

**American Sidewinder
Dropouts in a Polarizing Society Ride the Rails,
Skirt the Rim of Neoliberal Urban Peripheries**

By

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Abstract

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The following work provides a look into what may prove the most pressing social crisis of our time, the American dropout crisis central to the production/reproduction the “at risk” youth crisis, though captures the fallout of a deeper complex social risk. The argument is made that the dropout crisis nears the social epicenter of a deeper process of rapidly social polarization into two Americas, separate, radically unequal, and increasingly distant from the other. As a social process, the dropout flow perpetuates the social reproduction of America’s growing undercaste, those who exist at a level beneath and in conjunction with its underclass. As disposable people, these substants are increasingly available for intensifying forms of exploitation. The argument is made that, unlike the experience of low-income disadvantaged youth during the second half of the twentieth century, in the latest advanced stages of hyper-neoliberalism, social exclusion/push-out is experienced uniformly across all domains of societal operation (e.g., political, social, juridical, educational, cultural, and economic). As such ‘risk’, whether focused on the individual or society risk, takes on new meaning and exists in epic proportions, while the individual is forced to navigate often *sidewinding* institutional and spatial margins for which they are unprepared and given little warning, while often seeking ‘EVA’ (i.e., *Engagement, Voice and Agency*).

Central to the proposed theoretical framework of America’s ‘new risk’ is the role of mobility and societal pipelines, channels, and flows. Where ‘pipelines’ is an old concept heard from concerned parents condemning a failed educational system casting their children in the direction of “prison pipelines,” the concept is widened providing insight into the relation between youths’ fate and these urban channels, negative or positive, upward or downward moving. These channels create the pulse of a city, decisive as to the strength of social mobility. Alternatively, they are instrumental in the social reproduction of subpopulations (i.e., undercaste) embodying any combination of the following: undereducated, untrained, unexposed, unorganized, powerless and/or “dis’d” (i.e., myriad forms of disengagement including politically disenfranchised). The ethnography of youth risk against the press of supra-institutional flows is an ethnography of place, but it is also an ethnography of social mobility channels. These channels were once instrumental in facilitating upward social mobility within the ‘communal ghetto’. Conversely, these pipelines currently perpetuate the greatest wealth/power polarization in the country’s history with its rising levels of poverty, deep poverty, and social exclusion splitting the urban frontier. It is increasingly common that minority dropout conclude with a life of such extreme social exclusion and poverty. At the same time, assumptions of colorblind multicultural tolerance effectively hide the challenges and obstacles, and barriers of today’s socially disadvantaged, particularly minority youth, 16-24 years of age.

“The neighborhood continues to spawn beautiful murals, but they are more intimate, personal, circumscribed – rarely epic and collective.”

~ Mario Maffi on the transformation of New York City’s East Village in the late 1970s/ early 1980s.

“When too many children are at risk – we are a nation at risk.”

~ America’s Promise Alliance

“Let there be a coalition of the concerned. The Affluent would still be affluent. The comfortable still comfortable, but the poor would be part of the political system.”

~ John Kenneth Galbraith

In memory of John Kenneth Galbraith

In the spirit of J. K. Galbraith, who so well knew that his ideas would be devoured, discredited and/or dismissed, the following is not intended in the absolute but rather as a framework explaining contemporary risk within and not separate from a larger phenomenon of social exclusion and a new socio-structurally truncated marginalism. The framework, with its visuals, will hopefully be contemplated among people concerned with growing poverty in America, and most importantly, debated among youth. Any late-modernist, having seen the great chain stores rise and fall, knows that there are no absolutes. Still, this does not mean that though subdued under the state of neoliberalism, the basic preoccupation with lived equality is no longer central to the political desires of most Americans. The simple hope behind this work is that before being dismissed as living in the past – armory of the status quo – the comparisons with the past will take on a life of their own and continue to be mulled over in the ring of possibility.

Dedication
In Deepest Thanks and Loving Memory
along the Way

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Educational Background:

Ph.D., December 2013

School: University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
Degree: Education through Graduate School of Education
Program: Social and Cultural Studies

Dissertation Committee Members: John Hurst as Acting Advisor, Ramon Grosfoguel and Na'ilah Suad Nasir. Doctoral studies received Human Subjects Approval for ethnographic study of youth including extensive field research, participant observation, and longitudinal data collection.

Concentrations: Late Modern Political Economy: Liberal Remnants and Neoliberal Governance as Culture; The Neoliberal City and Risk Society; Urban Marginality; Critical Race Theory, Stratification and Exclusion; Urban Sociology; Social Justice and Inequality; Youth Adaptation as Culture

M.A., May 2000

School: New School of Social Research/New School University
New York, NY
Degree & Program: Political Sociology: Global Development and Neoliberalism

Mentors: Nancy Fraser (Globalization), Terry Williams (Ethnography), Jose Casanova (Sociology of Religion)

Concentration: Neoliberalism; Development; Globalization; Urban Political Economy focusing on socio-economic polarization, fragmentation and social exclusion.

Teacher Credential, December 1994

School: University of Queensland, Queensland, Australia
Concentration: Single Subject Social Sciences (TC1), California 2008 with Supplementary Authorization in English Composition (TC2S)

B.A., May 1992

School: University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA
Degree: Humanities (focus on Social History)

Awards: Fellowship Summer 2010

Won fellowship to UC Berkeley's Graduate Division's Summer Institute for Preparing Future Faculty. Graduated August, 2010.

Educational Program Researcher/Evaluator:

May 2013-June 2013 Contractor

University of California San Francisco, Interprofessional Faculty Development Course

Under the direction of Dr. Louise Aranson, MD, I was recruited for to assist in the design, implementation, and interpretation of evaluation material. Data collection included paper surveys, focus group and individual interviews. Results were incorporated into both official program evaluation reports and scholarly publication.

2006-present 'GSR' (Graduate Student Researcher)

Graduate School of Education's Evaluation Unit, UC Berkeley.

Graduate Student Research position under Lisa Kala, PhD. As a member of the evaluation staff, I was responsible for program evaluation instrument/survey design, implementation, report writing including quantitative and qualitative data analysis of department, program and course evaluations, and student troubleshooting. In addition, I worked with CREDE (Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence) to assist with evaluation of programs. In Fall 2009, the four-member staff was reduced to one Evaluation Officer, myself, overseeing program evaluation and assessment needs for the five credentialing programs at the Graduate School of Education through Spring, 2013.

Guest Speaker/Educator, 2009 - Ongoing

Presentation: Is Dropping Out the Key in a Tale of Two Cities Separate and Unequal?

This educational presentation, shown with a 40-slide powerpoint slideshow, has been given in various schools and to school district administrators upon request. The presentation explores the notion of dropping out as integral to a larger youth risk, issues of social risk, and probable lifetime trajectories.

Some Conference Papers & Presentations:

2008 *Dropouts: Marginal Youth and Surrogate Mobility.* Panel presentation at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New York, NY.

2008 *Dropouts: Marginal Youth and Surrogate Mobility.* Poster presentation at the Graduate School of Education Annual Research Day.

2007 *Makin' It Real Compared to What? Marginal Youth, Representation and the Polarization of Dreams.* Presentation at the College Readiness Network led by Oakland Unified School District's Brian McKibbens, and College Bound.

Evaluation & Program Consultancy Work:

Spring 2013 **University of California San Francisco (UCSF)** Hired to design and implement program evaluations including medical/dental practitioner focus group and individual telephone interviews with 33 participants.

Teaching Experience:

Summer 2009 Instructor **Introduction to Philosophy to gifted seniors**
Summer Institute for the Gifted (SIG).

2007-2008 Instructor **World Cultures to freshmen P/T**
Piedmont High School, Piedmont, CA
Responsible for design and implementation of curriculum using an equity and social justice framework.

2003-2005 Instructor **World History to freshmen and sophomores F/T**
Secondary School of Research, Brooklyn, NY
Responsible for design and implementation of curriculum using an equity and social justice framework.

2002 Instructor **US History – Junior High, P/T**
John Ericsson Middle School, Brooklyn, NY.
Responsible for design and implementation of curriculum using an equity and social justice framework.

Community Research/Urban Planning:

2010-2012 Assistant Director
Overcomers With Hope - A Media Arts Training Program for At Risk Youth, West Oakland, Oakland, California.
Assisting in the promotion and conceptualization of OWH's youth program in the media arts and technologies, tasks included grant writing, networking with local organizations and city officials, and recruiting.

2000 *Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, NY, NY.* Produced two background papers on development initiatives in Asia, including holistic development models and resource mobilization. Worked under direction of Prof. Shian-Lung Lai, Chief Economist of UNDESA.

Published Works, Research Papers and Reports:

Social Critique

Heating Up the Neoliberal Agenda: The GOP on Economic Stimulus (2002). Printed by Cultural Logic, online journal at <http://clogic.eserver.org/2002/2002.html>.

Business Entrepreneur/ Jewelry Designer, 1998-2000

Created 'Blue Nails Union Jewelers', making wax cast/sterling jewelry
Accepted as jewelry vendor in Sarah MacLachlan's Lilith Fair Musical Concert Tour's vendor village, touring 50 states plus Canada in summer 1998 and 1999. Working with 2-3 paid staff,

selling hand-made sterling silver pendants and bracelets manufactured in Oakland, CA and in Taxco, Mexico.

Personal Affiliations and Interests:

ASA (American Sociological Association)

Interests

Poetry and prose published in various journals, including: Antipodes, 360 Degrees, Disturbed Guillotine, Cultural Logic and Caveat Lector. Other interests: Jewelry design, cycling, racquetball and oil painting (works shown in various cafes).

