the importance of understanding the role of vernacular cultures in steering broader sociopolitical and cultural forces. In laying out the historical relationship between rhetoric and governance, he makes the case that attending to the voice of the people is an established and important practice for those in (or seeking) authority. However, he also points to the common screens and devices employed as filters on the people's voice that act to control the breadth and resonance of the public voice. Therefore, Hauser sets out to provide a framework for reaching the unfiltered public voice through their informal, day-to-day, discourses.

Ono and Sloop reiterate the necessity of attending to the voice of the oppressed.²⁰ By pushing us to not just look for materials produced by or about historically oppressed groups in the same mainstream outlets we mine for official or widely disseminated voices, Ono and Sloop work to expand our understanding of the vernacular to include a broader net of speech acts (including conversations in homes and on street corners) and in non-speech acts, such as music,

²⁰ Kent Ono and John Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62, no.1 (Mar. 1995): 19-46.

film, art, and performance. Further, they detail how vernacular should be considered beyond its counterhegemonic function and in terms of its ability to constitute and affirm the reality and beliefs of a culture or group on its own. Perhaps most importantly, they argue that while the study of broadly disseminated texts has been defended on the basis of their “historical impact,” that those impacts are often examined without concern for the marginal and oppressed. They also make the claim that vernacular texts have deeply consequential historical impacts on their own communities and groups. With that in mind, they argue that vernacular texts should not only be incorporated into the field of objects we study but perhaps should become the primary focus for rhetorical critics, as they are for this project.

The concept of vernacular culture and discourse is furthered in the Atwater and Herndon piece, “Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and Museum Africa.”²¹ The article examines museums as sites of communication and speaks to the problematic nature of disseminating messages about particular vernacular cultures and groups when these messages are in direct conflict with the values, beliefs, and practices of the official voice. It further attends to the tensions between vernacular and official voices by attending to how that relationship plays out when they are placed in the same public spaces. Moreover, the study makes clear that vernacular discourse is a key link between publics and public memory. The contribution made by these authors is of particular use for understanding the relationship and differences between vernacular and official voices as it tracks the various intersections and conflicts of the two at multiple iterations of space and time.

²¹ Deborah Atwater and Sandra Herndon, “Cultural Space and Race: The National Civil Rights Museum and Museum Africa,” *Howard Journal of Communications* 14, no.1 (January-March 2003): 15-28.

There are two key historical texts on Baltimore that I found particularly useful for the scope of my project: Elizabeth Fee et al.'s *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History* and Harold A. McDougall's *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community*.²² Each of these works makes significant contributions to our understanding of life in Baltimore, the contemporary situation of poverty and crime in American ghettos, and the role of race, class, and gender in historical and modern-day Baltimore.

The Baltimore Book draws on oral history methodology practiced by Linda Shopes, and reveal previously unarticulated problems and otherwise untold stories of the city, its neighborhoods, and its people. The book was born out of "The People's History Tour of Baltimore," a bus tour offered by local historians in the 1980s which aimed to reveal some of the previously untold stories of the city. Like all people's histories, it works as an admonishment of and reparation for popular, mainstream historical works that tend towards a telling of history focused on the experiences and stories of the privileged and upper class. As it stands, *The Baltimore Book* is an essential text for those studying the life and problems of Baltimore as it contributes important accounts of the lives otherwise obscured by dominant discourse. Brendan and Willa appear in a short piece in that book as well.

One of the more useful contributions to representations of race in the city comes out of Fee et al.'s chapter on Old West Baltimore, an area adjacent to the neighborhood I write about in Chapters One and Two.²³ Here, the authors spell out the public health problems, institutional and economic injustices, and social inequities endured by an area of the city that was most heavily

²² Elizabeth Fee, Linda Shopes, and Linda Zeidman, eds., *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Harold A. McDougall, *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

²³ Fee et al., 55-78.

populated by African-Americans. In doing so, they also present an activist history of this same community as they detail the impetus, organization, and efficacy of community based political action throughout the history of Old West Baltimore. Reflections on the ways members of the communities pulled on the power of black churches, recently secured voter rights, and a sense of allegiance with subjugated blacks outside their own communities to effect change in and around their neighborhoods. Future researchers would be well-served to further examine the way inhabitants of Old West Baltimore identify and utilize their existing resources and strengths to reach out and claim further resources and justice needed to better their lives and community.

Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community, author Harold McDougall offers a novel and impressive study of the city and its historic problems of race and class. As the title foretells, the text presents a new way of thinking about communities and how we might position ourselves as citizens, scholars, and activists to better the sociopolitical state of the city through tightly formed small-community based efforts and initiatives. McDougall presents a thorough history of political, social, and community action among African-Americans in Baltimore City. The “new theory” he presents is anchored to an argument about the way government interventions like those connected to The New Deal corrode grassroots and community-based efforts for social and political reform. McDougall argues that while The New Deal took some of the pressure off of individuals and communities who had thus far been responsible for caring for themselves, their families, and those in their immediate networks-- that state based programs also crippled the abilities of neighborhoods and communities to care for themselves. McDougall situates his text as,

A discussion of attempts by African-Americans in Baltimore (and their European-American allies) to renovate the community networks of old West Baltimore: the vernacular techniques for insuring that children are raised and educated properly, the food distribution systems linking black farmers to black city dwellers... the spiritual cohesions of the black church, and the informal association of business owners and professionals, all of which have been undermined.²⁴

He speaks to the damage done to the resources and abilities of local action groups, particularly after the widespread failure of many large state-based social initiatives to serve minorities and the poor. He then takes his readers through what amounts to a multi-decade attempt by grassroots organizations in Baltimore City to reorganize and reinvigorate efforts to improve life for their communities.

Like, *The Baltimore Book*, *Black Baltimore* relies heavily on interviews with the individual and communities directly engaged with problem solving in Baltimore's African-American neighborhoods over the past several decades. Attention to first person accounts of the struggle for justice in these communities and insights into the relationships between the individuals and groups that have composed movement groups in the city offer researchers a crisp account of the changing situation of race, class, and gender in the city. Of particular use to my chapters understanding of some of the key networks and histories in Baltimore are McDougall's writings on the black church. He presents religious spaces and groups as critical factors in the continuity of community and the stability of certain local action efforts and further, he looks to

²⁴ McDougall, *Black Baltimore*, 188.

these church-based efforts as potential models for the small community based efforts he advocates for in the text.

McDougall's ultimate contribution is one that suggests that small groups of similarly situated social actors are best positioned to understand and address the needs of their communities. In arguing about the loss of community in Old West Baltimore, the author draws heavily on the ideas of vernacular culture,

Separated from the vernacular strengths of their old neighborhoods, white neo-ethnics, like black neo-ethnics, have become increasingly dependent on government for essentials of life that once were supplied by family and community.²⁵

McDougall insists that successful efforts to rectify economic, social, and political inequities in the city must involve a reconnection to vernacular culture and localized communities. He argues,

progressive Baltimoreans and their counterparts in other U.S. Cities need to encourage the development of base communities at the neighborhood level. Base communities, smaller, more flexible, and more intimate than even mediating institutions, are needed to sustain the spiritual and moral energy of citizens engaged in the public process.²⁶

²⁵ *Idem.*, 189.

²⁶ *Idem.*, 194.

He then goes on to explain how, ideally, such base communities would organize into networks in order to mobilize on issues that necessitate action on a level that extends beyond their immediate communities. McDougall's anti-New Deal, anti-government interventionist line will strike most readers as a deeply conservative argument. The danger of this mode of thinking is one that excuses an unresponsive or irresponsible government from its basic duties to insure the general well-being of its citizens, even (and arguably most particularly) its most vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved populations. However, McDougall makes a strong case not just for the usefulness of a community's ability to self-solve its problems, but the necessity for them to do so when faced with the failures of government protection. Applying these theories to the Catholic Worker notion of personalism, which I detail in Chapter Two, presents a strong argument for ideals of sustainability, even if it falls short of drawing a detailed map that might guide us there. Compelling support for McDougall's theory is found throughout the following chapters in the evidence they provide of the city's failure to create and maintain systems that meet its people's most basic human needs.

This dissertation updates and expands the canon of works we have about the life and history of Baltimore by building from the populist approach of *The Baltimore Book* while applying the critical distance and contextual richness of *Black Baltimore*. My primary aim in these pages is to draw attention to everyday voices and objects from Baltimore that are otherwise muted and ignored. In doing so, I hope it demonstrates the value of looking beyond official sources and traditional methods for addressing the complexity of cities.

2.0 FROM OUTLAWS TO DEPUTIES: GUARDIAN ANGELS THEN AND NOW

This chapter begins by detailing the origins of the Guardian Angel organization in New York City, with attention to their controversial reception from police and community. Then, drawing on archival news accounts, I piece together the Angel first arrival in Baltimore and uncover early reactions from community members, police, and city officials—and map that out through their departure from Baltimore in the mid-1980s and their eventual return in 2007. To better situate the situation of violence, crime, and policing that first drove the Angels out of Baltimore, then called the group back, I unpack some of the key rhetorical and material transitions of the war on drugs—emphasizing the concurrent communalization and militarization of the police. The remainder of the chapter presents the voices and stories of the Baltimore Guardian Angels as means of understanding the history and tactics of the group and revealing the complex social, political, and economic circumstances that facilitated their transformation from outlaws to state-allies under the war on drugs.

2.1 STORIES FROM THE FRONTLINE

The oral histories I collected for these first two chapters come from five participants: three core members of the volunteer crime watch group, the Guardian Angels and the two long-term residents of the Catholic Worker community of Viva House. The Guardian Angels is a racially mixed citizen crime watch organization which got its start in New York City in the late 1970s. Over time, it has grown to include over 130 chapters across the globe.¹ The Guardian Angels established the first Baltimore chapter in 1981. After a tumultuous few years, it faltered and then ultimately disbanded before the start of the next decade. In 2007, the second generation of Guardian Angels emerged in Baltimore. The Catholic Worker movement, composed primarily of white working-class Catholics, is built on commitments drawn from Catholic teachings on nonviolence and service to the poor. It began in New York City in the 1930s and now includes over 245 communities worldwide.² The Catholic Worker community of Viva House opened in Baltimore in 1968. Examining the history of these two groups draws light on some of the most significant social, political, and economic transformations that took place in Baltimore during the War on Drugs.

Both groups operate out of southwest Baltimore, an area of the city with a population of 17,886, 76.2 percent of whom are black or African American; 17.6 percent are white, 3.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, 1.2 percent Asian, and 5 percent “two or more races” or “some other race.”³

¹ Guardian Angels, “Who We Are,” 2016, <http://guardianangels.org/>.

² The Catholic Worker Movement, “Catholic Worker Communities: Love in Action,” 2016, <http://www.catholicworker.org/communities/>.

³ This section is informed by the most recent demographic information available, from the Baltimore City Health Department, “2011 Neighborhood Health Profiles” report, <http://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/51%20Southwest.pdf>.

The median household income is \$27,158, with 45.3 percent of the residents making below \$25,000 per year. The neighborhood has seen an increase in development recently, due in large part to the University of Maryland's construction of a state of the art BioPark. But, much of the area is unoccupied—it has roughly twice as many abandoned, and four times as many vacant buildings as does the rest of the city. Life expectancy in southwest Baltimore is sixty-five years old, which is almost seven years less than average for Baltimore. When the Health Department calculated what they call “avertable deaths” they found that 57.3 percent of deaths in this community could be avoided if “all Baltimore communities had the same opportunity at health.” Rates of homicide and non-fatal shooting are more than twice the city average. Out of 55 Baltimore neighborhoods, southwest is second highest in rates of domestic violence, second in deaths by drug overdose, second in liquor store density, fifth in lead paint violations, and third in gas and electric cutoffs.

Viva House has always been active in citywide political actions, but they focus on serving their immediate community, which they see as the area roughly one square mile around their house. The Guardian Angels operate out of Baltimore's southwestern district police station and Viva House is located about a mile further southwest. The group currently has seventeen members, including Strider, Taps, and Taxman. Of the fourteen others, three are black (one woman and two men), while the remaining ten are white (two women, eight men).

Though Viva House was established a decade before the Guardian Angels, the Angels I interviewed were living in Baltimore throughout that time, meaning all five subjects were able to speak to experience with street and state violence throughout four decades of the War on Drugs. This is a rare and valuable occurrence in Baltimore, where community activists often find themselves defunded, displaced, or burnt out within the first months of years that they begin their

work. To better understand the dynamics at play in the distinctive approach these groups have for addressing violence in the city, I explore how they position themselves in relation to the police and everyday people in their communities. In addition to the meaningful contributions they make towards building a people's history of Baltimore, these accounts offer intimate insights into how cities shape the identity and actions of individuals and groups. With particular attention the role of the rhetoric of violence in these histories, I explore what they reveal about the experience of everyday people living in Baltimore throughout the War on Drugs.

In listening to each of my narrators share their experience of violence and the city during the war on drugs, I heard a good deal of resonance in their stories. However, I found the dissonance in their accounts to be even more telling of the situation of violence in the city. The specific tensions between the language and experiences of these two groups are rooted as much in their positionality as in the structures and histories of these two starkly different groups. With consideration for Guardian Angels and Catholic Workers as local and global organizations, I unpack the fundamental ideological and methodological tensions between the two groups.

2.2 CURTIS SLIWA AND THE GUARDIAN ANGELS IN NEW YORK

The Guardian Angels were founded in New York City in 1979 by Curtis Sliwa--- a night manager of a McDonalds in the Bronx. He saw the area around the shop as all but abandoned by city institutions and in dire need of repair, so he organized a small group of volunteers to clean

up the nearby streets and sidewalks.⁴ He recruited more volunteers and expanded the efforts into other neighborhoods and communities facing similar needs and neglect. Eventually, that neighborhood cleanup project expanded into a community watch program. In what eventually became their most well-known program, the Angels began patrolling the city's notoriously high-crime subway system, formally establishing themselves as citizen crime fighters. As their work grew increasingly interventional, their image transformed from that of a neighborhood watch to a vigilante group.⁵

⁴ Guardian Angels, "How We Got Our Start," *GuardianAngels.org*, <http://guardianangels.org/about/history>; Dennis Jay Kenney, "Crime on the Subways: Measuring the Effectiveness of the Guardian Angels," *Justice Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1986) 481-96; Dennis Jay Kenney, *Crime, Fear, and the New York City Subways: The Role of Citizen Action* (New York: Praeger, 1987); Susan Pennell, Christine Curtis, Joel Henderson, Jeff Tayman, "Guardian Angels: A Unique Approach to Crime Prevention," *Crime & Delinquency* 35, no. 3 (1989) 378-400; Brian B. Ostrowe, Rosanne DiBiase, "Citizen Involvement as a Crime Deterrent: a Study of Public Attitudes Toward an Unsanctioned Civilian Patrol Group," *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 11 no. 2 (1983) 185-93; Karen Bullock, "Citizen Patrols," in her *Citizens, Community and Crime Control* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 146-65; Roger P. Roess and Gene Sansone, "Things Have to Get Worse before They Get Better: NYC Transit-1970 to the Present," in their *The Wheels That Drove New York* (Heidelberg: Springer Berlin, 2013), 333-375; Jackson Krul, "On Patrol With The Guardian Angels, New York's Venerable Vigilantes," *VICE*, February 13, 2016, <http://www.vice.com/read/on-patrol-with-the-guardian-angels-new-yorks-pseudo-vigilante-group>.

⁵ Dennis Jay Kenney, "Crime on the Subways: Measuring the Effectiveness of the Guardian Angels," *Justice Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1986): 481-496; William Robbins, "Effectiveness of Guardian Angels Called Uncertain," *New York Times*, (Aug. 7, 1981) <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/07/us/effectiveness-of-guardian-angels-called-uncertain.html>; Susan Pennell, Christine Curtis, Joel Henderson, and Jeff Tayman, "Guardian Angels: A Unique Approach to Crime Prevention," *Crime & Delinquency* 35, no. 3 (1989): 378-400; Susan Pennell, Christine Curtis, and Joel Henderson, *Guardian Angels: An Assessment of Citizen Response to Crime*, Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1986; Karen Bullock, "Citizen Patrols," In *Citizens, Community and Crime Control* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014): 146-165; Eve Darian-Smith, "Neighborhood Watch- Who Watches Whom? Reinterpreting the Concept of Neighborhood," *Human Organization* 52, no. 1 (1993): 83-88; Laura E. Akers, "Private Citizens: Allies of Justice," *Criminal Justice Journal* 7 (1983): 251-274; Ira P. Robbins, "Vilifying the Vigilante: A Narrowed Scope of Citizen's Arrest," *Cornell Journal of Law & Public Policy* 25, no. 3 (2016): 557-599; Andrew Silke, "Dealing with Vigilantism: Issues and Lessons for the Police," *The Police Journal* 74, no. 2

City officials and community members initially had mixed reactions to the Guardian Angels. Some saw them as filling in the gaps in policing from the overextended New York City Police Department. Others—including then Mayor Ed Koch, the NYPD, and Transit Authority—saw the group as dangerous and counterproductive. While city authorities initially criticized the Angels and saw them as more of a threat to order than a boon to it, by 1980, officials offered the Angels status as auxiliary officers of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority.⁶ The Angels declined the offer at the time, stating that the affiliation would ultimately limit their capabilities. But, eventually, the groups agreed to “work together cooperatively.”⁷ For decades to come, as the Angels continued to patrol in New York City and establish other chapters in cities around the globe, they experienced periods of cordial collaboration with police and times of deep animosity.

(2001): 120-133; Travis Dumsday, “On Cheering Charles Bronson: the Ethics of Vigilantism,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 47.1 (2009): 49-67; Hayden P. Smith and Geoffrey P. Alpert, “Joint Policing: Third Parties and the Use of Force,” *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal* 12.2 (2011): 136-147.

⁶ Glenn Fowler, “Angels Refuse Auxiliary Status,” *New York Times*, Oct 17, 1980, Late Edition (East Coast), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/423991593?accountid=10750>.

⁷ “Guardian Angels Get City Recognition,” *New York Times*, May 30, 1981, Late Edition (East Coast), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/424094312?accountid=10750>.

2.3 FIRST ANGELS ARRIVE IN BALTIMORE

In 1980, news of the Guardian Angels in New York started spreading beyond the city and making headlines in Baltimore in 1980.⁸ In July of 1981, the *Baltimore Sun* ran its first story about the potentiality of Guardian Angels coming to Baltimore to establish a local chapter.⁹ That article ran on the front page of the “Maryland” section and reported that Curtis Sliwa, along with eight members of the Philadelphia Guardian Angel chapter, were expected to give a news conference in front of City Hall in Baltimore that week to announce that the Angels were in the process of establishing a local chapter. It gave some background on the New York chapter and provided details about recruitment—stating that the chapter would be looking for between fifty and sixty volunteers over the age of sixteen, who held no criminal record, were employed or in school, were able to defend themselves and pass “established Guardian Angel requirements.” The article shared the Guardian Angels’ claim that they were establishing the Baltimore chapter at the request of private citizens and community groups, but that the Angels declined to name those individuals and groups, citing the possibility of retaliation and blowback from any Angel opposition. At the time, local police and government spokespersons said they were concerned that the Angels had not reached out to city officials ahead of this visit.

⁸ “Arrest Heats Up Feud in New York between Police, Subway Protectors,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct 10, 1980, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/536035376?accountid=10750>; Carol Oppenheim, “Angels of a New Order,” *Baltimore Sun*, Dec 24, 1980, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/536019370?accountid=10750>, Neal R. Peirce, “Angels of Gotham,” *Baltimore Sun*, Apr 20, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535963099?accountid=10750>.
⁹ Deborah K. Taub, “Red Berets Are Coming: Guardian Angels Plan Anticrime Chapter Here,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 8, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535903593?accountid=10750>.

Later that week, the *Sun* dedicated the front page of the Maryland section to the Angels, again, with a report of the visit by Sliwa and the Philadelphia volunteers.¹⁰ The article explains that the evening started out as a press conference in front of City Hall announcing the arrival of the Guardian Angels in Baltimore, and then switched into Sliwa and the others leading five new Baltimore Angel recruits, along with reporters and photographers, on full-fledged patrol of the city's adjacent "red light" district known as The Block. Bystanders had mixed reactions—some saying they were "all for" the new Angel patrols and the city needed all the help it could get, while others wrote Angels off as more interested in publicity than community. One of the workers from The Block yelled for the Angels to, "Go back to New York." To broaden the discussion of Angels arrival in Baltimore, the *Sun* ran a piece next to that report which explained the legal and historical background of the concept of the "citizen's arrest."¹¹ In referencing Guardian Angel statements declaring their use of the tactic, it noted that the right to citizen's arrest was well-established in Maryland law, but also cautioned that such powers had manifested locally as "lynch laws" in the past and warns that in terms of possible recourse, citizens do not enjoy the same juridical and litigious protections as official state actors.

Over the course of the following weeks, *Sun* coverage reveals mixed reception of the group. Popular columnist Michael Olesker wrote that the Angels were "acutely media-hip," and described them as, "a kind of daydream by General Patton, with casting by Charles Bronson and

¹⁰ Sandy Baninsky and Raphael Alvarez, "Guardian Angels Begin Patrols on the Block," *Baltimore Sun* July 11, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535851881?accountid=10750>.

¹¹ J. S. Bainbridge Jr., "Citizen Right to Arrest a Tradition," *Baltimore Sun*, July 11, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535895205?accountid=10750>.

fashions by Che Guevera.”¹² Olesker’s Guevera comment is in reference to the standard paramilitary-style Guardian Angels uniform—a red beret, white t-shirt, and red jacket with the Angels insignia: the image of an eye enclosed in a triangle super-imposed on a winged shield.¹³ The paper’s first editorial on the Angels reads as skeptically optimistic,

In theory, self-appointed vigilantes or protective patrols are wrong. They lack the training and authority of police officers and could be tempted to abuse their position. In practice, the swagger and red berets of the Guardian Angels bring feelings of security and comfort to people in New York. ...It is not a matter of Guardian Angels coming here, but of some Baltimoreans donning red berets. There are certainly neighborhoods where they might be welcome, and also people who might want to join for all the worst reasons.¹⁴

The editor goes on to caution that the Angels’ success in Baltimore would be dependent on their “total cooperation with the Police Department,” demonstrations of “character and self-restraint” among its leadership, and deference that takes them only into those neighborhoods

¹² Michael Olesker, “Guardian Angels: Smooth-Talking, Media-Hip, but Somehow Appealing,” *Baltimore Sun* July 12, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535897475?accountid=10750>.

¹³ The importance of the uniform is highlighted in The Guardian Angel Mission Statement, “The Alliance of Guardian Angels is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization founded in 1979 in New York City, New York by Curtis Sliwa. Our mission is to fight crime, provide real life positive role models, be a visible crime deterrent (that’s why we wear our uniform) and make citizens [sic] arrest if we see a serious crime occurring. We accomplish our mission through training volunteers, as visual crime deterrents patrolling the subways, buses, and the streets of communities which have supported and invited the presence of the Guardian Angels.” Guardian Angels, “Guardian Angels Training,” *Guardianangelstraining.com*, <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/history.php>.

¹⁴ “Guardian Angels” (editorial), *Baltimore Sun*, July 15, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535904455?accountid=10750>.

which actively seek them out. Letters to the editor echo these sentiments as well, with some readers commending the efforts of the red bereted group by likening them to the green berets and calling them a necessary component of the city's increased vigilance against crime.¹⁵ Still, others compare the group to the Klu Klux Klan, Cuban Liberation Army, and Italy's fascist Blackshirts, warning that as an "undisciplined mob" the Angels pose more of a threat to Baltimore than do the "criminals."¹⁶

Less than two weeks after the Angels staged their first patrol for the press, they held their first recruitment drive.¹⁷ Shortly after, while the debate over the group's arrival in town was playing out in the press, news came of the Angels' first use of the citizen's arrest in Baltimore.¹⁸ The incident occurred in August of 1981 before the first class of Angels graduated in Baltimore, and before the start of their official patrols. Just before 2 AM, Curtis Sliwa and two other Angels were traveling through the city by car on their way home from a local radio interview, when they reportedly encountered a fistfight between two men outside of a North Avenue bar. By Sliwa's account, they intervened as one man was pulling a gun on the other and were able to restrain

¹⁵ Arthur J. Dzura, letter to the editor, "Guardian Angels," *Baltimore Sun*, July 16, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535896358?accountid=10750>; N.H. Buchar, "Thanks, Twice," letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, Jul 20, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535879093?accountid=10750>.

¹⁶ Robert Dorsey, letter to the editor, "Guardian Klan," *Baltimore Sun*, Jul 23, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535906404?accountid=10750>; Louis P. Bouri, letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, Jul 23, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535906404?accountid=10750>; Ray Greenberg, "Nice boys?" letter to the editor, *Baltimore Sun*, August 8, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535902567?accountid=10750>. See also Cheryl Herr,

"Terrorist Chic: Style and Domination in Contemporary Ireland," in *On Fashion*. ed. Shari Benstock and Suzanne Ferriss (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 235-66.

¹⁷ T. W. Hendricks, "Guardian Angel Recruiting Drive Gets Under Way," *Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1981, from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535907334?accountid=10750>.

¹⁸ Melford Prewitt, "Fistfight Prompts Angels' 1st Citizen's Arrest in City," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 7, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535905325?accountid=10750>.

both, place them under citizen's arrest, and wait for police to arrive. All accounts of the incident from police and eye witnesses suggest that Sliwa overdramatized the details of the event. By that time, the Angels had developed a reputation for exaggerating tales of their heroics and, at times, staging crime and rescue operations to boost their image.¹⁹

The following month, another Angel-related altercation appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*. A 25-year-old member in training, who was not in uniform, reportedly witnessed three teenagers attempting to break into a jewelry case at a local pawn shop. He claimed that he identified himself as a Guardian Angel, at which point the teens began to attack him. Then, after knocking one of the suspects out, another of the teens hit him with a pipe and ambulance took him and treated for a cracked rib at a local hospital. He reported that two of the suspects escaped and the

¹⁹ David Gonzalez, "Police Union to Sue Sliwa Over Hoaxes," *New York Times*, Nov 26, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/26/nyregion/police-union-to-sue-sliwa-over-hoaxes.html>; David Gonzalez, "Sliwa Admits Faking Crimes for Publicity," *New York Times*, Nov 11, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/25/nyregion/sliwa-admits-faking-crimes-for-publicity.html>. It is also interesting to note that Sliwa claims the famous Kitty Genovese case as his inspiration for starting the Guardian Angels. [Kevin Cook, *Kitty Genovese: The Murder, the Bystanders, the Crime that Changed America*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2014), 201]. In 1964, the *New York Times* reported that Genovese was killed in an early morning knife attack on a New York City sidewalk, and thirty-eight people witnessed the murder and failed to intervene or call the police. The event became the basis for the theory of the "bystander effect," which suggests an inverse relationship between the probability of intervention and number of bystander witnesses. [John M. Darley and Bibb Latané, "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8 (1968): 377–83.] However, after decades of research and conversation around the case as pivotal in shaping understanding of crime intervention, researchers have debunked much of the *Times'* reporting, and have presented a revised version of the case which, among numerous other complications, insists that there were far fewer than thirty-eight witnesses and while at least two bystanders called the police, it was the NYPD that failed to report to the scene under the assumption that it a harmless "domestic incident" was underway. [Cook, *Kitty Genovese*; Rachel Manning, Mark Levine, and Alan Collins, "The Kitty Genovese Murder and the Social Psychology of Helping: The Parable of the 38 Witnesses," *American Psychologist* 62, no. 6 (2007): 555-62].

third was arrested. However, police later denied that any arrests were made and no theft had been attempted.²⁰

Just over a year after the Guardian Angels were established in Baltimore, an Angel on patrol in Newark, New Jersey, was shot and killed by on-duty police officer. The facts of the shooting were hotly contested between police and Angels on the scene, further fueling the tensions that had grown between the two groups in cities throughout the country.²¹ In August of 1983, David Simon wrote an article for the *Sun* lauding the work of Angels who, upon responding to nearby gun shots, chased and apprehended one of the gunmen and turned him over to the police.²² But, by October membership for the local chapter had fallen from an initial two hundred, down to six. One of the remaining members attributed it to, “poor leadership, poor attitudes, poor recruitment.” According to police, the Angels had only been involved in three arrests over their first two years in Baltimore, though the Angels claim to have prevented “some other crimes that did not involve the police.”²³ A month later, in November of 1983, the *Sun* ran a story about Maryland Transit Authorities denying the Guardian Angels’ request for free subway passes to conduct patrols.²⁴ The article mentioned that a new guardian Angel leader had

²⁰ “Would-be Crime Fighter Hurt,” *Baltimore Sun*, Sep 29, 1981.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/535820858?accountid=10750>.

²¹ Michael Norman, “Guardian Angel is Killed by an Officer in Newark,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1982, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/01/01/nyregion/guardian-angel-is-killed-by-an-officer-in-newark.html>; “2 Officers Suing Leader of ‘Angels,’” *New York Times*, Sep 09, 1982, Late Edition (East Coast),

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/424430796?accountid=10750>.

²² David Simon, “Angels Give Chase After Man is Shot,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 15, 1983, D1.

²³ Matt Seiden, “Guardian Angels here are Down to Six,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct 10, 1983, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/536788965?accountid=10750>.

²⁴ Katie Gunther, “MTA Balks at Free Ride for Angels,” *Baltimore Sun*, Nov 17, 1983, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/536752817?accountid=10750>.

been brought in from Detroit, who claimed to be increasing membership again. But, that was the last time that first group of Angels appeared in the Baltimore paper.²⁵

²⁵A *Sun* report from 1989 suggested that a private property manager of a high-rise apartment building in midtown Baltimore invited Sliwa to reestablish a local chapter, offering the Angels space for their headquarters in the building in exchange for patrols. A handful of *Sun* articles spanning between April of 1989 and October of 1990 indicate that while a smaller network of Angels briefly operated in and around that building, they were again fraught with controversy, had a contentious relationship with city authorities and at least one member was charged with assault during that timeframe. Gelareh Asayesh, "Guardian Angels Are Back in Baltimore," *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 18, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1639321398?accountid=10750>; "Guardian Angels Arrive at Housing Complex," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug 21, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734182573?accountid=10750>; Sandy Banisky, "Ambridge Uses Street Tactics to Get His Angel at Last," *Baltimore Sun*, Apr 26, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637501857?accountid=10750>; Martin C. Evans, "Guardian Angel Meets City Officials to Ask Tolerance for Citizen's Arrests," *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637424510?accountid=10750>; Deborah I. Greene, "Howard Seeking Angels Trainee Linked to Assault," *Baltimore Sun*, June 13, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1639328171?accountid=10750>; Deborah I. Greene and Roger Twigg, "Guardian Angel Faces Charges After Scuffle," *Baltimore Sun*, June 10, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637429947?accountid=10750>; Lance Helgeson, "Angels, Police Agree to Help One Another," *Baltimore Sun*, July 26, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734320182?accountid=10750>; Jackie Powder, "Racial Slur Causes Activist's Ouster," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 26, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1753844944?accountid=10750>; Gregory P. Kane, "As Police Guard Trump's Cyclists," *Baltimore Sun*, June 15, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637584154?accountid=10750>; Michael Olesker, "Ambridge Weighs Clipping Wings of Elusive Angel," *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 25, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1639322337?accountid=10750>; Michael Olesker, "Sliwa Comes on Like Macho Man as Don Quixote," *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 20, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1639417037?accountid=10750>; Joshua Eli Roberts, "Angels' Help," *Baltimore Sun*, May 30, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1644803872?accountid=10750>; Staff and Wire Reports, "Angels Want Schaefer's Views on Bail Release," *Baltimore Sun*, May 1, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734172484?accountid=10750>; Staff and Wire Reports, "Guardian Angels Vow to Clean Up South Baltimore," *Baltimore Sun*, Aug 25, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637528657?accountid=10750>; Ginger Thompson, "Guardian Angels Again Leave City but Vow to Return," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 3, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734290813?accountid=10750>.

2.4 THE SECOND GENERATION OF ANGELS IN BALTIMORE

Roughly a decade and a half after local police forced the Guardian Angels out of Baltimore, the group was reformed. In 2007, I sat down with three members of the new chapter to learn more about the first and second waves of Angels in Baltimore, with particular interest in how a city changing shape through the War on Drugs factored into the Angels' arrival, departure, and eventual return to Baltimore. Chapter Commander Marcus Dent, who goes by the call-sign Strider, heads the latest wave of Guardian Angels in Baltimore.²⁶ So, it was Strider I first contacted about meeting with the group. I emailed Strider introducing myself as a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh in the early stages of research for a project on fatal violence in Baltimore. In describing the component of my research focused on individual and community efforts impacting violence in the city, I explained that I saw the Guardian Angels as an important part of the story of Baltimore's community activism from both current and historical viewpoints.

I'm hoping for the opportunity to talk with you about the work you are doing. Much of the outcome of this project (and the direction my writing will take) will depend on who I can access and what they have to say, but I'm hoping to get a general idea of what sorts

²⁶ As the spokesman for the group, "Strider" discloses his legal name, Marcus Dent. Taps and Taxman requested that the identity remain coded by the use of their "call signs" or the names they use in service of the organization. They see this as a necessary safety precaution due to the nature of their work. For consistency, I refer to all three by their call names here. Strider, Taps, Taxman, (Baltimore Chapter of Guardian Angels), interview by Katie Kavanagh O'Neill, February 10, 2007, Baltimore, Maryland, transcript, Department of Communication, University of Pittsburgh.

of individual and community efforts are taking place, what's driving people to act, what might be contributing to their success, what their sense of the problems are, etc....²⁷

He responded promptly and enthusiastically the following day with interest an interest in meeting for an interview,

I love being able to speak to people about the effort it takes to empower a community and the reason certain individuals would make time to help. Our chapter here in Baltimore is still in the startup mode but I have a very good team of Angels from different social and diverse backgrounds who have acted as one unit to help manage and structure the Baltimore Chapter. I would love to speak with you and have you speak with the other angels as well. We have put together a great relationship with miscellaneous communities and organizations to form a like-minded team of cooperation.²⁸

Strider included links to websites for the local (baltimoreguardianangels.org) and national (guardianangels.org) Guardian Angels organization along with his phone number for purposes of setting up an interview. We arranged to meet the following week at a local, bar/restaurant where I was able to reserve a private room to facilitate recording and conducting the interview.

On the day of the interview, Strider brought two other Angels with him, "Taps" Director of Operations for the Baltimore chapter and "Taxman," who assists in martial arts and street training. Strider and Taps are black, and in their early forties, Taxman is white in his mid-fifties.

²⁷ Katie Kavanagh O'Neill, e-mail message to Marcus Dent, February 2, 2007.

²⁸ Marcus Dent, email message to the author, February 3, 2007.

All three wore the standard Guardian Angel uniform. Though often described as wearing military or paramilitary garb, critics have likened their outfits to those of the Girl Scouts.²⁹ There is a watchfulness about the men that I recognize not just from police officers I've interviewed for other projects, but from the cops in my family who carry that same strategic attentiveness about them whether they are on the job or off duty at a funeral or baseball game. It comes across as simultaneously acutely attentive and broadly distributed. In keeping with the language of Strider's email and his demeanor on the phone, all three came across as approachable but practiced. They were eager to talk about their work but focused on conveying a clear, confident, coordinated message of the Guardian Angels as a disciplined and professional organization. As I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the details shared by Strider, Taps, and Taxman regarding the individual roles they play in organizing, training, and patrol offer a solid framework for understanding the fundamental structure and operation of the group. Our conversation lasted just under an hour and a half.

Strider and Taps' involvement in both the first and second waves of the Baltimore Guardian Angels is not only useful for understanding the transformations the group underwent between those iterations, but moreover, how the War on Drugs transmuted crime, policing, and the city.

Strider: Taps and I were part of the original organization. Taps was actually a part of the first graduating class of the Guardian Angels and I followed him in. I was

²⁹ Matt Seiden, "In Southwest Baltimore, they Wait and Hope for the Guardian Angels," *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 11, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535802597?accountid=10750>

actually, as soon as he graduated I was in, and I was actually part of the second graduating class of the Guardian Angels and that was back in the early 80s. 81 maybe?

Taps: Yeah, something like that.

Strider: So, we stayed in until maybe 84-

Taps: Yeah, 84-85.

Strider: 84-85 and then we pretty much went on to work and live our lives and all that kind of stuff and that was our first experience with the Angels at that time.

Taps: When the Guardian Angels came to Baltimore the first time and they had that recruitment drive, all the Angels that came to Baltimore were from other states, but they just came for the recruitment and to train the Guardian Angels in Baltimore City. But, people wanted to be Angels in Baltimore. So, when they announced they was coming to Baltimore, I jumped on the bus and went right there.

Throughout the course of the interview, all three men seemed most comfortable talking about the work of the group and spoke little of themselves beyond their roles in the organization. Though Strider and Taxman each make passing references to their wives at one point, none lingered on questions I posed about their personal histories. At the start of the interview, when I asked them about their early memories of Baltimore, Strider and Taps revealed that they are twin brothers and that Taxman is their brother-in-law. Strider explained that he and Taps moved in from the city to the county when they were eleven years old, but that his early memories are of life in Baltimore—which he remembers as a very different place than the city he sees today.

It's a whole different thing to what it is now. Now I'm forty-three years old, and I mean, in Baltimore City back then, I remember sitting on the steps with my grandmother, the ice cream truck came around, that kind of stuff. You didn't have to worry about the shoot-ups, and the guns, and all the high volume of crime we have now. So, that's what I remember back then.