SOCIAL WATERS OF RISK AND THE DROPOUT SURGE

The Dropout Crisis as a Communal Crisis of Social Proportions

In 2010, a youth, soon to disappear from the area temporarily, at seventeen asked rhetorically, “What we got out down here in the Lower Bottoms? Answering...” We ain’t got nothing. We ain’t got no theaters...if you want to get involved in something, you have to go to San Francisco. Our parks have needles in the grass.” She wasn’t alone in her opinion as many of the youth in the area share a similar sentiment, that is, regarding austerity and its larger social disadvantage escaping attention under the eye of a market development plan posing as urban recovery and social governance.

Considering the statement, what is actually being said with regard to the integrity of opportunity, particularly, local opportunity? Like 2009 and 2010, 2011 was also an extremely austere year for local youth in the recessed Lower Bottoms, in pockets of North Oakland and the working class flatlands overall. Realities in terms of opportunity, school orientation and organization, jobs, what constitutes criminal conduct, what constitutes guilty punishment, and the nature of the plea bargain were all changing – just to name a few. These experiences were changing rapidly, though nonetheless remained deeply embedded in a larger structural transformation of the city completely foreign to youth raised to believe in individual enterprise and effort. The larger recession-based structural transformation (aka the ‘Great Transformation’) was also concealed – increasingly as the recession conditions rolled on through the years – by a narrative of the unbounded possibility of community. While clearly impacting the individual, these accumulative changes would not have people concluding that the American city was not the city it had been just five years earlier until this too began to flourish as its own narrative in the hyper-accelerated period of change that followed in the post-Occupy climate of 2012 and 2013.

Big change wove itself through the neighborhood resonating in West Oakland’s Lower Bottoms in ways visible and invisible to youth just as to the cartographer precisely because so much of the change was internal to the institutional system. Whether or not youth tales affirming claims of greater austerity of resources and inequities are correct is essential to the deeper probe as to why youth segue and/or “drift” (cf. Matza, 1964) into channels clearly marked by risk rather than remaining in school and/or enrolling in some form of vocation-based certification credentialing.

Who are these youth? Based on interviews conducted in the public schools, its continuation schools, through community events, conferences, meetings, rehabilitation centers, Juvenile Hall, and with local youth and young adults (18-25), it is argued that these youth come of age through the 2000s are not exclusively of a ‘Scapegoat Generation’, a tag used to describe youth denied by the system while blamed by the system through the 1990s. It is also suggested that tags such as ‘the Abandoned Generation’ and ‘the Lost Generation’ used to refer to youth come of age in the 2000s again denied and/or overlooked by the system touch on aspects of a larger social conditioning of *Generation Negation*. Specific to the idea of *Generation Negation* is the deep

understanding of a faulty social reproduction¹ that, as it works across all social domains, includes a state of being reflective of a collapsed social. *Generation Negation* acknowledges the idea of mistreated, lost, delinquent, and/or drifting individuals but only as emblematic of the larger societal collapse. Unique to *Generation Negation* is the emphasis on the fact that these youth have been abandoned in a systemic way that is seamless across all social domains of operation and production including economic and political. Critical to the concept of *Generation Negation*, as Davis (1999) saw and wrote on youth in a socially at risk society in the late 1990s, these youth were the initial product of a society that embraced social negation coming of age in a period when the word “welfare” took on a ‘distasteful association with charity, lay-about, and/or bum. And yet, in the 2010s, if the time is given to reflect on early neoliberal era assumptions and processual transformation that was legitimized and actually took place thereafter, it is now easy to recognize that far more than welfare was lost; the larger social state itself was lost while hidden behind an attack on the ‘welfare’ goliath. These youth are its meandering product.

In dismantling the social state and its attendant vital sociality, many cuts have negatively touched youths’ lives. Critically, it is the synthesis of modes of social negation (e.g., in the ongoing defunding of public education, the dismantling of public employment opportunities, the elimination of large national job training programs) that have together created an interwoven web of negation and emaciated opportunity for these youth of the last few decades with little recognition. Once again, as in the 1980s, the aspect of social injustice is obscured through institutional adjustments, a rhetoric of choice, and the promise of enhanced freedom. As with the 2005 “Open Enrollment” implemented in Oakland at the same time that the conservative small schools break up of large schools was implemented, it appeared a seeming ‘freedom’ that allowed youth to enroll in schools out of their area. While meaning that a handful of youth from the neighborhood would bus out of the area, doing more damage than good, the process also contributed to hard times for those not accepted or unable to make the commute.

Subsequently attending the same local schools, the schools were now contending with less funding due in part to reduced student enrollment compounded by general public education funding cuts. At the same time indicative of the circularity of decay, accountability in these same schools decayed as administrations hid the fact of dropouts by not showing the drop unless and until the youth had officially signed out, a rarely adhered to procedure. In hindsight, changed standards of operations foreshadowed the school closure epidemic and charter school conversion quick to follow during the early years of Great Recession recovery. The pre-Reagan educational standard of needs-based funding suffered the hardest blows under new pressures tied to administrative funding dependency. Twisting the administrative budget and standard, schools and districts were made to lean heavily towards compromising needs-based standards for the sake of a hoped for institutional self-preservation. At the same time, greater institutional semi-autonomy further eroded the universality of administrative regulatory standards, widening the financial gulf between top administration and staff; internal to the educational domain, it was a social phenomenon mirroring the larger rejection of equity-based development central to the new neoliberal standard. With a self-preservation fear/decentralizing operations fusion driving a massive wedge into the system, the inequality of the larger neoliberal social manifest as the

¹ Social reproduction is a sociological term referring to the reproduction of the life-ways, habits, customs and the like reproducing inequality from one generation to the next (cf. Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

polarization between educators' administration and staff, student programs and its youth. Youth were receiving less indirectly through reduced funds, resources, services, programs, skill-building and (socially "hooked-in") stipend-based job experience all rapidly dwindling.

And yet, though legitimized through the lore of survival of the fittest, rationally problematic in terms of the youth left behind was that there was not the equal foundation to justify a callous selectivity that simply tossed the rejected to the side in a resegregation of persons and standards of quality and equity. The rejected were not only being rejected from institutions, but from a yet-named post-Great Recession "insiders" social – the new *Production Social* – a 'social' so-called because of its indelibly disposed orientation towards values of production as profit, power, control.² Meanwhile, growing more intense from one year to the next was the extremes taken to achieve such ends.

How best to define such a generation? Explained by economist Paul Krugman, youth born in the 1980s and thereafter are of a generation experiencing less social mobility than their parents' generation. They are youth living out their teenage years in the late 1990s, a period when austerity seized the *country's political* imagination and policy most notably in the case of the "game-changing" Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) move towards the continuing contraction of the welfare state under President Clinton. At the same time that socially disadvantaged children of *Generation Negation* were coming of age in America, austere forms of structured adjustment policy were being heavily incorporated into dominant global development designs. Seizing world and urban growth plans and policy from West Oakland to Latin America, it was a system of development launched through the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in addition to, in the case of urban youth, municipal, state and federal governance. Immensely widespread in its transformative intent, in part because of its complex subtleties, it is this interfolding intensity and the implications of these reifying processes of socially disadvantage that a relation as between today's youth and tomorrow's bohemian undercaste has only recently received the camera boom of scholarly light (cf. Alexander, 2010).

But Argentina is a far cry from West Oakland. And yet, youth of the Oakland flatlands, the one-time edges to its burgeoning downtown, have also experienced what might be considered its own austerity-driven collapse just as Argentina did at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These youth, roughly 15, 16, and 17 in 1999, 2000, 2001 are the first to experience the pangs of what has been dubbed a 'silent depression' hitting specific ethno-racial minorities, often Black and Latino males, in particularly oppressed urban flatlands. Politically, these youth are among the first to be delivered less in a politics of negation and neglect while forced navigate a political paradigmatic folklore of growth, development, and accountability never before so tightly wound in its media-hyped "logic" of individuated blame (e.g., school, family, person), freedom, opportunity, self-help, the hazards of centralized government, the benefits of local control etc. Meanwhile, youth come of age in a *Production Social* where the new cultural milieu is in part constructed by a mindset only having known a mounting austerity; anticipating greater austerity even relaxation happens at accelerated speeds in interim pseudo moments of calm. Social outcast

² For an early definition of 'the social' see N. Rose's 1996, *The Death of the Social* where 'the social' is understood as a limited geographical and temporal field setting the terms for the way in which human intellectual, political and moral authorities in certain places and contexts, thought about and acted upon their collective experience. Not an external existential sphere of human society, it is a novel plane of territorialization.

but never literal social outsider, just as with the growing sociality in the wealthy areas, rising in the urban flatland low-income quarters (areas yet claimed by redevelopment) is a new kind of mechanization, a predisposition to automated motion and gesture stripped of social consciousness moving that much closer to a neoliberal archetype of human form. Though there is also a passionate voice of oppression that in one's personal time easily turns intense often internalized emotions into expressive creation as in art, dance, theater or, absent needs or outlets, the high-voltage affiliation of gang representing. Absent the foregone social anchor, it is increasingly a social space of extremes regardless of what is said or if nothing is said at all and silence prevails.

The social negation that exacerbates resource scarcity and needs deprivation (including the most basic needs, such as a hot nutritious meal) requires both the reworking of material opportunity and resource availability as well as the transformation of values and beliefs that as shown accompany this austerity-driven change. It is a social neglect that hides itself by redefining the very assumptions of what constitutes resources in this way better deflecting forthcoming accusations of- and objections to inequity and resource scarcity. It is a social neglect that includes legitimized forms of exclusion, for instance, through the straight forward elimination of training centers with a long history of effectively connecting its participants with upwardly mobile forms of societal-ly *'hooked-in'* opportunity. Alternatively, it involves subtle policy-entangled change as in the case of school push-out achieved through *not offering* the known needs of low-income youth in a school as in the case of charter schools opting to not offer a free lunch program. As noted earlier, another form of policy-entangled change includes the trend towards conservative-inclined curriculum and educator beliefs within learning environments grown from fear on the part of the administration losing its corporate funding hamstrung in its own corporate-dependency while ideologically absorbed then disposed towards the same system.

In recognizing the reach of concrete social risk, "at risk youth" becomes a convenience much more than it is an accurate sociological category with blame conflated with the individual youth even when not attributed to the individual youth. At this point, it is a problem a categorical epistemology making sense of the social through separate categories and/or subjects and the separate experience. Meanwhile, as the social imaginary grows predisposed to the idea of individual blame/the individuated experience at the very time that levels of destitution and desperation grow more common though less discussed and emotions internalize, a counterpoised "free for all" street sensibility also fans out within the local culture. This inversely correlated socio-cultural evolution points to a moment of societal decay, that is, when polarized forms of behavior are taken up to answer the problem of emaciated opportunity creating a space where "bad behavior" meets alternative forms of "bad behavior." This socio-cultural moment of extremes ushers forward a drug spike and substance abuse surge tied to a growing desire for pain relief. Symptomatic of cultural devolution, it is a process that is reified through a corollary *societally hooked-in* prescription-solution craze, one of the few remaining social phenomenon to dissolve differences of race, class, and social standing where habits are one and the streets have no name.

En sum, the entangled multi-dimensional process of urban decay first intensified through relative mainstream muting of social crisis followed by a more local 'taken for granted' acceptance and personalized contending of crisis invariably escapes mainstream detection. Nonetheless, the socio-economic polarization that continues to rip apart the country's wealth distribution polls

continues to do so at the level of the street through the very socio-communal weave of surviving institutions intended to curb hardship and deprivation of a city's historically socially disadvantaged. In an administrative pattern dating back to the Gilded Age – where the poor remained undereducated though a good source of cheap industrial labor amidst the greatest epic of wealth inequality second to our own – there is a deepening impoverishment of the poor. It is a de facto racial tale precisely because of the inequity of poverty among races therein bringing a story of global proportions back to West Oakland.

Despite the country's rapidly polarizing wealth inequality, notably between its richest 10% and its poorest 40%, the mainline explanation for disadvantage remains failed personal responsibility, again keeping with mainstream beliefs further entrenching the status quo largely through people at once critical of this or that incident but resolute in an ideological devotion. As with the Gilded Age such disparities of wealth cannot but drive a wedge through the social order, cannot but give way to epidemics and/or waves of drug dependency combating the pain of capital dependency, cannot but give way to drifting youth and "child labor" amidst growing entrenched underground economies. For economist, Paul Krugman, these can be taken as signs of our own era's "great unraveling" (Krugman, 2004). For Mayor Jean Quan of Oakland, the problems are being addressed though in ways that view youth challenges as indirectly tied to contracting job market and joblessness, the latter conceded to at the level of particular trades or fields and not at the level of class. The country's crisis presumed dropout rates (45-50% for certain ethno-racial groups), far surpassing any country in Europe and Cuba, was effectively hidden from public knowledge through low national figures for over a decade. Only very recently in 2013 – at the same time that advanced hyper-neoliberal institutional machinery is fast at work dismantling traditional public schools and youths' crisis conditions, psychologically, physically, and socially are coming to light – has the reality of *even higher* dropout rates been acknowledged as a national crisis. The insight of crisis is usually taken as proof of the need for new and improved forms of education once again steering the people away from the "old" public forms that aided in leveling inequality straight into the arms of market solutions thus animating a contagious "entrenched" social-psychology feeding a socially polarizing market-driven status quo (cf. Ravitch, 2011).

Seen as evidence of school and teacher failure, the dropout crisis is easily used as yet another reason to justify school closure rather than used to justify tighter operational regulation with an eye towards youths' needs. Showing a certain synchronicity of administrative thought, President Obama, Mayor Jean Quan of Oakland, and former Superintendent Tony Smith of the OUSD, have all addressed the current public school failure as a disgrace, which school districts, municipal and the federal government are said to be addressing through neoliberal/market-based reform solutions. Just as the current president followed the lead of former republican president in saving the auto industry, in appointing Ben Bernanke and others, these solutions are precisely the kind of reforms envisioned by Bush in passing his educational 2001 reform package, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). Despite its subsequent criticism and ongoing rejection of test-based standards as actually enriching achievement outcomes, less obvious was how testing secured a double-advance of market systems. Through the lauding of "standards," the country lost sight of the fact that through precisely such individual subject-accountability (e.g., testing) a kind of individuated accountability was sold to the public circumventing and obfuscating the need and former existence of ethical, moral and practical administrative standards revolved around equity and social justice. In this light, in the name of standards – standards were lost, sold and

compromised. If it were to prompt a deep probe of the educational operational archipelago from federal standards down to the local school in the name of a socially inclusive solution, it would reject competition-based models while returning to equity-based standards as with needs-based funding, truancy officers, and more rigorous regulatory standards of administrative accountability. But this is not the direction of federal, state or municipal governance any more than it is the experience of its youth quickly coming of age in a foreign place with its foreign standards.

Official figures have understated the dropout crisis in part through poor accountability tools while often drawing upon varied definitions of “dropout.”³ Official dropout figures showed a gradual increase in the late 1990s as high school completion rates continued to decline. Still, national figures fogged the national trouble spots and/or “dropout factories” when suggesting a 14-18% dropout rate for Blacks and a 30-35% dropout rate for Latinos, with nominal rates for Whites and Asians.⁴ Ironically, in the 2000s, dropout rates for the 1990s were said to be higher than official rates from the period making the dropout rate trend line appear a gradual increase between decades rather than a relatively abrupt jump. And yet, signs of an abrupt jump in the 2000s against the familial press of welfare retrenchment, the implementation of NCLB standards and the move towards greater inequality of socio-economic standards between schools, such a jump is confirmed in numerous reports and studies (cf. Rumberger, 2011). In what looks like a case of political “progress” spin, the argument is made in Bush’s second term that the current dropout rate is *actually improving* since the 1990s, high though it may be - a virtual inversion to actual exploding trend lines. For Orfield and McArdle, it is considerably higher than in the mid-1990s as it has nearly doubled since this time (2006). Based on these more accurate percentages, the national graduation rate for Blacks is approximated at 50%, 53.2% for Hispanics, 76.8% for Asian/Pacific Islanders, 74.9% for Whites, and 51.1% for American Indian.⁵ These figures are starkly contrasted with American achievement of the early 1970s when the dropout rate for youth that had yet to receive a credential (since many dropouts went on to trades programs receiving a credential) was approximately 21% for Blacks, 12% for Whites, and 34% for Hispanics.⁶ The figures are most starkly contrasted with the dropout rates of the 1980s as a man from West Oakland come of age in the 1980s asked me when I inquired as to the prevalence of dropouts,

³ The crisis of accountability and tracking dropouts has received increasing attention in recent years. The fact is there has been far too many ways to calculate completion and dropout rates that disguise actual figures – including the NCLB provision to not ‘disaggregate’ high school completion rates by subgroups (e.g., race/household income). According to national figures, the percentage of students dropping out showed improvement between the 1970s and 2005. Declining dropout rates were found in the Black community, though much less so among Hispanics, which were said to maintain a relatively constant dropout rate of approximately 35 percent. And yet, based on the official figures of the US Census Bureau, the Black dropout rate hovered between 12-14% in the 1980s and 1990s leading one to wonder from what percent did the dropout rate “fall” under NCLB in the twenty-first century. For the purpose of this study, dropout will refer to any individual who has left school for a period of one semester or longer, regardless of whether or not they chose to return to school after this initial six month period, as many do return to school at some point.

⁴ See Institutional of Education Sciences at <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16> as a good example of official figures wildly out of sync with President Obama’s statement on the country’s failing public schools.

⁵ As a leading educator, Gary Orfield writes extensively on dropouts infusing the subject with much needed critical theory. Many of his concerns are taken up and explored in the following work including the relation between the neoliberal structural transformation of education, urban gentrification in minority majority low-income districts fused with the forces of racialization and desegregation creating an explosive synthesis (G. Orfield & N. McArdle, 2006; G. Orfield et al., 2004).

⁶ http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/pdf/1_PDF.pdf, Site referenced January, 2012.

“What’s a ‘dropout’?” He went on to explain, “Back in the day, school was what you did - period.” He was right: Blacks had a 12% dropout rate in the mid-1980s comparable to Whites just ten years earlier. This intergenerational overflow points to a macro correspondence between the height of leveled inequality in the early 1970s, the vital social borne out of it, and its overflow effect positively overflowing into all regions, communities and institutions regardless of race or class orientation. More efficacious than the “trickle down” lore of market-based growth where positive growth is to touch all lives slowly and indirectly, this intergenerational overflow shows clearly how a vital social (symbolized by effectively leveling inequality) invariably touched K-12 institutions, the schools, and the lives and social imaginary of the next generation of children delivering substantive intergenerational progress.