When I asked Taps about his childhood in Baltimore, he nodded along with his brother's recollection of sitting on the stoop at his Grandmother's. He added,

It's definitely got more active on the streets with the crime, especially with the drug activity. Back then, you didn't have all that, I mean sure drugs were around, but there was an element of respect. You didn't mess with the elderly people; you didn't mess with kids. Now you got kids out there hustling, you know, so I mean, it's become more aggressive out there, you know?

The lens through which Strider and Taps see the Baltimore of the mid 1960s through early 1970s presents a picture of the golden age of American cities—where families are intact, neighborhoods are safe, and people feel secure.³⁰ But, there is little indication that the city was

³⁰ Stuart Tannock, "Nostalgia Critique," *Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (October 1995): 453-64; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Jean Starobinski and William S. Kemp, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes* 14, no. 54 (1966): 81-103; Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

less “dangerous” in the late 1960s than in the late 2000s.³¹ While crime histories and news archives are at odds with the notion that we are living in a uniquely violent and turbulent time, this fantasy of a gentler past is an enduring component of the social imaginary.³² Rather than pointing to an increase in violence and crime as Strider does, Taps attributes the change he sees to a rise in aggression. His observation here is useful for thinking about the range of factors that impact one’s sense of security that cannot be measured in terms of the statistical occurrences and probabilities of violence.³³

³¹ In 1967, Baltimore had the second highest homicide rate in the country and in 1969 and 1971, Baltimore’s homicide rate reached historic highs. “Baltimore’s Murder Rate 2nd in Nation,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 16, 1967, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/541577382?accountid=10750>; Roger Twigg, “1971 was Record Year for Murders, the Most Violent Time in City History,” *Baltimore Sun*, Feb 7, 1972, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/536302139?accountid=10750>.

³² Changes in law, reportage, population, geographic boundaries make it impossible to construct a precise statistical timeline for understanding trends in violent crime. However, a search through the archives of *Baltimore Sun* reveals that Baltimore has always registered relatively high rates of crime and violence. Shane Scott, “Crime in Baltimore: A Grim Tradition Thugs Thriving in City Streets since 1700s,” *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 1, 1992, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406766044?accountid=10750>; “Ask Congress Act to Check Murders,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 14, 1923, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/544318707?accountid=10750>; “The Country’s Homicide Rates,” *Baltimore Sun*, Mar. 12, 1967, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/539437924?accountid=10750>; “‘U.S. Homicide Rate for Young Men Far Exceeds Other Nations,’ Study Says,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 27, 1990, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1734314206?accountid=10750>; Jonathan Bor, “High Death Rate among Blacks in Baltimore Cited,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 30, 1989, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1637548471?accountid=10750>; Frederick L. Hoffman, “Homicide Record of U. S. is Worst in Civilized World,” *Baltimore Sun* Apr. 19, 1931, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/543404374?accountid=10750>; Roger Twigg, “Crime Index Dip Shown but City Rate is Still High,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 1970, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/542500487?accountid=10750>.

³³ Later in this chapter, I return to this thread by further unpacking the dynamics of aggression and masculinity under the War on Drugs. Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Bonnie Mann, *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from the War on Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Elaine Fox, Laura Griggs, and Elias Mouchlianitis, “The Detection of Fear-relevant Stimuli: Are Guns Noticed as Quickly as Snakes?” *Emotion* 7, no. 4 (2007): 691–96; Jenny

For Strider and Taps, nostalgia has a clear impact on their rhetorical perspective and how they approach their work.³⁴ But, when nostalgia fixes to politics, the distortions that emerge in this sort of wistful remembrance are not without consequence. As Svetlana Boym explains, nostalgia is not always retrospective, but can also be prospective,

The fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future. The consideration of the future makes us take responsibility for our nostalgic tales. Unlike melancholia, which confines itself to the plane of individual consciousness, nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory. While futuristic utopias might be out of fashion, nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension—only it is no longer directed toward the future. Sometimes it is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space.³⁵

For the Angels, attempting to refashion their perception of the past into the present sets up an exhausting and impossible task. As their recollection of a more peaceful, orderly time positions their work as more restorative than constructive, it binds them to a fictive blueprint.

Yiend, "The Effects of Emotion on Attention: A Review of Attentional Processing of Emotional Information," *Cognition and Emotion* 24, no. 1 (2010): 3-47.

³⁴ Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1968): 1-14; Richard E. Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6, no. 3 (Summer 1973): 154-61; Scott Consigny, "Rhetoric and its Situations," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1974): 175-86.

³⁵ Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and its Discontents," *Hedgehog Review* 9, no. 2 (2007): 7-18, 9.

While Taps and Strider talk of the Baltimore of their childhood in the 1960s and early 70s as a time of relative peace and order, Taxman sets the story of his teen years in that era to the backdrop of widespread political, social, and cultural tumult. He is roughly ten years older than the others, which accounts in part to his different historical perspective. He explains his introduction to the Guardian Angels,

Well, my wife and I kind of started out as activists to begin with. We were both part of a group called “Up with People” and she [sister to Taps and Strider] traveled around the world and that’s where we met. And we’ve been trying to make a difference ever since. And we continue to try and make a difference. And when Strider called and wanted me to become a part of the organization, I was honored and, uh, quite flattered. But, back in the 60s, it was, there was a different philosophy back then. There were a lot of racial issues, having to do with Martin Luther King being shot, the Kennedys being shot, and then growing up in that era. And then actually seeing drugs continue to grow at an alarming rate and then seeing the gangs coming into all portions. From the time I was twelve until the time I was married, I lived out in Timonium and that was very ritzy. Everyone had money and everybody was well-off. All the kids had cars and they maybe dabbled in drugs, but not like you see now. Regardless of what area you come from and what stage you come from, you can be very affluent and part of the drug scene. You can be from the poorest part of the town and still be in the drug scene. And that’s the way it is now. In the 60s, they started getting into the psychedelic drugs and getting into the escapism and getting away from the Vietnam War, and people going to Canada, and people tripping out, and basically that’s what they were doing back then.

Taxman's story doesn't invoke the same sense of nostalgia as that of Strider and Taps. However, when he mentions that people "dabbled in drugs" in the past, but "not like they do now," his message has an immutable tone of "Make America Great Again" to it. Neither Taxman nor the others claim any particular ideological or political affiliations for themselves or the Guardian Angel organization throughout our conversation.³⁶ However, some acutely conservative, right-wing leanings come through in Taxman's account. His continued admonition of drug use carries a puritanical message, and his heavy reliance on the rhetoric of crisis mimics traditionally conservative arguments that are pro law and order.

The fact that Taxman's earliest experience with activism was with Up with People provides useful insight into his ideological leanings. Up with People was a product of the global evangelical Christian Moral Re-Armament movement which espoused that the only way to achieve social and political change was through a devotion to personal moral probity.³⁷ Moreover, his statement reflects the anti-drug rhetoric of the larger Angel organization. Anti-drug rhetoric has long been a component of the Angel's messaging, but it has intensified over time. When the Angels first arrived in Baltimore, they claimed that they were unconcerned with

³⁶ At the national chapter level, the Angels are also unaffiliated with a political party, but Curtis Sliwa is the host of a conservative talk show on 77 WABC Radio in New York City and the chair of the rightwing Reform Party of New York State. Bill Mahoney, "The Reform Party's Long, Winding Road Takes Another Turn," *Politico*, Oct. 28, 2016, <http://www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2016/10/sinuous-history-of-reform-party-takes-another-turn-106827>

³⁷ See Daniel Sack, *Change! Unite! Fight! Moral Re-Armament: The Reinventions of an American Religious Movement* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2009); Philip Boobbyer, *The Spiritual Vision of Frank Buchman*. (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2013); Richard H. Palmer, "Moral Re-Armament Drama: Right Wing Theatre in America," *Theatre Journal* 31, no. 2 (1979): 172-85.

drugs and prostitution, and instead would focus on what they called the “serious crimes” of rape, robberies, and muggings.”³⁸ That was in keeping with the focus of the New York Angels at the time as well, who were also targeting crimes of violence.

By 1987, the Guardian Angels had adopted the slogan, “Drug Free or Die.” That year, Sliwa was invited to represent the anti-drug side of a public debate on drug use and drug legalization at the University of Maryland. He was accompanied by fellow drug opponent and former head of the Drug Enforcement Administration Peter Bensinger. They faced drug proponents and counter-culture icons and Abbie Hoffman and Timothy Leary.³⁹ At that event, which Sliwa and Leary went on to restage at Universities around the country, Sliwa equated drug use to “genocide” and spoke of dealers as “mutants.” Taxman echoes Sliwa’s moralizing tenor again when talking about drug trade workers,

The lure of money in the drug scene and the illusion of a gang trying to say that “we’re a family,” which they’re not. Only using these kids as slaves ... most like ...for a better part of an explanation. They use these kids so they can continue to make money and steal as much as they can.

Though Taxman’s telling of Baltimore in the late 1960s and early 1970s acknowledges the complex relationship between drugs, street violence, and state violence, he doesn’t talk about

³⁸ Sandy Banisky and Rafael Alvarez, “Guardian Angels Begin Patrols,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 11, 1981.

³⁹ Kris Antonelli, “Right and Left ‘Wrestlers’ Go to the Mat at College Park on Drug Issue,” *Baltimore Sun*, Oct. 15, 1987, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1103247005?accountid=10750>.

the Vietnam War or the assassination of King and the Kennedys as the result of corrupt governments and unjust systems, but rather as disruptions to social order. The moralizing tone and rhetoric of crisis highlighted in these sections not only speaks to the predisposition the Angels have for law and order and the War on Drugs, but provides insight into the broader social and cultural landscape that allowed the War on Drugs to emerge and flourish.

One of the fundamental failings of the paradigm of the War on Drugs is that it is somewhat confounding to pin down what the target or enemy is. “Drugs” in and of themselves are not the enemy. In fact, with very few exceptions, most “drugs” are not only legal, but researched, developed, and distributed via federal funding and federal guidelines. Even beyond the rhetorical messiness presented in the term, the hollow impracticality of a war on “drugs” is evident with a quick glance at the history of the legality of drug use in the US, as the legality, production, distribution, and use of various psychoactive substances are perpetually shifting between stigmatized and normalized. While there has always been some degree of moral panic around drugs and drug use, the specifics of which substance(s) are a threat to society is forever in flux.⁴⁰ This is evident in the history of alcohol prohibition, in the persistent narrative of drugs as a threat to social order, in current debates regarding the decriminalization of marijuana, and as contemporary discourse on addiction and abuse points increasingly away from street drugs like meth and heroin to their respective legal, regulated counterparts: Adderall and OxyContin.⁴¹

⁴⁰ James E. Hawdon, “The Role of Presidential Rhetoric in the Creation of a Moral Panic: Reagan, Bush, and the War on Drugs,” *Deviant Behavior* 22, no. 5 (2001): 419-445; Theodore Chiricos, “Moral Panic as Ideology: Drugs, Violence, Race and Punishment in America,” *Justice with Prejudice: Race and Criminal Justice in America*, ed. Michael J. Lynch and E. Britt Patterson (Guilderland, N.Y.: Hawwor and Heston, 1996): 19-48; Erich Goode, *Drugs in American Society* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

⁴¹ Manuella Adrian, “What the History of Drugs Can Teach Us About the Current Cannabis Legalization Process: Unfinished Business,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 50, no. 8-9 (2015): 990-

2.5 THE DRUG WAR: FROM RHETORICAL TO MATERIAL

The rhetoric of crisis—be it moral, economic, or political, is often deployed to generate the conditions of urgency which facilitate the expansion of state control.⁴² With a declaration of war, comes an understanding that extraordinary conditions exist which call for extraordinary measures and extraordinary trust in the state. German political theorist Carl Schmitt, introduced the legal concept of a “state of exception” to establish that conditions will arise “characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like” which call governments to deviate from the normal rule of law.⁴³ Giorgio Agamben traces the roots of the state of exception from early Roman law through the current War on Terror to investigate how governments grow their power under crisis. He argues,

1004; Michael C. Gerald, *The Drug Book: From Arsenic to Xanax, 250 Milestones in the History of Drugs* (New York: Sterling Publishers, 2013); Jeremy Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

⁴² Bonnie J. Dow, “The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 53, no.3 (1989): 294-310; Carol Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Libya; Bush 43 on Iraq,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10, no.2 (2007): 303-334; Denise M. Bostdorff and Daniel J. O’Rourke, “The Presidency and the Promotion of Domestic Crisis: John Kennedy’s Management of the 1962 Steel Crisis,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27, no.2 (1997): 343-61.

⁴³ Such a case was made for the 1933 Decree for the Protection of People and State—an act which suspended civil liberties of German citizens as a necessary defense against the threat of communism. However, that decree was never repealed. So, it was this notion of a “state of exception” that established the conditions necessary for the rise of the Third Reich, which positioned Hitler as dictator of a fascist, totalitarian state. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (1922; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), 6.

Modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination not only of political adversaries but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system.⁴⁴

Agamben points to German history as a potent warning that there are no safeguards that preclude the state of exception from simply becoming a permanent state of order—a flaw which facilitates the transformation of democracies into totalitarian states. He argues, “when the state of exception... becomes the rule, then the juridico-political system transforms itself into a killing machine.”⁴⁵ The urgency of war facilitates the acceptance of these conditions as part of a temporary, but necessary sacrifice.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2; earlier threads of his theory on the state of exception can be found in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁴⁵ Agamben, *State of Exception*, 86.

⁴⁶ Under current law, the National Emergency Act (NEA) of 1976 sets limitations on the scope of power for a presidential declaration of a state of exception (legally referred to as a State of Emergency). The NEA, in theory, includes a safeguard which insures that a state of exception should not become a permanent, de facto rule of law. The NEA specifies that a President must specifically name which laws are relevant and impacted by the declaration of emergency, and also places a one-year expiration date on such declarations, and stipulates that congressional approval is required to extend the declaration every six months. However, not only are there are a number of laws that are not impacted by these restrictions, the statute of limitations can be renewed every year through the sole authority of the president. [Patrick Thronson, “Comprehensive Reform of America’s Emergency Law Regime,” *University of Michigan Journal of Law Reform* 46, no.2 (March 23, 2013): 737-87; Cass R. Sunstein, *Laws of Fear: Beyond the Precautionary Principle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35-63; Michael Head, *Emergency Powers in Theory and Practice: The Long Shadow of Carl Schmitt* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2016); Andrew Kent and Julian Davis Mortenson, “The Search for Authorization: Three Eras of the President’s National Security Power,” *Cambridge Companion to the United States Constitution*, Fordham Law Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2824416, August 16, 2016, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2824416>]. Although the United States is currently under thirty separate states of emergency, the oldest of which dates back to 1979,

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to detail the complex political evolution of the drug war, a brief trace through some key language and policies provides useful context for understanding some of the fundamental turns in politics and policing that have transformed the situation of violence in the Baltimore and that shapes the lives and work of my narrators and their communities. To that end, I offer a brief overview of how this rhetorical war turned material.

The War on Drugs didn't fully take shape until the early 1980s, but Richard Nixon deployed the language of war in articulating an official governmental response to what he articulated as "the drug menace."⁴⁷ His 1971 address to Congress framed America's drug problem as a public health crisis and placed addiction and abuse at the forefront of America's drug problem,

In New York City, more people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five years die as a result of narcotics than from any other single cause. As part of this administration's ongoing efforts to stem the tide of drug abuse which has swept America in the last

congress has never once met to either approve or discontinue a presidential declaration of a state of emergency. [Gregory Korte, "Special Report: America's Perpetual State of Emergency," *USA Today* (September 9, 2016).] In practice, this means the NEA functions as an unenforceable formality that has in fact left the US in a perpetual state of emergency. [Paul Achter, "Rhetoric and the Permanent War," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 102, no. 1 (2016): 79; Muhammed Asadi, "Constructing Global 'Wars Without End': Vocabularies of Motive and the Structure of Permanent War," *Qualitative Sociology Review* 7, no. 3 (2011: 44-71.)]

⁴⁷ Though Nixon was the first president to invoke the language of war for framing America's problem with drugs, prohibitionist Harry Anslinger, Commissioner of the U.S. Treasury Department Bureau of Narcotics from 1930 to 1962, laid much of the federal government's rhetorical groundwork for the War on Drugs. Johann Hari, *Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015); Douglas Clark Kinder, "Bureaucratic Cold Warrior: Harry J. Anslinger and Illicit Narcotics Traffic," *Pacific Historical Review* 50, no. 2 (May 1981): 169-91.

decade, we submitted legislation in July of 1969 for a comprehensive reform of Federal drug enforcement laws. ...We must now candidly recognize that the deliberate procedures embodied in present efforts to control drug abuse are not sufficient in themselves. The problem has assumed the dimensions of a national emergency.⁴⁸

Nixon's emphasis on addiction was accompanied by a commitment to increase drug treatment options, indicating a promising public health approach to the crisis. But, even though his language was more sympathetic than other hard-liners, he nonetheless maintained a sanctimonious tone which presented drug use as a threat to the social fabric and moral order. He goes on to address the issue of drug-related crime,

Narcotic addiction is a major contributor to crime. ...Untreated narcotic addicts do not ordinarily hold jobs. Instead, they often turn to shoplifting, mugging, burglary, armed robbery, and so on. They also support themselves by starting other people—young people—on drugs. The financial costs of addiction are more than \$2 billion every year, but these costs can at least be measured. The human costs cannot. American society should not be required to bear either cost.

Even though Nixon's initial framework for the drug war was more public health-oriented than law and order-based, by linking addiction and crime, he laid critical groundwork for the punitive turn. As Nixon began looking towards reelection, his approach to the country's drug

⁴⁸ Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress on Drug Abuse Prevention and Control," United States Congress, June 17, 1971.

problem coalesced with his racist Southern Strategy as he became more “tough on crime.”⁴⁹

Although it was Lyndon Johnson who took the nation’s drug problem out of the hands of the Treasury Department and transferred it to the Department of Justice, it was under Nixon that the Drug Enforcement Agency was formed to coordinate federal efforts to control drug distribution and use. Under Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, marijuana remained a low priority for law enforcement, though social stigma persisted.

Throughout the Reagan administration, the puritanical “Just Say No” campaign and media hysteria around crack cocaine and set the stage for an unprecedented escalation of the war on drugs. It was under Reagan that the “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986” was established. Often referred to as “Len Bias Law,” it was named for a University of Maryland basketball star died of a cocaine overdose. As the number two draft pick for the NBA, his death garnered vast and sustained media coverage, and shifted the narrative around cocaine from that of a harmless party drug to a dangerous narcotic. The Len Bias Law became one of the most significant and controversial pieces of legislation in the drug war, as it established harsh mandatory sentencing for even small amounts of cocaine possession, while imposing stricter criminal penalties for crack over cocaine at a ratio of disparity of 100:1.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Robert Mason, “‘I Was Going to Build a New Republican Party and a New Majority’: Richard Nixon as Party Leader, 1969–73,” *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3 (2005): 463-483; Thomas J. Johnson, Wayne Wanta, Timothy Boudreau, Janet Blank-Libra, Killian Schaffer and Sally Turner, “Influence Dealers: A Path Analysis Model of Agenda Building During Richard Nixon’s War on Drugs,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1996): 181-94.

⁵⁰ After years of debate over the racially biased nature of the legislation, it was repealed and revised to a measure of 18:1 in the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010. Stephen D Reese and Lucig H. Danielian, “Intermedia Influence and the Drug Issue,” *Communication Campaigns about Drugs*, ed. Pamela J. Shoemaker (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1989): 29-46; Lewis Donohew, David Helm, and John Haas, “Drugs and (Len) Bias on the Sports Page,” *Media, Sports, and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1989): 225-237.

Under Reagan, the federal government began soliciting US military support for the drug war. The National Guard held marijuana eradication exercises, programs were instituted to initiate military training of police, and military vehicles and equipment were made available for local police.⁵¹ This escalation continued in the 1990s, as Presidents Bush and Clinton prioritized drugs as a threat to American national security. Broken Windows Policing strategies and policies like the “Three Strikes” legislation ushered in the era of mass incarceration, and fundamentally changed the nature of domestic policing.⁵² Throughout that decade, an enormous structure of state control was established that granted new powers to law enforcement, particularly to those departments and divisions involved with communities that were already experiencing a disproportionate amount police violence and overreach. At the same time, trends in public health and addiction research began to nudge conversations around America’s drug problem towards the notion of supplementing criminal justice approaches to the drug problem with medical interventions.

The introduction of the war on terror gave offered a new framework for the war on drugs and reignited the cause of prohibition. On October 3, 2001, just three weeks after the attacks on 9/11, the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources met

⁵¹ James Gray, *Why Our Drug Laws Have Failed: A Judicial Indictment of War on Drugs* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010); Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up: Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

⁵² The “Broken Windows” theory forwarded the notion that crimes like vandalism and loitering, which were previously considered to be lesser priorities than “serious” crimes like rape, robbery, and assault are, in fact, significant contributing factors to social disorder that and create an atmosphere conducive to violence. Broken Windows policing made such crimes a priority as part of a broader approach social control. I return to this concept throughout this chapter. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “The Police and Neighborhood Safety: Broken Windows,” *Atlantic Monthly* 249 (1982): 29-36, 38.

before Congress. Chairman Mark Souter opened the hearing by linking the threat of terrorism to the global drug trade. He testified,

In the past three weeks, our Nation has been forced to simultaneously examine a number of critical issues with new urgency and vigor. For drug policy, the September 11th attacks on our country immediately highlighted the dark synergies between narcotics trafficking and international terrorism. Afghanistan has always been one of the world's leading producers of opium, but very little of it has entered the United States, and our national attentions have focused on other sources of supply.

We must now confront the new reality that the Afghan drug trade, largely without crossing our borders, has harmed our country just as much as the drugs from half a world away that reach American's streets. The Afghan drug trade has given direct financial support for the Taliban regime to harbor international terrorists and *at least indirectly* assist Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network to grievously attack the United States of America.⁵³

The concept of “narcoterrorism” quickly became a driving force in America’s global and domestic policies.⁵⁴ Shortly after 9/11, the Bush administration cashed in on hysteria around

⁵³ Mark Souter and the United States House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources, “Drug Trade and the Terror Network,” October 3, 2001. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-107hhrg81496/html/CHRG-107hhrg81496.htm>.

⁵⁴ In the 1980s, Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry used the term “narcoterrorism” to describe what he saw as an international conspiracy funded through drug trafficking to destabilize his government. The term has emerged in discussions of global drug markets in various instances since then, but has gained greater popularity in recent years. Peter A. Lupsha, “Towards an Etiology of Drug Trafficking and Insurgent Relations: The Phenomenon of Narco-

threats of terror and launched a year-long propaganda campaign which suggested that casual drug users in the US were funding global terrorism.⁵⁵ Under the existing cloud of shock and fear, and an insistence on a symbiotic relationship between drug trafficking and terrorism, drugs and drug trade workers were marked as a threat to national security. With the help of that narrative force, legislators grew the powers of the state to include a mass surveillance apparatus of US citizens. Eventually, all claims that Al Qaeda was funded by drug trafficking were debunked in the 9/11 commission report and numerous studies of domestic and global trafficking demonstrated no significant financial relationship between terror networks and the drug trade.⁵⁶ However, the myth of a synergistic relationship between drug trafficking and terrorism persists.

2.6 CHANGES ON THE BATTLEFIELD IN BALTIMORE

While the Baltimore Angels do not explicitly address the policies or language of the War on Drugs in these narratives, the way they juxtapose the antagonistic relationship they had with police in the 1980s with the collaborative association they have with them in the present day follows the arc of transformation of policing and the drug war that I outlined above. Here, Strider describes the initial tensions between Angels and police in the 1980s,

terrorism,” *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 13, no. 2 (1989): 61-75.

⁵⁵ David L. Altheide, “Consuming Terrorism,” *Symbolic Interaction* 27, no.3 (2004): 289-308.

⁵⁶ Benoit Gomis, *Counterterrorism: Reassessing the Policy Response* (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 2015).

The Angels started in '79 in New York. So, by the time they started in the '80s here in Baltimore, they were still seen as controversial, or violent, or vigilantes and you had all this stuff you had to deal with. So, once the Angels came to Baltimore, the police department, no matter what we did, we couldn't get it right. No matter what it was we did. We stopped somebody from being mugged, we grabbed the purse, anything, the police came down and they pretty much came down on us. "What are you doing? You have no right to do this. Get out of here." And that kind of issue.

As indicated in the news accounts cited throughout this chapter, Strider is correct in claiming that the Angels had little to no support from police in the 80s and 90s. Even when Baltimore opened its first subway system in 1983 and the Angels approached the Mass Transit Authority to ask for *gratis* subway rides for Angels on patrol, the MTA not only declined their request, but discouraged the group from patrolling the subway altogether.⁵⁷ However, Strider also admits that the Angels did little to change that relationship in those years,

When we first came in, in the 80s, the Guardian Angels came into the neighborhoods, they trained, they started patrolling the streets—very little communication with the people living in the community, very little, no communication at all with the police.

⁵⁷ Katie Gunther, "MTA Balks at Free Ride for Angels."

The resistance the Angels felt from city authorities in the 1980s continued through their brief return to Baltimore from 1990 to 1991. Strider explains the moment when tensions between Angels and police came to a head,

What happened that pulled the chapter out of Baltimore in '91, was they were called into Pigtown to control the huffing, which is sniffing glue thing, and three Angels saw a guy doing it, and they snatched the bag out his hand. The same time they snatched the bag out his hand, a police officer rolled up, and they wanted to charge the Angels with assault because they took this drug user's bag of glue. And at that time, Curtis Sliwa thought it was a good idea to disband the chapter, because if you keep having run-ins like that with the police—sooner or later, how long is it going to be before the Guardian Angels are coming back at them? Which is, what I thought, was a real good move.

Strider's accounts of the history and intensity of the conflict between Angels and police at both the local and national level, supported by the numerous news accounts cited throughout this chapter, are important for understanding the gravity and significance of the transformation that occurs in that relationship between the 1991 and 2007. As Strider explains,

This time around, what we did was we met with the police commissioner first. Then we met with the community associations; then we met with the people who didn't have community associations, so we met with everybody, the store vendors, everybody. We pulled them all into the loop before we even put one Guardian Angel in the neighborhood. So, what that does is it brings everybody into it. We actually have a real

good relationship with the police department, especially the southern district here, where they involve us in on everything they do. You know? We're all involved in meetings, all the community events, everything. And, you know, on the 15th of this month they're actually going to have Curtis Sliwa as a guest speaker at the southern district police station. Which, you know, is something we, you would never see a Guardian Angel in a police station in the '80s. Ever.

The emphasis Strider places here on the irony and significance of Curtis Sliwa being invited to speak at a local police station is one of the most significant turns we hear throughout this oral history. It punctuates a key transition that took place between when the Angels were first driven out of the city by police and back fifteen years later when a spokesperson for the Baltimore Police announced the Department's support for the return of the Guardian Angels,

We welcome partnerships with community residents who are looking to help in the crime fight. The only thing we'd caution the Guardian Angels, or anybody else, is that the actual enforcing of the laws be left to professional law enforcement officers. But we welcome the partnership.⁵⁸

The partnership the Guardian Angels formed with the police is the most significant change from the first to the second iterations of the group. Reflecting n the Angels' return to

⁵⁸ Sumathi Reddy, "On the Streets Again: Guardian Angels Back in Baltimore; Long Absent, Group Resumes Crime-fighting Efforts in City, Recruits Members, Seeks Headquarters Site," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb 02, 2007.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/406144003?accountid=10750>.

Baltimore in 2007, Curtis Sliwa stated, “We have not changed. I think what has happened is that law enforcement and the elected officials have changed, a change of perception. Police now say community policing is key.”⁵⁹ Sliwa’s claim is well-supported both in the statements presented here by Strider, Tap, and Taxman, as well as the numerous news accounts cited throughout this chapter. The fact that this newfound cooperation between the two was due more to changes in strategies of policing than in any tactical or ideological changes on behalf of the guardian Angels is illustrative of a dramatic transformation of policy and procedure for law enforcement that coincides with the (then) developing trend of community policing and the radical militarization of police under the War on Drugs.⁶⁰

2.7 Community Policing

Two key changes in American policing came about between the earlier and latter iterations of Angels in Baltimore—the introduction of the concept of “community policing” and the dramatic militarization of the police born of the War on Drugs. The concurrent development of these trends accounts for some of the irreconcilable incompatibilities at the root of tensions between police and the people of southwest Baltimore, and other similarly positioned communities around the US.

⁵⁹ Reddy, “On the Streets Again.”

In the aftermath of the civil unrest in American cities in the 1960s and 1970s when in the wake of nationwide anti-war demonstrations, the Watts and Stonewall riots, uprisings in the wake of the assassination of King and the Kennedys, police began looking for new methods and programs that might assuage their relationship with civilians.⁶¹ It was in the wake of that turmoil that the notion of community policing began to take foot. In 1972, the National Sheriffs' Association started the National Neighborhood Watch Association, as "an 'extra eyes and ears' approach to crime prevention."⁶² This led to the development of the strategy of "community policing" in the 1980s, which the US Department of Justice defines as,

a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.⁶³

⁶¹ Jack R. Greene and Stephen D. Mastrofski, eds., *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Robert H. Langworthy and Lawrence F. Travis, *Policing in America: A Balance of Forces* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1999); Geoffrey P. Alpert and Roger G. Dunham, *Policing Urban America* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1997); Quint Thurman, Jihong Zhao, and Andrew L. Giacomazzi, *Community Policing in a Community Era: An Introduction and Exploration* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2001); Gary Corder, "Community Policing," *The Oxford Handbook of Police and Policing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014): 148-71; Mike Brogden and Preeti Nijhar, *Community Policing* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Roger G. Dunham and Geoffrey P. Alpert, *Critical Issues in Policing: Contemporary Readings* (Long Grove, Ill.: Waveland Press, 2015); Dennis P. Rosenbaum, "Community Crime Prevention: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature," *Justice Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (1988): 323-395.

⁶² National Neighborhood Watch Organization, a Division of the National Sheriffs' Association, "About Us," *National Neighborhood Watch* website, <http://www.nnw.org/about-national-neighborhood-watch>.

⁶³ US Department of Justice, "Community Policing Defined," *Community Oriented Policing Services Online Resource Center*, <https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P157>.

Such strategies are well-established in the story of policing in America, as the state has always been tasked with managing its relationship with both criminal and law-abiding citizens. In *Citizen Spies: The Long Rise of America's Surveillance Society*, Josh Reeves unpacks the historical dynamics of the relationship between civilians and law enforcement. He suggests,

The essential crux of this regulation has involved channeling citizen vigilance into acceptable forms of seeing/saying citizenship. Since the emergence of Neighborhood Watch... in the 1960s and 1970s, citizen patrols have been assigned very limited tasks, that revolve around communication and lateral surveillance—a stark contrast, no doubt, from the days of watch-and-ward citizen patrols and vigilante justice that characterized most American policing from colonial times to the end of the nineteenth century. This shift is perhaps best characterized as the process by which “Wanted Dead or Alive” was gradually transformed into “Armed and Dangerous: Do Not Approach—Contact Authorities Immediately.” As sovereign governments spread unevenly throughout the US territories, the state gradually asserted its monopoly over legitimate violence. While the state still needed citizens to remain active in the police apparatus—to function as concerned community members, witnesses, and snitches—a range of public and private institutions emerged to properly cultivate these citizens in standards of seeing/saying conduct that would not violate the state's privilege of violence. In a word, these institutions set out to turn vigilant citizens into *communicative* citizens.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Joshua Reeves, *Citizen Spies: The Long Rise of America's Surveillance Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2017) 78-79; see also Mark Andrejevic, “The Work of Watching

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, this history syncs with the change in the relationship between Guardian Angels and police between the 1980s and the 2000s from antagonistic in the earlier, more autonomous iteration of the group, to collaborative, when the group reforms to operate as, in essence, an extension of the state.⁶⁵ This transformation is critical for understanding the ability of the state to absorb and appropriate independent civilian organizations to weaken opposition and expand its own power simultaneously. William Lyons argues that this is the manner through which community policing,

has turned cities into a terrain of social control that has less to do with substantive problem solving and more to do with controlling discontent.... This larger context highlights how local, national, and international messages about social control contribute to efforts to manage the consequences of making capitalism work by separating legitimation from consent and linking it to fear and dependency.⁶⁶

One Another: Lateral Surveillance, Risk, and Governance,” *Surveillance and Society* 2, no. 4 (2002): 479-97.

⁶⁵ It is worth noting that in 2008, for the first time, the Baltimore Guardian Angels publically endorsed the confirmation of a Police Commissioner—Frederick H. Bealefeld. He would later resign in the wake of a series of high-profile police department scandals. Annie Linskey, “Citing his Record on Crime, Council Easy on Bealefeld,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 26, 2008, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406197214?accountid=10750>; Peter Hermann, Julie Scharper, and Justin Fenton, “Baltimore Police Commissioner Bealefeld Resigns,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 3, 2012, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2012-05-03/news/bs-md-ci-bealefeld-resigns-20120503_1_baltimore-police-commissioner-bealefeld-select-lounge-shooting-city-police.

⁶⁶ William Lyons, *The Politics of Community Policing: Rearranging the Power to Punish* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 185. See also G. Parkinson, “Politics of Community Policing,” *Journal of Crime and Justice* 5, no. 4 (1978): 308-317; Wilson Edward Reed, “The Politics of Community Policing in Seattle, Washington (1985-1993)” (PhD diss., Northern Arizona University, 1995).

Regardless of whether or not it is the intention of community policing to operate as a democratizing force, as a strategy in action it amplifies the power of the state by recruiting civilians to police their neighbors. Rather than rebalancing the power imbalance between police and civilians, it deepens the chasm. For those individuals and communities who are already disproportionately targeted by police actions, such as the poor and people of color, this can result in an even greater environment of fear and distrust. In light of those dynamics, police might benefit from “outsourcing” some elements of their community policing program, to assuage some of the tensions between police and communities, by mediating that relationship through a third-party group like the Angels.

As a part of this trend of community policing, citizen patrols have been in place in Baltimore for years as part of the city’s Neighborhood Watch Program Citizens on Patrol program. The program, which conducts the citizen patrols referred to as “COP Walks” was established in 1991— the same year the Angels were driven out of Baltimore.⁶⁷ The Angels’ criticisms of these patrols was made clear in this excerpt from my interview with Strider,

When you’re out there, you know, you’ll see community COP [Citizens on Patrol] walkers, and it’s like ten people, and they’ll all go out, and it’s they’re all talking all at one, it’s just crazy. Whereas the Guardian Angels will go out on a patrol and you have one lead, patrol leader, you have a second to him, then you have the other patrol

⁶⁷ George L. Kelling, Mona R. Hochberg, Sandra Lee Kaminska, Ann Marie Rocheleau, Dennis P. Rosenbaum, Jeffrey A. Roth, and Wesley G. Skogan, *The Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Communities Program: A Preliminary Report* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice, 1998).

members. And each patrol member has a certain, specific job that they have to do on the patrol, whether something happens or not.

Strider shared a conversation he had about community policing with former Commissioner of Baltimore Police, Ed Norris. Norris now conducts a talk radio program in the city and he invited Strider on the show to talk about community policing. Strider said that prior to meeting Norris, he had heard him on the program condemning citizen patrols as a threat to the community and a liability for police. He recalled,

One of his biggest concerns about community policing is that, “Hey, somebody is going to get shot, somebody is going to get killed, you guys can't go and blah blah blah blah blah.”

And when I met him I said, “Okay, then. You know what? You tell me what should the police do and how they're going to stop it.” You know?

[Norris responded,] “Well, I didn’t say they’re going to be able to stop it! But I’m just saying you’re putting yourself in harm’s way.”

[Strider, returning the question back to Norris, said again,] “Ok, so what would you do?”

The frustration experienced by both police and the Guardian Angels over the impossibility of finding a risk-free solution led both parties to reach the point where they were willing to put past tensions aside to work collaboratively in the fight against crime. As part of the collaboration between Angels and police this time around, instead of conducting independent patrols, the Guardian Angels began participating in the Baltimore Police Department (BPD)

Citizen on Patrol (COP) Walks. These patrols now typically consist of community members, police officers, and Guardian Angels. At one point in our conversation, Strider stated that once Angels joined these patrols, “people started getting more involved in the COP walks.” While this claim is difficult to support (even if careful numbers were kept regarding participation in COP walks, which they are not, causation/correlation would be hard to argue), it does speak to the concerns held by opponents to community policing over the role such mediators play in amplifying state authority under the guise of a democratization of power. Though the Angels consistently talk about their relationship with police and the community as collaborative and balanced, part of the complication of these kinds of alliances comes through in Strider’s telling of one of their recent COP walks. He explains,

Actually, we did enter a crack house. And that wasn’t our call. We went on a COP walk. And during that COP walk one of the people said to the cop, “Hey, drug dealers hang out in this abandoned house.” One cop, “Oh, okay, I’ll go look.” Goes up the steps, walks through the door, walks right into the house. As Guardian Angels, the last thing we need is seeing a newspaper saying a cop get shot in a crack house and Guardian Angels were there as well. Two Guardian Angels went around the back; another two stayed out front. I was at the front door. Another Angel went with the cops. And the thing is, as soon as that happened everybody knew, okay this is not good, we’re going to go secure this area.

So, if anything did happen in there, there’s no way they’re going to get out without an Angel knowing it. But also, at the same time, I was able to see Taps, Taps was able to see Hammer, Hammer was able to see Robo, so everybody saw somebody. And I think that kind of spooked the police officer first and the reporter—that was in the paper.

She was like... I mean, as soon as he went in that house, Angels just left the line. And she asked us, “Where are they going?” They know where they’re going. And everybody saw everybody. You know. That’s something he should have done before he walked into that damn crack house. You don’t take COP citizen walks into a crack house—a 3-floor townhouse. You know?