As with the man unfamiliar with the word “dropout”, another local in his forties released from prison serving over ten years time strolled the area only to come to the same conclusion with overlapping perception with respect to community disintegration: the older West Oakland community had been made to rot or left to decay. Both perceived a sort of communal disintegration and yet neither of the men was surprised. Why neither was surprised by their own observations had to do with their own understanding of history. In the 1990s in New York City when the city sought to upgrade its former majority-minority slums similar methods of displacement combined with de facto decay and a “hands tied” compliance were used against the pressures of limited alternatives or social outlets. For Klein (2007), it is precisely this kind of underdevelopment that is woven into the development doctrines; a shock for the recipient people, it includes neighborhood push-out, repossession, and takeover. And yet, in many ways, the insights of locals and scholars as to the historical decay is news for large percentages of people believing 1) things are getting better; 2) in the possibility of a low-dip in a larger comforting trend-line of historical progress; and/or 3) in a certain self-induced hard times. Together these explanations offer a panoramic range of accountability legitimizing urban blight and decay even when it is not temporary though is misread as temporary.

When we look for correlations in society to help explain the collapse of the public education system, the dropout surge and its corresponding school>dropout>prison pipeline⁷, educational accounts provide limited insight so often predisposed to some combination of psycho-social accounts (e.g., behavioral disorder), cultural inferiority (e.g., ethnic or class), and/or the impoverished disorganized environment (e.g., ecology). This educational ‘bank’ of theoretical accounts, while necessarily diverse, can be used as a *singular panoramic frame* perpetuating the learned mindset under the auspices of seeming intellectual tolerance. The individual account can situate itself within the panoramic frame of mainstream acceptability. However, in the following work it is shown how the panoramic frame of acceptable theory is itself embedded within neoliberalism’s “mainstream” – a range of beliefs, actions, methods, and faiths working towards the single of end of power, control, and profit. Avoiding breaking theoretical ground while advancing a panoramic social gestalt and mindset, the neoliberal means uses a faux tolerance perception undergirded by disdain and scorn for that which lies beyond, which can easily include the poor. For reasons that will become clear, the exploding dropout rates of the current century better correspond to America’s current 30%-40% ethno-racial and child poverty rates and the social reproduction of growing ranks of a new cheaply maintained highly job-insecure disposable

⁷ Normally referred to as the “school to prison” pipeline, the expression actually embeds a dropout moment, which more often than not poses as a requisite interim moment in this larger downward mobility pipeline.

people and underemployed masses (i.e., including underemployed labor, members of the underclass and those of a permanent undercaste).

Over the course of the last forty years the country has moved increasingly away from class-based explanations for weakening social mobility of the working/underemployed/unemployed masses. It has turned instead to race, culture, theories of post-modernity and the potential of globality still amplifying older totems of analyses like individual responsibility, genetic inferiority, and destiny or fate. And yet, a holistic analysis of the social/youth risk entangled in the experiences of low-income socially disadvantaged urban pockets begs the question of downward social mobility, which begs the question of the condition of working class communities and the extent of correspondence between downward mobility and larger structures in decline.

The rising poverty of this century better corresponds to the country's retrenchment of social services and the popularizing of a learned guttural rejection of the Keynesian welfare state with its social services, social engineering and the growth liberalism in which social policies, programs, and ideologies were embedded. In today's market-driven political climate, the fact that these Great Society policies and programs delivered the greatest leveling of inequality and wealth redistribution in the country's history does not carry the kind of policy import that would weigh-in modifying current policy course.⁸ Ineffably silent in its growth, little is heard as to the corresponding relation between the escalating polarization of 'haves' and 'have nots' integral to the neoliberal agenda and the intensifying material and social poverty of America's children of poverty. Meanwhile, faces of the current poverty do not simply show up on city streets, they thrive on these streets which some youth have made their home.

If the successes of Great Society social programs pro-active across education, training, jobs, and political fields, are any indication, the current market politic compounding socio-economic polarization – animated through welfare retrenchment, halted program funding, rising user-fees, and declining assistance – could not do otherwise. In terms of youth, the experience is one of institutional distancing and “big-picture” societal disengagement amidst very immediate hands-on classroom concerns with pupil engagement. This larger “big-picture” disengagement is no less routinely felt by youth whether animated through political disempowerment, social service exclusions or dismantled training programs. The fact that none of these forms of pro-social intervention have been determined reasonable, necessary or viable public forms of intervention for the good of all invariably takes a toll on the youth subject. Often viewed separately, the death of the social – as the loss of one-time high-functioning mobility channels, the loss of affordable training centers, the loss of political forums of democratic voice – repeatedly leaves in tatters the socio-communal lattice webbing previously pulsating through communities; as a social phenomenon, it is repeatedly compounded by the very direct pressures of push-down hitting the individual. In the case of the \$10,000 marijuana fine that blanketed Oakland's billboards in 2012, at \$10.00 an hour with no benefits, it would take more than a lifetime to free oneself from the constraints of such intense social push-down manifest here as debt bondage.⁹

⁸ The height of reduced inequality of the early 1970s marked the end of what is known as the “Great Compression,” that is, the New Deal through the Great Society. A period seemingly earning deep analysis as to its political science, it is a political economy little discussed even among advocates of change, the latter increasingly drawn towards county/community levels of political influence therein ostensibly transcending the lines of party politics.

⁹ The billboard actually took a fear-inducing tone, reading “You Just Blew \$10,000” showing a young man lighting up while driving. It was released shortly after the controversial closure of Oaksterdam cannabis university, raided in

For the young man and woman today, the polarizing ratio of income:rent, income:tuition and/or income:fines shows how far removed the country's standards have drifted from Great Society standards of seeking equitable redistribution and maximum participation. Even the use of the liberal-conceived "reasonable and necessary" standard that once imposed caps on rental costs as a percentage of income is so long out of use that youth today are challenged to imagine such stability or dependable standard as opposed being forced to ride the wings of market fluctuations. Just 25 years ago, it was up through the Reagan presidency that the 25-30% of income ceiling on rents was the federal standard. Inconceivably high, the ceiling on current costs better corresponds to the current profit maximizing than any suggestion of "reasonable" even in the best of circumstances where youth find that first job to begin the long haul out of debt.

In terms of the rising number of dropouts in California, whereas in 1988, 80% of 18 to 24-year olds earned a high school diploma, in 1998, 75% earned a high school diploma, with the remaining 25% either dropping out *or earning a terminal degree* (cf. Rumberger, 2001). At the turn of the century, a 25% dropout rate was still deemed worthy of government attention inasmuch as these youth were increasingly recognized as part of an emergent *underclass*, the latter class type also estimated at a comparable 25% of the population and growing. However, while formatting new modes of intervention to bring the rates down, the country was still committed to its deep if unconscious loyalty to an ideological equation tying the USA to social mobility and ultimately shared growth. Considered troubling poverty and dropout figures at 25%, the context was strong enough to correct and overcome. In hindsight, it was a mobility lore myth that would require at least a decade of mounting hardship before widespread perceptions, turned to question the durability of America's social mobility ladder.

Nonetheless, these 25% rates from the *fin de siècle* pale in comparison to the current 50% rates especially high for minority males of color corresponding for the same subgroups to the high rate experiencing incarceration together forming *a dropout jugular*. A dropout rate range spanning between 25-50% would have been totally inconceivable in the late 1960s when hardship was an unacceptably *unequal* 8% jobless rate among particular minority groups (though still slightly higher for males in these groups). The earlier 8% rate now said to represent the nation as a whole has become a kind of ideal goal for minority youth and young adults whose jobless rate scrapes a 40-50% ceiling – higher for dropouts and ex-inmates depending on the city. Pointing to the national downward mobility of social standards ongoing since the early 1970s, collectively these trends point to devolving governance standards of assistance and intervention. Widening flexibilization in the name of standards from school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood has indeed contributed to resurgent resegregation. Above and beyond resegregation, through such systemic holes as the dropout jugular, negative national market growth is in part absorbed through its massive dropout jugular. At the same time, chronic joblessness is absorbed by these outcasts rather than a implementing a concerted public-jobs-based recovery strategy. Meanwhile, the criminalizing/incarceration state continues its rapid expansion (cf. Alexander, 2010; Gilmore, 2007; Mauer, 1999).

The Great Compression in America's reduction in inequality abruptly came to an end in the early 1970s. What has since 'evolved' to a rampant inequality today defining social space first began

2012, a confusing contradictory year where increasing percentages of Oaklanders were protesting the injustices of criminalization for use of marijuana and other substances while fees/sentencing costs escalated.

its polarizing course. Clearly wrapped into its transformative fold is the transformation of particular domains including the educational domain continuing to undergo the transformation of operational (e.g., nonunion charters) and achievement (e.g., testing) standards. The mood on the street in 2008 is captured in this sticker reading:



Sticker seen in neighborhood fast-food joints and on outdoor roadside poles capturing the social climate and political temperament as impressions educating the sidewinder, 2010

It is a message that speaks to changing standards in education where messages read: “Educate: Don’t Incarcerate.” Both messages are signs of the change to come – and a call-out of the families feeling their community is under threat. The message is for a desire for enhanced tools, skills, trades, and construction and the hard labor necessary to save neighborhood homes over and above the criminalizing system.