But when it happened, we pretty much knew what we were doing. Everybody is assigned somebody to deal with and you know where that person is, from the time they walk up the basement to the time they walk out the alley. You’re covered. But it all comes down to awareness.

An account from a reporter covering the event writes that Strider was leading the patrol, with seven other Angels and “dozen residents, developers and a police officer” when “a police officer bursts into a rowhouse thought to be a front for drug activity, some [Angels] follow, and others wait outside, looking in every direction.”⁶⁸ There seems to be disagreement or at least confusion regarding the organization of power in these COP walks in terms of who is leading who. Through Strider’s account, we get a useful allegory for the larger dynamic that plays out in community policing. In theory, these police-community collaborations can certainly appease the unease people may feel about being subject to state control, when materialized into action on the street, there is neither the time nor the mechanism for democratic deliberation: the officer takes action by entering the house, and the accompanying Angels and citizens on patrol become his de facto backup squad. Whether the officer’s action was a calculated display of authority or a

⁶⁸ Reddy, “On the Streets Again.”

spontaneous response to a perceived threat, it is clear that the officer holds absolute authority while the Angels and community members function to amplify his power.

Another important detail here concerns how Strider describes the abandoned building the group enters during their patrol. By characterizing it as a “crack house,” Strider imposes a symbolic meaning onto the structure which is rooted in a socioeconomic notion of drugs, crime, and vacancy tethered to the “broken windows” theory of policing mentioned earlier in this chapter. The aggressiveness with which the officer approaches the vacant building, and the implicit threat the house seems to hold for those on the patrol syncs with the sort of paranoia that was circulated via broken windows policing regarding the physical threat imposed by vacant, un-surveilled spaces in the city.⁶⁹ Also, the fact that he calls it a “crack house” and not a “shooting gallery” (the colloquial term for of a space frequented by heroin users) or some simply an abandoned space frequented by drug users imposes the racialized stigma of crack cocaine and reveals an outdated understanding of drug use and culture. While crack was widely circulated in Baltimore in the 1990s, by 2007, it accounted for a very small percentage of the local drug market.⁷⁰

A key problem that emerges with the sort of community policing these patrols claim to enact is that the social memory of the friendly “cop on the beat,” is revealed as largely a social myth that cannot be replicated in reality. Consider Taxman’s rendering of the neighborhood cop of the past,

⁶⁹ Ralph Taylor counters broken window theory by arguing that economic instability, not structural decline, leads to increases in violence and criminal activity. *Breaking Away from Broken Windows: Baltimore Neighborhoods and the Nationwide Fight against Crime, Grime, Fear, and Decline* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000).

⁷⁰ I return to this thread in Chapter Three, when the Catholic Workers talk about the stark differences between the impact of alcohol, crack, and heroin on their community.

You don't have a police officer like you had years ago walking down Broadway. Or one on this side and one in ... they know their neighborhood. You don't have that anymore. You can't. So that's where ... the only thing we're doing is ... we're guides. We are guides and we want to empower them because if we work as a team and we work together, we feed off the strengths of each other. And we feed off the strengths of that community. And all we have to do is just say, "Okay. We're here to help. Not here to solve."

This sentimental telling of the past highlights the stark incongruities between the Angels' nostalgic ideal of policing clashes and the historical and contemporary reality of the way police function in this community. Regardless of whether or not the archetypal amiable beat cop ever inhabited these communities, that character bears little resemblance to today's military-clad tactical teams, plain clothes knockers, and uniformed officers who patrol from the isolation of their squad cars. The failure of community policing as a strategy geared towards easing the tensions between police and historically subjugated communities, cannot be fully understood or thoughtfully evaluated without consideration of a simultaneous development in American law enforcement—the systematic militarization of its local police forces. In the convergence of these two trends, under an ever-growing atmosphere of surveillance, a critical locus of study is formed for unpacking how the War on Drugs furthers the chasm between police and communities and strengthens the relationship between police and Guardian Angels.

2.8 MILITARIZATION OF THE POLICE

Regulations preventing US military forces from engaging in civilian life are part of the crucial protections in place to guard US citizens against government abuse of power.⁷¹ The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act (translated from Latin, “force of country”) established that the US military could not perform police functions.⁷² While these constraints were put into law for the purpose of protecting democratic freedom, the legislation has been amended at times to facilitate implementation of policies like desegregation, and to restore order in the event of natural disasters and terrorist attacks, and to quell rebellion. Under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, policies were enacted that nullified Posse Comitatus when applied to operations involved in the War on Drugs.⁷³ With those changes, a systematic militarization of US police began to unfold. Peter Kraska, whose research on the subject spans decades describes this period of militarization as,

The advent of an unprecedented cooperative relationship between the US military and US civilian police at both the highest and lowest level of organization, including technology transfers, massive military weapons transfers, information sharing between the military

⁷¹ Eliav Liebllich and Adam Shinar, “The Case Against Police Militarization,” *Social Science Research Network*, September 21, 2016,

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2840715.

⁷² Jennifer Elsea, “Posse Comitatus Act and Related Matters: A Sketch,” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, June 6, 2005. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/p/posse-comitatus-act-and-related-matters-a-sketch.html>.

⁷³ Eric V. Larson and John E. Peters, “Preparing the US Army for Homeland Security: Concept, Issues, and Options,” *RAND Corporation Monograph*, 2001, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1251/MR1251.AppD.pdf.

and police targeted at domestic security, a close operational relationship in both drug control and terrorism control efforts, and a high level of cross-training in the area of special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) and counter-civil disturbance, counterinsurgency, and antiterrorism exercises.⁷⁴

The implications and reach of these changes are vast and complex. But, one way to understand how militarization plays out in everyday policing under the drug war is to look at the history and development of SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams.⁷⁵ Originally conceived of as “Special Weapons Attack Teams” by LA Police Chief Darryl Gates, the idea for having military-style special operation units came about in the wake of the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles, during which four thousand National Guard troops were deployed, thirty-four people were killed, and more than 2,000 were injured.⁷⁶ Though SWAT teams are often described as having been designed to contain and negotiate rare and existing situations of violence—such as hostage situations and sniper attacks, the earliest SWAT deployments were the 1969 raid of Black Panther Party headquarters and the 1974 raid on the Symbionese Liberation Army. These early deployments are critical for understanding the historical undercurrents for SWAT raids and

⁷⁴ Peter B. Kraska, “Militarization and Policing—Its Relevance to 21st Century Police,” *Policing* 1, no. 4 (2007): 502.

⁷⁵ Clyde Haberman, “The Rise of The SWAT Team in American Policing,” *New York Times*, Sept. 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/us/the-rise-of-the-swat-team-in-american-policing.html>.

⁷⁶ That uprising took place in 1965, sparked by an incident of police brutality, in the wake of decades of tension and racial discrimination experienced by the largely impoverished black community of south central LA. Sorin Adam Matei and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, “Watts, the 1965 Los Angeles Riots, and the Communicative Construction of the Fear Epicenter of Los Angeles,” *Communication Monographs* 72, no. 3 (2005): 301-323.

other military tactics being consistently disproportionately deployed against individuals and communities which have long borne the brunt of the violence and hostilities of the state.

SWAT teams emerged in cities and towns across the country and, through the legislative expansion of domestic police-military powers under the War on Drugs, use of SWAT teams quickly became primarily proactive rather than reactive, with 80 percent of SWAT team deployments being used in investigative, “no knock” drug raids.⁷⁷ The weight of the difference between police and military tactics has serious consequence. While civilian police officers are trained to use the minimum force necessary, the military is trained to use deadly force to win any battle—meaning SWAT raids often involve the use of lethal force.⁷⁸

The legal intricacies of these changes are complex and, as history has shown, easily manipulated to suit the will of the state. Debates around the constitutionality and effectiveness of these tactics continue to play out in conversations in the media, and among activists, scholars, politicians, and legal professionals and carry a range of implications.⁷⁹ But, the crux of those problems is in the fundamental cynicism of theories and practices of policing which presume that everyday citizens are a threat to the state. When police take on military optics and tactics, those they target are conscripted into battle. Such dynamics make it difficult for police and their surrogates, like the Guardian Angels, to perform as occupier and ally within these communities

⁷⁷ Kraska, “Militarization and Policing,” 506-7.

⁷⁸ While there is no federal regulation that insists that these deaths be reported, between 2010 and 2016, at least eight-one civilians and thirteen law enforcement officers were killed in SWAT raids. Kevin Sack, “Door-Busting Raids Leave Trail of Blood—The Heavy Toll of Using SWAT Teams for Search Warrants,” *New York Times*, Mar. 18, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/18/us/forced-entry-warrant-drug-raid.html?smid=pl-share>.

⁷⁹ Radley Balko offers a thorough overview of the history and controversy around the militarization of US police in [Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces* (New York: Public Affairs, 2013)].

simultaneously. I return to these issues later in my discussion of the Catholic Worker position on state violence and policing.

2.9 PATROL AND COMBAT TRAINING

In addition to the Guardian Angels' paramilitary-style uniforms, and their use of ranking designations common to police and military organizations to structure their internal hierarchy, Angels often lift language from combat and law enforcement for their training manuals, promotional materials, and interviews with the press. As I indicate throughout this chapter, the Angels I interviewed also draw heavily from the rhetoric of battle and law enforcement in their own accounts of working with the group.

Strider, Taxman, and Taps talk about the Guardian Angel training as soldierly— as they experienced it as recruits and as they conduct it as leaders. An article from the *Baltimore Sun* archives offers useful details about the training of Baltimore's first class of recruits in 1981. Revealing that Guardian Angels' methods have been military-inspired from the beginning, the reporter describes the scene,

They stood in two lines in crisp military style, clad in green army fatigues, white T-shirts and black jump boots. ...Ramrod straight, arms at their sides, these young male and female recruits, the majority of them black, were standing in a dusty basement drenched in sweat. ...after perhaps a thousand more barked military commands (left face!—right

face!), a thousand more leg kicks, punches and blocks, they will earn the red berets that identify them as full-fledged Guardian Angels.⁸⁰

The article goes on to point out the severe atmosphere (laughter and talking are not allowed) in which recruits are schooled in “calisthenics, martial arts and military drills, arrest procedures, first aid and CPR.” Discipline plays a significant role in their training as well, as exemplified in the reporter’s description of the Angels’ zero-tolerance policy regarding drugs and weapons, and in her telling of how group leaders explain that the penalty of “25 knuckle or two-finger pushups,” imposed for tardiness “encourages camaraderie.” Similar accounts of methods of discipline and training for Angel chapters in the 1980s are reported in other such archived news accounts and histories of the group.⁸¹

Strider described a similar kind of military-like orderliness of the modern Angel training regimen as he explained the how Taxman and Taps are responsible for instructing new recruits,

[Taxman is] responsible for the martial arts part of the training, which is, basically, his specialty is aikido. We have a martial arts instructor for Kung Fu as well, and we have Taps, who basically oversees all of it, because what he does is he ties the martial art training into the Guardian Angel street tactic training.... Ok? Which is psychological, physical, everything. I want to let these guys tell you what it is they do, but I want to let

⁸⁰ Andrea Pawlyna, “Guardian Angels: Group Now Training, is Expected to be on Patrol in City in Early October,” *Baltimore Sun*, August 30, 1981, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/535885534?accountid=10750>.

⁸¹ Curtis Sliwa and Murray Schwartz, *Streetsmart: The Guardian Angel Guide to Safe Living* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1982).

you know, we have the first aide, conflict resolution, we have, what is it, it's sort of like a sort of like a military-type thing where we go through the structure and the order.

He goes on to explain that while ultimately, each chapter is responsible for its own specific methods of combat training, the majority of the Guardian Angels' psychological and physical conditioning is standardized across chapters.

All the manuals are all the same for all the street tactics and the training; everything's the same. The only thing that is not the same is the martial arts defense training. And we did that years ago when everybody was pretty much on the same page, but if you go on the internet and you'll see each chapter commander is responsible for training of their own chapter.

The "GuardianAngels.org" site that functions as the official webpage for the group holds no specific information about training for patrol recruits. Instead, it offers more generalized language about its methods and missions; characterizing patrols as, "Guided by principles of honesty, dependability and persistence, volunteers empower themselves and selflessly protect others," while transforming "hopelessness into empowerment, fear into friendliness and the caring individual into a powerful collective."⁸² However, a separate site billed as "The Guardian Angels Training Website" states that in 2011, at the annual training conference for

⁸² Guardian Angels, "Safety Patrols," GuardianAngels.org, <http://guardianangels.org/safety-patrols>.

Guardian Angels, Curtis Sliwa announced that the Angels were adopting an official training program called, “The Guardian Angels Defensive Tactics System.”⁸³ According to that source,

The Guardian Angels Defensive Tactics System is a version of the Raven Tactical International Law Enforcement Defensive Tactics Program. It is a comprehensive Defensive Tactics Program offering officers a functional foundation in a variety of related defensive skills. The program has been developed by certified Defensive Tactics Instructor Fernan Vargas. Mr. Vargas has trained Police and Security officers at the local, state, and federal level. Modules of the course have been P.O.S.T. Certified [“Peace Officers Standards and Training”] in several states and have also been adopted by various agencies, such as the Pentagon Force Protection Agency.... The program has been pressure tested in heavy scenario training and gone through several revisions based on the material’s effectiveness under stressful, live scenario testing. The program is meant to give new recruits a firm foundation in the mental, psychological and physical skills needed to properly protect themselves from a violent offender. The program is designed to be simple, adaptable, and easy to recall and use under stressful situations.⁸⁴

The training, which the site explains should be used for all new recruits, is divided into five modules: “Defensive Tactics,” “Ground Survival,” “Control, Compliance, and Arresting

⁸³ “Defensive Tactics” Guardian Angels Style,” GuardianAngelsTraining.yolasite.com, <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/resources/GA%20Defensive%20Tactics%20System.pdf>

⁸⁴ Fernan Vargas and The Guardian Angels, “The Guardian Angels Defensive Tactics System,” GuardianAngelsTraining.com, <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/defensive-tactics-training.php>.

Techniques,” “Instructor Development,” and “Instructor Trainer Development.” The first three modules lay out expectations Angels are held to in terms of Use of Force and methods for, “Unarmed Defensive Tactics, Escapes from Grabs & Holds, Control & Compliance Holds, Handcuffing & Arrest Procedures, Ground Survival tactics, Multiple Attacker Tactics, Secondary Protection Skills, Weapon Disarming & Defense.”⁸⁵ As is indicated by their headings, the last two modules are dedicated to training future leaders and instructors. The only “certified instructors” listed on the website are Fernan “Raven” Vargus (mentioned in the excerpt above), Miguel “3rd Rail” Fuentes, and Kevin “The Punisher” Cain. Biographies for each of the highlight their experiences in martial arts and other related disciplines and include personal stories of heroic achievements like this one attributed to Cain,

Since Kevin Cain grew up in Hampton Roads, Va, where many of the elite military forces of the United States are training in special warfare, he learned at an early age the nature of combat. That understanding of reality versus fiction in warfare lead Kevin Cain to compete in No Holds Barred events in the early and mid-90’s. At that time, the events were not regulated by sport rules. The fights were tough and brutal, held in the back yard at parties. Kevin Cain decided that NHB fights alone was [sic] not sufficient tests for his theory. In 2001, he decided to take it one step further and begin his career as a Guardian Angel. As a Guardian Angel “The Punisher” Kevin Cain walked unarmed

⁸⁵ The document on Use of Force details the specific guidelines established by Guardian Angels in navigating the force continuum. The “force continuum” is a tool used by law-enforcement agencies to establish the varying limits of methods of force that can be used to insure compliance in any given situation. Guardian Angels, “Force Continuum,” GuardianAngelsTraining.com, <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/resources/Guardian%20Angels%20Use%20of%20force.pdf>

into the heart of Washington D.C. directly into a gang war between the Crips and MS13. With the help of his fellow Guardian Angels all armed only with Kevin Cain's teachings, the Guardian Angels were able to stop the gang war and help local police take back a neighborhood they did not previously dare venture into. Kevin Cain sits on the Advisory Board for the Richmond Virginia chapter of the Guardian Angels as the defensive tactics instructor.⁸⁶

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully unpack the wealth of rhetorical maneuvers deployed here, this passage offers a useful window into the broader belief system adopted by Guardian Angels, which, while labeled as "defensive," is steeped in aggression, enforces obedience to authority, rebukes "street violence," and reverses the violence of the military and the police. I return to these claims throughout this chapter, as I highlight how, at the local and national level, the image of the Guardian Angels transitions changes from outlaw to statist under the war on drugs.

2.10 A COMMITMENT TO ORDER

Discipline and order play a significant role in these accounts from Strider, Taps, and Taxman as well as in the broader rhetoric of the Guardian Angels. Earlier in this chapter, I highlight an excerpt from Strider explaining that each patrol has an appointed leader and a designated second-

⁸⁶ The Guardian Angels, "Instructors," GuardianAngelsTraining.com, <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/defensive-tactics-training.php>.

in-command and that each of the remaining members, “has a certain, specific job that they have to do on the patrol, whether something happens or not.” Here, they describe how the military-like orderliness provides them with the strategic leverage called for when the group faces a situation where they are outnumbered.

Strider: If you have six Angels out in a group, each Angel, like Tap says, one individual starts something, everybody automatically knows because of the commands that Taps teaches. Okay, we’re gonna handle this as a time formation, we’re gonna handle this as a—

Taps: A vee—

Strider: A vee— or whatever. So, you get this, so you learn those as well. So now, what happens and what we’ve done before in the past and these things work because we pretty much came up against people who outnumbered us by at least five to one. And what happens is ... Is when they come after you, because of one code word coming out of the patrol leader’s mouth, you pretty much put yourself in some sort of a formation, where you’re gonna defend yourself. Let’s say, if it’s the three of us and nine people come at us. Okay, then we get inside a formation, probably back to back and once that word’s given and you’re in that situation, then you just lost maybe three of those nine. Because they [took off]. “Okay, I’m done.” So, you’d lose three. So, then you got ... You maybe have six more, that’s gonna keep on coming at you. Depending on what it is you do with that time and usually when we say we act as a team, we do. Because everybody responds the

same way at the exact same time once that command's given. And that's pretty much intimidating on its own, and people just freak right out.

The way the Angels use the orderliness of these formations as a weapon of intimidation mimics the way police and military units use similar structures of order and symmetry to confront disorder and control others. They also rely on structures of repetition for teaching commands and techniques that generate the sort of orderliness and automated obedience that are so vital to the function of the military and police. Here, Taxman explains how they prepare recruits for the myriad of potential situations they may face, using mock-up buildings and structure to simulate the spaces they will need to navigate on patrol,

We have a place [for] when we train. We go down the hallways, and these are alleys. ...We would go into an abandoned house, a crack house ...if we were supposed to or this is what we were instructed to do by our leader, our group leader at the time. These are the situations that we might run into, these are the practices that we have over and over and over again. Why? So, they can become instinctive. That's why. And I'm not saying that we go and we train, and we go break walls and break bricks and all that. That's not what we do. Our goal is to be aware of what possibly could happen, but in a controlled environment, in a controlled scenario.

This methodical training and organization establishes the conditions for obedience to group leaders and imbues members with the necessary confidence to enter into spaces and situations that they have perceived to be threats. Strider asserts,

It's really neat because what happens is once all this stuff's put together, the outcome is, let's say you have six Angels walking down the street and you got three guys fighting. Ok, these six Angels are able to go in there, without, you know with maybe the only person speaking is the patrol leader who can give a certain command in three to four second, this thing is all resolved and over.

I witnessed a brief instantiation of the group's disciplined orderliness during the interview when in the midst of our discussion, Strider's phone rang. He paused to take the call, after explaining that it was their "Co-ordination Director" whom he called "Pita" on the phone.⁸⁷ After a roughly two-minute conversation, he hung up and explained,

The thing about her is everywhere we go, everything we do is always report back to her. She doesn't hear from somebody, she called one phone then she called the other phone. So everywhere we go she's like the lifeguard for everybody. She knows where all the angels are at any given time. We're on a COP walk, or like we'll leave here and say, "Pit, okay we're done." And she documents the time, and then we'll go back, and Taps is gonna put together an event log that tells her everything that we did today. [That's] gonna go into a file and we'll send a copy to New York, and a year from now I'm gonna say, "Mark, you still got those notes?" "Yes." I wanted to answer that, but that's what happens

⁸⁷ The website for the Baltimore Guardian Angels lists Pita as the group's assistant chapter commander and explains that her "call sign" is short for "Pain in the Ass." Baltimore Guardian Angels, "About Us," *Baltimoreguardianangels.org*, <http://www.baltimoreguardianangels.org/index.php?page=about-us&bio=pita>.

everywhere we go. So, we cover our bases really, really well. So, if something happens and I didn't answer, then she's gonna start calling the other Angels. And then she's gonna start calling the places where we've been, "Hey, look, those guys left, where were they going?" So, we try to cover our bases with that. And it's just another form of communication. It basically keeps all the Angels safe.

As Commander, whenever these guys go anywhere without me, Pita gets the first call, Pita calls me and says, "Hey, I've talked to such and such and such. They're in their cars, they're on their way home." We're fine. If I don't hear from someone, I don't care if it's midnight, I'm calling everybody. It's just the communication is there to keep everybody safe.

Watching this orderliness in action, it became clear that the Angels' devotion to orderliness is a product of their perception that order and obedience keep them safe. Later in the interview, he states it explicitly, "The mistakes we make, we pay for with blood."

This is useful to consider in terms of the Angels' alliance with the state. In the next chapter, I address this more fully by contrasting it with the anti-statist position of the Catholic Workers — whose commitment to justice supersedes their appreciation for order. Likewise, many of those who reside in the neighborhoods where these Angel patrols take place—in particular people of color and the poor—may be subjected to more of the harms of authority than its comforts.

Certainly, for those folks, law and submission carry very different stakes than they do for the Angels. Those discrepancies of experience and all their accompanying tensions constitute the patchwork of anxieties that creates so much of the conflict in the city.

Of the three Angels I interviewed, Strider was the most forthcoming about navigating the anxieties and fears that are part of this work.

Now, we're walking on the patrol, we see guys staring on a corner, you've got a patrol of six Angels. All six Angels are going to watch those guys, they're going to watch across the street for them guys, they're going to watch behind you when you pass those guys. They're not going to say anything to you, they're just going to watch. A guy comes over to say hello to you, what do you do? You're going to look at this guy, you're going to look at the guys around him, you're going to look at his hands, you're going to look at his feet, you're going to look at his expression.

While this degree of caution is an essential part of the Guardian Angel training and street patrols, Strider goes on to describe how he carries that same watchfulness with him wherever he goes. He spoke frankly about his hypervigilance and acute sense of vulnerability,

Whether the Angels are there or not, even if I'm walking outside my door—and I don't have neighbors where I live—I still look left and right. But the thing is, people need to be aware of where it is that they're going and what they're doing, you know? ...I do that any day, every day. I do it at work. Because it teaches you, okay, you now what? This guy is not smiling. He doesn't seem happy to me. His hand is behind his back, I wonder what's in his hand. He's got his hands in his pockets, what's going on there. You know, you're watching his eyes. This guy, I just saw him shift his eyes at a guy across the street. Now I've got to watch this guy.

In pointing to how these patrols teach him to examine his surroundings, he demonstrates the manner in which his experiences have trained his attention and shaped the way he interprets the world.⁸⁸ He goes on to reveal that he sees his membership with the Guardian Angels as a shield for his personal vulnerabilities as a black man in Baltimore,

I think I have probably less of a chance getting shot as an Angel as I do walking down Baltimore City as a black man, for no reason. Just walking down the street. You know? And they're going to look at me but at least they're going to think twice about shooting me, you know? "Oh, maybe I shouldn't..."

I'm not saying I'm not going to get shot [on patrol as an Angel], but they're going to think about it before they do it. If I go just with regular clothes on, I'm walking down someplace here, my days are pretty much ... I'm just slim pickings, just like everybody else down here.

While Strider does fit the key demographic categories (black men between the ages of 18 and 45) of those most susceptible to gun violence, as I highlight throughout these chapters, the notion of urban violence as random or senseless is a myth that persists despite statistics and facts to the contrary. In my introduction to this dissertation, I unpack this as one of the most common misconceptions about violence in the city and discuss the range of ways that people conceive of

⁸⁸ The training manuals I refer to earlier as part of the Defensive Tactical System refer to this maneuver as the "visual frisk." Vargus, "Visual Frisk," <http://guardianangelstraining.yolasite.com/resources/Guardian%20angels%20VISUAL%20FRISK.pdf>

themselves on the spectrum of vulnerability. However, it was interesting that there was only one point in our conversation when Strider specifically contextualized the fear that he is more likely to be shot “for no reason,” than on patrol as a Guardian Angel—which, he shared, is a reaction he had from watching *The Wire*.

When I conducted this interview in 2007, *The Wire* was still filming in Baltimore and airing on HBO. I asked Strider, Taps, and Taxman about whether or not they had seen the show and, if so, what they thought about the way it represented the situation of violence in the city. Taxman had not watched the show, but Taps and Strider were avid viewers who both reported that they found the show to be a strikingly accurate representation of Baltimore. As Strider said,

This stuff is real. The sad thing about it is you watch *The Wire*—and I know I’ve watched it a couple of times—and I said, ‘Man. You know what, man? Maybe I ought to put this beret down and go sit myself on home, because it’s pretty scary.’

While, like everyone, Strider’s fears and anxieties about violence in the city form from a range of mediated and non-mediated experiences.⁸⁹ However, amidst all these personal stories and experiences he shares, this is the one time he (or any of the men) expresses his reservations about working with the Guardian Angels. In the context of his many years of experiences with the group and in the city, that contributes a pretty remarkable window into how of mediated and

⁸⁹ See Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); idem., *Medium is the Massage* (New York: Penguin Books, 1967); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

non-mediated experiences converge in the composition of identity and the process of sense-making.

2.11 AGGRESSION AND DEFENSE

As detailed in the introduction to this chapter, Guardian Angers patrols are designed to occupy territories that are otherwise vulnerable to crime and violence. Their ability to lay claim to these spaces relies on a deftly constructed imposing image: the visibility of their uniforms and coordinated movements and formations, as well as stoic posturing; and the distinctive commands and codes that allow them to communicate furtively and efficiently, along with the strategic silences the use when confronted by others.⁹⁰ Strider explains that some of the group's power is

⁹⁰ The emerging body of literature on narcoculture (or *narcocultura*) is germane to the struggles over space and power between the Mexican and Central American governments and local drug cartels. John P. Sullivan defines *narcocultura* as, “the cultural world of drug traffickers and security officials who combat drug trafficking” by waging a “physical and information war for control of territory, markets, and influence.” This rapidly growing area of research holds great value for unpacking the relationships between culture, violence, and the “war on drugs” here in the United States. In particular, there has been a turn in attention towards artifacts of narcoculture not simply as products of modern zeitgeist, but as presenting a direct challenge to state authority, which con However, the current notion of narcoculture is more descriptive than analytic. John P. Sullivan, “Criminal Insurgency: *Narcocultura*, Social Banditry, and Information Operations,” *Small Wars Journal* 3, no. 4 (2012): 30. See also Alma Guillermoprieto, “Days of the Dead. The New Narcocultura,” *New Yorker* 84 (2008); Ashleigh A Fugate, “*Narcocultura*: A Threat to Mexican National Security?” (PhD diss., Monterey Naval Postgraduate School, 2012); Ethan Sharp, “Visualizing *Narcocultura*: Violent Media, the Mexican Military’s Museum of Drugs, and Transformative Culture,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 30, no. 2 (2014): 151-63; Josiah Heyman, “When I Wear My Alligator Boots: Narco-Culture in the US–Mexico Borderlands,” *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 39, no. 1 (2014): 181-83; Natalia Mendoza Rockwell, “Boots, Belt Buckles, and Sombreros: Narco-Culture in the Altar Desert,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 44, no. 3 (2011): 27-30.

derived from a vague, but intimidating mythology that surrounds them. He spoke of the way community members conceived of the Angels,

I don't think they know much about what the Angels do. I think through the 28 years of the Angels being around, it's sort of like ghost story.... But, if you think about it, sometimes that's a good thing. It's like those little spook stories that people hear, like "aw, the Guardian Angels re coming down the street" and they don't care that you have family or a wife and kids at home or that you worked all day and night, they see you and they're like, "These guys, they're into martial arts."

He describes how their image and tactics function to intimidate quietly.

You see one of us down the road, it's like: look at that, that's pretty cool, you see two of us, that's ok, you see three, four, you get up to six and eight people dressed alike, walk alike, it's pretty intimidating.... We walk outside and someone starts yelling, screaming, cussing us, nobody's going to respond. We'll watch you, but we're not going to talk to you. We're just going to look at you. You're not going to get anything back, unless you try and hurt one of us and then, you know. But, other than that, you're not going to get no feedback. So, you yell and scream all day, we're going to keep going our path.

As demonstrated in sit-ins and other acts of passive protest, defiant stillness constitutes rhetorical action. The Angels' argue that their judiciously constructed performance of detachment renders these patrols as a non-confrontation. As Strider explains,

If you're sitting there and you're not frazzled at all by anything that's happened so far. You know, it kind of concerns people, they're like, "You know what I don't like this," you rather have a guy yelling at you, than a guy who's just looking at you and not saying a word. So, it's like a ... It's like a mental thing. Most of the stuff you can get out of anything, just depending on how you carry yourself, it's really, really cool.

While Angels maintain that their tactics are strictly defensive and not offensive, they describe their strategy as one of intimidation. However, that argument presupposes that there are defensive ways to occupy contested territory or to assume power over those who inhabit that space—that may be a hard point to sell to those people who are subjected to such attempts at control. In the same manner that police and military use such tactics for crowd control, or a bratty sibling pokes his finger in their brother's face while boasting, "I'm not touching you," given the communicative context they are deployed in, these actions are less resolutely defensive than they are righteously taunting.

These patrols are a form of surveillance, which most on the receiving end would perceive as an act of aggression. Moreover, as I explain in my chapter on RIP shirts, much of the violence in Baltimore is tied to territory and space-claiming. Therefore, even if Guardian Angel patrols are able to deter dealers from operating in the area of patrol temporarily, that displacement runs the substantial risk of creating conflict elsewhere as drug workers and users are forced into other contested territories. In the same way that Broken Windows policing proved to short-term, superficial solution these provisional disruptions of day-to-day activity often compound violence.

Importantly, it is clear that these are not secondary tactics, but instead are the primary mode of interacting with others, which then guides others' perception of the group and lays the structure for their relationships. This measured way of spanning aggression and passivity also figures prominently in the way they talk about their work. Consider this passage where Taxman explains his role as lead trainer of martial arts.

Well, my specialty is the defensive end. I primarily teach the Aiki or Aikido portion of the training. All the techniques and all the philosophy of the training that I'm responsible for is defensive in nature, completely. All the hundreds and thousands of techniques that I've learned over the years I will perform on you right now. But, if you don't attack me, nothing happens. And that's the philosophy that we want to portray to our members. It's not just going out onto the street, going out on patrol and having this "bad ass," if you pardon the expression, philosophy. It's a disciplined, team-work philosophy.

There is an aggression imbued in this syntax. "All the hundreds and thousands of techniques that I've learned over the years I will perform on you right now," even when followed by, "But, if you don't attack me, nothing happens" is both a claim to power and a threat of violence. Similarly, by describing the group's philosophy as "not just bad-ass" (pardon the expression), but "disciplined, team-work" harkens to the menacing civility carried in the attitudes of mafia dons. Certainly, Taxman's way of talking about the Angels is attributed, in part, to how he is trained to communicate about his work as an accountant, where he is learned and practices in the kind cautious bureaucratic and juridical double-speak that simultaneously promises and absolves accountability. But, Taps has a similar way of talking using similarly pointed language

and drawing comparisons to this military in explaining how he is responsible for the psychological aspects of the Guardian Angels training.

My job is, once he gives you the tools of the martial arts part of it, my job is to get in your head. I'm building a soldier that can go out on these patrols and work not as an individual, but as a team. You know what I mean? Everybody knows what each person's job is, and my job is to make sure that you know what your job is. You know? And you'll want to be trained to know what his job is [gestures to Strider] what his job is [gestures to Taxman] so that, if something happens, you know how to deal with that. You also know how to deal with different people, you know? Cause I'm going to come at you like that. I'm going to come at you like the guy in the street's going to come after you. I'm going to get in your head, because through the training period, you want to know who's capable of going out there on these patrols and who's not.

Whether these men have inadvertently picked them up from their own training and interactions with Guardian Angel leadership, or are using a deliberate rhetorical strategy, these kinds of verbal maneuvers are particularly conspicuous when Taps details what essentially amounts to the Angels' Psychological Operations (PSYOPS).⁹¹ The fact that Angels stress the importance of mental conditioning for their training and approach, also reinforces the notion that

⁹¹ Sunil Nurula, "Psychological Operations (PSYOPS): A Conceptual Overview," *Strategic Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2004): 177-192; Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations* (Darby, PA: DIANE Publishing, 1989); Hank Prunckun, "Information Warfare: Can the Concept be Applied to the War-on-Drugs?" *Australian Defense Force Journal* 169 (2005): 52.

their dramatics are more than simple displays of bravado and showmanship. But, as I discuss in the introduction in regards to Curtis Sliwa's infamous publicity stunts, the Angels have always used theatrics and hyperbolic storytelling to direct attention and resources towards their work.

Consider the way Taxman makes use of narrative,

Put a gun on my wrist, my face, my back, and my side an I'll take it away from you. But, if you stand across the street with an Uzi I'll give you anything you want. You know? But the thing is that, if you want to have a good analogy of how the Angels will move during a patrol, watch some of these old war movies where the patrol would go out. And another excellent movie is—watch *Magnificent Seven*. And the certain portions about how they move about, how they as a team move, how Chico has to go... and how Yul Brynner tells Chico to go watch the back door. That's the type of awareness that you may want to see in a movie, but that's the type of awareness—without the theatrics—that's what Taps teaches.

Throughout the interview, each of the men articulates his version of heroism. However, Tax is the only one who casts himself as an urban cowboy, rendering the neighborhoods they work in the “wild west.” Even though he clarifies that the Angels operate “without the theatrics” of these iconic slices of cinematic American hypermasculine violence, in tandem with his imagined faceoff with an Uzi-wielding thief echoes the bravado of the language found on the Guardian Angels training website from Vargas, Fuentes, and Cain. It is also reminiscent of the kind histrionic storytelling Curtis Sliwa is known for. Moreover, the liberal use of battle language in these melodramas replicates the kind of fantasy war play that pervades the culture of

childhood, particularly in the lives of boys.⁹² Again, this technique isn't an invention of the Guardian Angels. States have long nurtured and exploited these fantasies in order to facilitate the flow of bodies into war.⁹³

2.12 ALLEGIANCE AND BELONGING

Another key thread that can be traced through these accounts, and in the broader rhetoric of the Guardian Angels, is the importance they place on their ability to overwrite members' instincts to think and respond critically as individuals while on patrol. As I discuss earlier in this section in terms of the Angels' bonded notions of safety and order, they face practical physical and mental conditions that might benefit from the kind of regimented short hand they train in. But, there is always the danger of groupthink in these patrol scenarios, and, alternately it puts members at a disadvantage when they are faced with a situation that they haven't trained for. At one point in

⁹² Jane Katch, *Under Dead Man's Skin: Discovering the Meaning of Children's Violent Play* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Diane E. Levin and Nancy Carlsson-Paige, *The War Play Dilemma: Everything Parents and Teachers Need to Know*, second edition (New York: Columbia Teachers College Press, 2006); Jean Piaget, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1951).

⁹³ William Ayers, "Hearts and Minds: Military Recruitment and the High School Battlefield," *Phi Delta Kappan* 8, no. 8 (2006): 594-99; Nina B. Huntemann and Matthew Thomas Payne, eds., *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games* (London: Routledge Press, 2009); David Leonard, "Unsettling the Military Entertainment Complex: Video Games and a Pedagogy of Peace," *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education* 4, no. 4 (2004): 1-8; David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (Prometheus Books, 2004); Roger Stahl, "Why We Support the Troops: Rhetorical Evolutions," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12, no.4 (2009): 533-70; Mia Fischer, "Commemorating 9/11 NFL-style: Insights into America's Culture of Militarism," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 38, no. 3 (2014): 199-221; John Eighmey, "Why do Youth Enlist? Identification of Underlying Themes," *Armed Forces and Society* 32, no. 2 (2006): 307-328.

our conversation, Taps explains that not everyone is cut out for the mindset required to function on patrol,

Not everybody's going to be a patrolman in the Angels. Ok? Because we need to know that you can take what the streets are going to give, and not going to lash out and act as an individual. You know? So, basically, I more or less will twist you, turn you, and bring you to your breaking point, and then you'll come out of that. And then you'll be evaluated. And then when you graduate, you'll feel confident on those patrols and you'll feel confident in the people around you, as one great big family. You know what I mean? So, that's basically my job.

The aggression in this passage calls to mind the hazing practices of groups who have high-stakes in affiliation--- such as military and police unions, fraternities, sororities, sports teams, street gangs, and cults--- and the traumatic rhetoric and ritualistic practices they deploy in order to unmake and reform individuals in order to establish order and induce compliance.⁹⁴ These acts which forge the interdependency essential for survival in foxholes also strips personhood from group members and erodes the individual conscience. Further, in this process of bonding, affiliates detach from their authentic comities and outsiders. These actions can provide a superficial sense of safety and support from the group, it is entirely dependent on how closely they cohere to the group. In the same way, the Guardian Angels offer members a sense of order, belonging, and legitimacy, while it heightening the sense of exclusion from outsiders.

⁹⁴ Rachel Lynne Bowman, *The Embodied Rhetoric of Recruit Training in the United States Marine Corps*, (PhD diss, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2015).