In 2011, OUSD addressed the crisis in its schools marking the beginning of an administrative effort to reverse this long largely silent trend towards dropout as corresponds both with the larger job crises for those entering the labor force and with the rejection of inclusionary measures and means in the Neoliberal City-modeled recovery. Often these communities are living in a city’s “hot lands” inner-city flatlands, areas with big development plans for urban rebuild and buy-up as with large sections of West and North Oakland flatlands. These explosive dropout rates unheard of in other Western nations appear to have more to do with the implosion of working class urban socio-production infrastructure since the 1980s than with any kind of cultural or genetic inferiority. To understand what socio-communal inclusionary engagement would look like, members of these communities can look at their grandparents’ generation of the 1960s with its Great Society programs in social engineering when the social imperative was a political mandate and economic standard of *maximum feasible participation* (MFP) spanning the different social fields: political, socio-cultural, economic. The standard was not to provide for a handful of individuals while denying the majority as in the case of accepted inequitable funding seen between schools today within the same school district. *Quite to the contrary, as well understood by Great Society administrators, such inequitable and therefore divisive incentivizing at the level of policy and institutional operations would only further rupture a community producing an outcome opposite to the goal of inclusion.* As noted, recognizing the hazards of such instituted inequities, the objective of the Great Society/War on Poverty was to overcome division through *enhancing equitable forms of distribution* at the level of institutional policy, program funding, and program inclusion as to be operationally embedded rather than the more inconsistent flow of aid run through charity, the latter ignoring the reality of vast inequities. Many youth today living in these dense communities marked out by trauma and street hustling battle a social-

psychological dread when sensing that whatever is meant by ‘equality’ is an ‘equality for some’ (cf. Greenwald, 2012) that likely does not include them – if they are not within a socially select group and/or a part of the insiders social. And yet, to be allowed ‘entry’ into the ‘insiders’ social can easily become a losing proposition as well as it furthers the country’s polarizing wedge straight through the long-standing communal architecture. As seen in the intensifying of gang affiliations during periods of economic depression, the reluctance to accept societally hooked-in opportunity because of how it separates a person or group from a larger community is a resistance that breaks down when an area grows so blighted and desperate that individual and familial survival becomes paramount. En sum, the polarization that continues to rip through the nation is found in its most public, local institutions; it is socially reproduced in the behavior of residents through policy implementation, adaptation, and acculturation in a reifying process of negative social reproduction.

Part of the Oakland 2011 Occupy Movement came together in part due to the large-scale inequality as well as the authoritative/administrative inequitable distance between authorities and subject in the so-said democracy. This polarizing wedge was showing up seamless across the recently transformed *production social* domains, as in the area of health and education, in part through compartmentalized services tailored to individuals each with its ‘eligibility criteria’ barrier/barrage. Because of the ubiquity of the transformation, its reach across various production domains effectively flips the ‘regulations standard’ -- which through the mid-twentieth century used to closely monitor businesses and corporate ventures, on its head where regulatory standards are rapidly intensifying at the level of the individual bereft of *engagement*, *political voice*, and *animated active agency*, particularly youth.

Since 2012, there has been a new emphasis on community recompense/restorative justice and wrap around ‘networks’ of (largely non-public) providers in what is to be a new and improved service network. Unique to the quickly developing hyper-neoliberal service network of the current period is the inverting of former the *social production* premium on its head to become *the production social*. The new *production social* archipelago is increasingly standing in for former public/private socio-communal mobility lattice.¹⁰ As the country continues to wait on tenterhooks to see if any of this network society will transform the lives of those of its marginalized *Hungry City*, inequality as a polarizing programmatic wedge is relentless in widening its crisis indicators.

The loss of potential students to the dropout drain is America’s loss not simply because of the limited opportunities associated with the life trajectory of dropouts but also because of the

¹⁰ Hardly new, the idea of *network society* and its potential was articulated by Manuel Castells in 1996 work by the same title. And yet, as the new social morphology of the future, the network society where an array of non-governmental and private organizations wrap-around one another to take responsibility for a string of necessary social services has yet to materialize. Indeed, in many areas, there is a reversal as to what the individual seeks. Post-Great Recession/Great Transformation, the country is experiencing a resurgent desire for social, business, political exchange and communication as personable contact equipped with voice/rights. Again – a social shift that wraps the youth experience into its fold – such personal contact can be seen with high school students in their preference for human contact as on-hands engaged exposure, while still seeking practical experience. It is also exemplified in the Youth Radio program in downtown Berkeley with “VOICE” painted in large letters on the building in this way diffusing in the mind of the general public any sort of voice, free speech or democratic deficit, though for many, these very values are increasingly seen as compromised or sacrificed.

estimated cost to the government for every worker seeking social services rather than paying into their own emergency funds (cf. R. Rumberger, 2001). It is also a loss to the country because of the creative deficit generated from the combination of often emotionally hungry youth grown up on limited means, limited experience, exposure, and political voice as separate aspects of a limited opportunity including a circumscribed inner field within the traditional civic power/civil rights. It is this starved social-psychological conditioning that was said to seed the emotional hunger giving rise to unresponsive, defensive youth ‘drift’ (Matza, 1964) in the early studies of delinquency. It is also this starved emotional conditioning that steers youth towards the creation of alternative spaces of 1) exposure-based **Engagement**; 2) forums of political **Voice**; and 3) active **Agency** (referred to throughout as ‘**EVA**’). At once straightforward, when set in the context of the Neoliberal City with its subtle policy shifts, deepening resource deprivation, exclusionary forms of opportunity, decomposing of upwardly-mobile pipelines and the communities that were home to these pipelines, the dropout crisis is no less involved than the complexities of politics of urban growth writ large.

West Oakland symbolizes the late-modern transformation of an urban district in an area increasingly inclined towards the middle classes made possible through cutting working class programs, and services while cutting working class provisions, legal, educational, and political. The flatland area traditionally housed low to very low-income minority families extending all the way from West Oakland to Ashby Street in South Berkeley (cf. R. Self, 2003). *Skill, trades and training programs started to be reduced in the 1970s continuing into the 2000s until there was nothing but skeletal remains of both social mobility-producing and community-cohering structures for the initial working masses.* And yet, what good could come in eliminating job, skill, learning, training programs that had proven effective. The need for school>job training channels was upheld in the works of early proponents (cf. N. Grubb, 1996). Since the commencement of Great Recession/Great Transformation of 2007, decaying social conditions for the socially disadvantaged in the urban flats of West and North Oakland heated up with street markets solidifying themselves absent other healthy flows of capital exchange against the press of a dismantled training infrastructure and political voice.

The 1990s was a decade marked by overall improvement in the social and economic well-being for many Americans, which included the well-being of its poor. During this period, improvements were seen in: poverty rates, infant mortality rates, out-of-wedlock birth rates, high school dropout rates, median income rates as well as a number of standardized tests in the Black community – all against a backdrop of an economic boom. Writing on the carceral turn, Mauer (1999) observes that high school completion was actually up in 1999.¹¹ However, at the same time, incarceration rates were exploding, particularly for nonviolent crimes, including drug related crimes, such as marijuana possession. Seemingly counterintuitive, actual dropout rates are lower in the 1990s amidst a robust job market when the youth vocational pipeline through a

¹¹ Improvements in social standards in the 1990s, while legitimate in their own right, also reflect an offsetting decline in standards down from a high manifest in the five years between 1985 and 1991. During this period, there is indeed a watershed turning point in the development of the military/criminal/carceral state while people experience new forms of hardship with President Reagan dismantling 70% of Great Society policies and undoing labor union organizing through the Air Traffic Controllers’ Strike in 1981. Still, the ‘coming undone’ in ‘ghetto’ communities witnessed in the late 1980s does not include education, which nationally retains an 88% completion rate in the Black community throughout the 1980s still buoyed by the common belief of the strength in learning – and the privilege.

terminal degree and training certification was far from obsolete? What did youth believe would be gained from remaining in school or the value of education in general? To what extent was staying in school and striving for completion simply “what you did” as a student? The fact that youth did not drop out during a period of socio-economic stability for the training>job pipelines forces reconsideration of widespread explanations framing dropout accounts in terms of the individual youth as lazy, troubled, irresponsible, delinquent, confused and so on. Similarly, the question that rises to the fore is why youth do drop out in much larger numbers in the 2000s during a period of diminished school>training and training>job pipelines alongside diminished in-school electives exposure and engagement, shrinking aid to families receiving social assistance, and stiffening penalties in sentencing. Are they simply running from a system that makes relatively less room for them?

Why did the tendency to drop out of the educational system rise concurrent with a growing carceral system? Is there a structural correspondence between the plummeting conditions, both material and financial, in the production of traditional public educational forms, including public high schools and Adult Education, and the explosive investment in the rapidly expanding criminal/carceral state? In terms of corresponding shifts within different domains of societal operations, it appears that the twenty-first century dropout crisis closely corresponds with the emaciation of the unskilled labor job markets, and the emaciation of social programs and services folded into the seam of the larger cutting of the social state. The rising dropout crisis also corresponds with larger political changes tied to the emergent ‘criminal state’ inclined towards military/criminalizing methods (cf. Simon, 2007), a retrenched welfare state (cf. Wacquant, 2009), and an emergent corporatocracy (cf. Klein, 2007). It is in the context of this power-based/punitive means hybrid of governance that we are increasingly seeing the rise of the US Military funding public school initiatives including greater support in funding training/skill-building pipelines. While the Department of Education (DOE) remains one of the smallest cabinets, both Alameda County’s Peralta Colleges and OUSD received financial and material support towards targeted objectives (e.g., advertising).