These allegiances naturally reinforce the “with us” or “against us” attitudes that are vital to maintaining structures of power and authority. In my next chapter, I return to that thread in regard to the Catholic Worker Commitment to personalism.

2.13 THE TURN TOWARDS LEGITIMACY

When Strider, Taps, and Tax talk about the difference between the first version of the group the one they run today, all three emphasize a turn towards professionalism and respectability. They present the new Angels as better organized, more controlled, and smarter.

Taps: Back then it was more soldiering than anything. It wasn't a lot of edifying the community. It was more like you're on patrol and you're watching to see what's going on. And you didn't have a lot of time, like Strider, to be sociable. It was more or less on guard pretty much all the time. ...

Back when we were like 19, 20 years old--- we were all martial artists and fighters and street thugs. That's all we did. Okay? But, the Angels we have now either own their own businesses or manages their own businesses.

Strider: We do have some ex-military guys here. We have a private investigator with us, a bodyguard with us; we have a couple lawyers, we have a guy from NOAA. So, like I said, I got all business people, you know? Go to DC? They've got all the fighters. But we're smart.

Taxman: One of the philosophies that we use is that, there is always somebody bigger, stronger and faster, but we've taken the position that we're gonna be smarter.

... We have people in our administration, in our administrative group who are working people; they're professional people that have been around. Unlike in the 80s, we have an administrative board which deals with various portions of a 501c-3, who deal with the IRS, who deal with the legal ends, who deal with computers. You didn't have it back then.

To a certain degree, some of these developments can in part be attributed to “growing up.” As Taps points out, they were 19 and 20 years old when they first joined the group. They talk about having responsibilities to their jobs and families now, that they simply didn't have in the early 1980s. Moreover, they are no longer recruits. Strider, Tap, and Taxman are all in leadership positions in the Guardian Angels now and if something happens with the chapter, it falls on them to deal with it. Strider talks about the stress of carrying the liability for their work.

You know, if we go out there right now and somebody comes after one of us and we hurt them or if we go it there yelling and screaming or whatever it is we do, it's going to go public and it's going to hurt the organization. You know, and then you've gotta worry about the legal stuff, let's not even get into that one.

However, this notion of “growing up” suggests a unidirectional progress that doesn't account for how individuals and movements don't just progress, but regress and digress. Where

the Angels arrive in 2007 in terms of respectability and professionalization follows the predictable arcs that guide movements and groups towards centralization, commodification, and merger into the mainstream. The Angels don't just present themselves as reformed teenagers, but as polished, business-class professionals and bureaucrats. The Angels locate their newfound legitimacy in professionalism, respectability, and cooperation with the state. This is a turn against that old image of the Angels as a Guevera-styled rebel force and renders this generation as deputized state collaborators—a logical development under a war on drugs that synchronized the communalization and militarization of the police.

3.0 CATHOLIC WORKERS: HOSPITALITY AND RESISTANCE IN SOUTHWEST BALTIMORE

Some say working the soup kitchen
best defines the Catholic Worker.
Some say opening your home to the lonely and destitute
best defines the Catholic Worker.
Some say resisting war makers, doing the time,
refusing to go along with greed and violence
best define the Catholic Worker.
Some say it's all of these, knowing full well that the best we can do
is plant a few seeds, knowing full well
the harvest is a long time coming.
But, deep down, really, in our heart of hearts, we know...
It's gotta be the joy!
You lost joy, you lose it all.
No joy, no hope.
No joy, no endurance.
No joy, no understanding of the suffering.
No joy, no meaning to life.
No joy and it's just another year in Guantanamo.
No joy, and we're all just doing time on the plant.
Oh, yeah---
It's gotta be the joy!

-- Brendan Walsh¹

¹ Brendan Walsh and Willa Bickham, *The Long Loneliness in Baltimore: Stories Along the Way* (Baltimore: Apprentice House Press, 2016), 84.

The fighter jets overhead shook the concrete as Brendan shouted these words against the shriek of supersonic engines. It was the fourth day straight of Blue Angel military air shows, which Baltimore was promoting as “a grand celebration” of “proud naval history.” But, the motley crowd gathered in the backyard of Viva House didn’t see that as something to celebrate. Brendan and Willa had invited this assortment of neighbors, family members, convict nuns and priests, soup kitchen guests, and volunteers to celebrate a book the two had just published—a collection of stories and paintings from their forty-eight years of living and working in this small rowhome they call Viva House, “a house of hospitality and resistance” that they use as a soup kitchen and food pantry to feed their neighbors. Together, they cursed the “Blue Devils” flying overhead as Brendan pointed to the deafening war machines hollering, “That up there is why we’re down here.”

This chapter opens with a historical overview of the Catholic Worker Movement, tracing their origins from the work of Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in New York, through the arrival of Phil Berrigan and the Catholic Workers in Baltimore. By forwarding the voices and stories of the Catholic Workers of Viva House, I present them as witnesses to the transformations of poverty and violence in Baltimore under the war on drugs. The Catholic Worker investment in economic justice affords allows for a brief study of the underground economy in Baltimore, with attention to the role of the state and its institutions in maintaining the structures and systems of poverty in the city. The discussion moves towards my narrators’ reflections on their contentious relationship with the police, in the context of the war on drugs and the growth of the surveillance state. I end the chapter with reflections on the resonance and dissonance that surface in the juxtaposition of voices and perspectives from these first two chapters.

3.1 CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT IN NEW YORK

The Catholic Worker Movement was founded on May Day 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression in New York City when American radical political journalist Dorothy Day and French social activist Peter Maurin saw the injustice of capitalism as a system in which survival of some is contingent on the oppression of others.² They saw the need for an alternative labor movement that rejected the atheistic conditions of communism—one which centralized the needs and conditions of the poor, but was rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church.³ To organize, publicize, and circulate ideas about this movement, Day and Maurin began publishing a newspaper called, *The Catholic Worker*. The first issue addressed the audience and the mission of both the movement and the paper,

For those who are sitting on park benches in the warm spring sunlight.

For those who are huddling in shelters trying to escape the rain.

For those who are walking the streets in the all but futile search for work.

² Nancy L. Roberts, *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (New York: State University of New York, 1984); Robert Atkins, “Dorothy Day’s Social Catholicism: The Formative French Influences,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 13, no. 2 (May 2013): 96–110; Marc H. Ellis, *Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981); William D. Miller, *Dorothy Day: A Biography* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982).

³ Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002); Charles Chatfield, “The Catholic Worker in the United States Peace Tradition” in *American Catholic Pacifism: The Influence of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement*, ed. Anne Klejment and Nancy Roberts (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 1-13; Frederick George Boehrer, III, “Christian Anarchism and the Catholic Worker Movement: Roman Catholic Authority and Identity in the United States” (PhD diss., Syracuse University 2001; Mel Piehl, *Breaking Bread: The Catholic Worker and the Origin of Catholic Radicalism in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982).

For those who think that there is no hope for the future, no recognition of their plight—this little paper is addressed.

It is printed to call their attention to the fact that the Catholic Church has a social program—to let them know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare.

It's time there was a Catholic paper printed for the unemployed.

The fundamental aim of most radical sheets is the conversion of its readers to radicalism and atheism.

Is it not possible to be radical and not atheist?

Is it not possible to protest, to expose, to complain, to point out abuses and demand reforms without desiring the overthrow of religion?

In an attempt to popularize and make known the encyclicals of the Popes in regard to social justice and the program put forth by the Church for the “reconstruction of the social order,” this news sheet, *The Catholic Worker*, is started.⁴

Catholic Workers saw the “social justice program put forth by the Church” as the central organizing force for the movement, and they sought to live out Catholic teachings on justice and mercy through a commitment to personalism and nonviolence. Their pledge to *personalism* is rooted in the belief that all people are deserving of dignity and love, that such justice can only be achieved through an equal distribution of resources, which can only be achieved when each

⁴ Dorothy Day, “To Our Readers,” *Catholic Worker* 1 (May 4, 1933), 1.

person's commitment to community is greater than their devotion to the self. Maurin explains how Christian personalism is distinguishable from capitalist individualism,

[Christian personalism] makes each person responsible for the suffering Christ who stands before him in the person of the poor. It differs dramatically from an economic order characterized by rugged individualism, competitiveness and the profit motive.⁵

Rather than depending on the state and institutions to achieve this goal, Catholic Workers see the equitable sharing of resources as a primary responsibility of individuals. They believe that one must live a life committed to the Works of Mercy, a set of biblical principles which call followers to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, house the homeless, clothe the naked, ransom the captives, care for the sick, and bury the dead.

Catholic Workers see nonviolence as central to the work towards justice. At the start of the movement, official Catholic teachings on militarism and war, on the one hand, fell under the Just War theory, which forwarded the idea that war—while never ideal, was justifiable under certain conditions, as long as it was conducted within the moral constraints imposed by the Church.⁶ Catholic Workers, on the other hand, are committed to a universal resistance of war. Their opposition to World War II created friction with the Church and many traditional Catholics, but they stood firmly as pacifists in their opposition to nuclear proliferation, the wars

⁵ Mark and Louise Zwick, "Peter Maurin, Saint and Scholar of the Catholic Worker," *Houston Catholic Worker* 16, no. 4 (July-August 1996), <http://cjd.org/1996/08/01/peter-maurin-saint-and-scholar-of-the-catholic-worker>.

⁶ Henry J. Browne, "Catholicism in the United States," in *The Shaping of American Religion*, ed. James Ward Smith and Al Leland Jamison (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961).

in Korea and Vietnam War, US military interventions in South and Central America, and in their current opposition to US military operations across the globe.⁷

In their effort to forge a more humane society within the broader structure of an unjust system, Day and Maurin formed an intentional community in New York, where they lived together with others in the movement in voluntary poverty. That first Catholic Worker House in New York City became the model for what eventually grew into a network of roughly two hundred independently-run Catholic Worker communities around the world. Each house operates autonomously, determining its own mission based on the needs of its community. They share no formal institutional ties with one another or the Church. However, they are bonded in their collective commitment to hospitality and resistance.⁸

3.2 CATHOLIC WORKERS COME TO BALTIMORE

In the 1960s, Phil Berrigan, a young Catholic Worker priest from New York, moved to Baltimore, where he emerged as a major figure in the antiwar movement. Berrigan was influenced by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Cesar Chavez and wanted to apply their principals to opposing war and working for economic justice. Berrigan's located his ministry at St. Peter

⁷ For protestant notions of Christian Socialism and the "social gospel," see Theodore Paul Kallman, "The Pilgrimage of Ralph Albertson," *Communal Societies* 26, no. 2 (2006, 79-98); Theodore Paul Kallman, *The Pilgrimage of Ralph Albertson (1866-1951): Modern American Liberalism and the Pursuit of Happiness* (PhD diss., Georgia State University, 1997); and Robert P. Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities, 1732-2000* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003).

⁸ Most of these communities, like Viva House, exist in economically depressed urban areas, but a number of rural communities exist as well as Catholic Worker farms.

Claver's Church in Baltimore's Sandtown neighborhood, roughly a mile and half northeast of Viva House.⁹ The parish was the third Catholic Church in Baltimore established specifically minister to African-Americans and features prominently in the city's history of civil rights.¹⁰

Berrigan led a series of nonviolent direct actions against the Vietnam War. Among the most notable were those committed by the "Baltimore Four" and the "Catonsville Nine." The "Four" were an ecumenical group of war resisters who entered the Customs House downtown where they poured their own blood over draft files. The "Nine" was composed of a group of Catholic clergy and laity who removed nearly four hundred files from the local draft board, and set fire to them in the parking lot with homemade napalm. Many of the nine and their supporters stayed at Viva House before and after the action. Brendan Walsh drove the nine to the draft board that day.¹¹

Eventually, in 1973, Phil Berrigan would go on to marry fellow Catholic Worker Liz McAlister and the two would found Baltimore's second Catholic Worker community, Jonah House. Jonah House identifies as a resistance community, while Viva House sees their own work as primarily focused on service to the poor and extending hospitality to resisters. The communities have always worked closely together.

⁹ Sandtown is now most recognized as the neighborhood where Freddie Gray lived, was taken, and killed by police.

¹⁰ Joseph V. Tyson, *What We've Heard—What We've Seen: St. Peter Claver Roman Catholic Church Centennial Journal* (Baltimore: St. Peter Claver Church, 1988.)

¹¹ Murray Polner and Jim O'Grady, *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Lives and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997); Sharon Erickson Nepstad, "Persistent Resistance: Commitment and Community in the Plowshares Movement," *Social Problems* 51, no.1 (2004): 43-60; Rosalie G. Rieggle, ed. *Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012); Philip Berrigan and Fred Wilcox, *Fighting the Lamb's War: Skirmishes with the American Empire: The Autobiography of Philip Berrigan* (Monroe, Me.: Common Courage Press, 1996).

Brendan and Willa are now in their 70s, and they are among the most continuously devoted activists in Baltimore. As such, they offer unique and meaningful perspectives on the history of violence in the city.¹² In 2007, Brendan and Willa agreed to be interviewed as part of my ongoing research on violence in Baltimore. They invited me to meet them onsite at Viva House, we spoke in their living room, which is situated upstairs from the soup kitchen. Willa was running late, but Brendan greeted me warmly and jumped into conversation about the city, so I started recording. Willa joined us ten minutes into the discussion, and at that point I asked them to tell me how and when they first came to Baltimore and how Viva House came to be. Willa explained,

I came from Chicago, Brendan came from New York and we started the house in 1968.

We had lived at the Catholic Worker in Washington, DC.

And then courted and married there and then came here.

¹² My introduction to the Catholic Worker movement came about in the early 1990s, when I joined a group from the Institute of Notre Dame, the Catholic high school I attended in downtown Baltimore, to help serve meals at Viva House, the local Catholic Worker soup kitchen. That was the first time I met Brendan Walsh and Willa Bickham, the couple who founded and maintain Viva House, whom I interviewed for this chapter. I remember Brendan visiting my American history class during a unit on Vietnam to talk about the anti-war actions he and other Catholic Workers performed in and around Baltimore and D.C. in the 1960s and 1970s. From time to time, I would run into them at one of the protests my parents would take my sisters and me to against US military involvement in the Persian Gulf. My next encounters with Brendan and Willa came about in the early 2000s, when I was working with a local nonprofit agency serving Baltimore's homeless, and I would run into them at public meetings and advocacy events. Around that same time, close friends of mine, Shannon Curran and Joe Capista had joined the Viva House community and were living there, as well. I would occasionally help Shannon with the afterschool care and summer program Viva House provided for their neighbors and would attend poetry readings, art shows, and other social events held at the house.

...We had lived here before DC, I had just left the convent and was in a lay community, it was just at the beginning of lay communities. You know the options for women were to move from your father's house to your husband's house or go in a convent. And then options were opening for women and I was part of a lay community called Joseph House, which was in the Peter Claver neighborhood.

Willa's discussion of the barriers she faced as a woman coming of age in the 1960s mirrors the experiences of many women, particularly those who came from the working class and faced additional financial barriers in finding work and establishing independence. Three of my dad's four sisters and several of his female cousins—who, like Willa, were working-class Irish Catholics, joined the convent straight out of high school, but eventually left their orders.¹³ In light of the themes of this chapter—which trace Catholic Worker positions on poverty, war, and violence, it is important to note that for many working-class Catholics, the choice to join a religious community was as much a financial necessity as a spiritual calling—in the same way that enlisting in military service is the most viable option for many who seek education, job training, and other opportunities that lead to independence and stability. At the time, Joseph House was part of the then-developing trend of intentional lay communities, which offered

¹³ A number of factors contributed to the broader exodus of Catholics from religious orders and the Church in the 60s and 70s including changes in Church teachings that came about through Vatican II, the changing political and domestic landscape, and an increase in opportunities for women. See Mark Steven Massa, *The American Catholic Revolution: How the Sixties Changed the Church Forever* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Francesca Núñez, "Leaving the Institution: Secularized Priests," *Social Compass* 57, no. 2 (2010); Margaret M. McGuinness, *Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Carole Garibaldi Rogers, *Habits of Change: An Oral History of American Nuns* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2011); Kenneth A. Briggs, *Double Crossed: Uncovering the Catholic Church's Betrayal of American Nuns* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

Catholics an alternative to traditional joining Holy Orders of sisters, brothers, and priests; and alongside the growth in popularity of non-religious social justice communities.¹⁴ All this is useful to establish for understanding the way Brendan and Willa empathize with their neighbors and conditions and limitations that shape their day-to-day lives.¹⁵ They explain how they came to choose a location for Viva House,

Willa: It was the poorest white community in the city, that was one of the reasons we chose it. It was right after Martin Luther King had been assassinated and the riots, and we were living at that time, we hadn't started this house, we were living in an all African-American neighborhood at Peter Claver's and we realized we really should be in a more integrated neighborhood. So, we chose this—

Brendan: Because its right on the boundary line. Well, it was really the boundary line, Baltimore street. But now that's just been wiped out, I mean now it's completely integrated.

¹⁴ Related are the Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (BECs) that grew out of the post-Vatican II Liberation Theology movement in Latin America. See Massimo Faggioli, *Sorting Out Catholicism: A Brief History of the New Ecclesial Movements* trans. Demetrio S. Yocum, (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2014). On Liberation Theology, see Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973); Alfred Hennessey, *Liberation Theologies: The Global Pursuit of Justice* (1995); Curt Cadorette, Marie Giblin, Marilyn J. Legge, and Mary Hembrow Snyder, eds., *Liberation Theology: A Reader* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1992).

¹⁵ For a thorough survey of American Communalism see Timothy Miller, *Quest of Utopia in Twentieth-Century America, Vol. 1* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1998); Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

They rented a run-down rowhouse in southwest Baltimore and established it as a “house of hospitality and resistance.” As is discussed throughout this chapter, the specific function of Viva House has changed over time. Among other things, it has served as a shelter, a soup kitchen, and a schoolhouse, a safe house, and a meeting spot.

Brendan: This house here, when we started, was \$75 a month, rent. Then after being here about four or five years... the landlord wanted to sell it to us for \$500. We didn't want to own property back then.

Willa: He was retiring. He owned the neighborhood grocery store and was moving to Florida.

Brendan: Then he said, “Listen, I'm really moving, so now it's \$1,000, so it was \$1,000, what we paid for it.”

Willa: He understood what we were doing and all, and he ... His thing was that, if you don't buy it, somebody else will, and I don't know if they're going to let you stay.

Brendan: Now, it wasn't until, really, the '90s, that things really started to rocket up, housing-wise.

Willa: That's across the country, yeah.

Brendan: Even, you could buy a house right around the square for \$15,000. Back in 1977, '78. Now those houses are all 300 [thousand].

KKO (Interviewer): You have the house next door, right, too?

Brendan: Well, these two houses. This one right here, we just got for back taxes. Then the lot became vacant.

Willa: The one down the street, yes we did have, but we—

Brendan: Oh, the one that ... No, right now, nuns live there.

Willa: We deeded it to the sisters. We didn't need it.

This discussion not only lays out some of the stark transitions the neighborhood has undergone throughout the time Brendan and Willa have been at Viva House, it reveals much about the Catholic Worker attitudes towards both economics and community. Their resistance to owning land and willingness to surrender property to others is indicative of the Christian anarchist ethic that drives much of the Catholic Worker approach. Willa explains,

We tell students coming down here, we get the students from Notre Dame Prep [NDP is an elite Catholic School in north of Baltimore City] for example, and they all want to give back and give community service and all that kind of stuff. And we tell them, "Take less. Forget the giving back, just take less. Don't live such a high life style. Don't earn so much money." They think you're a strange person you know? But it's true, it's the only way we can have equality in this country.

Those commitments are reflected in their anti-recordkeeping sentiments as well, as demonstrated here by Brendan,

Often people ask, 'What have you done for almost fifty years?' There's a simple answer that usually satisfies the media and bean counters. We provided more than one million meals for people; served as a temporary home to over three thousand women, children,

and men; and distributed over 375 tons of food to neighborhood families (or more accurately, returned stolen goods to them). We keep accurate records just to be sure we have enough food for meals and food bags.¹⁶

Brendan and Willa maintained their own careers, Brendan as a high school teacher and Willa as a pediatric nurse, but are now both retired.¹⁷ So, those incomes went towards their personal living expenses and the upkeep and work of the house. The rest of their funding comes primarily through donations from family and friends, but they attribute much of their sustainability to living simply. They attribute the sustainability of Viva House to their loyal network of supporters and their relatively low cost of their work.

Brendan: I mean, there's no rent. There's no mortgage, and nobody gets paid. So, any money that comes in goes to the food pantry, or the soup kitchen, or probably, in the course of the year, ten or twelve thousand goes for rents, gas, electric bills, heat, all that kind of stuff.

¹⁶ Brendan Walsh and Willa Bickham, *The Long Loneliness in Baltimore: Stories Along the Way* (Baltimore: Apprentice House Press, 2016), 5.

¹⁷ Over the years, the two took turns staying at home to care for their daughter Kate, who they raised at Viva House. Kate eventually married a lawyer named David Little and he moved into the house as well, where Kate opened a small school in the adjacent building and Dave ran a free law clinic out of the backyard. Kate and Dave had two of their three children (Maya and Grace Little-Walsh) at Viva House, and all three generations lived there together from 1995 through 2004. The Little-Walsh family eventually moved out on their own, but continue to share in the work of the Viva House community. Carl Schoettler, "The Legal Counsel for the Down-and-Out; Helping David Walsh-Little Hangs His Shingle at Viva House, Where People Looking for Free Food Can Get a Free Lawyer," *Baltimore Sun*, Oct 29, 1996. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406951660?accountid=10750>.

Willa: [clarifying] For neighbors, yeah.

Brendan: I think the reason we don't have any trouble getting [support] is because people know that it goes right out. ... There's really no paperwork. No salaries, that kind of thing.

Willa: Brendan does our books.

Brendan: It's really kinda simple.

The way Brendan and Willa approach the financial aspects of their work reflects their devotion to community and personalism and positions them within the broader tradition of Christian anarchism. As Brendan explains, "We figure if you don't take anything from the established charities, then if something goes wrong, you're free to criticize, or at least challenge."¹⁸ In 2011, Brendan and Willa attracted national attention when they refused to comply with a new policy enacted by the United Way which required their network of recipients to sign an "Anti-Terrorism Compliance Form." The Viva House workers refused, calling the document "tantamount to a loyalty oath" and insisting that it conflicted with their ethical commitments.¹⁹ This staunch anti-statist position is made ultimately clear in the way Catholic Workers frame their mission as one of justice, not charity, something that distinguished them from the many community service groups that operate as part of the broader nonprofit industrial complex.²⁰ As Brendan explains,

¹⁸ Laura Lippman, "Viva House of Hospitality," *Baltimore Sun*, Nov 27, 1992, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406756773?accountid=10750>.

¹⁹ Edward Ericson Jr., "A Baltimore Soup Kitchen Refuses to Sign United Way's Antiterrorism Form," *Chronicle of Philanthropy* 23, no. 6 (February 10, 2011): 18.

²⁰ Dylan Rodriguez writes about the nonprofit industrial complex as, "set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class

The thing about why you do a soup kitchen, and everybody says it's a charitable thing, and what we say is it's more of a justice thing; that people have a right to these things, it's not that something's being given to them. They have a right to it, even if they have to take it.

3.3 EARLY YEARS OF VIVA HOUSE

As the population and problems of the city have changed over the past five decades, Brendan and Willa have adapted their aims and techniques to fit the needs of their neighbors. One of the starkest changes they talk about follows the shifts in trends in addiction in the city. They explain that their earliest guests were relatively easy to accommodate.

Willa: The people who came here, we had like three or four beds in every room in the house, they were middle aged and older men and mostly alcoholics. And at that time, you could get treatment on demand, so if a

proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970s." Dylan Rodriguez, "The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex," *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, ed. INCITE (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2017) 37-45, 38; Laura Finley and Luigi Esposito, "Neoliberalism and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex: The Limits of a Market Approach to Service Delivery," *Peace Studies Journal* 5, no. 3 (2012): 4-26; Robert Silverman, Robert Mark, and Kelly L. Patterson, "The Effects of Perceived Funding Trends on Non-Profit Advocacy: A National Survey of Non-Profit Advocacy Organizations in the United States," *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 24, no. 5 (2011): 435-51.

person was in the gutter, you know drinking so bad they were falling down to the bottom, they could go out to Spring Grove or go different places for treatment.

Brendan: Pretty much that day.

Willa: That day, yeah. ... So, we did real well with the men who lived here, it was fine.

“Treatment on demand” refers to a model of addiction service that facilitates expedient access for addicts who want to enter recovery.²¹ Willa is referring to the 1970s, when individuals seeking treatment could go to a range of nearby physical and mental health facilities and expect to begin treatment that day.²² She goes on to explain,

The mental hospitals were closed and people were to return to their neighborhoods and get community-based healthcare, and we know that the money did not follow that wonderful philosophy, and so it was just a budget cut, it just cut. ... That’s when we first started seeing women on the street, homeless women. And then of course, what followed then was homeless children—after the cut backs in housing, the housing budget was slashed in the late 70s.

²¹ Edward H. Kaplan and Mira Johri, “Treatment on Demand: An Operational Model,” *Healthcare Management Science* 3, no. 3 (2000): 171–83.

²² William L. White, *Slaying the Dragon: The History of Addiction Treatment and Recovery in America* (Bloomington, Ill.: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute, 1998); Michael Lemanski, *History of Addiction and Recovery in the United States* (Tucson, Ariz.: See Sharp Press, 2001).

As heard in this excerpt, where Willa highlights the role of deinstitutionalization in the explosion of the homelessness and addiction, when Brendan and Willa talk about the day-to-day struggles of their community and the barriers to the work they do, they consistently return to the broader social and systemic injustices they see as the root causes of poverty, addiction, or violence in the city. These arguments are key to the broader Catholic Worker critiques of capitalism and the state.²³ This slice of her testimony also demonstrates a maneuver that is consistent throughout their messaging—it presents a concise and pointed snapshot of a complex reality that exists at the intersection of dense socioeconomic and political histories. Willa’s “and we know the money did not follow that wonderful philosophy” and “then of course what followed was homeless children” are more than a matter-of-fact recollection of events. It is a reiteration of disdain for the state—which is presented as a mechanism that systematically dehumanizes the masses in order to sustain the comfort and power of the overclass.

²³ Gerald N. Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society, 1875-1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Gerald N. Grob, “Deinstitutionalization: The Illusion of Policy,” *Journal of Policy History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 48-73; Bernard E. Harcourt, “Reducing Mass Incarceration: Lessons from the Deinstitutionalization of Mental Hospitals in the 1960s,” *Social Science Research Network*, January 2011: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1748796; Christina Canales, “Prisons: The New Mental Health System,” *Connecticut Law Review* 44 (2011): 1725; E. Torrey Fuller, Aaron D. Kennard, Don Eslinger, Richard Lamb, and James Pavle, “More Mentally Ill Persons are in Jails and Prisons than Hospitals: A Survey of the States,” *Report from the National Sheriffs Association and Treatment Advocacy Center of Arlington* (Arlington, VA: National Sheriffs Association and Treatment Advocacy Center of Arlington, 2010); E. Fuller Torrey, *Nowhere to Go: The Tragic Odyssey of the Homeless Mentally Ill* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988); E. Fuller Torrey, “Documenting the Failure of Deinstitutionalization,” *Psychiatry* 73, 2 (2010): 122-24; E. Fuller Torrey, “Deinstitutionalization and the Rise of Violence,” *CNS Spectrums* 20, no.3 (2015): 207-14; Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (New York: Broadway Books, 2016).

Willa goes on to explain how due to deinstitutionalization, addicts in their community face more barriers to treatment than ever before—a problem which has been compounded as trends in addiction have transitioned from alcohol, to crack, to heroin.²⁴ She explains,

Right now, heroin is cheaper and that's what the drug of choice is here.

Which makes it a lot easier here for us because heroin you just nod off,
whereas crack you're jacked up like LSD.

Baltimore's long history of addiction, proximity to leading research institutions, and relatively progressive social and government systems keep Baltimore at the forefront of addiction studies. As a result, addiction treatment is one of the areas where Baltimore is slightly ahead of other cities in terms of access to resources. Nonetheless, the need for substance abuse services in the city still far surpasses its resources. At any given time, there are approximately 7,300 more addicts requiring medically-assisted detox than there are available treatment slots.²⁵

²⁴ Samuel A. MacMaster, "Harm Reduction: A New Perspective on Substance Abuse Services," *Social Work* 49, no. 3 (2004): 356-63; Cristina Redko, Richard C. Rapp, and Robert G. Carlson. "Waiting Time as a Barrier to Treatment Entry: Perceptions of Substance Users," *Journal of Drug Issues* 36, no. 4 (2006): 831-52; Seth A. Brown, Jefferson D. Parker, and Phillip R. Godding. "Administrative, Clinical, and Ethical Issues Surrounding the Use of Waiting Lists in the Delivery of Mental Health Services," *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research* 29, no. 2 (2002): 217-228; Kelly R. Knight, Marsha Rosenbaum, Margaret S. Kelley, Jeanette Irwin, Allyson Washburn, and Lynn Wenger, "Defunding the Poor: The Impact of Lost Access to Subsidized Methadone Maintenance Treatment on Women Injection Drug Users," *Journal of Drug Issues* 26, no. 4 (1996): 923-42; Mark Schlesinger and Robert A. Dorwart, "Falling Between the Cracks: Failing National Strategies for the Treatment of Substance Abuse," *Daedalus* 121, no. 3 (1992): 195-237.

²⁵ According to January 2017 data from Behavioral Health Systems Baltimore (BHBS), the agency which oversees the city's publicly funded addiction services.
http://www.bhbsbaltimore.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/OTP-Capacity-Report_01_27_17_FINAL.pdf

And Willa is right, heroin is the primary drug of choice in Baltimore. In the first three quarters of 2016 alone, 481 city residents died from drug or alcohol intoxication, with 86 percent of those deaths are the result of opiate overdose.²⁶

She points to the differences in volatility of alcohol, crack, and heroin addicts as a way to expose how issues like treatment access have an impact on everyone in the community—not just addicts and those who are most intimately impacted by addiction. Again, this is a rhetorical strategy of ethical pragmatism heard throughout the Catholic Worker messaging which is born of a spiritual commitment to justice and mercy and framed as common sense. As the interview goes on, they expound on the significance of the arrival of crack cocaine in the city. Brendan explains,

The hardest time for us was during all of the 90's, because crack cocaine really made people very, very volatile. But heroin and alcohol doesn't. Well, alcohol can, but mostly people are kind of like mellow. But not with crack cocaine. That was a big difference.

²⁶ As one of the earliest adopters of “harm reduction” approach to addiction, Baltimore has one of the country’s longest running publicly funded needle exchange programs. With roughly 25,000 of its 620,000 residents suffering from opioid-dependence, Baltimore City Health Commissioner Lena Wen issued a “blanket prescription” for Naloxone (Narcan) a rescue drug which can be administered to reverse the effects of overdose from opioids. Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, “2016 Third-Quarter Report,” September 2016, http://bha.dhmh.maryland.gov/OVERDOSE_PREVENTION/Documents/Quarterly%20report_2016_Q3_final.pdf; Baltimore City Health Department, “Baltimore City Health Department Celebrates 20,000 Residents Trained In Using Lifesaving Opioid Overdose Antidote, Naloxone,” *Baltimore City Health Department* (Press Release), February 3, 2017: <http://health.baltimorecity.gov/news/bmore-healthy-blog/2017-02-03-baltimore-city-health-department-celebrates-20000-residents>; David Vlahov, Benjamin Junge, Ronald Brookmeyer, Sylvia Cohn, Elise Riley, Haroutune Armenian, and Peter Beilenson, “Reductions in High-risk Drug Use Behaviors Among Participants in the Baltimore Needle Exchange Program,” *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 16, no. 5 (1997): 400-406. See also Jeanette L. Johnson, Ashraf Ahmed, Bradford Plemons, Walter Powell, Hugh Carrington, James Graham, Robert Hill, Robert P. Schwartz, Robert K. Brooner, *Steps to Success: The Baltimore Drug and Alcohol Treatment Outcomes Study* (Baltimore: Baltimore Substance Abuse Services; 2002).

Brendan and Willa reiterate this experience throughout our interview and report seeing changes in levels of violence and crime in their own community.

Willa: Oh, and it was rough living around here, nothing stayed in place, everything was stolen, drain pipes, front doors.

Brendan: Cars, they'd take cars.

Willa: Yeah.

Brendan: Just for scrap metal.

Crack is often attributed to an increase in crime and violence. A few common threads play out in those discussions: foremost is the assumption that crack is a more addictive than the powdered form, that differences of chemical processing (in manufacturing and consumption) make for a more unpredictable effect that often manifests as disoriented aggressions, and that together those factors combine to create higher rates of violence and crime among user groups. However, as a whole that literature reveals that socioeconomic disparities figure prominently in that rise.²⁷ It has also been well-established that the frenzied nature of the media coverage

²⁷ James A. Inciardi, "The Crack-Violence Connection within a Population of Hard-Core Adolescent Offenders," *Drugs and Violence: Causes, Correlates, and Consequences*, ed. Mario De La Rosa, Elizabeth Y. Lambert, Bernard Gropper (Rockville, Md.: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1990), 92-111; Roland G. Fryer, Paul S. Heaton, Steven D. Levitt, and Kevin M. Murphy, "Measuring the Impact of Crack Cocaine," *Economic Inquiry* 51, no. 3 (2013): 1651-181; Jeff Grogger and Mike Willis, "The Introduction of Crack Cocaine and the Rise in Urban Crime Rates," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 82, no. 4 (2000): 519-29; William N. Williams, Craig Garthwaite, and Timothy J. Moore, "The White/Black Educational Gap, Stalled Progress, and the Long-Term Consequences

contributed to the hysteria around the “crack epidemic.”²⁸ In Chapter One, lay out the argument that crack is a rhetorical invention designed to legitimate and escalate the drug war and to further the criminalization of poor and black communities as the focal point of sentencing discrepancies inscribed into law²⁹ These discussions continue to play out in all corners of research. But, Willa goes on to draw out another key thread in the crack debate that stands apart from deliberations around impact and use, by raising the question of the role of the state in the spread of crack cocaine. She states,

But they know exactly the day that, the time that crack cocaine came into the cities and of course some of us are paranoid enough to believe that it wasn't all unplanned.

of the Emergence of Crack Cocaine Markets,” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 98, no. 5 (2016): 832-47.

²⁸ Reeves and Campbell argue that the coverage of the cocaine epidemic happened in three phases. First, it was framed as impacting a small number of otherwise reasonable, treatable, and moneyed people. Then, the narrative shifted to a seemingly untreatable and unruly underclass. In the last phase, while the media becomes more self-reflective of the racist and classist coverage and the negative implications inherent to the second stage began to lessen, the ultimate depiction was still that crack addicts were untreatable and uncontrollable. This fatalist depiction played a significant role in the propaganda that shifted away from the early stages of medicalizing the approach to addiction and diverted funds away from treatment towards imprisonment. [Jimmie L. Reeves and Richard Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994)].

²⁹ Stephen D. Reese and Lucig H. Danielian, “Intermedia Influence and the Drug Issue,” *Communication Campaigns about Drugs*, ed. Pamela J. Shoemaker (Hillsdale, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 29-46; Lewis Donohew, David Helm, and John Haas, “Drugs and (Len) Bias on the Sports Page,” *Media, Sports, and Society*, ed. Lawrence A. Wenner (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1989): 225-237.

Willa's comment about the introduction of crack into the cities as "not entirely unplanned" is a reference to widespread, but controversial claims about the nature of the relationship between the CIA and drug cartels throughout the US involvement in the war against the communist Sandinistas in Nicaragua.³⁰ Her "some of us are paranoid enough" qualifier comes through as sarcasm, an indictment of what the Catholic Workers see as a long and obvious history of the state's abuse and neglect of marginalized populations and in their view of the government and its institutions as a being designed to create and maintain the bare political, social, and economic circumstances that render people vulnerable to state control. They continue this thread by emphasizing that the truth of those histories will never be revealed by state authorities and that in order to investigate many of these key factors in the history of drugs and violence in the city, you have to look to other sources.

Willa: Ed Burns and David Simon talk about that.

Brendan: Well, it would be good to talk to somebody like them.

Willa: Yes.

³⁰ Numerous authors take up this debate by drawing from a history of CIA alliances with drug traffickers in Laos, Afghanistan, Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Honduras, and Nicaragua and to elucidate the connections between CIA operatives and early, high-level Los Angeles crack dealers like "Freeway" Ricky Ross. Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs, and the Press* (New York: Verso, 1999); Kelly Heyboer, "A Furor Over the CIA and Drugs," *American Journalism Review* 18, no. 9 (1996): 10-12; Jonathan Marshall and Peter Dale Scott, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Victor M. Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Peter Kornbluh, "Crack, the Contras, and the CIA: The Storm Over 'Dark Alliance,'" *Columbia Journalism Review* 35, no. 5 (1997): 33; Craig Reinerman and Harry G. Levine, *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); David R. Bewley-Taylor, "Cracks in the Conspiracy: the CIA and the Cocaine Trade in South Central Los Angeles," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 12, no. 2 (2001): 167-80.

Brendan: Don't just go down to the police department.

Willa: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

This is the first point in the conversation when Brendan and Willa explicitly state their distrust of the police, a thread I continue later in this chapter. David Simon and Ed Burns are the co-creators of three Baltimore-based “ripped from the headlines” writing projects-turned-television series: *Homicide*, *The Corner*, and *The Wire*. All three projects deal explicitly with themes of crime, violence, race, and class in Baltimore. At the time of this interview, Simon and Burns were in the midst of filming *The Wire*, which ran for five seasons beginning in 2003 and concluding in 2008. In suggesting that David Simon and Ed Burns are more likely to give an accurate reflection of how crack came into the cities, they are drawing both on their personal history with the pair (Simon and his wife Lara Lippman are long-time friends of Viva House), and on the on-the-ground experience they gained prior to their careers in television. David Simon is an ex- crime reporter for the *Baltimore Sun* (some of the articles he wrote on the first iteration of the Guardian Angels appear in Chapter Two of this dissertation) and is credited as a Writer, Executive Producer, and Series Creator for *The Wire*. Ed Burns began his career as a Baltimore City police officer (often working in the homicide department) and later, worked as a teacher in the Baltimore City school system. He is credited as Co-Executive Producer and Writer for *The Wire*.³¹

³¹ Though no filming had taken place at Viva House at the time our interview, they mentioned that there was a possibility that it would be used as a location in an upcoming storyline where a main character performs community service in their soup kitchen. Eventually, Viva House was used as a recurring location in season five. The storyline revolved around the character of Bubbles, a recovering addict who was recurrently homeless. Brendan and Willa were cast as themselves and appear in the episodes two and five of the fifth and final season.

Brendan and Willa explain that writers for *The Wire* spent time at Viva House talking to guests and listening for details of language and culture that they could use in the show, and mention that Simon and Burns visited the house to give readings and talk about their work. They go on to describe how texts like *The Wire* and *The Corner* align with their work.

Willa: One thing that we talked about when Ed Burns and David Simon came and spoke about *The Corner*, was how they were dismissed—disliked by the media and the city government and state government, because they put a face on the drug addicts, the drug problem. In other words... often you see this in the paper... the drug addict is the monster, it's the alien. ...

Brendan: Yeah, they don't really want you to understand why somebody does this.

The attention they pay to the rhetorical functions of narrative in the construction of complex social and political arguments calls to mind the work of Francesca Polletta, who argues that storytelling, “helps to make sense of the anomalous, how it elicits and channels emotions, how it sustains individual and group identities.”³² Throughout this conversation, Brendan and Willa point to the relentless and insidious means through which capitalism and the state villainize and dehumanize people, in order to frame vulnerable individuals and groups as a threat to order and the safety of others.

³² Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Politics and Protest* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006) 7.

3.4 POVERTY AS VIOLENCE

The Catholic Workers consistently stress the human costs of systems of injustice. This comes through in their discussion of the root causes of addiction. Willa expounds,

That's the question we always ask ourselves, what has changed in our neighborhood, or city, our suburbs to produce such addiction? One of the reasons here is unemployment. People are just sitting around.

The quick mention of the suburbs here signals an awareness that, while America's drug problem spans across cities, suburbs, and rural communities, neighborhoods like their own often bear the brunt of blame.³³ Further, it situates the addiction issue in their community within the broader landscape of poverty and inequity.

Willa: We have to create jobs, that's the biggest problem here. ...

Brendan: Well, and schools.

Willa: Housing and schools, yes. ... I mean the schools are a mess, absolute mess.

They try so hard across the street at this school... and have wonderful teachers, they're some excellent people. But the children are so poor. You know?

³³ Margaret E. Ensminger, James C. Anthony, and Joan McCord, "The Inner City and Drug Use: Initial Findings from an Epidemiological Study," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 48, no. 3 (1997): 175-84.

In moments like these, the sense of enormity of these problems really come through. They offer a clear window into how poverty insinuates itself into every aspect of the day-to-day life in this community. 25 percent of people in Baltimore are living under the poverty line, which is roughly twice the national average. In 2011, the federal poverty guidelines mark the “poverty threshold” at \$10,890 for a one member household and \$18, 530 for a three-person household.³⁴ You are considered to be living “in poverty” if you are an individual or household making less than those amounts. Obviously, as is felt by the majority of people who live in that poverty, and as is argued by David Harvey and others: the federal poverty guidelines are widely contested as grossly underestimating the actual cost of living. Essentially, the calculations are based on an outmoded means of quantifying food costs established by the USDA in the early 1960s-- which, furthermore, was never intended as a measure of what it took to sustain an individual/family. It was based on the costs of a USDA “meal plan” that was “designed for temporary or emergency use when funds are low.”³⁵

It demonstrates that each supposed “way out” people are told there may be from poverty—through education, hard work, sobriety, obedience to authority—comes to a dead end in a reality that is composed of historic systems and patterns of inequity. Brendan explains,

The job thing is hard because, what kinds of jobs could you create?

³⁴ The full scale for other households is available on the US Department of Health and Human Services website: (<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml>).

³⁵ Gordon M. Fisher, “The Development and History of Poverty Thresholds,” *Social Security Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 3-14.

You could say that almost everything in the city needs to be rebuilt. Like, probably all of its water, sewer, roads, and bridges— there's probably that kind of work. But, whether anybody's going to do that as a priority is another thing. But, it's not like the old days where you could open a factory. I mean everything is made overseas. There's a whole group of people not needed for work. That's the problem.

Another important component of all this is the fact that disproportionately high rates of arrest and conviction in these neighborhoods impede those seeking to find employment outside of the drug trade, by saddling them with a criminal record.³⁶

Willa: I mean, this is the disposable society. We thought that in this country you had a right to food, shelter, clothing, work, but now we have a percentage of our population which is expendable. They're never going to work, they're never going to be educated, and it's just—

Brendan: Expendable labor.

Willa: Yeah. That's just the way life is.

³⁶ Devah Pager, *Marked: Race, Crime, and Finding Work in an Era of Mass Incarceration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Bruce Western, "The Impact of Incarceration on Wage Mobility and Inequality," *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 4 (2002): 526–46; Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett, "How Unregulated is the U.S. Labor Market: The Penal System as a Labor Market Institution," *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 4 (1999): 1030–60; Bruce Western and Becky Pettit, "Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 2 (2000): 151–69.

Brendan and Willa's critique of the "disposable society" have clear roots in the early work of Day and Maurin, who built the Catholic Worker movement as means to fight against capitalist structures that rely on the vulnerability of the poor.³⁷ I find these dense tangles accessible in Saadiya Hartman's work on black vulnerability and social death and what she calls the "afterlife of slavery."³⁸ She writes that slavery,

established a measure of man and a ranking of life and worth that has yet to be undone. If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is...because black

³⁷ The phrase "disposable society" originated in environmental studies: Paul H. Connett, "The Disposable Society," in *Ecology, Economics, Ethics: The Broken Circle*, ed. F. Herbert Bormann and Stephen R. Kellert (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991). See also, Robert Sharkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); Joan W. Moore, "Isolation and Stigmatization in the Development of an Underclass: The Case of Chicano Gangs in East Los Angeles," *Social Problems* 33, no. 1 (1985): 1-12; Katherine S. Newman, *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

³⁸ Saadiya Hatman, *A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007; in his 2012 article on the killing of Trayvon Martin, Stephen Marshall draws from the work of James Baldwin, Judith Butler, and Saidiya Hartman to examine the fungibility of black bodies beyond slavery and to the modern crisis of mass imprisonment and the heightened threat black bodies face from state violence the racialization of bare life. Stephen H. Marshall, "The Political Life of Fungibility," *Theory and Event* 15, no. 3 (2012); James Baldwin, "The Fire Next Time," in *The Price of the Ticket* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1985); Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning* (London: Verso Books, 2006). See also Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Family Life in a Federal Slum* (Piscataway, NJ: Aldine, 1970); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014). In his *Knocking the Hustle*, Lester Spence offers a grounded and insightful entrance into the unique stakes for people of color under neoliberalism. [Lester Spence, *Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics* (New York: Punctum Books, 2015)].

lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago.³⁹

The Catholic Workers return to the argument that their neighbors face an impossible economic system with an ethical pragmatism that presents their key arguments as indisputable common sense. Brendan argues,

Well, if you take what the government itself says, the government itself says for a family of four, you need to make at least \$20,000, alright? If the minimum wage is only \$5.15, then that person who makes \$5.15, isn't even near the poverty level. So, then if you raise the minimum wage to \$7.15, they're not near the poverty level, either. Then they also know that if you want everybody to pull their own weight—that is pay for their own housing, that you need to make at least \$20 an hour. If you said to anyone, “You know what? The minimum wage really ought to be \$20 an hour,” they would laugh so hard.

What we've created is, if you don't make \$40,000 a year—and you have a family, then you are essentially going to be behind. That's not living any kind of high lifestyle. We're amazed that people—like the woman who's was in yesterday—Pays \$500 for four rooms plus gas, electric, water bills. There's no way in the world she could ever always meet

³⁹ Saadiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 6.

those bills. No way. Yet that's what the rents are going in this neighborhood, and for junk.⁴⁰

One of the most interesting rhetorical features of this interview is in the interplay of Brendan and Willa's voices—as heard in this slice of conversation where Willa follows Brendan's statistic-driven soliloquy with a narrative illustration of what this means for individuals in their community. Brendan's bare figures flow into Willa's human example to form a layered and resonant argument. She shares,

We had a guy come in, ask for ... Came into the kitchen, because I'm usually in the kitchen doing the soup kitchen, and asked for a blanket, or [to Brendan] asked you for a blanket, and you told him to go see me. Of course, if somebody asks you for a blanket, you just go get a blanket, you know? He was real pleased. He said, oh I found such a good deal, he was able to rent a house for \$350, and it's so good, but it's cold. It has no furnace.

Willa's use of narrative bolsters Brendan's evidentiary facts to build an argument rooted in their commitments to personalism and mercy, and demonstrates the ways in which they continually work to humanize their neighbors and to situate them within the context of historical and structural injustices of the state. Willa shares another story of a woman named Stephanie,

⁴⁰ Rhonda Y. Williams offers a useful insight into the history and impact of public housing in Baltimore in her oral history work, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press 2004).

There's a young woman that comes in here, Stephanie ... Stephanie would be about 22, now. She's come in here since she was a little kid, to eat with us. It's almost two years ago in January—she lived here on Monroe Street—there was a fire. ...She was at work, and the grandmother was there. Her mother was in the house. Her daughter, her brother, and her cousin were all killed in the fire. And that house looks exactly the same today as it did the day that this terrible tragedy happened. Things just deteriorate. They're just falling down in front of you. And it all gets really depressing to live in the neighborhood.

As this thread moves from an account of the physical dangers imposed by neighborhood housing conditions into an indictment of the psychological harms of this kind of structural violence, the focus turns back to the brutality of the state.⁴¹ Brendan asks,

Then you say what is violent? You get into the lack of housing, and all that kind of stuff. And then they've blown up all high rise public housing in Baltimore for families, so they're all gone, and that mean that there's a lot of people who aren't being taken care of.

By acknowledging the ruptures caused by demolition and neglect, and charging city government with abandoning their neighbors, the Catholic Workers reject the notion that corner

⁴¹ I discuss the impacts of vacancy and decay on the lives of city people in more detail in Chapter One. Mindy Fullilove's *Root Shock* is a close and thoughtful study of the role of demolition and displacement in shaping the urban psyche, [Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004)].

drug dealers are the primary initiators of violence in their community, and argue that the onus for that lies with the state. As Brendan contends, “[poverty] is the reason why people have to go to violence, the drug thing just makes the violence explode.”

3.5 BALTIMORE’S DEPENDENCY ON DRUG MONEY

The connection between licit and illicit, and underground and legitimate economies are an elusive object of study. However, as trends in social and cultural research have shifted away from a dependence on top-down studies, ethnography and oral history provide new access to information about networks and communities that are otherwise cloistered. It follows then, that most detailed and relevant research on the underground drug trade comes almost exclusively from sociological and anthropological perspectives.⁴² The inner workings of the underground

⁴² Frederic M. Thrasher, *The Gang* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); Gerald D. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Elliot Liebow, *Tally’s Corner: A Study of Streetcorner Men* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967). Patricia A. Adler, *Wheeling and Dealing: An Ethnography of an Upper-Level Drug Dealing and Smuggling Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, “Shifts and Oscillations in Deviant Careers: The Case of Upper-Level Drug Dealers and Smugglers,” *Social Problems* 31(1983): 195–207; Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Bruce A. Jacobs, “Crack to Heroin? Drug Markets and Transition,” *British Journal of Criminology* 39 (1999): 555–74; Joan W. Moore, “Isolation and Stigmatization in the Development of an Underclass: The Case of Chicano Gangs in East Los Angeles,” *Social Problems* 33.1(1985): 1–12; Gerald D. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Joan W. Moore, Robert Garcia, and Carlos Garcia, *Homeboys: Gangs, Drugs, and Prison in the Barrios of Los Angeles* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); Jeffrey Morenoff, Robert J. Sampson, and Stephen Raudenbush, “Neighborhood Inequality, Collective Efficacy, and the Spatial Dynamics of Urban Violence,” *Criminology* 39 (2001): 517–60; Sheigla Murphy, Dan Waldorf, and Craig Reinerman, “Drifting into Dealing: Becoming a Cocaine Seller,” *Qualitative Sociology* 13, no. 4 (1990): 321–43.

drug economy are inherently inaccessible to academics, policy makers, and law enforcers, and anyone who lives beyond network boundaries. The cloistered nature of the illicit economy and the hyper-localized nature of its operative intricacies, insure that for the most part the day-to-day workings of the illegal drug trade remain largely coded and underground.

In 1995, Philippe Bourgois offered the first ethnographic look into the lives of street-level drug dealers in his, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*.⁴³ Centered on the drug trade in East Harlem, he locates the underground economy in relation to overall shifts in the global economy and points to the racial and social barriers between inner-city youths and licit economic opportunities.⁴⁴ Bourgois argues, in relation to the loss of factory jobs in New York City between the 1950s and the 1990s,

Economists and sociologists have documented statistically that the restructuring of the U.S. economy around service jobs has resulted in unemployment, income reduction, weaker unions, and dramatic erosions in worker's benefits at the entry level. Few scholars, however, have noted the cultural dislocations of the new service economy. These cultural clashes have been most pronounced in the office-work service jobs that have multiplied because of the dramatic expansion of the finance, real estate, and insurance (FIRE) sector in New York City.⁴⁵

⁴³ Philippe I. Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁴ Bourgois, 52.

⁴⁵ Bourgois, 114-115.

Bourgois goes on to explain that while many Americans rely on entry level positions in professional offices as a pathway to upward-mobility, inner-city youths are often excluded from such opportunities. Not only do geographic and educational access play a role, racist and classist hiring practices continue to lock many out of that system, underlining the permanence of poverty and the impenetrable borders of class.

In his, *The Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, sociologist Elijah Anderson fixed his lens on Philadelphia and draws clear distinctions between licit and illicit underground economies by marking people as either *decent* or *street* based on whether or not they are employed through the drug trade.⁴⁶ This paradigm not only presupposes that the state only criminalizes *indecent* behaviors, but that it can be counted on to only legitimize *decent* acts. Aside from its problematic broad moral judgement, what's lost in the decent/street dichotomy is the fact is that people often inhabit both the licit and illicit world: a councilman who receives a paycheck from the city and a payoff from a local drug gang, a grandmother who receives a monthly disability check, but runs an unlicensed daycare center from her home, or a dealer who filters drug money through a legitimately owned business. Moreover, studies of inner-city poverty that emphasize internal distinctions between *decent* and *street* points the blame for the problems of marginalized urban communities inward at their own members and actions—diverting responsibility and blame away from the state and its actors, while reassuring the rest of society that they exist outside of the system where these problems persist (and subsequently free of responsibility and blame). Waverly Duck and Anne Rawls later

⁴⁶ Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000); idem, *A Place on the Corner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Elijah Anderson, ed., *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

take up Anderson's notion of decent and street in their ethnographic work. I'll return to that study later in this section.

Nonetheless, Anderson provides useful insights into the working world of drug dealers and the difficulty of class mobility for the urban poor. He situates the inner-city drug trade within the context of a continued failure of the state to provide alternative economic opportunities in the inner-city. He argues,

It must be continually underscored that much of this violence and drug activity is a reflection of the dislocations brought about by economic transformations, shifts that are occurring in the context of the new global economy. ...where the wider economy is not receptive to these dislocated people, the underground economy is.⁴⁷

Like Bourgois, Anderson details some of the key blockades that lock black, inner-city youth from accessing some of the legitimate work that has historically been more available to the white working class. He argues that many of the trade jobs in the city are traditionally passed on through family connections, "Fathers and uncles bring in their sons and nephews. To get a certificate to work in these trades, a young man requires a mentor, who not only teaches him skills but legitimizes him as a member of the trade."⁴⁸ This is a keen observation regarding the ethnic hold on trade jobs in the city, however, it is important to note that in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore many trade and union workers have been displaced as well. Generations of families who have worked as stevedores, watermen, and steelworkers since they

⁴⁷Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 120.

⁴⁸Anderson, *Code of the Street*, 120.

emigrated from Ireland, Poland, Italy, or Greece now face the reality that their children do not have access to the jobs that have supported their families and their communities for years. While racism, classism, and sexism remain factors in education and employment practices, the underlying problem remains that there is no steady, living wage work available for the much of America.

Anderson and Bourgois provide valuable insight into the practicalities of poverty and the static nature of class in the city, offering key evidence for the case that drug trade work is often the most feasible option. However, neither of these studies offers access to the economic workings of the underground drug trade. Until recently, aside from what could be gleaned from criminal justice findings on street gang economics, little in-depth, qualitative or quantitative work was available on the practical functions of the underground economy.

Sudhir Venkatesh, a self-proclaimed rogue sociologist emerged as the foremost scholar on underground drug economies in the US as his multivolume ethnographic study of Chicago's Black Kings has provided a unique window into the day to day fiscal dealings of domestic drug gangs. In his landmark, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*, Venkatesh offers an in-depth analysis of the inner-city Chicago drug economy. His work illuminates the importance of both licit and illicit operations in these communities and explicates the role of commodification and self-production in the inner city. The book lays some important groundwork for understanding the structure and utility of the underground economy as he talks about how drug gangs have "insinuated themselves—and their drug money—into the deepest reaches of the community."⁴⁹ Importantly, the work unpacks the intricate ways in which drug

⁴⁹Sudhir Venkatesh, *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006) 285.

money holds urban communities together and reveals the absolute dependence cities have on their rich and far reaching underground economies.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Recent contributions from Alice Goffman and Kevin Deutsch raise considerable questions of veracity and ethics from academics and journalists alike. The still-unfolding controversies around the validity of these studies render it problematic to incorporate their findings into my research. Alice Goffman, "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto," *American Sociological Review* 74, no.3 (2009): 339-57. doi:10.1177/000312240907400301; Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Patrick Sharkey, "Reviewed: On the Run," *Social Service Review* 89, no. 2 (2015): 407-12; Victor M. Rios, "*On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* by Alice Goffman," *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 1 (July 2015): 306-308; Philip N. Cohen, "Survey and Ethnography: Comment on Goffman's 'On the Run,'" June 22, 2015, <https://www.terpconnect.umd.edu/~pnc/working/GoffmanComment-06-22-15.pdf>; Steven Lubet, "Ethics On the Run," *The New Rambler Review*, May 2015, <http://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/law/ethics-on-the-run>; Marc Parry, "Conflict Over Sociologist's Narrative Puts Spotlight on Ethnography," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 22, June 12, 2015, James Forman, Jr, "The Society of Fugitives," *The Atlantic*, October 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/10/the-society-of-fugitives/379328/>; <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Conflict-Over-Sociologists/230883>; Dwayne Betts, "The Stoop Isn't the Jungle," *Slate*, July 10, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/07/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_she_is_wrong_about_black_urban_life.html; Alex Kotlowitz, "Deep Cover: Alice Goffman's 'On the Run,'" *The New York Times*, June 26 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/29/books/review/alice-goffmans-on-the-run.html>; Jesse Singal, "The Internet Accused Alice Goffman of Faking Details in Her Study of a Black Neighborhood. I Went to Philadelphia to Check," *New York Magazine*, June 2015, <http://nymag.com/scienceofus/2015/06/i-fact-checked-alice-goffman-withher-subjects.html>; Kevin Deutsch, *Pill City: How Two Honor Roll Students Foiled the Feds and Built a Drug Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017); Edward Ericson Jr., "Anonymous Sources, Pharmacy Pills, and Gang Wars: Inconsistencies Raise Questions About 'Pill City,' a Baltimore Tale of Drugs and Murder," *City Paper*, February 17, 2017, <http://www.citypaper.com/blogs/the-news-hole/bcpnews-inconsistencies-raise-questions-about-pill-city-a-baltimore-tale-of-drugs-and-murder-20170217-story.html>; Brandon Weigel, "Questions Mount Over 'Pill City' Author's Previous Reporting," *City Paper*, March 3, 2017, <http://www.citypaper.com/blogs/the-news-hole/bcpnews-questions-mount-over-pill-city-author-s-previous-reporting-20170303-story.html>; Justin Fenton, "Officials Question Claims of a Pill Ring 'Pill City' Links Baltimore Teens to National Ring After 2015 Pharmacy Robberies" *The Baltimore Sun*, February 10, 2017, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-pill-city-book-20170210-story.html>; Justin Fenton, "Newsday, New York Times Reviewing Work of 'Pill City Author,'" *The Baltimore Sun*, February 17, 2017, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/investigations/bs-md-ci-pill-city-folo-20170216-story.html>; John Bonazzo, "Journalist Accused of Fabricating Sources for NYT Story Under

Waverly Duck and Anne Warfield Rawls build on the work of Bourgois, Anderson, and Venkatesh in their ethnographic study of drug dealing interactions in a neighborhood they call “Bristol Hill” located in a small city in the Northeastern US.⁵¹ Their work rejects the notion that urban drug markets are a chaotic web of predatory and opportunistic actors who lack common social values. Instead, they present dealers as community insiders who have well-established relationships in the neighborhood, who place high value in safety and order. Waverly and Rawls distinguish their approach from others by reframing Anderson’s classic decent/street dichotomy.

We treat the distinction as between the local order properties of a place where the job of drug dealing occurs and the values of residents—rather than as a distinction between persons. In other words, persons can hold “decent values” and nevertheless perform “street” practices and usually move back and forth between the two with some frequency.

Investigation - Sources for Kevin Deutsch's Articles About the Orlando Shooting in Newsday, Along with his book Pill City, Also Could not be Located,” *The New York Observer*, March 02, 2017, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com/resources/doc/nb/news/162E339DEA549FC8?p=AWNB>; “Editors’ Note,” *New York Times*, February 25, 2017, [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/pageoneplus/editors-note-february-25-2017.html?mtref=query.nytimes.com&gwh=58D5EED984025B04680E5762A39BFB2E&gwt=pay&_r=](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/pageoneplus/editors-note-february-25-2017.html?mtref=query.nytimes.com&gwh=58D5EED984025B04680E5762A39BFB2E&gwt=pay&_r=;); “Note from Newsday’s Editor,” February 16, 2017, <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/note-from-the-newsday-editor-1.13137281>; Nick Moran, “Fake Pill City,” *The Millions*, February 22, 2017, <http://www.themillions.com/2017/02/fake-pill-city.html>.

⁵¹ The ethnographic data collected in Bristol Hill was first published in [Waverly Duck and Anne Rawls, “Interaction Orders of Drug Dealing Spaces: Local Orders of Sensemaking in a Poor Black American Place,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 57.1 (2012): 33–75.] Duck extends and expands on the data and draws on some of the key findings established with Rawls in [*No Way Out: Precarious Living in the Shadow and Poverty of Drug Dealing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.]

The drug dealers we spoke with often espoused “decent” values, but their practices, like those of all residents were “street” when they were working on the street.⁵²

In *No Way Out*, Duck offers details of day-to-day life in Bristol Hill that demonstrate how dealers are motivated by a lack of education and employment options, and maintain close loyalties to neighbors and family.⁵³ This is echoed by the Catholic Workers in Baltimore, who point to the lack of industrial and trade jobs in the city and on the failure of government and industry to supplement those losses by creating new opportunities to make a living-wage in these community. Like Duck, they maintain that drug trade thrives under conditions of poverty. As Brendan argues,

If it wasn't for drugs, there wouldn't be any economy in this neighborhood. It's that simple. Landlords wouldn't get paid, food wouldn't be purchased, taxes wouldn't be collected because people wouldn't be buying stuff. So, it's an important part of it.

⁵² Duck and Rawls, “Interaction Orders of Drug Dealing Spaces,” 38.

⁵³ See also, Robert J. Garot, “‘Where you From!’ Gang Identity as Performance,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36.1 (2007): 50-84; Robert Harkey, *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Equality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005); Sudhir A. Venkatesh, “The Social Organization of Street Gang Activity in an Urban Ghetto,” *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1997): 82–111; Alford A. Young, *The Minds of Marginalized Black Men: Making Sense of Mobility, Opportunity, and Future Life Chances* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Randol Contreras, *The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence, and the American Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

While this has been a mundane fact of reality in communities like Brendan and Willa's for years, it was difficult to pinpoint exactly how much neighborhoods like theirs depended on underground income. In 2008, Baltimore commissioned an organization specializing in market analysis of inner cities named "Social Compact" to perform a neighborhood-by-neighborhood study of Baltimore's economy. The report was commissioned as part of a package intended to attract investors to some of the city's most impoverished areas, by demonstrating that developers should not shy away from bringing grocery stores and other amenities to neighborhoods that are revealed to have little to no IRS-reported income.

The "Baltimore Neighborhood Market DrillDown: Catalyzing Business Investment in Inner-City Neighborhoods," report (referred to more simply as the DrillDown report) compared the actual amount of money circulating in Baltimore's economy with records of reported income. In the process, they uncovered an 872-million-dollar discrepancy, demonstrating that Baltimore's underground economy amounts to approximately a billion dollars a year: a number roughly equal to the city's combined hotel and restaurant industries.⁵⁴ That number matches up with similar approximations made by calculating the daily cost of maintaining a drug habit in Baltimore multiplied by the approximate number of habitual drug users in the city.

As with most industries, a percentage of the profits from the drug trade are distributed disproportionately to top-tier players.⁵⁵ But, the \$872 million figure specifically refers to the amount of money that stays in the city. It does not include the profits that are exported to growers, manufacturers, distributors, and cartels. The neighborhood-by-neighborhood breakdown demonstrates that the majority of the unreported income that remains in the city goes

⁵⁴ Erickson, "Shadow Players."

⁵⁵ Duck, *No Way Out*.

to support individuals and families living at or below the poverty line.⁵⁶ The Catholic Workers talk about how this not only means that adult providers rely on drug trade income to support themselves and their families, but that the industry naturally attracts kids,

Willa: As the kids get toward middle school. You know, you reach that age, all of us have been there where it's so important to have that right pair of sneakers, right pair of pants, to have a school uniform.

Brendan: And they are not going to get it if they don't have ...

Willa: And their mom and dad aren't going to get it for you. Grandma can't get it for you.

Brendan: Because they don't have any money.

Willa: So, you've got to get it yourself and it doesn't take much to get a little money, so that's how kids get hooked.

The fact that this income is so desperately needed has long been an accepted, if not mundane reality in neighborhoods where jobs and resources are scarce and the costs of living are high. But, the report shows the extent to which the underground drug economy is critical to

⁵⁶ According to the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance-Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore (also known as BNIA-JFI), the DrillDown report is, "an assets-based market analysis ... that combines numerous data sets, both public and private, national and local, in order to build a set of community economic indicators that are tailored to urban markets. These indicators can be used to more accurately describe the size (population), strength (income and buying power), stability (homeownership and residential investment) and investment opportunity of a given market." BNIA-JFI is a nonprofit organization that collects, analyzes, and publishes a wide variety of data on Baltimore. The full "DrillDown" report is available through their website at: <http://www.ubalt.edu/bnia/drilldown/Baltimore-DrillDown-Full-Report.pdf>.

maintaining economic stability but for the city at large. The problem this report raises for the state is clear. Not only does it reveal the vibrancy of Baltimore's drug economy and the vast disparities brought about by the economic mechanisms of the state, it exposes the city's dependence on the drug economy. But, findings from this DrillDown report may be useful for building the case that the state's criminal justice-driven approach to dismantling the drug trade will continue to fail as long as issues of poverty and economic injustice continue to be ignored. The report does more than acknowledge the significance of the drug trade in Baltimore, it commits to it. This creates the need for some creative rhetorical maneuvering by spokespersons for the city, who shy away from marking the informal economy as "illicit" and stick closely to the claim that not all unreported income is necessarily tied to the drug trade.

This argument is reiterated by other community activists like Glen Ross who suggest that, in addition to the fact that the drug market is the only functional economy in some neighborhoods, that community members are compensated for their cooperation and their refusal to inform to police,

You have drug dealers here, and so a lot of people say, "How come residents don't tell on the drug dealers?" Well, these drug dealers pay people. They pay people to hold their stash. They'll pay sometimes \$200 or \$300 for a basement to cut their drugs. We're talking about single mothers and even some seniors.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Edward Erickson Jr, "Shadow Players: Drilling Down into Baltimore's Billion-Dollar 'Informal Economy,'" *Baltimore City Paper*, January 28, 2009.

This also complicates the relationship between neighbors who are not employed through the drug trade with those who are, rendering their dependence on one another a major roadblock to police and groups like Guardian Angels, who rely on internal surveillance and reporting to investigate and prosecute crime.⁵⁸ As a result, their relationship with the local drug dealers is generally uncontentious, because it is well-known in the neighborhood that the Catholic Workers do not collaborate with the police.⁵⁹ As Brendan explains,

I'm pretty sure that they know that we don't work with the police. And so, if they come in here, we're not going to say, "Are you doing this, are you doing that?" In reality, other than it's going to create a health problem for you, I don't see anything different between alcohol and the drug trade. And I know why people are in it, and it's stupid that there's violence attached to it. ...

See and a lot of people say as a good citizen you should report it. But if you sit down and say, "Well, what's going on?" To call anybody is just going to create a violent situation.

⁵⁸ Richard Rosenfeld, Bruce A. Jacobs, and Richard Wright, "Snitching and the Code of the Streets," *British Journal of Criminology* 43 (2003): 291–309.

⁵⁹ Catholic Workers have long been at odds with the police, and Brendan and Willa are no exception. Both have been arrested for protesting on several occasions. In 1991, Brendan was arrested for demonstrating without a permit, he told reporters that by imposing a deposit fee for permit licensing, police had rendered it all but impossible to secure permits for vigils and demonstrations. Frank Somerville, "Inner Harbor Peace Gathering Brings Arrest," *Baltimore Sun*, March 2, 1991. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/407107006?accountid=10750>.

3.6 OCCUPATION, SURVEILLANCE, AND THE WAR ON THE POOR

Brendan and Willa's refusal to intervene in the drug trade in their community is grounded as much in their rejection of violence as their commitment to economic justice. This is one of the most valuable contributions the Catholic Worker narrative offers for a wholistic understanding of the problems facing Baltimore. Their perspective clearly illustrates the otherwise complex fusions between institutional violence, poverty, and street violence. It points to the fact that any lasting solution to Baltimore's drug problem must be primarily focused on dismantling the systems that produce such gross inequities in the city. So far, the criminal justice-driven anti-drug agenda has only worsened the conditions of poverty in the city. As Willa explains, they view the war on drugs as a targeted war on the poor,

Willa: You could sit in our yard and do a survey and I don't think there's anybody that comes in here who hasn't been arrested. You're arrested for being poor.

Brendan: Yeah. ... you could easily say that.

Willa: I told Brendan recently I was coming through Pigtown and I saw—there's a corner store and two ... two houses down there was you know, two young people. It was a couple. You know sitting, a young couple sitting on the porch eating, that they had just come up eating. And a squad car was in front of me and on his bullhorn, he said, "If you do not live there, move now or you'll be arrested." And he was like ... they just, they just ... I mean I don't know. They were just going to have a little something from the corner store. But that's how people are treated around here, it's with great disrespect.

Brendan: Yep.

Willa: And boy you better move fast.

Willa's account has a tone of bewilderment as she simultaneously acknowledges and dismisses the authority of the state. She presents the voice of the police as both assuming that the couple he was addressing did not both did not belong there and, by simply being there, they posed a threat to the order and safety of the neighborhood. It is unclear in her telling whether or not she recognized the couple or knew whether or not they lived there. The point she makes in defense of the two deliberately disregards all that. She builds her case on the assumption that the couple's basic rights to food, space, and dignity overrule any claims to authority assumed by the officer—which the Catholic Workers mark as unjust, unwarranted, and inciting of violence. Their refusal to collaborate with police is also a fundamental extension of their commitment to nonviolence and resisting war. I asked them to talk about how the nature of their relationship with police had always been this way.

Willa: We see it as an occupation force.

Brendan: Well now, the question has always been since the 60's...

Willa: Oh no, it's the drug war.

Brendan: Yeah. I would say very much so since the '90s.

Willa: ... it's the drug war.

Brendan: Yeah. I mean the way the police operate, I'd say it would be.

Willa: It's the criminalization of the poor.

Much of the Catholic Worker rhetoric is constructed this way. In refusing to cede to the claims of authority that conflict with their basic commitments, they bypass what they see to be the unethical foundational constructs and assumptions of state, and build their argument on the foundation of their own moral conditions. As Brendan explains,

And then the number of people jailed... for meaningless stuff like urinating outside, sitting on the steps, “loitering,” as they call it. That type of hostility is going to help breed more violence. And then just go around and see all the cameras and that type of surveillance.

Brendan and Willa continue this thread of argument that frames the police as an “occupation force” as they as they discuss the surveillance cameras that were installed by police throughout designated “high crime” neighborhoods after 9/11, when city police saw a sharp increase in financial and material support from the federal government through the creation of the Homeland Security Agency and gained broader surveillance powers through the Patriot Act. As Willa describes,

Now, when we go out our front door at night, we have three flashing blue lights. Three cameras facing us. And on the sign, on the corner there’s a sign saying, “Your neighborhood is under surveillance for your protection.”

... And then they, we have flood lights. I just noticed the flood lights around James Street when I was coming through Pigtown. Have you ever seen that? It’s like there is a film

being made tonight, you know? It's Homeland Security money. We got a lot of money in the city, I don't know how much.

This is a key moment of convergence of state and street violence in Baltimore, as it marks the beginning of the strategic rhetorical, economic, and political merger war on terror with the war on drugs.⁶⁰ Even locally, city agencies and government officials in Baltimore have been forced to shift their attention to the drug war through the lens of its national and international workings as city governments rely on newly issued Homeland Security funds to wage the War on Drugs, a war which now routinely marks domestic drug gangs as *insurgencies*.⁶¹ Catholic

⁶⁰ It is beyond the scope of this project to address the economic workings of the international drug trade. Current, comprehensive research on this topic can be found throughout the academic and popular press. Particularly germane works include Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2009); Moises Naim, *Illicit: How Smugglers, Traffickers and Counterfeiters are Hijacking the Global Economy* (New York: Doubleday, 2005); David Mares, *Drug Wars and Coffeeshouses: The Political Economy of the International Drug Trade* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2005); Michelle Brown, "Mapping Discursive Closings in the War on Drugs," *Crime, Media, Culture* 3, no.1 (2007): 11-29; Scott Decker, *Drug Smugglers on Drug Smuggling: Lessons from the Inside* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

⁶¹ The naming of U.S. street gangs as insurgencies is not specifically a post-9/11 move. A 1993 monograph by Major David R. Hogg lays the discursive groundwork for the current integration of The War on Terror and The War on Drugs. David R. Hogg, *A Military Campaign Against Gangs: Internal Security Operations in the United States by Active Duty Forces*, AD-A274 041 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: US Army CGSC, 1993). However, the relationship between domestic street gangs, the War on Terror, and the armed forces has grown increasingly complex as demonstrated by a January 2007 FBI report on the increasingly active role street gangs are playing in the US military both at home and abroad. The report, which reveals that US street gangs are sending members into the armed forces to gain access to weapons and to be trained in combat, assesses the threat level as high—pointing towards dangerous implications for law enforcement officials and national security. For more on the relationship between the Patriot Act and the investigation of US drug gangs, see Gregory P. Orvis and Jeffrey P. Rush, "Modern Gangsters and the Patriot Act," *Criminal Justice Studies*, 19, no.2 (2006): 111-120.

Worker condemnation of police intensifies as the conversation continues, when they talk in more detail about the violence police bring to their community.

Willa: We've had men killed right around here by the police, shot in the back.

One that we knew the best, Scooter, and his mother we're still in contact with was across the street, well actually by the park.

Brendan: Right by the school. Fredrick and Gilmore. Old Fredrick and Gilmore.

Willa: Oh, that's right. Yeah. But anyway, the police told him to stop. Now [acknowledging], I know he was supposed to stop. But anyway, he ran and they cornered him, and shot him ten times in the back.

Brendan: Well, actually he was trying to climb over a fence.

Willa: Yeah.

Brendan: They claimed he had a gun. And of course, they produced a gun.

Willa: His mother said he never had a gun.

Baltimore Sun archives reveal that Scooter was killed in the winter of 1995. Looking for more details of the case, I searched through archives from the *Baltimore Sun* from February 1995. Midway through the issue dated February 25, I came across a striking image in the center of the front page of the Maryland section. It showed two gloved men pushing a neatly wrapped body in front of a crowd of police. The caption reads,

Westside shooting. Officials from the state medical examiner's office carry the body of a man who was shot 10 times by a police officer yesterday in the 1600 block of Frederick

Ave. in Southwest Baltimore. Police said the man aimed a handgun at the officer after a brief foot chase.⁶²

The story itself was printed at the end of the Maryland section, on the back page under the weather and lottery numbers. Scooter was never named in the story, but the details matched Brendan and Willa's account precisely: a man shot ten times, midday, right near Viva House; eyewitnesses insisted that the man had no gun, the police account differed. The article also states that community members reported that "scores of officers swarmed the area in recent months and used 'heavy-handed' tactics in an effort to rid the neighborhood of drugs."⁶³ Officer Darryl DeSousa, a six-year veteran of the force was named as the shooter. No follow-up articles were published.