Currently, the American dropout crisis has become what is arguably the biggest challenge facing public education directly or indirectly touching the lives, communities and neighborhoods of low-income formerly majority-minority urban district flatlands lined with some of the most increasingly valued Victorian housing in a city. And yet, while student under-performance is increasingly mentioned in political speeches and “at risk” becomes more widely accepted, efforts to address the crisis have only recently gained traction post-2011. Why are youth whose K-12 experience was once largely limited to being subjected to contrary politics internal to public school models of relatively like paradigms rather than the public schooling system as an arena hashing out large differences in ideals, beliefs and values – with youth now finding themselves on the inside looking out on such a conflict? Why when the larger social polarization discussed above wedges itself into the political field, youth are one of the first subgroups to experience these changes therein suggesting the need for a stable social production core value set in certain areas as to not destabilize an entire neighborhood or community when considering decentralizing public education? Why are youths’ dropout crisis levels exploding concurrent with the educational arena falling prey to political battles including the battle for the neoliberal “roped public” school autonomy advanced by the charter movement? Why does youths’ explosively high dropout rates ride parallel as a social phenomenon with what Kennedy deems “gang- and

drug-related inner-city violence with its attendant epidemic levels of incarceration...the defining crime problem in our country.”¹² When a youth “makes a mistake,” that is, shows bad judgment and commits a crime, possibly petty theft, if a few years are lost, do they no longer need the socio-communal mobility-lattice web that young adults formerly released from prison once navigated to restart their life and “get it right”?

During interviews with youth, there were four instances where, as the issue of incarceration came up, it was explained that “mistakes” were made. In each case, it was explained that they now see that they used bad judgment or were “in a bad way” at the time. Still, they did not understand why a past mistake must haunt the person year and after when they were trying to “do the right thing.” As one former youth released from Juvenile Hall explained, “Everyone makes mistakes. But I guess I ain’t allowed to make mistakes.” Are at risk youth allowed to make mistakes and then get back on the right track like the others or having missed a few years, possibly critical to coming of age, is it highly unlikely if not impossible against pressures of other disturbances? In 2004, as an early educator tackling the dropout crisis, Gary Orfield (2004) warns of the future dropout crisis, specifically how minority youth are being left behind by the graduation rate crisis across the nation. Does use of the operations-embedded dis-incentivizing (e.g., when cutting funds to Adult Education facilities for those of a certain background, age or record) foment its ideological counterpart fanning a growing conservatism while a bulwark of support for people’s solidarity is repeatedly splintered? Does the existence of such policy structures and practices further accelerate America’s exhaustive expansion of its neoliberal social reproduction including policies advancing the emaciation of opportunity structures in certain communities accelerating a trend of institutional dis-engagement among working poor seamless across social fields further driving a wedge in the already extreme national wealth polarization?

The student crisis is seen in part as reflecting a number of in-school processes including administrative push-out, while also reflecting large macro socio-structural changes including geographic and institutional resegregation and socio-economic polarization. However, push-out is social as well as only a seamless push-out working across the entire system of exclusionary provisions within the different social domains (and various subfields) can achieve an end of, for instance, dual societal tracks or societal outcast. Should a society that is no longer responsible for its youth once they have had institutional ties severed, as with aging out, neglect this group in terms of service/supports needed and/or missed? Increasingly, the seamless carry-over across social domains means a crime and its sentencing have added repercussions regarding socio-political exclusion forfeiting: political voice, access to social services, and financial assistance in learning. Collectively they harden the social walls of the societal outcast and sidewinder who is forced to work the system. Under this less than ‘restorative-justice’-based approach to sentencing inclined as it is towards a seamless plane of socio-institutional barriers, a very large percentage of the this subpopulation is destined to become targets of the carceral system as they veer increasingly towards street economies as a means of survival and sustenance?¹³

¹² See <http://www.berkeleyside.com/BerkeleysideCalendar/events/index.php?com=detail&eID=228>
Site referenced July, 2012.

¹³ Interestingly, though an effective political issue gaining presidents popularity, including George Bush Sr. and Clinton, by the late 1990s, the percentage of Californians favoring mandatory sentencing such as Three Strikes had declined to 38% from 55 percent. Similarly, in 2004, 69% of field poll respondents favored reform of the Three Strikes law versus 19% who opposed reform. If mandatory sentencing laws are any indication, both because of their ineffectiveness and weak popularity for those opposing harsh sentencing against questionable crimes, targeting low-

While it is the case that a dropout is more inclined to a life of risk taking and delinquency, it is also the case that the mere expression of support, the local organization that they are able to enter into without judgment, the community youth group that can give them a job that pays minimum wage beyond mere volunteerism, can turn them away from an injurious life. For most youth, street hustling is a matter of economic necessity far more than it is a culture of cool – the latter a perception entertained by middle school boys who misread their cousin’s heist as ‘cool’ far more than coming of age young men will. *The point being, these youth cannot be stereotyped as simply derelict. They often live in areas of deep post-industrial collapse followed by the construction of illegal economies and cultures borne out of them – then followed by the illegalization of these economies and, finally, as seen in the 2000s, followed by the near simultaneous destruction of engagement pipelines, social services, and affordable housing. Finally, all of this feeds and is followed by the decimation of the socio-communal mobility-lattice webbing occurring as part of a conflagration aftermath* where literally corner houses symbolic of a larger communal identity – is “burning” as large numbers of households are forced to relocate out of the inner-city.

Youth behavior is by no means “of a nature” as maintained by Charles Murray, implying some sort of genetic disposition or cultural determinacy.¹⁴ These youth become freewheels cruising between dead ends and speed bumps far more than “free agents in a free world.” The “race to the top” includes its own “race to the bottom” buried within increasingly ensnaring these youth. The following work takes the position that these youth are America’s sidewinders, outcast and marginalized spatially, socially, institutionally, and collectively as communities fragment in desired urban spaces where the comfort of consistency, stability, security and certainty are ever more elusive. *America’s sidewinders are youth come of age within the coming of age of the Neoliberal City where youths’ needs have been marginalized as a sidebar of a larger value inversion: market investment over human need, profit over people, production social over social production.* Regardless of what is thought of the logic of these decisions, the point often passed over is that it is a new experience and youth of working class origins fell into these ‘Great Transformation’ changes innocent, without warning, unprepared and without their out recompense for Generation Negation having come of age when not even the idea of networks was yet materialized as to bring comfort to a sidwinding youth.

income dropouts regardless of petty crime may also prove a political solution that fails over the long-term for those seeking instead healthy forms of social intervention.

¹⁴ In 1984, Charles Murray wrote *Losing Ground*, what was to sociology what Milton Friedman’s *The World Is Flat* was to political economy, a conservative bible. Following the lead of *Losing Ground* in *The Bell Curve*, Murray makes the case for genetic inferiority and the general self-imposed decline of low income communities of color. Murray sets the parameters for the ongoing academic battle between ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ with little room for political economy, while providing Reagan the cut-back bible in undoing the Great Society.

Research Questions Particular to a Time...

To what extent have traditional human ecology theories, tying together a tight circle of geographically close institutions to explain youth actions (i.e., school, family, peers), become inadequate in accounting for youth action in the Neoliberal era with its sculpted cities and institutions deciding policy, operations, and funding amidst deregulation and a new premium on just inequity? In terms of Generation Recession, those coming of age since the late 1990s, is it possible that a 58% high school non-completion for Blacks with 1 in 3 Blacks born after 2001 spending time in prison, 1 in 10 currently in prison constituting 1 in 2 of the country's prison population says more regarding systemic failure, dominant funding channels, and the fate of dropouts than individual factors?¹⁵ Is it possible that America's prison system, holding 5 times more than other western nations, says more about "solutions" to the country's downward mobility than family, school, or personal indicators says about school failure?

If America's dropout crisis has more to do with a bewildered youth crisis that includes excessive numbers of detainees, probationers, ankle tags, surveillance, fines in the tens of thousands of dollars, chronic joblessness, large percentages never exposed to vocational training, career channels, and employment pipelines – then is it fair to continue to refer to "equal opportunity" and the universal "competitive advantage" of all youth as they "race to the top?" In 1967, the Kerner Commission was appointed by President Johnson to conduct its famous study of government's strengths and weaknesses as related to civil riots. Often the lens used was from the vantage point of the effectiveness of services rendered calling forth the experiences of the people receiving the services. The Commission concluded by admonishing the government for what it found, noting that a country seeking social equality precludes equality through such means. It believed the nation could do better. The point being that if the infrastructure has yet to deliver than it is most likely not going to deliver under the current system, unless, that is, goals are rewritten and equality as more than an idea is the primary instrument and measure informing policy. Applying the same logic, the country must decide if the 50% dropout rate among certain ethno-racial groups, and the strength and cost ineffectiveness of a growing school>dropout>prison pipeline is a national crisis necessitating positively mobilizing social intervention or if it is simply accepted as "unfortunate." As "unfortunate," a position that many people take today, busy, tired, and focused on their own job securitization, too easily feeds into a socio-political climate of unresponsiveness providing an ideological field for deep structural neglect.

The following study is an ethnographic investigation as to how it could be that in a period of extreme hardship and socio-economic austerity, rather than staying in school, minority youth of color are dropping out in larger numbers than any period since Brown vs. the Board of Education's passage in 1954. Though comparable to the 1940s in terms of dropout percentages, problematically, large urban cities no longer serve as warehouses for this kind of industrial labor that justified the terminal degree and/or dropout track leaving many questions in terms of who is

¹⁵ For more information on prison rates and trends, see the Sentencing Project at <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/index.cfm>.

being served by the remaining public education infrastructure, and who is not being served. In terms of social/youth risk and the dropout surge central questions of investigation include:

Why are more low income minority youth dropping out of high school at a time of peak wealth/power inequality, peak service and resource scarcity, peak unemployment/low-wage underemployment, neighborhood “block-busting” in a tighter criminal state?

- AND -

Focusing on institutional ecology, how does the neoliberal project in social production, animated through its institutional production archipelago, feed into youths’ perceptions, experiences, habits, and actions?