Willa: We had a funeral service for him, we had a memorial up there where he was shot and killed just like a dog. You know, put a wreath and everything. And it was real strange, this woman who I had never met before from the streets was just walking by ... what did she sing?

Brendan: She did Psalm 23.⁶⁴

⁶² Andre Lambertson, "Westside Shooting," *Baltimore Sun*, February 25, 1995, 1B.

⁶³ Robert Hilson Jr., "Man Succumbs Amid 13 Shots from Officer, Who Reports Being Menaced," *Baltimore Sun*, February 25, 1995, 14B.

⁶⁴ Psalm 23 is a biblical passage from the Old Testament commonly invoked in Christian funeral rites, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; he guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely

Willa: The most beautiful...

Brendan: She didn't sing it, she recited it.

Willa: Okay.

Brendan: Word for word.

Willa: But very dramatically.

Brendan: Yeah.

Willa: Very. I mean it was like we had planned it.

It wasn't easy to find information about Scooter's death, since the only time his name (Gerret Tyrone Jackson) made the paper was on the one-year anniversary of his death. And that mention came only in the form of an image caption under a photograph of Willa with Scooter's mother, Geraldine Jackson, leaning over a handmade sign that read, "We Remember Gerret Tyrone Jackson (Scooter)." The photo titled "Mother's Protest" was accompanied by a caption which read,

Geraldine Jackson, whose son Gerret Tyrone Jackson was killed in a police shooting last Feb. 24, signs a poster with his name on it yesterday outside Central Police Headquarters in Baltimore. She signed with ashes, in observance of Ash Wednesday. Ms. Jackson was taking part in a protest organized by Viva House, the Catholic Worker project in West Baltimore that provides meals for the poor. The demonstrators delivered a petition with

goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." 23 Ps: 1-6 (New American Standard Bible).

200 names to Police Commissioner Thomas C. Frazier asking him to look into several shootings by police in the past year.⁶⁵

When describing the memorial they held for Scooter, they reveal the intensity of the surveillance and intimidation their community experiences from the police.

Brendan: Well, I remember we couldn't get people ... a lot of people to go. They were afraid.

Willa: They were.

Brendan: Afraid to show up because the police were there.

Willa: Yeah. And so, a lot of people stood across the street, they wanted to see but they were afraid to.

Brendan: Mhm.

Willa: Because the police retaliate, you know? If, you stand up against them.

The story they share about Scooter exemplifies the close bonds Brendan and Willa feel towards their community and the allegiance they feel towards those they serve in the soup kitchen, who join them in the soup kitchen. It also speaks to the nature and intensity of their relationship with the police.

Willa: We carried the case as far as we could, we met with the head of homicide.

⁶⁵ Barbara Haddock Taylor, "Mother's Protest," *Baltimore Sun*, Feb 22, 1996, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406911285?accountid=10750>.

Brendan: Well, the same cop killed not long after that another person up by the Payson library. Another person I think shot in the back, too.

Willa: Yes. Yes. And, of course, we questioned that whole thing and he explained that you know, this cop's brother was the president of Tufts University and it's a very respectable, good family.

Darryl DeSousa's name appears in the *Sun* dozens of times after Scooter's death. As Brendan mentions above less than a year later, the officer was implicated in another fatal shooting in the neighborhood. This time, DeSousa and two other officers opened fire on a crowded block, killing 38-year-old alleged gunman George Thomas Jr. and 18-year-old innocent bystander Melvin James.⁶⁶ DeSousa has never been charged with any wrongdoing and currently serves as Deputy Commissioner of the Baltimore Police.⁶⁷

Scooter's mom, Geraldine appears in the paper once more after her son's death, when four years later, her unarmed 17-year-old nephew was shot and killed by police. Again, her story

⁶⁶ Ballistics reports confirmed that both men were killed by police-issued bullets, but they were unable to determine which officer fired the fatal shot. A civil suit filed against the officers on behalf of the bystander's family was dismissed Peter Herman, "Source of Fatal Bullet Unclear Police May Have Shot Bystander, 18, Killed Near Gun Battle," *Baltimore Sun*, December 7, 1995, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1995-12-07/news/1995341098_1_police-officer-officers-fire-escapee; John Rivera, "Family of Shooting Victim Sues 3 Police Officers; Bystander Killed as Trio, Escapee Trade Gunfire," *Baltimore Sun*, Apr 17, 1996. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406912059?accountid=10750>; AP report, "Bystander in Shootout Killed by Police Bullet," *The Gettysburg Times*, December 8, 1995: <https://www.newspapers.com/image/55717381/>

⁶⁷ Baltimore Police Organizational Chart, Baltimore Police Website, <http://www.baltimorepolice.org/sites/default/files/BPD%20Org%20Chart%20v43.3-draft.pdf>.

was limited to a few words in a caption that accompanies a photograph where she is pictured mourning another young family member's death at the hands of the state.⁶⁸

Brendan and Willa go on to talk explain that police give little attention to the deaths that take place in their community and in other majority poor, black neighborhoods in the city.

Willa: Well, the last time that somebody was murdered on this block would be

⁶⁸ Eli McCoy—who was also black, unarmed, and from southwest Baltimore, was shot and killed by Baltimore Housing Police. Nancy A Youssef, “Tensions Flare at Rally to Protest Police Shootings; Participants Block in State Trooper's Car, but Violence Averted,” *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 28, 1999; <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406452402?accountid=10750>; Brenda J. Buote, “O'Malley Laments Police Shootings; ‘Ineffective Policing’ the Result of Past Management, He Says,” *Baltimore Sun*, Feb. 7, 2000, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406445076?accountid=10750>; Brenda J. Buote, “Unarmed Teen is Killed by Police; Suspect Appeared to Reach for a Weapon, Housing Officer Says,” *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 26, 1999, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406444631?accountid=10750>; Tim Craig, “Prosecutors Won't Seek Charges in Police Shooting; Officer Fatally Wounded Man After Mistaking Cellular Phone for Weapon,” *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 15, 1999, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406428609?accountid=10750>; Caitlin Francke, “Grand Jury Will Not Charge Officer in Shooting of Unarmed 17-Year-Old,” *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 14, 2000, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406439235?accountid=10750>; Peter Hermann, “Officer Who Shot Teen Apologizes, Defends Act; Grand Jury Concludes Kenneth M. Dean III Shouldn't be Charged,” *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 15, 2000, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406440346?accountid=10750>; idem, “Police Say Evidence Supports Officer; Autopsy Suggests Teen Reached into Pocket Before Fatal Shots,” *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 27, 1999, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406446698?accountid=10750>; Gregory Kane, “Justice for All—So Long as They're One of Us,” *Baltimore Sun*, Aug. 1, 2001, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406490853?accountid=10750>; Sarah Koenig, “‘Reservoir of Suspicion’ and ‘Reservoir of Goodwill’ 1999 Killing Highlights Mistrust of Police,” *Baltimore Sun*, July 21, 2001, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406495006?accountid=10750>; Sarah Koenig, “Jury Finds Against Officer,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 30, 2001, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406505907?accountid=10750>; Ivan Penn, “Black Officials Raise Zero-Tolerance Fears; O'Malley Tells Group that Enforcement Will Not be Race-Based,” *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 21, 1999, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406431084?accountid=10750>; Tim Craig and Peter Hermann, “200 Attend Funeral of Teen Killed by Officer; Politicians, Protesters Attend Service for Youth,” *Baltimore Sun*, Dec. 2, 1999, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406433064?accountid=10750>.

about a year and a half ago.... in June it'll be two years.

Brendan: Somebody was shot in the head in the alley. Probably, it was probably drug related, but we can't say for sure because that was never really investigated.

Willa: No, no, they don't [investigate]. He was coming from the abandoned houses up there. And probably someone had a stash of stuff and he took it or something that's our theory, you know? And he took it or something and of course, you can get yourself killed for that.

Brendan: Or he didn't pay or something, something happened.

Willa: His family was outraged. ...The detectives wouldn't even return their calls or anything. There's no investigations of these murders, it's just "who cares," you know?

Brendan: As far as we know nothing's ever been done.

Samuel "Scooby" Umstead is the victim they remember in this story. He was fatally shot and wounded in the alley behind Viva House late in the afternoon on June 27, 2005. He was pronounced dead later that day at the Maryland Shock Trauma Center.⁶⁹ Brendan and Willa were right, the case was never solved—which is not unusual, particularly in Baltimore.⁷⁰ On average,

⁶⁹ Richard Irwin, "4 Die Since Saturday in Separate Incidents," *Baltimore Sun*, Jun 28, 2005, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406671609?accountid=10750>; "Death Notices," *Baltimore Sun*, Jun 29, 2005, person: Samuel "Scooby" Umstead, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/406673514?accountid=10750>.

⁷⁰ I was able to determine the status of this case by searching the database maintained by the Murder Accountability Project. Though names are not attached to the data sourced through the site, results can be narrowed by demographics (age, location, race, sex, weapon, circumstance.) Umstead was the only 39-year-old white male killed in Baltimore in 2005. That record can be

a third of all murders in the US go unsolved. But, in Baltimore, which has the lowest homicide clearance rate of any major American city, nearly two-thirds of murder cases remain unresolved.

3.7 JUSTICE AND RESISTANCE

From the position of Catholic Workers, the war on drugs is not just a misdirection of resources, but a brutal extension of historic and systemic inequities. Their commitment to push back against those structures persists as they continue to centralize the fight for justice over order. When talking about the future of their work and community, Willa says,

Willa: An ideal in our life is to redistribute the wealth, however we never dreamt in our lifetime we would see this redistribution of wealth, but it went the exact opposite way of what we expected-

Brendan: Yeah.

Willa: I mean the poor are poorer.

We have a stone of hope out front. ... On it is written, from Martin Luther King's speech in 1963, the I Have a Dream Speech, "Out of this mountain of despair will come a stone

found here:

http://public.tableau.com/vizql/w/Offenders19762014/v/SHRMain/viewData/sessions/D5BA40A164BC4C9E8D1BBF3E9261B17A0:1/views/718281667352765213_10096115522017110895?maxrows=200&select_x=521&select_y=332.

of hope.” The mountain of despair is what we see the problem is around us, so it’s like our prayer stone. That’s one way we try to keep hope and pray.

The stone makes for a strong reminder that Viva House is not only a house of hospitality—that functions as a soup kitchen, shelter, and resource center; but of resistance—resistance to war and economic injustice. Brendan and Willa talk about hypocrisy of the state in condemning violence in their community, while it is simultaneously modeling violence.

Willa: We’re the leading military power....

Brendan: The way to solve all disputes that the adults show you to do is violence.

So... there was no negotiation with Iraq, alright? Do you or don’t you have weapons of mass destruction? Just go in and bomb them.

Willa: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so, being a militarized society, why wouldn’t you expect violence on the streets?

Brendan: Why wouldn’t a kid assume that that’s the way they should do it?

Brendan and Willa ground their oppositional to the police in pacifism and pragmatism. If Guardian Angels are foot soldiers in the war on drugs, then Catholic Workers are its conscientious objectors. Exploring the differences in language, commitments, and practices of these two groups, provides a window into the complex affiliations and allegiances that impact the tensions among the people of southwest Baltimore.

3.8 WITH ME OR AGAINST ME:

CONSONANCE AND DISSONANCE IN THE VOICES OF ANGELS AND WORKERS

From the viewpoint of an organization which functions according to the principle that whoever is not included is excluded, whoever is not with me is against me, the world at large loses all the nuances, differentiations, and pluralistic aspects which had in any event become confusing and unbearable to the masses who had lost their place and their orientation in it.—Hannah Arendt⁷¹

Towards the end of my interview with the Guardian Angels, Strider started to lose some of the formality that structured much of our discussion. In the introduction to my chapter on the Guardian Angels, I write about the tone of formality that comes through in their interview as sounding distinctively deliberate and practiced. There are moments like that which come through in the Catholic Worker interview as well—when Brendan starts quoting income statistics and Willa punctuates stories with phrases like “occupation force” and “the underclass.” After all, each of these narrators are to some degree used to talking about their work--- to reporters, to volunteers, to politicians, to supporters and critics. So, none of them are novices in the art of persuasion. But, the Angels—and Strider in particular, who is the spokesman for the group, spoke with a particular degree of caution that reminded me so many encounters I’ve had with police. I worked as an interviewer for another researcher’s oral history project for a while in grad

⁷¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951), 380-81.

school, and I collected histories from two or three police officers over that time. The project was on the womens' movement in Pittsburgh, and these officers were members of the first generation of female recruits when the department was force-integrated in the 1970s. The other women I spoke with for that project were mostly activists—an employment lawyer, a reproductive health nurse, a leader in a movement of pro-choice Catholics—the point being, they were all practiced speakers as well. But, the guardedness in those police interviews had the same note of caution as my conversation with the Angels, which is not too dissimilar from having a drink with one of my cop cousins. So, when Strider began to drop his guard towards the end of our interview, I let my pauses stick longer to hear what he might say. He finally broke away from his insistence that the community was all welcoming them with relief and open arms and started talking more intimately about the frustrations of his work. He shared,

What's funny is you ride down the street and you see the Lincolns, and the Cadillacs, and the big SUVs and the kid in there is 17-years-old, or younger, with spinners. You know? Yeah, oh man, these guys got it made.

And one of the things I complained about as an Angel at these community meetings was— I tell the parents, “You know what? Your sons, your kids are paying the rent.” You know? And don't come to the meetings complaining you got high crime in your neighborhood when your kid's coming in here with more money than I have. You know? And you should see them, people get all pissed off.

We went to a meeting... and there was a social worker there, the police department was there, and some lady said, “Well, you know, you're not just going to pluck my kid off the

streets because he's out after 10 o'clock." I said, "Listen. They put a curfew in order and your kid is out here, then your kid needs to go." ...

I told them, "Everybody in here knows some little teenage pain in the ass that just snatched somebody's purse or has a gun in their room or is slinging drugs."

The room got quiet as a pin. ...And nobody said anything.

The social workers are sitting there.

I said, "Don't tell me—" I said, "Everybody in here... you come to these meetings, you want to bitch and complain and blame the police. And the same kids doing the dirt are living in your house, or in somebody's court, or somebody's grandmother's taking care of their daughter's or son's kids."

You know?

And the social worker said. "Well we at Social Services—"

I said, "Well, tell me. How many kids you pick up all the time, that basically you go get because of some kind of a drug issue in their mom's house and mom knows about it?"

You know? And then the lady said, "Yeah. That is happening."

And I know it's happening. I know it's happening.

When Strider's language relaxes into the phrasing like, "bitching about the police" and "pain in the ass kids," his frustration becomes clear. His exhausted refrain of "you know?" tells me how isolated he feels that no one else is making these simple connections. Of course, it is striking how similar his testimony is to Brendan's exasperated insistence that, "nobody's bills would get paid" without drug income in their neighborhood. And how much it resonates with the

arguments from Venkatesh and Duck, insisting that dealers are integral to the social and economic order in these communities, not predatory invaders.

Tuning in closer to the language of Strider's outrage, I hear where his resentments are laid bare, "You see the Lincolns, and the Cadillacs... The kid in there is 17-years-old, or younger. ... Coming in here with more money than I have. ... Yeah, these guys got it made." Like the tired myth of the welfare queen, these slices of bitterness reveal the insidiousness of the capitalist folklore which drives people who want more to point their envy at those who have less.

Placing these interviews in conversation with one another exposes the tensions between the Catholic Worker commitment to justice and the Guardian Angels' pledge to order. Moreover, it reveals the degree to which pro-state and anti-state undercurrents shape the dynamics between various actors in the city. This 2004 joint statement from Baltimore's mayor and police commissioner shows how deftly they deploy rhetoric to engender and manipulate allegiance to the state,

Drug dealers are like foreign terrorists: they use a combination of intimidation and ruthless violence to protect their interests. ... Urban terrorists such as this seek control of neighborhoods and stop at nothing to protect their assets. Most dealers direct their violence at others involved in the sale and abuse of illegal narcotics. For example, a drug trafficker relies on murder and assault—commonly backed with firepower—to maintain

discipline within the drug organization, to solve turf disputes, to restore respect, and to settle even the most trivial disagreements.”⁷²

A simple substitution of villains in this story and it sounds like the Catholic Worker’s critique of the police as a force of terror using “intimidation and ruthless violence to protect their interests... stopping at nothing to protect their assets.” That simple shift in perspective seamlessly transforms this into an indictment of the brutality of the state, which so “commonly” uses violence to “maintain discipline... to solve turf disputes, to restore respect, and to settle even the most trivial disagreements.”

Guardian Angels see drug dealers as instigators of violence. They commit to dismantling the drug trade, which they see as a drain on the social, economic, and political systems that would otherwise be able to strengthen and support their community. Catholic Workers see police and the state as the aggressors, and they are committed to dismantling the social, economic, and political systems they hold responsible for the inequities and injustice that shape day-to-day life in their community. As Paulo Freire states,

Any situation in which “A” objectively exploits “B” and hinders his or her self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence... because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human. With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by

⁷² Mayor Martin O’Malley and Commissioner Kevin P. Clark, *Effectively Reducing Crime in Baltimore* (Baltimore: Baltimore Police, 2004), 17.

the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There had been no oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation.⁷³

The stories shared by the narrators in these chapters make clear that the Guardian Angels and Catholic Workers face overwhelming conditions of violence in their day-to-day lives and work in Baltimore. They also demonstrate how fixed perspectives can limit potentials for understanding and addressing those conditions. Freire's framework, like the Catholic Worker's, offers a lens that can broaden our scope of vision for examining urban violence.

⁷³ Freire, 55.

4.0 EMBODYING THE DEAD: FUNCTION AND MEANING IN RIP T-SHIRTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

“I used to know everyone’s story, how they died, but I can’t keep them straight.” On June 1, 2000, eighteen-year-old Jason Crippins was shot and killed less than two blocks from his home in East Baltimore.¹ It wasn’t long before Linda Thorne noticed a fresh layer of memorial graffiti covering her neighborhood, “Every wall around here had his name on it,” she recalls. Homicide strikes this community at a rate of more than ten times that of the national average—leaving survivors to contend with an immeasurable amount of loss. Recognizing the exceptional impact of death on her community, and as a means of assuaging the sheer magnitude of mourning they face in the day-to-day, Thorne turned to personalized memorial T-shirts as a timely, practical, and meaningful response to fatal violence. By collecting photographs of the deceased from loved ones and borrowing commemorative refrains from the memorial graffiti she saw outside, Thorne started making and selling “Rest In Peace (RIP) T-shirts” out of her Johnston Square rowhouse.²

¹ “Man Killed, Another Wounded in Apparent Drug Dispute,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 2, 2000, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2000-06-02/news/0006020263_1_baltimore-county-police-sergeant-east-baltimore

² Annie Linskey, “Clothed in Grief for City’s Dead,” *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 2007.

In the years since, Baltimore's homicide rate has risen to an all-time high and RIP shirts have become an even more prominent fixture in and beyond East Baltimore.³ As part of this broader dissertation on the rhetoric of fatal violence in Baltimore, I present RIP T-shirts as profoundly expressive artifacts with the potential to give voice to those who are otherwise often ignored, obscured, or silenced—the individuals and communities most impacted by murder.

RIP shirts, like the lives of those they commemorate, are complex and, at times, controversial. While some hold these shirts as somber reminders of the disparity and violence of the city, others eschew them as celebratory epideictic for heroes of the illegal drug trade.⁴ This chapter positions RIP shirts as multivalent artifacts. To that end, I explore their potential not just as a valuable means of remembering the dead and healing from loss, but for claiming space and power, and speaking back to dominant discourse in meaningful ways. RIP T-shirts are as much strategic political messages as they are talismans of personal remembrance. As rich communicative artifacts, they illuminate important information about the situation of the city--not only for what they reveal about the lives and struggles of those who use them, but as

³ In 2015, Baltimore amassed its highest per-capita highest homicide count on record and is on track in 2016 not just to surpass the per capita record, but the overall record as well. Jess Bidgood, "The Numbers Behind Baltimore's Record Year in Homicides," *New York Times*, January 15, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/14/us/Baltimore-homicides-record.html>.

⁴ The notion of outlaws as heroes is a long-established cultural trope. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1959); Ye Zhang, "The Marsh and the Bush: Outlaw Hero Traditions of China and the West" (PhD Thesis, Curtin University of Technology, 1998); Chris Frazer, *Bandit Nation: A History of Outlaws and Cultural Struggle in Mexico, 1810-1920* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Paul Kooistra, "Criminals as Heroes: Linking Symbol to Structure," *Symbolic Interaction* 13, no. 2 (1990): 217-39; bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Graham Seal, "Consuming Outlaws, The Common Good and Heritage from Below," in *Heritage from Below*, ed. Iain J.M. Robertson (New York: Routledge, 2016), 75.

evidence of the historic and systemic networks of oppression and resistance that make these artifacts material.

4.2 HISTORY OF THE RIP T-SHIRT

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact time and place RIP T-shirts first appeared. Linda Thorne was likely not the first person to make RIP T-shirts in Baltimore, but I have yet to find evidence of them circulating there before she started making them in the year 2000. When searching for mentions of RIP T-shirts in major American news outlets from the year 2000 and before, I found nine articles, though they are sometimes called “dead man shirts” in early reports. They came from the *Washington Post* (1995), *Montgomery Advertiser* (1997), *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (1997, 1998), *Los Angeles Times* (1998), *New York Times* (2000), *Louisville Courier Journal* (2000), *Zanesville Times Recorder* (2000) and the *St. Petersburg Times* (2000).⁵ These articles

⁵ Chevel Johnson, “T-shirts Honor Casualties of Mean Streets,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1998, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/oct/11/news/mn-31353>; Emily Yellin, “New Orleans Epitaph: Dead Man Shirts,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/17/us/new-orleans-epitaph-dead-man-shirts.html>; Bill Maxwell, “Glorifying Death Becomes a Way of Life,” *St. Petersburg Times*, April 19, 2000, http://www.sptimes.com/News/041900/news_pf/Opinion/Glorifying_death_beco.shtml; Ruben Castaneda, “Postscript to Violence; Hard Lives and Brutal Deaths Are Chronicled on D.C.’s Walls,” *Washington Post*, March 20, 1995, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/307848030?accountid=14709>; Michael Perlstein, “The City of Jazz Funerals Adds ‘Dead Man’s Shirts,’” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, March 3, 1998; Coleman Warner, “Gangster’s Violent End Makes Him Role Model for Youths,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 11, 1997; Jamie Kritzer, “Epitaphs in Unusual Places Pay Tribute to Slain Friends,” *The Montgomery Advertiser*, May 14, 1997: 1A-2A; “Use Faith to Oppose Senseless Violence,” *The Courier Journal*, August 16, 2000:3; Bill Maxwell, “Glorifying Death Becomes a Way of Life,” *The Times Recorder*, April 24, 2000: 4A.

create a loose timeline of RIP shirts suggesting the practice first emerged in the 1990s in a handful of urban communities with high rates of violence, and then gaining broader popularity and national media attention around the year 2000.⁶

A number of these early news articles refer to a New Orleans shop owner by the name of Ricky Lewis as an early producer of the shirts.⁷ It is no surprise that New Orleans might hold one of the earliest (if not the first) sites of production for RIP shirts. Not only does New Orleans, like Baltimore, have one of the highest *per capita* murder rates, it is also the birthplace of what is arguably the most distinctive of African American memorial traditions, the jazz funeral.⁸ Ricky Lewis opened his “Video Images” shop in New Orleans in 1989 with a relatively simple set up consisting of a computer, printer, and heat press. He planned on selling inexpensive celebratory shirts for birthdays and anniversaries, which did make up the majority of his business for the first two years. In 1991, he sold his first memorial T-Shirt. “It all started when some guy came to me to do a memorial. He ordered 30 shirts. It just took off from there. It must have been word-of-mouth, because I never advertised.”⁹ Before long, RIP shirts began to account for 95 percent of

⁶ Collectively, these articles also mention early (by or before the year 2000) iterations of RIP T-Shirts in Fort Lauderdale, D.C., Philadelphia, and Detroit. Another early article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reveals production of airbrush-painted memorial T-shirts in Philadelphia as early as 1989, predating the technology that made the photo-format T-shirt more widely accessible. Monica Yant, “Survivors Find T-Shirts a Fitting Memorial,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 25, 1997 http://articles.philly.com/1997-05-25/news/25562850_1_t-shirt-fitting-memorial-airbrushed-portrait. For more on cultural impacts of new media technologies see Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy, *MediaSpace: Place, Scale, and Culture in a Media Age* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁷ Johnson, “T-Shirts Honor Casualties.”

⁸ I return to the significance of New Orleans in terms of the history of African American memorial practices later in this chapter.

⁹ Michael Perlstein, “The City of Jazz Funerals Adds ‘Dead Man’s Shirts,’” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, March 3, 1998.

Lewis's business. By 2004, the *Times-Picayune* reported that the shirts were becoming "as common as flowers at funerals" in New Orleans.

I encountered RIP T-shirts for the first time in the early-to-mid 2000s in Baltimore, just through day-to-day life--particularly in some of the more neglected neighborhoods I frequented in West and Southwest Baltimore. However, they were becoming increasingly visible in much broader spaces of the city in 2007, when Annie Linskey first wrote about them for the *Baltimore Sun*.¹⁰ By then, RIP shirts were an established trend, there was sufficient business to sustain at least two vendors from the local Mondawmin Mall shopping center and Linda Thorne, who said of the steadiness of her home-based t-shirt business, "RIP knocks on the door every night."¹¹ I solicited help from Linksey in getting in touch with Thorne, but neither of us was successful.¹² Linskey also informed me that she was "kicked out" by mall management when she interviewed vendors there for her story, stating that they did not want "death or violence" associated with the mall.¹³

A few weeks after Linskey's article ran in the paper, I went to Mondawmin looking for her vendor sources and found only one of the two original kiosks open.¹⁴ The vendor I spoke

¹⁰ Annie Linskey, "Clothed in Grief," *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 2007, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2007-01-04/news/0701040073_1_rip-shirts-tiller-mondawmin

¹¹ Linskey, "Clothed in Grief."

¹² Though I've made numerous attempts by phone, mail, and internet to track Linda Thorne, I have not had any success in connecting with her personally. I would be interested to find out if she is still making these shirts and what insights she might have into how the practice has changed over the years.

¹³ Annie Linskey, personal e-mail to the author, January 5, 2007.

¹⁴ Mondawmin Mall is located in the center of a historically black community in Northwest Baltimore. As it is the only major shopping center inside the city, and is adjacent to a transit station with a subway stop that functions as a hub for city buses, it draws its customer base from throughout the city. Mondawmin Mall featured prominently in reports of the 2015 Baltimore Uprising that followed the killing of Freddie Gray when it was occupied by the National Guard.

with—a middle-aged, African-American man, was courteous, interested in my project, and generous with his work, but asked to remain anonymous and did not wish to be recorded.¹⁵ He designed, printed, and sold all of the goods from the kiosk, including the RIP shirts and RIP dog tags.¹⁶ He, reiterated that because many people associated the shirts with the drug trade, they had been attracting controversy since well before the Linskey piece. He explained that he was no longer permitted to display the shirts, but that I could look through his sample catalog of printed images in a nearby white binder which was closed, but out in plain sight. He gave me an overview of what he said was a relatively simple process of design and production: a customer would bring in an image or set of images in digital or hardcopy that he would scan or upload to his computer. He would show them the binder of examples he shared with me so they could make choices about text, content, and design. The degree of customer involvement in the process varied from client to client.

In our conversation, he said that not being able to display the shirts had not impacted his sales, as he relied primarily on word-of-mouth and return-customers. The number of individual shirts sold varied case-by-case, and the vendor shared that he could tell how high ranked the victim was in the drug trade by how many shirts sold. Because he was already trying to keep a low profile, he was reluctant to give me more than three samples. So, after reviewing roughly forty examples, I made my selection in terms of what was as most representative of the form

¹⁵ Mondawmin Mall vendor (anonymous), personal interview with the author, January 2007.

¹⁶ RIP dog tags are also wearable, customizable memorial artifacts that can include the same selection of photographs, symbols, and text as RIP shirts.

regarding image, text, and composition. One of the samples I selected had sold “about two dozen copies,” another, “between 50 and 80,” and the third sold “in the hundreds.”¹⁷

When I returned to follow-up with the vendor a few weeks later, he was there at the same kiosk, but closed his sample binder as I approached and told me he was no longer interested in talking about the shirts. I thanked him and went on my way. Our interactions on both visits were equally cordial and given his initial openness and interest in my project, and in light of the warning I had from the *Sun* reporter about being kicked out by mall management, I assume he was told by Mondawmin officials not to accept any more interviews.

These shirts are so common now, that RIP functions as a cottage industry. In 2012, a shop owner selling RIP shirts in New Orleans’ 7th Ward, told CNN that there were now, “roughly 20” similar shops within the three-square-mile area and plenty of business to go around.¹⁸ “If I’m too busy, my customer will go to another shop, and if they’re too busy, their

¹⁷ I gathered these numbers in a conversation with the anonymous vendors who supplied me with the samples; vendor name withheld; personal interview by author (Baltimore, January 2007).

¹⁸ This growth of the RIP shirt industry happened alongside the mainstreaming of hip-hop and associated culture, fashion, and symbols. Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Macmillan, 2007). The jump in popularity at the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s could in part be attributed to one of the first mass-market popular culture mentions of RIP shirts in Master P’s 1997 hit, *Is There Heaven 4 a Gangsta?*: “Look into the eyes of a killa, neighborhood drug dealer.... Damn, now he’s in the dirt... Pourin’ out beer for my dead homey... A bunch of Rest in Peace T-shirts with his motherfuckin’ picture on it.” Percy Robert Miller (“Master P”), “Is There Heaven 4 a Gangsta?” *Rhyme & Reason Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*, Priority Records B000003AFK, 1997, CD. Also, the music video for the song “T-Shirts” from underground Miami rapper Desloc Piccalo played in regular rotation on BET in 1997, with the refrain, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, now your picture’s on a T-Shirt.” Memorial t-shirts also circulated following the deaths of Tupac Shakur in 1996 and Biggie Smalls in 1997. Jeremy Prestholdt, “The Afterlives of 2Pac: Imagery and Alienation in Sierra Leone and Beyond,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2009): 197-218; Greg Dimitriadis, “In the Clique: Popular Culture, Constructions of Place, and the Everyday Lives of Urban Youth,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2001): 29-51.

customer will come here. There's not a shortage. You can survive without doing Rest in Peace shirts, but your business will never grow.”¹⁹

In considering the economic function of RIP shirts, it is important to understand the need for “alternative” means of memorial for those who are grieving the loss of a murder victim in Baltimore. *The Baltimore City Paper* recently did a thorough accounting of the financial costs of murder in Baltimore-- for survivors, and for the State. I address that report and its broader implications in greater detail in Chapter 1. However, I want to highlight some key economic factors here before moving forward. Conservative estimates of the average cost of a funeral in the US fall between \$8,000 and \$10,000. Statistically, the average murder victim in Baltimore is a 25-year-old African American male killed by gunshot.²⁰ That means that, on average, these victims are young, die suddenly, and are uninsured. Though some programs are in place to assist with funerary costs, they constitute a tiny fraction of the overall expenses incurred. The *City Paper* assessment suggests that, under the best of circumstances, survivors will still need to come up with \$5,000 just to claim their loved one's body from the morgue and have it attended to by a funeral parlor.²¹ Keeping in mind that survivors are also experiencing a sudden loss of income, and the ongoing, cumulative expenses accrued through the stress of ongoing circumstances for

¹⁹ Elliott McLaughlin, “RIP Tees: In Murder City, a Market for Wearable Memorials,” *CNN.com*, March 1, 2012 <http://news.blogs.cnn.com/2012/03/01/rip-tees-in-murder-city-a-market-for-wearable-memorials>

²⁰ Karen Houppert, “From Gunshot to the Grave: The High Cost of Murder in Baltimore,” *Baltimore City Paper*, January 12, 2016, <http://www.citypaper.com/news/features/bcpnews-from-gunshot-to-grave-the-high-cost-of-murder-in-baltimore-20160112-story.html>

²¹ It is also worth noting that due the nature of these deaths, access to the body for proper burial can be severely delayed in cases where an autopsy (which can take several weeks to complete) is required for the homicide investigation.

survivors--suffice to say, it unlikely that the "average victim" of murder in Baltimore will have an "average burial."²²

RIP shirts are now one of the most visible components of urban memorial, not just in New Orleans and Baltimore, but throughout the United States. These shirts are part of the everyday memorial landscape in cities like Washington, D.C., Baton Rouge, Detroit, Saginaw, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, Memphis, Flint, Miami, and Mobile.²³ Vendors from many of these markets are also reporting that the shirts are sustaining their business largely, if not entirely.²⁴ The *San Francisco Chronicle* reports that RIP shirts are now, "a silent, but booming industry in the Bay Area." The *Chicago Tribune* reports that this once-niche practice has now

²² I attend further to the ongoing impact of homicide on survivors, financial and otherwise, throughout the dissertation. For the report I refer to here, see Houppert, "From Gunshot to the Grave."

²³ Nadeje Green, "Friends and Families of Young, Black Homicide Victims use T-shirts to Mourn Loss," *Miami Herald*, April 5, 2014, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1962438.html#storylink=cpy>; Bob Johnson, "The Economy of Violence: Airbrush Artist's 3-D Designs Sells RIP T-shirts," *Saginaw News*, October 10, 2013, http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2013/10/the_economy_of_violence_airbru.html; "Gang Member Father of Nine-year-old Boy Shot Dead in Targeted Revenge Killing Started Selling T-shirts," *Daily Mail*, November 9, 2015 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3310305/Gang-member-father-nine-year-old-boy-shot-dead-targeted-revenge-killing-started-selling-t-shirts-son-s-face-day-boy-s-mother-bought-new-car.html#ixzz4GizrSYUc>; Donna Britt and Amber Stegall, "'RIP' Shirts Have Changed How People Mourn In South Louisiana," *Cbs46.Com*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.cbs46.com/story/25991707/rip-shirts-have-changed-how-people-mourn-in-south-louisiana>;

²⁴ Henry Jenkins' notions of *convergence*, *participatory culture*, and *collective intelligence* provide a useful framework for talking about the various ways in which media, technology, and culture converge create complex messages and meanings. His take on participatory culture explains that media producers and consumers no longer maintain separate roles. Collective intelligence refers to the ways in which knowledge is shared and combined to create new, complex understandings. Each of these three theories relies on multiple media makers/consumers and various interacting technologies. Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

become, “ubiquitous at the funerals of young victims of gun violence.”²⁵ *The Miami Herald* says that for many in the communities where these shirts are sold, the T-shirt vendor is, “often the first stop before funeral arrangements.”²⁶ Martin Lovejoy, owner of International T-Shirts says RIP shirts make up 85 percent of his business in Detroit, “We started the business to do family reunion t-shirts, schools, churches and other businesses. In the past 11 years, RIP has taken over the business... The business is more ran like a funeral home now instead of a t-shirt shop because every time someone gets killed or murdered, our phone rings or people come in to get RIP t-shirts made.”²⁷

These articles also show that while RIP shirts began as a trend for youth to wear to informal memorial celebrations (and not seen as proper funeral attire), that now, young people are more often eschewing suits and other formal modes of dress, and buying the shirts as primary funeral wear. These shirts are also now purchased and worn by older wearers, as well. That broadening in demographics comes through in items like this from the *Los Angeles Times*, “Survivors, from the very young to people in their 40s and 50s, wear them casually. It’s not uncommon to see them worn in grocery stores and shopping malls, by people getting off a bus or walking in a neighborhood.”²⁸

²⁵ Mary Wisiniewski, “More Young Mourners Showing Love, Remembrance, with ‘RIP’ Shirts,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 18, 2014, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-rest-in-peace-shirts-20141018-story.html>

²⁶ Nadeje Green, “Family of the Slain Use T-Shirts,” *Miami Herald*, April 5, 2014, para. 5, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miamidade/article1962438.html#storylink=cpy>

²⁷ Barry Liebowitz, “Rest in Peace T-Shirts: Detroit Businessman says Crime, RIP Brand are Profitable these Days,” *CBS News*, May 1, 2013, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/rest-in-peace-t-shirts-detroit-businessman-says-crime-rip-brand-are-profitable-these-days/>

²⁸ Johnson, “T-Shirts Honor Causalities.”

The technology, which allows these shirts to be made quickly, cheaply, and in batches, not only makes it practical in the aftermath of sudden death, but lends itself to future reproduction.²⁹ The high potential for return business means that most RIP vendors keep their samples on file indefinitely, with future orders in mind. As the *Miami Herald* aptly points out, this often renders vendors as *de facto* “archivists of death” for their communities. Vendors from all over the country, including the one I spoke to in Baltimore, report that a significant amount of income from the shirts comes from reprint-- copies reordered for anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, and often just for additional everyday use. Vendors also attribute high sales numbers to their many repeat customers—like Amanda Brewer, who purchased all seven of her Studio X in Miami, a local top-seller with a sign in the front window that reads, “Home of the RIP T-Shirts.” One of her shirts pictures two fallen family members—on the back, a father, and on the front, a son. Both were murdered within a few blocks of one another, fourteen years apart. She says of the RIP shirts, “It’s like the ghetto’s obituary. This is my time to grieve. When I put it on, I’m saying, ‘Yes, they took my family.’ But you know what, they’re in a better place. They’re still with me because I wear their shirts.”³⁰ Natalie Hopkinson, writing about Go-go culture in DC,

²⁹ When photography turned digital and the technology became cheaper and more widespread, anyone who had access to a computer and printer had the capacity to make personalized photo T-shirts. So, it was relatively (and other custom photo work) with a simple set up at home or a small shopping center kiosk. They are now widely available through online vendors where customers can upload images and generate custom and template-guided layouts and designs. The RIP T-shirt is just one example of the ways in which media and technology are altering modern memorial practices. For a useful reader on the subject, see Andrea Hajek, Christine Lohmeier, and Christian Pentzold, eds., *Memory in a Mediated World: Remembrance and Reconstruction*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³⁰ Green, “Family of the Slain Use T-Shirts.” This quote speaks to the many broader cultural and economic shifts at play in urban memorial practices. For one, the speed with which information is spread through digital and social media, and a decline in distribution and readership in print press, makes the printed, paid newspaper obituary increasingly obsolete.

echoes Brewer's sentiments on the function of the RIP shirt as an obituary. She notes of the function of RIP shirts in dance clubs, "Much like newspaper headlines, RIP T-shirts break the news and express grief, tragedy, and loss—transforming individuals into walking, talking, and dancing obituaries."³¹ This stand-in for obituary is a particularly clear example of how RIP shirts perform rhetorical gestures usually assigned to other artifacts and texts, and is a testament to the potentials they hold as multivalent objects: from practical to political, and from poetic to profane.

4.3 MEMORIAL, MEANING-MAKING, AND STRUGGLE

Examining memorial as a means of better understanding culture is a long-established practice across disciplines.³² Memorial traditions are rich with information: not simply as archives of facticities for the dead, but as a looking glass into the conditions and culture of a community of mourners. Rooting RIP T-shirts within the broader tradition of memorial connects those who

³¹ Go-go is a genre of black dance hall music originally influenced by jazz, funk, and R&B that developed in Washington, D.C. in the mid-1960s. The genre has maintained popularity over the past five decades and continues to develop under influences from rock and hip-hop. Natalie Hopkinson, *Go-go Live: The Musical Life and Death of a Chocolate City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 38.

³² Douglas James Davies, *Death, Ritual, and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* (London: Cassell, 1997); Anne Teresa Demo and Bradford Vivian, eds., *Rhetoric, Remembrance, and Visual Form: Sighting Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Donovan J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993); Suzanne E. Smith *To Serve the Living: Funeral Directors and the African American Way of Death* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Michael Kerrigan, *The History of Death: Burial Customs and Funeral Rites, from the Ancient World to Modern Times* (Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 2007).

use them to all of those who mourn. At the same time, it distinguishes the practice from other memorial traditions and explicates the distinctive value of these objects as a looking glass into what often otherwise operates as a deeply coded community.

The largely poor, black populations submerged in steady and lethal violence in Baltimore have developed a number of distinctive practices for mourning their murder victims.³³

Commemorative graffiti, like that which inspired Linda Thorne to make her RIP shirts, covers buildings, bridges, and buses.³⁴ Makeshift roadside memorials pepper city streets.³⁵ Custom

³³ For more on memorial and urban space, see Melvin Delgado, *Death at an Early Age and the Urban Scene: The Case for Memorial Murals and Community Healing* (Westport, Conn. Praeger, 2003); Rebecca Louise Carter, "Valued Lives in Violent Places: Black Urban Placemaking at a Civil Rights Memorial in New Orleans," *City and Society* 26, no. 2 (2014): 239-61; Derek H. Alderman and Joshua FJ Inwood, "Landscapes of Memory and Socially Just Futures," *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography* (2013): 186-97; Christopher Perry Steele, "The Emergence of a Local Memorial Landscape in the Aftermath of Violent Tragedy: a Study of Baltimore's Dawson Murders, 2002-2005" (PhD Diss., University of Maryland, 2007).

³⁴ For more on memorial graffiti, see Gabriele Lübbers, "The Graffiti of Grief: Violence, Death and Remembrance in Pittsburgh Gang Neighborhoods," *Paideuma* 53 (2007), 145-160; Mona Abaza, "Mourning, Narratives and Interactions with the Martyrs through Cairo's Graffiti," *E-International Relations* (Oct. 7, 2013), <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/10/07/mourning-narratives-and-interactions-with-the-martyrs-through-cairos-graffiti/>; Ken Davis, "Street Gang Graffiti 101," *The Re-Evolution of American Street Gangs*, ed. Dale L June, Mohamad Khatibloo, and Gregorio Estevane (Boca Taron, FL.: CRC Press, 2015), 165; Lisa K. Waldner. and Betty A. Dobratz, "Teaching and Learning Guide to Accompany Graffiti as a Form of Contentious Political Participation," *Sociology Compass* 7, no. 12 (2013): 1027-43.

³⁵ For more on roadside memorial, see: Lisa A Flagg, "For all the Brothas who Ain't Here: Roadside Memorials as African American Material Culture and Performance in Detroit" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 2013); Jennifer Clark and Ashley Cheshire, "RIP by the Roadside: A Comparative Study of Roadside Memorials in New South Wales, Australia, and Texas, United States," *Omega-Journal of Death and Dying* 48, no. 3 (2004): 203-22; Dennis Klass, "Spontaneous Shrines/Roadside Memorials," *The A-Z of Death and Dying: Social, Medical, and Cultural Aspects* 53, no. 1/2 (2014): 391; Robert M. Bednar, "Killing Memory Roadside Memorial Removals and the Necropolitics of Affect," *Cultural Politics* 9, no. 3 (2013): 337-56; C. Allen Haney, Christina Leimer, and Juliann Lowery, "Spontaneous Memorialization: Violent Death and Emerging Mourning Ritual," *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 35, no. 2 (1997): 159-71.

floral arrangements take the shape of guns, dollar signs, and local housing projects. Candle light vigils, concerts, and other modes of performance generate opportunities and for tributes of spoken word, poetry, music, and dance. While my focus in this chapter stays on RIP T-shirts, it is important to acknowledge that they are just one component of the broader memorial practices developed and used by this community, and the product of a long cultural history of mourning in the midst of scarcity and suppression.

African American memorial practices have deep roots in resistance. This is vital to the lineage of RIP shirts as it locates them within the tradition of struggle, and situates them as a stark example of how the everyday social practices of oppressed groups are perceived and treated as threats to broader social order. In *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, historian Eugene Genovese reveals how slaves rejected southern paternalism and resisted the controls of slavery by converting Christian practices intended to placate into a “powerful defense against the dehumanization.”³⁶ In his chapter on funerary practices, he details the many constraints slaves faced in burying their dead: from lack of properly allocated time and resources through the strict regulations—and in some cases outright prohibition—of memorial, out of fear that slave funerals might function as generative sites of rebellion.³⁷ Genovese demonstrates that despite these severe controls, slaves in the South developed and performed robust memorial practices by blending customs borne across the Atlantic on slave ships with subversions of Christian practices imparted unto them by missionaries and plantation owners. Through these resilient traditions, the culture and community of a subjugated people endured.

³⁶ Eugene D Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 11.

³⁷ Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

Resistance is also at the root of what is perhaps the most notable of African American memorial practices, the jazz funeral in which mourners march and dance with the casket through the streets to music that moves from the somber to the celebratory, is in part traced to African funeral practices.³⁸ In *How Racism Takes Place*, George Lipsitz points to funerary second line displays as evidence of, “the enduring and irrepressible African presence in local culture.”³⁹ Malik Walker, who studies systematic theology, offers a useful synthesis of that tradition as an act of struggle.

(The jazz funeral) operates as a political and cathartic response to a situation of systemic disenfranchisement. While the jazz funeral is a performance of grief, it is also a protest. The mastery of the form of the state funeral is an expression of rootedness in the civic traditions of society, and its imitation in the jazz funeral is simultaneously an undermining of the notions of power and prestige associated with the state funeral. For people in New Orleans, the infusion of jazz and gospel music in the funeral is a self-expression of suffering and discontent. ...The jazz funeral in itself provides a lesson in how to reckon with life and death, struggle and triumph, thus providing the outline for a transcendental politics of struggle.⁴⁰

³⁸ Richard Brent Turner, *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). See also Leo Touchet and Vernel Bagneris, *Rejoice When You Die: The New Orleans Jazz Funerals* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Tashel C. Bordere, “‘To Look at Death Another Way’: Black Teenage Males’ Perspectives on Second-Lines and Regular Funerals in New Orleans,” *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying* 58, no. 3 (October 2009): 213-32.

³⁹ George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 212-13.

⁴⁰ Malik JM Walker, “Jazz Funerals and the Transcendental Politics of Struggle,” *The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* 26, no. 2 (2016), <http://www.societyarts.org/arts->

These complex and multifaceted traditions cannot be boiled down to a singular thread or narrow evolution of practices. However, it is clear that the conditions of scarcity, restriction, and resistance retained significance for African American funeral practices as these traditions made their way from West Africa through New Orleans, to Baltimore. RIP shirts are evidence that—through a heritage of resilience and subjugation—African Americans continue to develop memorial practices as a means of honoring, in death, those who were not honored in life.⁴¹

4.4 THE RHETORICAL VALUE OF MEMORIAL GOODS

RIP shirts are a relatively new localized tradition and there are at present very few academic writings which address them directly.⁴² However, prior work exploring the rhetoricity of

journal/online-edition/126-online-edition-vol-26-no-2/292-jazz-funerals-and-the-transcendental-politics-of-struggle.

⁴¹ See also Smith, *To Serve the Living*; Paul C. Rosenblatt and Beverly R. Wallace, *African American Grief* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Karla F. C. Holloway, *Passed On: African American Mourning Stories: A Memorial* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), Courtney Baker, *Humane Insight: Looking at Images of African American Suffering and Death* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

⁴² For research on the broader use of the T-shirt as memorial souvenirs, see Aaron Glass, “Crests on Cotton: ‘Souvenir’ T-shirts and the Materiality of Remembrance among the Kwakwaka’wakw of British Columbia,” *Museum Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 1–18; and Tracey J. Potts, “‘Dark Tourism’ and the ‘Kitschification’ of 9/11,” *Tourist Studies* 12, no. 3 (2012): 232–49. A handful of academic pieces make mention of RIP T-shirts as a component of broader contemporary urban death practices. See Helen A Regis, “Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line,” *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001): 752–77; Lisa Marie Cacho, “‘You Just Don’t Know How Much He Meant’: Deviancy, Death, and Devaluation,” *Latino Studies* 5, no. 2 (2007): 182–208; Erika Lee Doss, *The Emotional Life of Contemporary Public Memorials: Towards a Theory of Temporary Memorials* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); Lisa Marie Cacho, “Racialized Hauntings of the Devalued Dead,” *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, ed. Grace Kyungwon Hong; Roderick A Ferguson (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011),

everyday artifacts and the communicative potentials of ordinary objects provides a useful framework for unpacking the cultural value of RIP shirts. In “Books, Reading, and the World of Goods,” Zboray and Zboray draw on theories of consumption to reveal how people imbue meaning and significance onto everyday artifacts.⁴³ Their study of antebellum diaries and letters offers a useful model for examining how common consumer goods “transcend commercial value” and express social relationships through an array of functions that range from the sacred to the everyday. Their work builds on an approach developed by Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, which first placed anthropology into conversation with economics to reveal the various ways through which the use of goods operates to transfer message and meaning.⁴⁴ Olson’s *Emblems of American Community* examine a range of visual artifacts including paintings, statues, and everyday household goods; to reveal the range of meanings imbued in the rhetorical iconography of the American Revolution.⁴⁵ In, *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture*, Olson et al. present us with the notion of consumption itself as a rhetorical act which, “invite(s) the use of such commodities for the expression of social status or individual and collective identity.”⁴⁶ These studies demonstrate the breadth of information contained in everyday objects their use.

25-52; Alexandra L. Giancarlo, “The Lower Ninth Ward: Resistance, Recovery, and Renewal” (PhD diss., University of Guelph, 2011).

⁴³ Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, “Books, Reading, and the World of Goods in Antebellum New England,” *American Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1996): 587-622.

⁴⁴ Mary Douglas and Baron C. Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

⁴⁵ Lester C. Olson, *Emblems of American Community in the Revolutionary Era: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

⁴⁶ Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope, eds., *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 273.

At first glance, these T-shirts may appear to be simple, straight-forward artifacts of mourning. They are in part, composed of universal and commonplace touchstones and employ essentially phatic language and symbols. However, I argue that these shirts operate as more than mere death notices. When looking at RIP T-shirts as *rhetorical* artifacts, I consider their communicative potentials not just as tombstones or obituaries, but as richly coded texts that express a broad range of responses to power, aggression, and violence, while they are simultaneously operating as constitutive tools of meaning-making, solidarity, and resilience.⁴⁷ The hyper-localized context for these shirts, range of symbols they employ, and the cloistered and coded practices necessary for maintaining the structures and networks of these linguistic communities make this a dense artifact to untangle.⁴⁸ Through my experience within the linguistic community I write about here in Baltimore, my knowledge of media and cultural theory, and my training in the methods of rhetorical criticism and oral history, I am equipped with a particularly useful set of tools and literacies to set about this work.

4.5 ANALYZING THE ARTIFACTS

I address elements of *representation* at play with these artifacts, with particular attention to the notion of *struggle* as the nexus of Black Masculine Identity Theory. Then, I move to a discussion

⁴⁷Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000); Allen Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and Its Symbols, 1650–1815* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966).

⁴⁸For a more complete unpacking of urban sociolinguistics, see Elliot Liebow, *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (Boston: Little, Brown 1967).

of the RIP shirt as a product of *vernacular* culture, which draws on the politics of *visibility* to claim *power*. Fourth, I examine the *photographs* on these shirts and how they work in terms of *capture* and *framing*. I then attend to the varied *ways of viewing* these shirts, regarding perspectives of *wearers* and *passersby*. Finally, I attend to the *body as a site of display*, and discuss how these shirts operate in conjunction with the bodies of those who wear them to *occupy territory* and *claim contested spaces*.

4.6 SUBCULTURE, STYLE, AND VIOLENCE

RIP T-shirts are understood, by insiders and outsiders alike, as embedded in a broader network of people, values, and practices connected to the illegal drug trade. The censure experienced by the mall vendor I spoke with, and the broad stigmatization of RIP shirts, stems from the perception that these objects overtly or covertly endorse criminality and glorify violence. That criticism is fixed in the idea of embodiment and the notion that those who produce and wear these shirts are implicated in whatever an individual viewer or audience perceives these objects to represent.⁴⁹ That consequentiality gets at the root of one of the key arguments I maintain

⁴⁹ Controversies around mode of dress and gang affiliation are certainly nothing new. When I was growing up in Baltimore in the 1980s and 90s, it was already commonplace to see dress code postings of “no colors” and “no bandanas” in schools, shopping malls, skating rinks, and public parks. Most public schools in Baltimore now issue uniforms in part to cut down on visible signs of gang affiliation. For the handful of city schools that do not have a uniform, the very first item on the list of general requirements for dress code states, “The style of clothes that a student wears may not endanger him, her or other students.” (baltimorecityschools.org). More about stigma, fashion, and gang affiliation can be learned from the ethnographic work of Robert Garot, *Who You Claim: Performing Gang Identity in School and on the Streets* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

throughout this dissertation—that marking the people and practices proximate to the drug trade in Baltimore as belonging to a subculture of violence, is a dangerous distortion which reinforces the broader circulated fictions of urban violence as senseless and which ignores the broader structures of violence. As I argue throughout this chapter, rhetorical analysis of RIP T-shirts is particularly valuable for demonstrating how broader systems of violence initiated and maintained by the state generate and perpetuate violence at other levels. Therefore, while I see the value in drawing from notions of subculture for writing and talking about the individuals and practices tied to the complex social worlds of the urban drug trade, I reject the notion that violence values are what mark this group “distinctive” from others.

For an alternative framework of subculture, to the individuals and practices proximate to the illegal drug trade, I look to Dick Hebdige’s work in *Subculture and the Meaning of Style*.⁵⁰ While Hebdige’s work, like much subculture theory, comes out of the lineage of Wolfgang’s studies of street gangs as a subculture of violence, he cautions readers against conflating the two.⁵¹ Instead, he offers a useful framework for addressing the complex homologies of subterranean cultures. He approaches products of subculture in the same manner with which McLuhan considers all media—as weapons for disrupting or achieving equilibrium. Hebdige

⁵⁰ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture and the Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1991). For critiques of the subculture concept: Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1996); and the edited collection from Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris, *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁵¹ Hebdige spends some time on this in his “Suggested Readings” notes at the end of the book, attending to the differences between, “the delinquent gang (small, with specific local recruitment, a set of loyalties, and a strong commitment to ‘machismo,’ subterranean values and illegal activities) and the *subculture* which is altogether broader, looser, less strictly defined by class and regional membership and less literally involved in law-breaking.” However, he also uses the Quinton Boys, a skinhead gang, as an example of how delinquent gangs can operate within subcultures. [Hebdige, 180-81.]

writes about how punk appropriates “the rhetoric of crisis” born from the tumult of the 1960s and 1970s.⁵² While punk comes out of postwar turmoil, RIP shirts are born from the chaos of perpetual war. As a direct byproduct of the war on drugs, influenced by the war on terror, they thrive amid the relentless and targeted violence of the state and under an increasingly militarized domestic sphere.⁵³ This temporal difference matters here—RIP style is not “seeped in irony” like punk’s counternostalgic rhetoric. Instead, it is a frank and synchronous appropriation of the violent symbols of the state being pointed back at the state and its sympathizers in the midst of war. Hebdige’s notions of polysemy, violence, and the appropriation of state symbols are particularly germane for understanding how subcultural groups remake the artifacts and practices of a dominant culture to develop systems of revolt and operate as central modes of critiquing dominant culture and its political, social, and economic structures.

In his discussion of polysemy and the unfixed nature of signs, Hebdige unpacks the relationship between meaning and the subject position, explaining that a sign or symbol can have many meanings and interpretations and that the position of the thing structures its meaning. He explains,

Here the simple notion of reading as the revelation of a fixed number of meanings is discarded in favour [sic] of *polysemy* whereby each text is seen to generate a potentially infinite range of meanings. Attention is consequently directed toward that point—or more

⁵² Hebdige, *Subculture*, 87.

⁵³ In Chapters One and Two, I draw out the details and impact of the militarization of the police in regard to the impact felt by community members, Guardian Angels, and the Catholic Workers of Viva House. Those threads are critical to understanding of the military language and symbols at play in RIP shirts that blur the distinctions between soldiering and domestic policing and contribute to the framing of urban drug gangs as a threat to national security.

precisely, —that level in any given text where the principle of meaning itself seems most in doubt. Such an approach lays less stress on the primacy of structure and system in language (‘langue’), and more upon the *position* of the speaking subject in discourse (‘parole’). It is concerned with the *process* of meaning-construction rather than with the final product....⁵⁴

This fluidity of meaning allows for broader and deeper understandings of RIP shirts and the subjects who utilize and display them, particularly regarding the potentials for “oppositional readings.”⁵⁵ Hebdige articulates a range of ways through which punk takes up violence as one of its central organizing ideas. Just as we see with RIP shirts, outsiders often read punk as confrontational and a direct provocation of violence.⁵⁶ Accepting the punk’s cut-ups as a continuation of the self and an external manifestation of the experience of poverty and violence for the postwar working class, then RIP shirts are a material articulation of the experience of poverty and violence for those marked as enemies of the state under the war on drugs. In unpacking punk style as “confrontational dressing,” Hebdige notes that it is “directly offensive” in its irreverence and use of profanity and “threatening” in its anti-state slogans and emulation of terrorist and guerrilla outfits.⁵⁷ Beyond these phatic expressions of violence, he draws from the anthropological concept of bricolage and surrealist uses of collage to articulate punk’s principal

⁵⁴ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 117-118.

⁵⁵ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 102.

⁵⁶ Using one’s body to communicate meaning and enact resistance is a useful example of McLuhan’s theory of media as an “extension of man.” Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

⁵⁷ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 106.

quality as “the violence of its cut ups,” which relies on the appropriation, rearrangement, and juxtaposition of established cultural symbols to dissect, disrupt, and construct values.⁵⁸

Hebdige also points to the specific value for subcultures in appropriating military and state symbols for use within its own messaging. He offers a nuanced read of punk’s use of the swastika which attends both to its shock value and dense political content as a symbol that, based on context, can function as a gesture towards Berlin, Nazis, and fascism, while also having the potential to work as an anti-racist symbol.⁵⁹ Hebdige also draws on reggae and Rasta cultures to demonstrate the rhetorical value of appropriating the marijuana leaf and camouflage as symbols of resistance that transform blackness into “a positive sign, a loaded essence, a weapon at once deadly and divinely licensed.”⁶⁰ This is useful for understanding that “violent style” is often deployed as an indictment, rather than an endorsement of violence. Similarly, military language and symbols are a common component of RIP shirts, seen in the slogans such as one appearing in Annie Linksey’s report which reads, “Another Dead Soldier.”⁶¹

It also should be noted that violent, militaristic images and words (guns, dog tags, thuggish posturing) are coupled with religious icons and imagery (crosses, praying hands, angel wings) in a manner which addresses the conflicts between morality and immorality which is inherent in the issues and controversies related to state sponsored military and police violence.

This is a potent example of what Phil Cohen articulates as, “the latent function of subculture to

⁵⁸ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 106.

⁵⁹ He stretches his read further to account for the broader punk filter that presents everything as essentially vapid and meaningless. Again, the extended analysis works for the context of punk, but the end point where all meaning disintegrates does not port over into the non-ironic use of symbols in RIP style. 107.

⁶⁰ Hebdige, *Subculture*, 37.

⁶¹ Linskey, “Clothed in Grief.”

express and resolve, albeit magically, the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture.”⁶²

While the wearers see these shirts as praising the victim, police and other outsiders see these as objects of blame, implicating the victim and the wearer in violence and the drug trade.⁶³

Reverend Willie Ray, a fixture of anti-violence initiatives and vigils in Baltimore says of the shirts, “We may see them as thugs or a menace to society, but that's not how (his friends) see them. A lot of them are just kids, they are just in for it for the wrong lifestyle or they are in it for survival.”⁶⁴ The tensions at work in this paradoxical display have great impact on active reception of RIP shirts in terms of the notions of simultaneous praise and blame not only pulls back the curtain on the relationship between state-sponsored violence the violence of the drug trade, offering specific evidence of symbolic actions which function as a retaliatory response to the War on Drugs, but also illuminates the powerful subversive potentials for subcultures which appropriate the language and symbols of oppression.⁶⁵

⁶² Albert Kircidel Cohen, *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1955).

⁶³ Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to evaluate broader fashion trends for those who wear RIP shirts, it is worth mentioning that there are a number of ways we can look to modes of dress associated with the underground drug trade for understanding the way subcultural fashion can communicate or enact resistance. For example, the commonly seen oversized T-shirts are either worn to conceal weapons as they are to gesture towards the wearer’s potential for holding a weapon. In the same vein, low-hanging pants worn without belts and shoes worn without laces stem from prison wear, where belts and laces are forbidden. Future work should consider what it is for these wearers to identify themselves as potential shooters or prisoners through their mode of dress. In a later chapter, I discuss the way clothing is used to avoid the recently developed facial recognition technologies used by police. So, while the dominant read of these choices (like punk) may mark them as “offensive,” Hebdige offers a framework that facilitates an oppositional read which repositions these trends as “defensive.”

⁶⁴ Linskey, “Clothed in Grief.”

⁶⁵ Laurent Pernot, *Epideictic Rhetoric: Questioning the Stakes of Ancient Praise* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015).

4.7 STRUGGLE AND BLACK MASCULINE IDENTITY

In order to understand the rhetorical value of the RIP T-shirt for understanding the communities in which they operate, it is important to situate them within the framework of historically problematic representation for black bodies, particularly those of young, black, urban men.

Ronald L. Jackson's *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media* articulates some of the most essential and problematic stakes at play in the mediated representations of Black bodies. The overarching argument of the text insists that mass-mediated representations of Black bodies not only emphasize difference over sameness in relation to non-Black bodies, but that these representations are overwhelmingly inscribed with meanings which mark them as "criminal, angry, and incapacitated."⁶⁶ Jackson works through a history of representation of Black bodies in the United States, reaching back to slave bodies and guiding us through contemporary pop cultural depictions in music, television, and film.

Jackson's "Black Masculine Identity Theory" posits that *struggle* is at the nexus of Black masculine identity. His theory is founded on four essential components: recognition, independence, achievement, and community. Drawing from Charles Taylor's "politics of recognition," Jackson posits that *recognition*—or the acknowledgement by others of one's masculine behaviors is the foundation of Black masculine identity.⁶⁷ He writes of *independence* as the second fundamental component-- and while this element is often misconstrued as inherently directed towards or located in deviancy or control, that independence is forged

⁶⁶ Ronald Jackson, *Scripting the Black Masculine Body: Identity, Discourse, and Racial Politics in Popular Media* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.)

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

through self-development, self-sufficiency, and ultimately found in a balance between “autonomy and dependence.” The third component, *achievement*, may also carry with it negative connotations of greed and a fixation on material acquisition. However, he makes clear that achievement of goals can also include those which are purely spiritual. Moreover, he insists that *achievement* here is often linked to the collective and fixed on the well-being of the community. *Community* is the fourth component of Jackson’s theory. He writes about how community (family, neighborhood, and any number of evolving sets of relationships) “affirms and contractualizes” Black masculinity in and through its own set of reactions, judgments, and behaviors.⁶⁸

4.8 VISIBILITY, VERNACULAR, POWER, AND PEOPLE’S ART

It is useful here to consider the RIP shirt as a product of a vernacular culture for which, as established earlier, visibility is deeply connected to struggle. To that end, I look to those involved in the practice of RIP T-shirts as part of a subculture which appropriates and transforms the customs and technologies of the parent culture in order to find new ways of expressing and enacting resistance. This section offers context for these shirts in terms by considering what

⁶⁸ See also Ronald L. Jackson II and Mark C. Hopson, eds., *Masculinity in the Black Imagination: Politics of Communicating Race and Manhood* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2011); Mark Anthony Neal, *Looking for Leroy: Illegible Black Masculinities* (New York: NYU Press, 2013); Miles White, *From Jim Crow to Jay-Z: Race, Rap, and the Performance of Masculinity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Anthony J. Lemelle, Jr., *Black Masculinity and Sexual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

visibility politics offers for our understanding of the role of power in vernacular culture and people's art.

Dan Brouwer's notion of *visibility politics* is particularly useful in unpacking the ways in which representation impacts reality for black, urban bodies. Drawing on the work of Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked*, he talks about visibility politics as, "a theory and practice which assume that 'being seen' and 'being heard' are beneficial and often crucial for individuals or a group to gain greater social, political, cultural or economic legitimacy, power, authority, or access to resources."⁶⁹ The young, black, inner-city utilization of the body to argue, persuade, or memorialize is meaningful in relation to this definition. Again, while body memorial is certainly not limited to those who wear RIP T-shirts, the relative ubiquity of this practice among the populations I look at here speaks to their alienation from broader cultures and the rationale behind the choices it makes in its discursive practices. The choice to use one's *body* to memorialize in this way points to the alternative, traditional means of memorial to which this group does not have social, political, or economic access: traditional memorial, obituaries, and gravesites.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Dan Brouwer, "The Precarious Visibility Politics of Self-stigmatization: The Case of HIV/AIDS Tattoos," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1998): 114-36, 115; Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 2003); Gerard A. Hauser, "Incongruous Bodies: Arguments for Personal Sufficiency and Public Insufficiency," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 1-8; Joel Penney "Eminently Visible: The Role of T-Shirts in Gay and Lesbian Public Advocacy and Community Building," *Popular Communication* 11, no. 4 (October 2013): 289-302; Judith Butler, "Longing for Recognition," *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 1(3): 271-90; Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁷⁰ Beyond the economic barriers mentioned in the introduction, there are a number of issues related to stigma, praise, and blame at play here which may limit access to some more traditional, broader epideictic memorial (like those we see for victims of terrorism or state-sponsored violence). Erika Doss has a relevant unpacking of this idea of "the authoritative

The controversy surrounding these shirts illuminates the problematic nature of communicating messages about a minority culture when these messages are in direct conflict with the values, beliefs, and practices of dominant groups. As outsiders at times identify these shirts as a glorification of a person chronically involved in criminal acts, they are often dismissed or devalued. This speaks to the struggle between official and vernacular culture and how those discourses present themselves in public spaces. In this case, the shirts draw attention to the divide between mass-mediated representations of victims as criminal and self-representation of the victim as victim. The concept of vernacular culture as addressed by Atwater and Herndon is useful for thinking about the poor, inner city cultures and communities.⁷¹ The authors discuss the differences, or even discrepancies, of official culture and vernacular culture as such,

Vernacular culture is situated locally; it is given material and symbolic expression by the individual and community. Vernacular culture seeks its end in change and is much more ambivalent about the meaning of its past. Vernacular culture speaks of rights, the secular, the here and now.⁷²

religious, economic and political cultures” that are responsible for making the distinction between “good death” and “bad death” in relation to her work with public, visual memorial. Erika Doss, “Death, Art and Memory in the Public Sphere: The Visual and Material Culture of Grief in Contemporary America,” *Mortality* 7, no. 1 (2002) 63-82.

⁷¹ Deborah F. Atwater and Sandra L. Herndon, “The Use of Public Space as Cultural Communicator: How Museums Reconstruct and Reconnect Cultural Memory,” in *Understanding African American Rhetoric: Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations*, ed. Ronald L. Jackson and Elaine B. Richardson (New York: Routledge 2003), 70.

⁷² Atwater and Herndon, “The Use of Public Space,” 70.

This is useful for thinking about RIP T-shirts as intimate communicative artifacts that are imbued with private meanings, but which circulate in public and serve community-based functions. They are created to fill the changing social needs of the community and they speak to the very present situation of the city, as a place where lives are plagued with violence and death.

These artifacts can also be examined within the broader tradition of urban murals as people's art. Both the RIP T-shirt and the mural are used to memorialize or to document some public memory, they employ a language of culturally-recognizable and historically-based symbols, utilize a combination of image and text to form messages, constitute distinct and novel art forms, are part of a strategy for living within particular and oppressive social environments, and constitute markers of space.

In her study of Chicano murals, Margaret LaWare reveals how visual artifacts can work as powerful arguments. She proposes that certain elements of visual propositions (such as its rich language of symbols and specific linkages to space) are particularly well-suited to communicate to group members who share in a language of symbols and have at stake some sense of space and belonging.⁷³ The coding practices in both murals and the RIP T-shirt serve a dual purpose: they communicate to a community in a shared language who has at its disposal a cultural history which gives them access to symbolic meanings and it also marks that language as distinct from that of dominant culture.⁷⁴

⁷³ Margaret R. LaWare, "Encountering Visions of Aztlan: Arguments for Ethnic Pride, Community Activism and Cultural Revitalization in Chicano Murals," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 34, no. 3 (Winter 1998): 140.

⁷⁴ See Caitlin Frances Bruce's work on muralism, identity, and culture ["Texturing Space, Emplacing Gender: Claudia Mendez's 'Constructing History, Constructing Identities,'" *Women's Studies in Communication* 39, no. 2 (2016): 147-152; idem, "Tour 13: From Precarity to Ephemerality," *GeoHumanities* 2, no. 2 (2016): 432-452; idem, "Modalities of Publicity: Leon's City of Murals Project," in *Inopinatum, The unexpected impertinence of Urban Creativity*, ed,

This idea of setting one's culture apart from the mainstream in this way has a specific strategic function. As LaWare states, "In order for a minority community to argue that its culture has distinct properties that sets it apart from the dominant culture, it needs to show those distinctions within cultural artifacts, including visual artifacts."⁷⁵ The creation of these shirts and murals enriches the culture from within: contributing to its visual legacy, broadening its means of intracommunity communication, preserving its language of symbols, and providing some unique form of expression that they can claim as their own. These artifacts also have the potential to inform dominant culture or outside communities about beliefs, practices, and values specific to these populations which might help to illuminate some important or distinct element of that culture that is otherwise difficult for outsiders to decipher or to engage with.

Visual artifacts assign significance to cultures, they can address and assuage cultural differences and tensions, and can be used as a means of confronting and resisting the silencing functions of dominant culture. LaWare claims, "People's art provides strategies for living and coping within a social environment that subjects minority communities to racism and social injustices."⁷⁶ These artifacts serve as declarations of worth: both the T-shirts and murals are filling in a gap, a void in recognition from dominant culture that some injustice has been served to this community. They draw attention to something significant ignored by the mainstream: be it the loss of an individual life, or the historic struggle and discrimination of an entire ethnic or racial group.

Luca Borriello, Christian Ruggiero (Salerno, Italy: ArtiGraficheBoccia, 2013): 45-59; idem, "Public Surfaces Beyond the Great Wall: Communication and Graffiti Culture in China," *Invisible Culture, University of Rochester Electronic Journal*, Issue 15 (Fall, 2010.): 102-124.]

⁷⁵ LaWare, "Encountering Visions of Aztlan," 140.

⁷⁶ LaWare, "Encountering Visions of Aztlan," 143.

4.9 THE CAPTURE: POWER, FRAMING, AND CONFIRMING

To further explore the rhetorical dimensions of the RIP T-shirt, I look to one of its key visual components: the photograph. A wide range of established theories and practices can be applied to the study of a photograph. In the same manner in which I mine from other fields for this chapter, I highlight those which contribute most generously to a broader understanding of how RIP T-shirts function in terms of power and struggle for the people who use them. Keeping in mind the range of stakes at play for image-takers, subjects, and the broader communities in which images are displayed, I unpack what photographs contribute to meaning-making for the RIP T-shirt in terms of its potentials to *frame truth*, *give power*, and *confirm experience*.

In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag explores the photograph as a piece of evidence which proves the, “incontrovertible truth that something happened.” She writes, “The picture may distort; but there is always a presumption that something exists, or did exist which is like what’s in the picture.”⁷⁷ Sontag’s claims point to an important consideration for the RIP T-shirts and the images they employ, one of a deliberately *framed* shot. This concept is further drawn out by A.D. Coleman in his work on visual literacy and seeing,

Photographs do not “show how things look,” since there is no one way that anything looks. *What a photograph tells us is how a particular thing could be seen, or could be*

⁷⁷ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2001), 5.

made to look – at a specific moment, in a specific context, by a specific photographer employing specific tools.⁷⁸

As irrefutable a thing as a photograph may appear to be, and as densely informative it may be, we must keep in mind that the image is deliberate and selective. In a world where images are getting sharper, bigger, easier to manipulate, and cheaper to make and reproduce, it is all the more important to be mindful of the duality of the photograph as something that simultaneously reveals and conceals the material world. Sontag's framing reminds us that while each RIP T-shirt makes reference to a real, and singular person—and bears with it other possible facticities about the person it represents, we must not mistake these artifacts and images as “telling the full story,” as standing-in for the person they represent, or as a piece of evidence that can be applied to all victims of murder in Baltimore. Such broad strokes would contribute to the same issues of representation that this project looks to mitigate.

Foucault's metaphor of capture is also particularly germane to this discussion of *framing* and *power* in regards to arresting or confining the referent. The bodies pictured on these shirts are already overly simplified and dehumanized by media in specific representations of their particular lives as reported in the news of their death, but also through dominant and mass mediated representations of young, urban blackness. Therefore, the capture here is crucial to the ways in which the deceased is remembered either as a reiteration or disruption of the hegemonic concept of this population. He is displayed as a “soldier,” a father, a friend, something else, or something more.

⁷⁸ A.D. Coleman, *Depth of Field: Essays on Photography, Mass Media, and Lens Culture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 57.

Once the image is placed on the shirt and then onto the body that displays it, it then becomes a tool of power to place the victim back in the space he once inhabited, the streets of the city. Sontag explicates this relationship between power and space as she talks about photography as it both, “helps people take possession of a space in which they are insecure” and, “become(s) part of the general furniture of the environment—touchstones and confirmation of that reductive approach to reality which is considered realistic.”⁷⁹ The wearer is claiming the space for himself and for the victim, which can render his position less vulnerable.

Another means through which one might understand the function of the photographic images which make up the RIP T-shirt is to talk about photographs as “a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power.”⁸⁰ Here, Sontag gets at some of the broader functions of photography for the image-taker. She distinguishes the power in this act as belonging not to he who is remembered, but to he or she who is remembering. She suggests that the very act of image-taking is empowering because it is an action one takes to own, document, subvert, appropriate, or testify.

In relation to these claims and ideas concerning the “defense against anxiety,” one wonders, as the drug trade culture is saturated with these T-shirts and images, if there is not at least at times, an awareness of the act of photographing as a moment of pre-memorial, as a preparation for obituary, and as some way of combating the omnipresence of death and violence (and subsequent anxiety) in this community--- whether those images are mundane impromptu snapshots or professional commissions for formal events such as wedding and proms, if they are self-portraiture or taken by family and friends. Even if this awareness of mortality and eternity is

⁷⁹ Sontag, *On Photography*, 21.

⁸⁰ Sontag, *On Photography*, 8.

not totally in place at the time the image is taken, it is clearly in play when the image is displayed on the shirt.⁸¹

Though, as Sontag reminds us, the image is not to be considered as a replication of the deceased but as an indication of something which is like the deceased—these images are, in the simplest terms, evidence.⁸² They are *confirmation* that someone existed.⁸³ As they operate as both a proclamation of life and a declaration of death, they express “he was here,” “he is gone,” and “he will be remembered.”⁸⁴ Considering the history of concealment and erasure of black

⁸¹ For sources on the African American tradition of photographic portraiture, see Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present* (New York & London: WW Norton, 2000); Maurice O. Wallace, Shawn Michelle Smith, ed., *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Leigh Raiford, “Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle,” *African American Review* 45, no. 3 (2012): 479-481; Jasmine Nichole Cobb, “Picture Freedom: Remaking Black Visuality in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of American History* 103, no. 3 (2016): 752-753.