It has already been over 50 years ago when James Bryant Conant warned the nation that the decay of urban schooling coupled with high youth joblessness and the persistence of racial segregation was a recipe for social disaster that threatened the health of large cities. The answer at the time required improving urban schools, while creating more job opportunities for inner-city youth tackling the problem through a multi-dimensional human investment in turn propelling economic momentum (Conant, 1961). It has also been over 50 years since dropping out was associated with mounting unemployment for undereducated urban minorities where correspondence theories emerged linking job opportunity trends to youth behavior (cf. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Cloward & Ohlin, 1966). In revisiting theories of correspondence, if the bilateral connections are more complex in neighborhoods where schools are entangled in the larger neoliberal structural transformation of a city, what variables are now included in what, in breaking beyond ecological parameters, a new “complex correspondence?” If Reverend Al Sharpton is correct, explanations are as simple as social exclusion and negative forms of inclusion reified in the form of cultural norms where low income neighborhoods become predisposed to crime and doing time becomes a kind of street badge of honor. But if it is about complex forms of social exclusion, what are they and how do they unfold in youths’ lives?

It has been over 30 years since urban renewal was tied to the discourse of healthy social mix urban growth. In the 1980s, while Oakland was developing the areas surrounding pristine Lake Merritt, the idea of ‘social mix’ growth was already understood by low-income residents as a glorified gentrification forcing displacement of the low income families into outer city’s edge districts. Since 2000, White reclamation has extended beyond the downtown into these “soiled” marginal flatlands now seen as highly desirous largely because of the classic housing stock. Oakland has seen its Black population decline by 25% between the 1960s and 2000, while its White population continues to rise, notably in the urban flatlands. Meanwhile, absent job and training pipelines against the pressures of a declining real wage, chronic job instability, and a

general familial uncertainty, urban flight continues as a guttural reaction for those who can no longer afford the city's inflating costs. A double jeopardy for minority youth whose residential and financial stability are destabilized, where certifiable training-linked-opportunity would prove their saving grace, their fate is likely among the unskilled with a jobless rate triple the average jobless rate. Why have such problems of the flexibilization of labor, the exceedingly high rates of joblessness among low-income minority males, the loss of training centers that would navigate an otherwise discrimination in hiring continued to be disassociated with the dropout crisis? Instead, the dropout crisis continues to be analyzed categorically by subject, be it the child, the school, peer groups, the neighborhood, community and so on. In this way, analytic frameworks utter a comparable bias in their analytic instruments likely to preclude subtle and robust links between micro and macro forces. In the meantime, certain neighborhoods and districts may easily vanish along with the innocence of what it means to be an adolescent as urban survival, with its historical challenges, grows all the more dire at any time since the mid 1960s. The difference being that in 1964 and 1965 corrective foundations were being legislated including the Voter Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act, whereas currently both political and juridical rights are being reversed as the foundation for the urban future.

In 1974, the "benefits" of dropping out as, paradoxically, *reducing delinquency* among the working classes at the height of reduced inequality and low dropout rates, could not be applied to the situation today at the height of inequality, soaring dropout rates, and soaring joblessness among non-credentialed low income minority youth. And yet, there persists a tendency to invoke time-tagged explanations and indicators only to obscure the actual experience of today's youth. More dangerous, it seems, there is a tendency to cling to and promote the idea that mass educational underachievement, indeed dropping out, may not be a "bad thing" for certain "kinds" of youth completely abandoning Reagan's emphasis on basic education for all. Instead, there appears a subtle ideological seeding in the people flowering beliefs that "basic needs" are not universal, but somehow contingent or subjective, that they are different depending on the social standing and educational habitus of the family. An ideal all too close to those of a well-intentioned bourgeois sensibility of the Gilded Age, embedded within in it is the conceptual abandonment of universal forms, of which public education is its hallmark.

In 2012, former Superintendent Tony Smith of Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) spoke to crowds addressing the unimaginably high rates of dropouts in his district. In terms of the country's failing public education, whether it is through vaguely defined exemptions that emasculate attendance laws, through the failure to evaluate patterns of absenteeism, termination of truancy officers, through the failure to track truants or simply through fudged school records actual dropout rates have been made administratively mystified for decades. According to Smith, the dropout rate was an appalling 50% and something would be done about it under his administration. As families relished in possibility of change, the dropout crisis looked poised to receive much needed attention as a crisis warranting administrative priority. And yet, even the 50% was a polished estimate. Despite billboards declaring a 30% dropout rate, proclaiming that "everyone needs a boost" in seeking to build up a bank of mentor-based volunteers and its attendant system of volunteerism, dropout rates in crushed areas like Oakland were actually fluctuating upwards of 60-65 percent. These rates appeared to have a direct correspondence with poverty levels of a people, the latter also having risen to two-thirds for the black communities. In 2013, Oakland and other cities like Oakland were still in need of multi-dimensional

intervention that took as its end the healthy socially inclusive growth of the individual therein foregoing systemic administrative operations build and revolved around values of profit, power, control and push-out.

A Brief Review of Existing Analytic Frameworks Often Applied in the Study of Dropouts

In urban sociology, the human ecology paradigm developed with the rise of what is known as the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s preoccupied with the rapidly growing cities, a new urbanism and the constant move towards what would become globalization. The theory of human ecology is applied in the study of delinquents through Shaw and McKay's (1969) *Juvenile Delinquency in Urban Areas* using a standard ecological framework focused on sociality as a local sociality and the disorganization it harbors. Concerns for the immediate environment lead to consideration of the effects of mobility or lack thereof, the benefits of ethnic homogeneity and culturally adaptive strength all contributing to the social organization of an area. Similarly, Amos Hawley's (1950) *Human Ecology: A Theory of Community Structure* focused on the community as a complete and self-sustaining whole that is interdependent and constantly adapting to its physical and social environment, while adding an evolutionary image of communities and societies as part of a growth functionalism. Weak on political economy and structural determinism, human ecology also overstates symbiotically adaptive upgrading of community at the expense of human agency.

For most of the early-to-mid twentieth century, the dropout had been associated with the working class and its culture of labor, ethnic culture and/or delinquency. These understandings grew out of histories of the New York City slums, images of the hustler bad boy and the roll-over as young recruits into newly forming urban gangs. In part, this mirrors the mid-century Keynesian moral faith in upward mobilizing educational structures that had been used to construct the federal educational operations. Under Fordist/Keynesianism government, dropouts, when not taking up the vocational/trade route, that is, youth heading for a life of social outcast, delinquency and possibly prison, were naturally understood as exceptions to the rule of social mobility channels via public education and/or trades. Even during the mid-century period of Growth Liberalism, this analytic lens prevailed emphasizing the psycho-sociology of delinquency with heavy focus on family, neighborhood, ethnicity, socio-economic status. It was not until structural, systemic, trans-local factors came to carry too much causal strength rushing in the pressures of the Civil Rights movement that a revolutionary way of explaining failure refashioned popular and scholarly perception, forcing a reanalysis in the study of youth.

In the 1960s, with growing recognition of constrained mobility so clearly entangled in institutional operations, questions of economics, class, social reception, and, specifically, of opportunity or the lack thereof, began to influence the study of dropouts and delinquency. In their classic study of delinquency, *Delinquency and Opportunity*, Cloward and Ohlin (1966) provided a critical account of delinquency stressing the limits of opportunity patterns, social strain, and the disparity between what lower-class youth are led to want and what is actually available to them as the source of a major problem of adjustment. Explaining youth risk through societal structure, they concluded that the key realms of societal production, economic, social, particularly the education system – and politics, so often overlooked in accounting for youth – influenced the prospect of youth achievement and social mobility. In the Black community a

similar idea is captured by youth themselves, as one young man from West Oakland explained, “Everyone knows you have to work twice as hard to get half as much as the White person.” The point, when incorporating how society is represented in the schools, among political officials, and within the household from parents and community members, is that youth are moving headlong into a major collision with belief where the constantly heard belief that personal failure is their own doing has already come to haunt them and tear apart their sense of self.

By the 1970, New Urban Sociology (NUS) has emerged rejecting human ecology focusing instead on class distinctions, issues of subjugation, inequality, oppression, difference between use value and exchange value among labor markets, micro-macro linkages, and other structural considerations. And yet, despite the 2000s lost decade of stagnation and drift including heightened exclusion, widening inequality, deepening poverty, stagnant or downward mobility (aka “stuck” per street slang) – all seemingly straining earlier ecological perspectives – the insights of NUS were largely muffled. NUS depictions of the dialectic relation between youth and socio-institutional constellations had yet to achieve widespread notoriety in both the popular and scholarly imagination, thwarting traction in the collective social imaginary, unlike images of the individuated subjects with said ‘acceptable’ or ‘poor’ performance in a sea of opportunity. Tragically, Martin Luther King Jr’s prophecy that, inadequately accounted for, America’s poor and disadvantaged are left to fluctuate helplessly between explosive encounters at the one extreme, and docile acquiescence at the other, with little socio-political structural engagement mollifying familial needs in between, is borne out four generations later.

With the rise of new urban sociology (NUS) in the 1970s, riding the wave of critical theory and critical functionalism – traditional urban sociology focusing on environment, technology, adaptation and functional necessity as motors of development was superseded or at least combined. NUS challenged functionalist assumptions behind much of urban ecology and modernization theory, which held as an underlying assumption the abundance and affluence in the country’s seeming growth-bound society. As a victory for progressive perspective, NUS revitalized focus on social inequality, conflict structures, geographies of scale, political economy, and even dependency/world systems analyses, though it was a victory that would prove largely temporary. With NUS, world systems began to blur with local ecological accounts as a new emphasis was placed upon the role of business interests, corporate incentives, political power alliances, and other *platforms of scale* moving between local, state, national and global. Increasingly, people spoke in terms of the global city where analyses sought to explain the complex weave of multiple scales and multiple strains creating forces of circumstance at the level of local space, acting upon groups, families, institutions and individuals. Robert Blauner’s *Racial Oppression in America* (1972) offered a classic account of applied dependency theory at the level of the inner-city providing an elaborate account of what had become referred to as ‘internal colonialism’ at the time, a variant of NUS.¹⁶ It is also during this time that *correspondence theory*, a form of conflict theory, is applied in the field of education where the argument is made for structural correspondence between working class schools (education) and working class lives (cf. Bowles & Gintis, 1976) another off-shoot of NUS.