⁸² Bruce Gronbeck binds *believing* to *seeing* by drawing out the etymology link between *knowledge*, *witness*, and *sight* (in Greek, *theoria theoros* and *thea*) and highlighting the Latin root of *evidence* as *e-videre* (“out of or from seeing”). [“Visual Rhetorical Studies: Traces Through Time and Space” in *Visual Rhetoric* ed. Olson, et al., xxii].

⁸³ These ideas also play out in discussions of evidentiary photographs of lynching and torture. Dora Apel, “Torture Culture: Lynching Photographs and the Images of Abu Ghraib,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (2005): 88-100; James Allen, Hilton Als, John Lewis, and Leon F. Litwack. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. (Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000.); Leigh Raiford, “Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory,” *History and Theory* 48, no. 4 (2009): 112-129; Julie Gerk Hernandez, “The Tortured Body, the Photograph, and the U.S. War on Terror” *Comparative Literature and Culture* 9.1 (2007): <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=clweb>; Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Judith Butler, “Torture and the Ethics of Photography,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25, no. 6 (2007): 951-966.

⁸⁴ Literature around the Argentinian mothers’ movement, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, also known as Mothers of the Disappeared provides a wealth of insights into rhetorical strategies of resisting erasure and disappearance. I return to Mothers of the Plaza later in this chapter in regard to haunting and space-claiming. Alicia Partnoy, “Textual Strategies to Resist Disappearance and The Mothers of Plaza De Mayo,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2007): <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=clweb>; Victoria Ana

bodies, these testimonial and evidentiary functions of RIP shirts heighten their political consequence.⁸⁵

In addition to the power photographs give to both photographer and subject, Sontag also discusses the potential influence they might have on audiences and communities. She explains that images themselves, “cannot create a moral position, but they can reinforce one—and can help build a nascent one.”⁸⁶ This renders RIP shirts (and their images) to be more than just *products* of culture (with all the meaning, values, and beliefs that culture ascribes to them), but as *reinforcements* of culture, values, and beliefs. In the context of a contested culture like one, that constitutive function means RIP T-shirts operate both as a powerful affirmation for some and potent threat to others. I will return to these tensions later in the chapter.

4.10 VIEWING AND MEANINGS FOR THE WEARER AND THE PASSERBY

These shirts are seen by various audiences and through a range of viewing processes. For a passerby, the image may be fixed or fleeting. They may encounter it as a solitary iteration or repeated on numerous bodies within in the same space. It can be seen up close or at a distance,

Goddard, “Demonstrating Resistance: Politics and Participation in the Marches of the Mothers of Plaza De Mayo,” *Focaal* 50 (2007): 81-101; Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997);

⁸⁵ David G. Embrick, “Two Nations, Revisited: The Lynching of Black and Brown Bodies, Police Brutality, and Racial Control in ‘Post-Racial’ Amerikkka,” *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 6 (2015): 835-43; Sarah J. Jackson and Brooke Foucault Welles, “Hijacking# Mynypd: Social Media Dissent and Networked Counterpublics,” *Journal of Communication* 65, no.6 (2015): 932-52.

⁸⁶ Sontag, *On Photography*, 17.

unobstructed, or obscured. Each of these modes of viewing impacts the transmission of meanings.⁸⁷

As Paul Frosh explains, “there is a connection between photographic resemblance and the mode and context of viewing, specifically the duration, mobility and concentration of the look, as well as the method of displaying the photographs.”⁸⁸ Frosh draws our attention to the various iterations of “passers by” and the impact of mobility on the gaze. While these shirts are often displayed on bodies in motion, the durability of the gaze is impacted situationally: those passing the wearer on the street, those fixed in conversation with the wearer, those locked into stationary intimacies, like waiting at a bus station or sitting across from someone on a train.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ This section on modes of viewing is grounded in notions of the gaze from Lacan and Foucault. For understanding the processes at play for wearers and passersby examining these shirts, I look to Lacan’s *gaze* as that which determines human subject/object identification within the scopic field. In thinking about how the state and other critical, outside viewers encounter these shirts, I draw on Foucault’s work on surveillance the disciplinary functions of the panoptic gaze. Jacques Lacan, “The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze (1964),” *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books 1979).

⁸⁸ Paul Frosh, “Filling the Sight for Force: ‘Smoke.’ Photography, and the Rhetoric of Immobilization,” *Textual Practice* 12, no. 2 (1998): 323.

⁸⁹ The practice of wearing photographic portraits traces back to the earliest commercial photographic technologies. Geoffrey Batchen writes about early photographic jewelry in his discussion of pins, rings, brooches, bracelets, and pendants inset with daguerreotype portraits [*Forget Me Not: Photography and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006) 33-34, 69]; and in his detailed unpacking of the viscosity and materiality of lockets, Batchen points to the popularity of jewelry that incorporated calotypes, ambrotypes, tintypes, and albumen prints [“Ere the Substance Fade: Photography and Hair Jewelry,” in *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* ed. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London: Routledge, 2004) 32-46]; David Hackett Fischer notes that many audience members present for Lincoln’s second inaugural address wore a small portrait of the president that hung from a ribbon around the neck [*Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas* (Oxford University Press, 2004) 348]. Prior to the invention of photography, painted portraits were embedded into wearable frames in eighteenth century mourning jewelry. [Christiane Holm, “Sentimental Cuts: Eighteenth-Century Mourning Jewelry with Hair,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 139-143; Robin Jaffee Frank, *Love and Loss: American Portrait and Mourning Miniatures* (Yale University Press, 2000); Deborah Lutz, “The Dead Still Among Us:

It is also important here to differentiate between how these objects are perceived at varying points of distance. At long distance, viewers might not get that it is a memorial T-shirt. Those who recognize the genre would probably realize that such a T-shirt is being worn at mid distance, but only in short distance would the specifics of the image come into play. The insider community member sees these images only in fleeting glances, perhaps from mid distance, for instance where the viewer can make out the basic outline and composition of the shirt, enough to glean that it is an RIP T-shirt, but is unable to make out enough detail to see if they recognize the image of the dead on the shirt, or read any specific text. Therefore, it may be recognized as an RIP T-shirt, particularly to those who are aware of the culture, but simply as that—as an anonymous body which can be assumed to have been murdered in Baltimore’s drug trade.

It is also important to consider the impact of these shirts on passersby and wearers when they are confronted with multiple instances of the same shirt, sometimes at once on multiple bodies within the same space. These numbers make it likely that viewers will see multiple RIP T-shirts memorializing different individuals. This melancholic repetition brings home for the viewer the pervasive extent of the impact of homicide on this particular community.

In terms of visual composition, the shirts are usually black or white and typically include at least one photo of the victim, sometimes multiple images. Common symbols included in the design of the shirts include stock and customized images of local geographic landmarks, praying hands, crosses, religious figures, guns, marijuana leaves. In addition to the photographs and symbols, these shirts include the name, or nickname of the victim, and at times the death date, perhaps a birthdate, and a range of slogans including, “Rest in Peace,” “Gone, but not

Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry, and Death Culture,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 39, no. 1 (2011): 127-142].

Forgotten,” “Only the Good Die Young,” “Thuggin’ Eternally,” “The Wrong Man Died,” and, “Another Dead Soldier.”⁹⁰

It is important to note how this pool of language symbols are employed to impart power onto their subjects. In some cases, the image presented is a perpetuation of the popular representation of the young, urban, black male as a violent and dangerous street thug, brandishing a weapon or covered in colors, signs, and symbols of drug crew affiliation.

The first sample shirt which memorializes Lil Tommy, is the one that sold “in the hundreds.” In the bottom two images on the shirt, Lil Tommy is pictured as cold, serious, and threatening. Looking again particularly to the bottom right image, the street clothes (including the memorial dog tags) work in connection with his aggressive expression and posturing to present as either stoic or threatening. In another RIP shirt, the victim again is shown staring coldly into the camera “larger than life,” peering over the cityscape: a widely recognizable image of the city’s skyline layered over another oversized image of a corner street sign which reads, “Lexington Terrace.” Beyond simply showing the victim as dangerous or thuggish, this image also aligns him with a particular territory-based drug crew situated amidst one of Baltimore’s most notoriously treacherous housing projects.⁹¹

An alternative and differently functioning image choice to that of the culturally dominant representation of these victims, is one that deliberately *disrupts* the hegemonic and popular mediated view of this population—an entirely different sort of power play— and focuses on the

⁹⁰ The examples I offer here are composited from the samples I viewed and collected in Baltimore, as well as descriptions that came from the newspaper accounts I cite throughout this section.

⁹¹ In New Orleans, RIP shirts sometimes function to mark and claim territory by include images of dice that display the corresponding number to the ward the victim was from. Johnson, “T-Shirts Honor Casualties.”

victim's social position not as a "soldier" but as a father, son, or person of faith. An example of this counter discourse is evident in the shirt which was sold between 50 and 80 times. Herein, the victim is portrayed in a hyperelevated position, as both royal and angelic as the superimposed crown and angel wings are accompanied by the captions "Prince Amongst Men" and "King in Heaven." In the composition, the victim is also flanked by holy, Christian figures. The Virgin Mary is eye level with the young man, head bowed towards him in prayer. At his waist are mirrored images of Jesus Christ crouching, hands clenched in prayer, and situated in an almost subservient position in relation to the victim. Elements of this type of imagery are also present in the form of angel wings in the top two images in Lil Tommy's memorial.

To combat this idea of the two-dimensional representation of the subject, many of these shirts utilize multiple images of the same person to demonstrate the depth of his character or the diverse spectrum of roles he played in life: as a gangster, as a father, as a religious person, as a friend, or as a son. These shirts are a response to standard mediated depictions of this victim population and they have the power to either replicate or dispute this dominant discourse.

Some of the most interesting T-shirts are the ones like Lil Tommy's, which employ both dominant and counter narratives, layering violent wording and imagery with either religious or playful emblems, icons, and text. This multi-dimensionalizing seems to work against this idea of capture, as the producer and wearer attempt to present the dead as a complex figure that lives beyond a flattened image of him. The shirt memorializing Lil Tommy employs this technique to complicate the representation of the victim, as the top two images interact with the bottom two. In this representation, the juxtaposition of religious imagery with violent imagery is not ironic, but an iteration of a broader world which routinely provides a space for the violent among the holy. Although examples such as these, which utilize multiple images of the same victim,

provide a broader representation of the dead, these images are still mere slices of time and person. Consequently, they call only for superficial presumptions about the veracity of their content and the totality of their representation.

For the wearer, the shirt may be given to them by another mourner, or can be seen for the first time at the site of purchase, on a page in an album inclusive of a merchant's other RIP images. But, these shirts are there to examine over time. For the wearer, these shirts also obviously carry dense personal meaning. According to Elijah Anderson, "When you have a friend or a loved one who is cut down, after something like this happens sometimes people will take sides." He claims that wearing the shirt communicates, "I'm standing up for this person. I respect this person. I miss this person. You can put me down on his side."⁹² The wearer often has unique knowledge of the subject which the passerby and the researcher are not privy to; therefore, he will be more intimately acquainted with the masked contextual meanings and messages. For instance, if an image features the dead in formal attire the wearer (having known the dead) may also know that the image took place at his daughter's christening or at a high school graduation. If he is pictured standing in front of a row house on a street corner, it could represent the corner he ran as a drug dealer or the home of the grandmother he cared for. In these ways, the images have hidden meanings to which only the wearer and his immediate community has access. The value of the image for these viewers, and the extent of what is seen, is reliant not on the content and design of the T-shirt itself, but in reference to the stock of memories they hold concerning the deceased.

⁹² Linskey, "Clothed in Grief."

4.11 THE BODY AS DISPLAY

When we encounter someone wearing an RIP T-shirt, our attention may be drawn to the image of the victim, but the wearer remains within our scope of vision. Just as we would take into account a gallery wall or billboard as informing the presentation of an image, the body is also staging an image, while at the same time, the body of display absorbs message and meaning from the shirts they display. Therefore, it is important for an analysis of RIP shirts to take this co-effecting relationship into account and consider, not just what these shirts bring to the wearer, but what the body contributes to the image.

Gerard Hauser's work on the body of political prisoners offers insight into the body as a visual, political tool.⁹³ In the case of a hunger striker, choice of using the body as a *site of* and *object for* display is understood to be born not just of ingenuity, but of necessity and poverty of means. The prisoner uses his body because that is all he has. However, even if the use of the body is a result of a paucity of resources, it still remains a powerful rhetorical strategy. Likewise, RIP T-shirts, while inexpensive (depending on the complexity of the design, quality of the shirt, and mode of production they can cost as little as \$10 to \$20) and disposable, when placed on the body become powerful means of personalizing an argument, image, or cause. It quite literally puts a face to an abstract claim and can be empowering for one who has access to little beyond his own body.

Choosing one's body as the site of memorial materializes the intimacy of the connection

between the body of the victim and the body of the survivor.⁹⁴ As the wearer makes known the

⁹³ Hauser, "Incongruous Bodies," 1.

⁹⁴ Looking at the popularity of the RIP T-shirt in relation to other forms of body memorial like tattoos can also reveal some important information about this population and speak to the issues of economy, visibility, and practicality that make these shirts necessary. While tattoos are still a

loss of the dead, he acknowledges that he risks the same fate, a self-expectation which is all too frequently realized. Such self-awareness is evident in the Linskey piece on these shirts from the *Baltimore Sun*, which quotes a young man as saying of the shirts, “We live for our brothers. If they die, this is what we do. ... God forbid if something like that happened to me, I’d want them to do the same.”⁹⁵ This cyclical system is all too clearly illustrated in certain examples of these shirts which utilize photos that feature the victim himself wearing another’s RIP T-shirt. An example of this can be seen in Lil Tommy’s shirt, wherein the bottom right image of the young victim includes what is easily presumed to be a RIP memorial dog tag. In this representation, it is evident that the victim engaged in this memorial process before he himself was immortalized through a RIP T-shirt.⁹⁶ This effect is infinitely stackable, as seen from one of the images Linda

popular mode of body memorial in this community and within broader cultures as well, there is an initial cost and commitment that supersedes that of the other options. The T-shirt also provides greater visibility than the alternatives—its images are larger, brighter, and more vivid than the others and also (because of their size) can utilize more complex renderings and compilations of images, words, and iconic emblems. Practically speaking, the temporality of the T-shirt over the tattoo should not necessarily be considered as a lesser connection to the dead, or as any indication of a “temporary” nature of their grief, particularly in light of the practice of reprinting death anniversaries and other celebrations. Also—just as Linda Thorne invoked the RIP shirt as a response to what she saw as the overwhelming visual clutter of RIP graffiti in her neighborhood—there is a horrific pragmatism at play when wearers must take into consideration that they can (and often do) rotate considerably more RIP shirts into their personal use than they can don tattoos.

⁹⁵ Linskey, “Clothed in Grief.” Beyond these ritualistic uses of RIP shirts as a traditional display of support for others expressing the same grief, these shirts are used to signal allegiance and solidarity in other tactical ways. For example, RIP shirts are sometimes displayed in courtrooms, by those who are there to support the victim’s family. Similarly, groups will show up in otherwise color-coded shirts to display solidarity with the accused. Michael Dumas, “Murder in Mobile: Memorial T-Shirts and Other Products Off Comfort to Some Families Racked by Tragedy,” *Al.com*, January 26, 2015,

http://www.al.com/news/mobile/index.ssf/2015/01/murder_in_mobile_memorial_t-sh.html

⁹⁶ In this chapter, I maintain the anonymity of the victims and refer to them only as they are named on the T-shirt. This is both to protect the privacy of the subjects and their families as well as to maintain the focus, in this slice of the dissertation, on the T-shirts as standalone artifacts.

Thorne holds in her collection, which pictures six young black men, all known to one another whom she describes as, “wearing blue outfits” who died in separate incidents. She adds, “In the picture, one of the men is wearing a RIP T-shirt for someone else.”⁹⁷ This is a somber reminder of the temporality and potential interchangeability of the victim and survivor in these circumstances.⁹⁸

In its function as a site of display, the body also contributes significantly to the constitutive potentials of RIP T-shirts—for forging individual as well as collective identities. The notion of self-branding is a useful frame for exploring these constitutive dimensions. The act of self-branding is so commonplace in American culture that few of us even recognize its pervasiveness until we are asked to interrogate the branded logos and symbols we display every day. In her work on the branded personae, Alison Hearn positions self-branding as pervasive in the literature of corporate marketing, central to self-obsessed contemporary social media practices, and ubiquitous in the neoliberal marketplace.⁹⁹ The inescapable universality of self-branding is important to keep in mind as part of the broader arguments here that position RIP shirts not as cultural anomalies, but as one of many material iterations of late-stage capitalism. In that light, these shirts function as imitations of a pro-corporate parent culture. At the same time, in rejecting the corporate advertisement for personal remembrance can be seen as a resistant, nonconforming subversion.

⁹⁷ Linskey, “Clothed in Grief.”

⁹⁸ Cheryl Jorgensen-Earp’s work on onsite and chosen memorials is also relevant to issues of space and place here, as these shirts can be seen as existing in several layers of space and place, some chosen and some onsite. Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp and Lori A. Lanzilotti, “Public Memory and Private Grief: The Construction of Shrines at the Sites of Public Tragedy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 150-70.

⁹⁹ Alison Hearn, “‘Meat, Mask, Burden’: Probing the Contours of the Branded ‘Self,’” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8, no. 197 (2008).

The constitutive process at play with these shirts is not wholly different from that of any other T-shirt-based self-branding. However, I argue that there is something qualitatively different that distinguishes the connections made among wearers of RIP T-shirts from those that are forged through the corporate allegiance and affiliative functions that connect the wearers of the same Gap, Google, or Hollister T-shirt.¹⁰⁰ The personal nature of these shirts as memorial artifacts, and the human situation that call them into purpose, opens access to intimacies that lend themselves to authentic bonds based on authentic (and often pre-existing) social networks, arguably beyond the more mediated bonds formed by people wearing the same Superman or Che Guevara shirt.¹⁰¹ In that same vein, the localized distribution of these objects affords greater possibility that multiple copies of the same shirts will be worn by those who are a part of preexisting local networks, making it all the more likely that these shirts function to reaffirm preexisting social bonds. Even those who imbue meaning into Superman and Guevara as cultural symbols, and those who feel kinship when they spot someone wearing the same breast cancer

¹⁰⁰ The fact that these memorial artifacts take their form as T-shirts lends itself to the ease of both reproduction and display, further amplifying their constitutive reach. As established earlier in the chapter, these shirts are not usually produced as singular, one-of-a-kind items. Multiple copies of the same shirt are made and displayed by numerous individuals throughout a community--identifying those who wear them as allied with the other wearers.

¹⁰¹ Michael Serazio, "The Elementary Forms of Sports Fandom A Durkheimian Exploration of Team Myths, Kinship, and Totemic Rituals," *Communication and Sport* 1, no. 4 (2013): 303-25; John Hughson and Marcus Free, "Paul Willis, Cultural Commodities, and Collective Sport Fandom," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 23, no. 1 (2006): 72; John L. Caughey, *Imaginary Social Worlds: A Cultural Approach* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); Joli Jenson, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 9-29; Herbert Smith, "Badges, Buttons, T-Shirts and Bumperstickers: The Semiotics of Some Recursive Systems," *Journal of Popular Culture* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1988): 141-149.

awareness shirt as theirs, or a fellow fan in an Orioles shirt, rely on largely (if not solely) mediated relationships rather than the ones shared by those who mourn the same dead.¹⁰²

Returning to Brouwer's notion of visibility politics, it is important to consider the role of self-stigmatization and surveillance at play in displaying these shirts. Brouwer underscores the positive potentials of "making oneself visible"¹⁰³ as an act of filling a void of information, or speaking to an instance of injustice ignored by the dominant culture. However, while he attends to the positive potentials of visibility as essential to claiming, forming and communicating identity, he cautions us about the possible negative consequences of implicating oneself in the argument. In his study of commemorative HIV tattoos, the self-stigmatization of marking oneself as diseased is coupled with a broader stigma of mortification through body modification. Further, while using one's body as a site of display can be a means of transcending one's own corporal position as a way of becoming something larger than one's own self, by the same turn, is the risk of dehumanization, where the individual behind the body or the man inside the flesh is vaporized and recognized only as an indicator of an argument, image, or cause. The same stakes are at play for RIP shirts. Further, while RIP shirts draw valuable attention to victims and survivors of fatal violence, and the conditions of struggle in which they live and die, wearing these shirts also marks the wearers as proximate to the illegal drug trade.

The potential for sustaining the damage of stigma intensifies when a single body or single image of a body becomes representative of a larger social body. As demonstrated in Harold and

¹⁰² Marilyn Peterson Armour, "Meaning Making for Survivors of Violent Death," in *Violent Death: Resilience and Intervention beyond the Crisis*, ed. Edward K Rynearson (New York: Routledge, 2006): 101-21; Tanya L. Sharpe, Sean Joe, and Katie C. Taylor, "Suicide and Homicide Bereavement among African Americans: Implications for Survivor Research and Practice," *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 66, no. 2 (2013): 153-72.

¹⁰³ Brouwer, "Precarious Visibility" 115.

DeLuca's work on Emmett Till, there is a risk that the body of display or the body pictured on an RIP shirt can be transformed from object to abject.¹⁰⁴ In these cases where bodies become inextricably linked to an argument or cause, they are more than mere markers of marred innocence. They materialize the immaterial. Where the former may inspire empathy and communion, the latter may threaten to further separate and ostracize.

4.12 PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SPACE

Throughout this dissertation, I detail how Baltimore's long history of racialized poverty and hypersegregation informs the contemporary situation of the city—where the distance between Baltimore's poorest neighborhood and its richest can be measured by twenty years. This not only underscores the reality that fatal violence occurs in great concentrations within select and highly contested spaces of the city, but that Bourdieu's notion of "social space" is just as much a part of this struggle.¹⁰⁵ RIP shirts are particularly useful for drawing out what Sullivan describes as the struggle for power in the narcoscape, as they operate within its kinetic and informational dimensions.¹⁰⁶ Though RIP shirts do not occupy a fixed physical space in the city, they have a

¹⁰⁴ Christine Harold and Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Behold the Corpse: Violent Images and the Case of Emmett Till," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2005): 263-86.

¹⁰⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 14-25.

¹⁰⁶ In the introduction to this dissertation, I take up John Sullivan's notion of narcoscape of "a physical and cultural construct where competing actors vie for power." Of relevance here is his claim that, "The battle has kinetic (violent acts) and informational (propaganda and information operations) dimensions. Both intersect in physical and virtual space (i.e., traditional and new media) where all sides seek to frame political, economic and cultural discourse about the value

steady and conspicuous visual presence in the communities most impacted by fatal violence. In that way, they can function like LaWare's murals, to delineate borders and act as "a symbolic space for reconstituting the local community."¹⁰⁷ This is of particular value to communities who have been alienated from other traditional spaces of mourning. As one RIP shirt wearer explains, "Funerals kept death in churches, and formal religious rituals... but these t-shirts are on our backs during our daily lives."¹⁰⁸

The space of the city is regularly implicated in the violence of the drug trade in Baltimore. Its active port and location on the I-95 make it a useful anchor for drug smuggling throughout the east coast. Long stretches of row houses, and networks of narrow alleyways contribute to the ease of movement for those evading pursuit from cop cars on foot or by bike. Most of the high-rise public housing has been torn down, in large part because it is nearly impossible to police and many low-rise public housing developments are designed around central courtyards, which are hidden from street view. High percentages of vacant homes afford ample space for stash houses and shooting galleries, while deserted and unkempt lots provide room and cover for dealing and using.¹⁰⁹

Because of the role of space in the activity of the drug trade, it is not unusual for RIP T-shirts to include images of specific housing projects, street corners, or other landmarks linking

and control of drugs" John P. Sullivan, "Criminal Insurgency: *Narcocultura*, Social Banditry, and Information Operations," *Small Wars Journal* 3, no. 4 (2012).

¹⁰⁷ LaWare, "Encountering Visions of Aztlan," 148.

¹⁰⁸ Donna Britt, "Rip Shirts Have Changed How People Mourn in South Louisiana," *CBS46 Atlanta*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.cbs46.com/story/25991707/rip-shirts-have-changed-how-people-mourn-in-south-louisiana>

¹⁰⁹ See Ralph Taylor, *Breaking Away from Broken Windows: Baltimore Neighborhoods and the Nationwide Fight Against Crime, Grime, Fear, and Decline* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2000).

the dead to his territory. So, when these shirts include an image of a specific location, they communicate the victim's allegiance to a contested space. Moreover, consider what Richard Morris offers in terms of gravesites as modes of communication, where he notes, "Each memorial is a sacred symbol given both to the deceased and the living."¹¹⁰ This duality functions in RIP shirts as wearers claim a connection to a territory by proxy through space claimed in the image of the victim displayed on the shirt. Even in cases where there is no overt space-claiming within the image and text of the shirt—in understanding that the wearer is allying himself with the dead, and consequentially allying himself to the territory the dead represents, bodies of display negotiating a space are claiming it as their own.

These spatial tensions can be unpacked in light of Foss and Domenici's work on the metaphor of *haunting* used in the protests of the Argentinian mothers of the disappeared, by calling on the "relationship of convertibility" of Burke's notion of *synecdoche* and its function to, "abbreviate a situation or context, and to sum up its essence."¹¹¹ When a survivor wears an RIP shirt bearing an image of his friend, he places that victims body back into the spaces he once

¹¹⁰ Richard Morris, "Death on Display," *Rhetorics of Display*, ed. Lawrence J. Prelli (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 204.

¹¹¹ Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Foss and Domenici, "Haunting Argentina," 237-258; Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo* (Wilmington, Del: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994); Alicia D. Amico and Alicia Sanguinetti, *Circles of Madness: Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo* (Fredonia, N.Y: White Pine Press, 1992); Matilde Mellibovsky, *Circle of Love Over Death: Testimonies of The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo* (Willimantic, Conn.: Curbstone Press, 1997); Emilia Bondrea and Maria Duda, "The Event and the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza De Mayo," *Journal of Research in Gender Studies* 4.1 (2014): 423-28; Karen A. Foss and Kathy L. Domenici, "Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in The Protests of The Mothers of The Plaza De Mayo," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87.3 (2001): 237-58; Margaret E. Burchianti, "Building Bridges of Memory: The Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo and the Cultural Politics of Maternal Memories," *History and Anthropology* 15.2 (2004): 133-50; Karen Ortiz Cuchivague, "The Mothers of Plaza De Mayo and Their Legacy in Defending Human Rights," *Trabajo Social* 14 (2014): 165-77.

inhabited—reclaiming space not simply for himself, but for his missing friend. This resonates with the “limbo state” generated when the Argentinian mothers display of photographs of the disappeared in their protests, “The photographs and silhouettes point to children who once lived but who now are profoundly absent.”¹¹² Through a similar set of complex images, symbols, and rhetorical actions, not only do RIP shirts contribute to the struggle over contested spaces within the ongoing territorial tensions of the underground drug trade, but they also function to transfer power over space between the ethereal and the earthly. The fact that so many of the murders in Baltimore occur within deeply concentrated areas, and the fact that those who use these shirts naturally navigate those same select spaces, renders these artifacts all the more haunting. Wearers are forever circling this map of death sites, the city itself a tomb for them all: the living and the dead.

If, as Foucault suggests, the graveyard is a reminder of impending death and the existence of a life thereafter, consider the effect and message of these roving, omnipresent body memorials.¹¹³ At the funeral of 23-year-old Antonio Lacy, a homicide victim from Mobile, many of his friends and family wore RIP shirts reading, “Gone but Ain’t Forgotten.” His father was disturbed by the knowledge that he could be confronted with images of his murdered son at any time, without warning. “I didn’t want any made. I didn’t want him to be remembered off a T-shirt. ...I every time I look around someone has on a T-shirt with his face on it. That’s a traditional thing, and I want to break that trend.”¹¹⁴ While experiences like this are inevitable in close communities that are contending with a disproportionately high number of murders, for

¹¹² Foss and Domenici, 252.

¹¹³ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27.

¹¹⁴ Dumas, “Murder in Mobile.”

some, the constant presence of these RIP shirts only creates a sense of disturbance in so much that they are a reminder of the reality they live in: where violence is imminent, life is fleeting and death is sudden.

4.13 FUTURE RESEARCH

Without further critical consideration of RIP shirts, the significance of these artifacts might be lost to the superficial attention they receive as a controversial commodity that circulates in connection to the illegal drug trade. Future studies should continue to explore the rhetorical potentials of everyday memorial artifacts by considering them in the context of Clifford Geertz's notion of "sacred symbols" as they function,

to synthesize people's ethos...the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood... and their world view... the picture they have of the way things in their sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order.¹¹⁵

Exploring memorial artifacts can prove particularly rich, as their symbols speak about both the living and the dead. This research also speaks to the value in continuing the push within the field of rhetoric towards studying vernacular texts and everyday artifacts. Such work widens the scope of available objects of study, transforms what can be conceived of as information, and

¹¹⁵ Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World-view and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols," *Antioch Review* 17, no. 4 (1957): 421-437.

provides access and inclusion to a broader range of speculative voices. Forwarding everyday voices as a source of meaning-making can supplement, push back, or upend previous understandings which were derived from the rhetoric of the state and others limited voices of privilege. Such work will build towards a sounder democratization of knowledge.

5.0 MOVING FORWARD

In April of 2015, Freddie Gray was taken and killed by police from his southwest Baltimore neighborhood. Gray's death came in the wake of the high-profile police killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice, Eric Harris, and Walter Scott. Eye-witness accounts and videos of Gray's encounter with police spread quickly across social media and the press. In response, widespread outrage fueled a massive rebellion in Baltimore and throughout the US, marking it the most significant uprising to take place on American soil since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.¹ In an effort to appease protesters and quiet the unrest, Maryland State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby filed charges against six of the officers involved in Gray's death on counts ranging from illegal arrest to manslaughter to "depraved heart murder."² While order was restored in the city, within a year all charges were dropped. To-date all six remain active members of the Baltimore City Police Department.

¹ Natasha C. Pratt-Harris, Michael M. Sinclair, Cynthia Barbara Bragg, Nicole R. Williams, Kalfani Nyerere Ture, Belinda Davis Smith, Isiah Marshall Jr, and Lawrence Brown, "Police-involved Homicide of Unarmed Black Males: Observations by Black Scholars in the Midst of the April 2015 Baltimore Uprising," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26, no. 3-4 (2016): 377-389; Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Ron Nixon, "Freddie Gray in Baltimore: Another City, Another Death in the Public Eye," *New York Times* (2015); Marisela B. Gomez, "Policing, Community Fragmentation, and Public Health: Observations from Baltimore." *Journal of Urban Health* 93, no. 1 (2016): 154-167.

² The charge of "Depraved-Heart Murder" is akin to second-degree murder charges incurred as the result of a death caused by wanton indifference or criminal negligence.

The cellphone videos, audio recordings, and closed-circuit surveillance footage of the 2015 Freddie Gray case carried no more weight with the American justice system than did the 1991 videotape of Rodney King's vicious beating by the LAPD. In the time that passed between those two cases, there has been no demonstrable change in the frequency or intensity of police brutality or police-precipitated homicides.³ The fact is, Freddie Gray was just one of at least 1,146 people killed by police in the US that year.⁴ No one knows exactly how many Americans are executed by the state, as ours is one of a few democracies whose law enforcement agencies are not required to record or report on police-precipitated homicides and shootings.⁵

³ Elliott C. McLaughlin, "There Aren't More Police Shootings, Just More Coverage," *CNN*, April 21, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/20/Us/Police-Brutality-Video-Social-Media-Attitudes>; Regina G. Lawrence, *The Politics of Force: Media and the Construction of Police Brutality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); David G. Embrick, "Two Nations, Revisited: The Lynching of Black and Brown Bodies, Police Brutality, and Racial Control in 'Post-Racial' Amerikkka," *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 6 (2015): 835-43; Sarah J. Jackson and Brooke Foucault Welles, "Hijacking#Mynypd: Social Media Dissent and Networked Counterpublics," *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 6 (2015): 932-52.

⁴ Jon Swaine, Oliver Laughland, Jamiles Lartey, Kenan Davis, Rich Harris, Nadja Popovich, Kenton Powell, and Guardian team, "The Counted: People Killed by Police in The United States – Interactive." *The Guardian*. Accessed January 7 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>.

⁵ In 2014, an investigation conducted by the *St. Louis Dispatch* revealed that only 6% the roughly 18,000 US law enforcement agencies report homicides deemed "justifiable" by police, regardless of whether the person died at the hand of a private citizen or state actor. Christine Byers, Walker Moskop, "Nobody Counts Police Killings in the U.S.," *St. Louis Today*, November 9, 2014, http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/nobody-counts-police-killings-in-the-u-s/article_8ec76c48-4414-5861-9183-134c75a4be10.html; Wesley Lowery, "How Many Police Shootings a Year? No One Knows," *Washington Post*, September 8, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2014/09/08/how-many-police-shootings-a-year-no-one-knows/?utm_term=.7fbce970b10a.

While racial violence is deeply embedded in American history, black people living in the US today face a greater likelihood of dying at the hands of law enforcement than they were to be lynched during the era of Jim Crow.⁶ As Angela Davis states,

The sheer persistence of police killings of black youth contradicts the assumption that these are isolated aberrations. ... They, in turn, represent an unbroken stream of racist violence, both official and extra-legal, from slave patrols and the Ku Klux Klan, to contemporary profiling practices and present-day vigilantes.⁷

This not only contextualizes the current tensions between minority communities and the police, but highlights the fact that the structures that form the identity and practices of the US are fundamentally composed of rhetorical and material bigotry. Though history books show that the US continues to implement laws and policies designed to correct for some of its earliest aims and

⁶ Jerome Karabel, "Police Killings Surpass the Worst Years of Lynching, Capital Punishment, and a Movement Responds," *The Huffington Post*, November 4, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jerome-karabel/police-killings-lynchings-capital-punishment_b_8462778.html.

⁷ Angela Davis, "From Michael Brown to Assata Shakur, The Racist State of America Persists," *The Guardian*, November 1, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/01/michael-brown-assata-shakur-racist-state-of-america>. See also: Abe Markman, "Why Are So Many Unarmed Black Americans Killed by the Police?" *The Humanist*, 75: 4 (2015): 8; Sharon E. Moore, Michael A. Robinson, and A. Christson Adedoyin, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Police Shooting of Unarmed African American Males: Implications for the Individual, the Family, and the Community," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26:3-4 (2015): 247-250; Willie F. Tolliver, Bernadette R. Hadden, Fabienne Snowden, and Robyn Brown-Manning, "Police Killings of Unarmed Black People: Centering Race and Racism in Human Behavior and the Social Environment Content," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 26, no. 3-4 (2016): 279-286.

strategies of targeted racial injustice, the reality persists that ours is a system founded on and guided by principals of supremacy, not justice.⁸

The prevalence of mobile recording devices, efficiency of digital distribution, and increase in networks and modes of communication which operate independent of state control offer new means of documenting and disseminating previously obscured accounts of racial injustice. As a result, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the bigoted lineage of modern US policing or to conceive of its institutions as existing apart from America's traditions of racialized state violence.⁹ The fact that the blame for urban violence in the US stays fixed on the

⁸ Though few meaningful actions toward criminal justice reform were taken under the Obama administration, in light of the Freddie Gray case, the Baltimore City Police Department came under review by the United States Department of Justice. However, the case is currently suspended in political and bureaucratic limbo under the supervision of anti-civil rights legislator Attorney General Jeff Sessions and the increasingly authoritarian Trump administration. Charlie Savage and Eric Lichtblau, "Civil Rights Group Rebukes Trump Justice Dept. Over Case Delays," *New York Times*, January 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/24/us/politics/civil-rights-trump-administration-sessions.html>.

⁹ For histories of police violence in the US, see: Marilyn S. Johnson, *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004); Ronald Weitzer and Steven A. Tuch, *Race and Policing in America: Conflict and Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Malcolm D. Holmes and Brad W. Smith, *Race and Police Brutality: Roots of an Urban Dilemma* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Leonard N. Moore, *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Jeffrey S. Adler, "Shoot to Kill: The Use of Deadly Force By The Chicago Police, 1875–1920," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38, no. 2 (2007): 233–54. Recent critical works contextualizing mass incarceration as the result of the racist militarism of the war on drugs include: Angela Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Press, 2016); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Laleh Khalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); and Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

individuals and communities most likely to be its victims reveals the insecurity of a young nation still grappling with independence and striving to distinguish itself from its aristocratic and colonialist parents. Regardless of our ideals, America is subject to the same impulses of ambition and ignorance that contribute to the shape of all societies. There is no reason to believe that we lack the imagination and courage to atone, innovate, and build towards a just future. But, it seems we have yet to develop the requisite humility.

Countries such as Germany and South Africa offer models for the US and others who are forced to reckon with their own inherited structures of racialized state violence. Through the work of their truth and reconciliation commissions, they lay out a blueprint for restorative justice initiatives which centralize the voices and experiences of the oppressed in order to counter the effects of centuries-old supremacy-driven principals and policies. In taking a reconciliatory approach to denazification and the transition from apartheid, they demonstrate how diligent humility can dismantle massive shameful structures of governance and build new systems that guarantee the rights of all.

Here in the US, groups like Black Lives Matter and Mothers of the Movement are reframing the conversation around the American justice system by forwarding accounts of victims of racist state violence. Moving forward, researchers and policymakers concerned with issues of violence would be well-served to focus their attention on the experiences and testimonies of the everyday people who are most closely impacted by violence. Oral history and rhetorical criticism are among the many tools that can be used to mining for the experiences of those who have been previously silenced or ignored. Applying such methods works to democratize history, expand our scope of knowledge, and aid in unmaking and reimagining ways of living beyond the grip of the past.

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