¹⁶ Other scholars taking up the theory of Black America as an internal colony included members of the Black Panther Party, such as Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton in *Black Power* (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967).

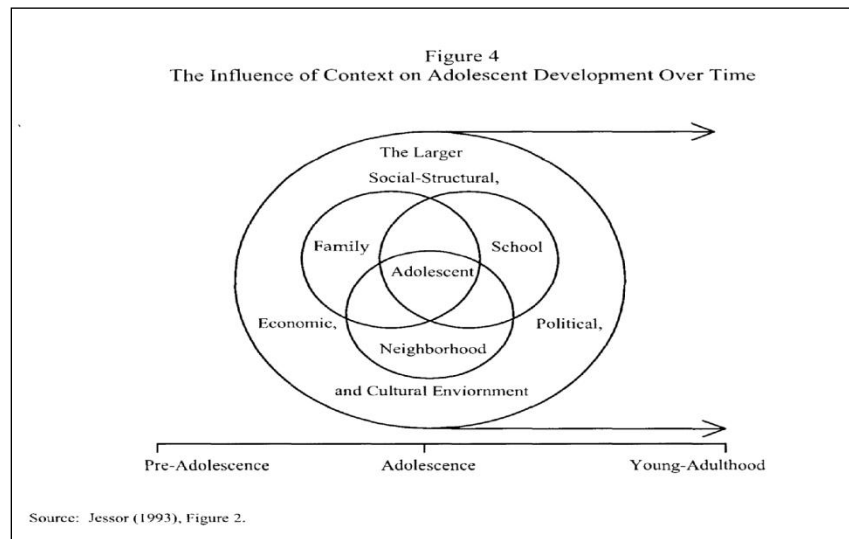
Reaganomics would not only do its best to “correct” for the structuralist preoccupation with political economy and systemic determinism, to achieve this aversion of new ideas regarding accountability, it would invoke old principles of locally-disposed human ecology, rebirthing a more fervent individualism. Neither dropping out nor incarceration would be described as systemic processes of controlled production, but rather as marginal behavior requiring alternative solutions. In the 1980s, the idea of ‘at risk youth’ – with the emphasis on ‘youth’ over ‘risk’ became more commonplace. It complimented the new post-Keynesian philosophy where governance attention was increasingly focused on a combination of conservative values: individual responsibility, service of v. service towards, competitive advantage, and trickle down gains. The social milieu outside of the institution in the recessed neighborhood took on the image of a stark no man’s land; it was continually argued that it was not the responsibility of government where it rose or fell of its own accord. The youth that slipped through the cracks of decentralized institutions offering service learning oriented training were increasingly likely to encounter a life marked by hardship. At the same time, Reaganomics marked government’s early retreat from its commitment enforcing “doable,” based on ‘reasonable and necessary’, cost ceilings on utilities, food, education, healthcare and/or rent allowing free market pricing into the lives of the socially disadvantaged. The model created a situation of societal risk while invariably increasing the number of at risk individuals within society. The individualistic approach to youth risk would be quickly blown up through governance/management rationale, and scholarly accounts, in this way invoking the enclosure of the early ecological accounts while avoiding the systemic, structural and/or super-structural accounts demanding a far more stringent analysis of where socio-political forces steer social production and negative reproduction.¹⁷

Human ecology’s focus on POET (i.e., population, organization, environment and technology) is also revitalized in the 1980s as seen in the popular post-modernism, while the ideas of the 1970s emphasizing dependency systems, structured determinism, and political economy wane. Though suspicious of classical notions of truth, reason, identity, objectivity, of the idea of universal progress, singular frameworks as “one size fits all”, grand narratives and other Enlightenment norms – postmodernism emerges preoccupied with difference and local culture – which could easily devolve towards supporting theories like ‘neighborhood effect’ and does. Postmodernism’s focus on difference, giving rise to ruminations of ‘self-ownership’ and ‘local autonomy’ proved a fitting mellifluous cultural compliment accompanying the urban neoliberal transformation with its promise of universal gains through individuated, localized, decentered semi-autonomous empowerment. At the level of politics, it was a case of political punditry working both sides of the street in what would prove a winning strategy: a polemic of self-serving aspirants competing for personal success while subjects, students or nations, were said to be universally blessed with a ‘competitive advantage’ where there could be no losers. In terms of political economy, it was like reaching the Promised Land. For a country in the process of reviving its traditional “soul of a church,” the promise of community revitalization and local power gave a localized anchor to economic individualism’s widespread appeal. Meanwhile, its polemic of universal gain through its one-size-fits-all global solution would cease circulation as a central theme once structurally embedded in the urban infrastructure in which case adherents didn’t really matter. Seemingly pulling the public in opposite directions in fact these twin

¹⁷ Books highlighting the inverse of individual risk, that is, societal risk, emerged shortly after Thatcherism and Reaganomics had undone the welfare state while destabilizing social space, eliminating regulatory stabilities and dismantling societal/political power sharing (cf. Beck, 1992).

ideologies were pulled upon- and entertained on an as-needed basis to legitimize arrest, for instance, of escalating nonviolent crimes, and its antithetical counterpoint, an exclusionary-based structural transformation of urban infrastructure. While this playing both sides of the street continued, its advocates deftly claimed universal applicability on the one hand, and localized individualism on the other. Meanwhile, America stood ever-ready behind an unflinching faith in its own freedom.

Though there remained a critical edge in its urban analyses, with the new life of post-modern theory preoccupied with culture and localism as instigators – it was unmistakably less radical than theories of marginality from the 1960s and 1970s that had argued for internal colonialism and dependency. Combining ideas of negative social reification, the 1980’s turn towards culture in the social sciences saw resurgent use of variations on the theme of ‘culture of poverty’ to explain delinquency and drift. At the time, radical perspectives on delinquency and dropout bravely synthesized the popular focus on culture with the earlier focus on structure. This socio-cultural structuralism was integrated with early ecological ideas of environment focusing on family and peer relations, school environment – all of which was said to be internalized at the level of the individual youth habitus (cf. Willis, 1981; MacLeod, 1987).



The following 1993 diagram reflects the 1950s human ecology approach to urban living in explaining youth behavior. It also happens to be a perspective revitalized under the conservative politics of the 1980s when very localized accounts of bad behavior, particularly when tied to family practice, were used to explain welfare uses and abuses. As a highly simplistic model, it is also the fundamental conceptual design legitimizing conservative rejection of public government departments as besieged with ‘bureaucratic inefficiency’. Additionally, this localized institutionality is also used to attack public schools said to be comprised of lazy unionized/job secure teaching staff slackers. Able to explain poor family practice, poor school achievement/underachievement, and poor peer behavior/delinquency, from a conservative perspective, there is little more to the story. In not exploring institutional transformation/decimation politics and the realignment of decision-making power among the

private sector, it is an account that works in their favor. However, the fact that low-income households had the most to gain from government social service intervention and the most to lose from welfare/social service retrenchment/cuts is no less true, in which case thirty years of welfare-, labor market-, socio-political organizing- retrenchment has to, on some level, complicate a localized account of youth transition (cf. Males, 1996). In the very least, having considered a twenty-year dropout trajectory and how it corresponds with other trends highlighting socio-inclusionary dis'-engagement, the enclosed triad of 'family, school and neighborhood' cannot capture the experiences of the growing legions of poor of the urban *Hungry City*. With many being arrested and others relocating, without actual figures or giving voice to the personal account, there is a great likelihood that, with the persistence of this antiquated account, that the historical record will also fail to capture the deeper sublime experiences of city dwellers in the painful kaffuffle forever marking its great period of transition.

Considering current trends in the rising rate of poverty and deep poverty, it is not uncommon to hear suggestions that current generations and their services are being ransomed for the well-being of today's affluent populations (cf. Davis, 1999; H. A. Giroux, 2003; Males, 1996). This notion seems well supported when considering that far more children are among the growing numbers of deep poor while funding for traditional public education continues a financial plummet matched by ideological disdain and widespread criticism.¹⁸ For critical ecologist, educator and child psychologist, Nanette Davis, this is simply an insult to the American people noting that "Youth problems are not an American aberration but a reflection of fundamental features of American society."¹⁹ Drawing deep insights from looking at youth trends in across the panorama of social fields including health, education, security, and safety, Davis warns the country of an imminent crisis in the new century tied to a social neglect that creates a settling in of "wasted lives." Davis thinks she sees destabilizing forms of governance blinded by desire, ideas, and ideologies forfeiting social justice producing and rapidly reproducing "surplus risk." Specifically, in naming specific modes of risk, Davis highlights: structured uncertainty; job deskilling, job losses, familial breakdown due to job losses; misplaced political faith in rational choice-making concealing actual short-term governance with little by way of long-term planning; lack of a living wage for the country's poor; consumer-consciousness luring youth into practices of conspicuous consumption; lack of social participation; lack of a premium on social equity unbalanced in terms of class, race, ethnicity, age; lack of premium on social justice in terms of risk reduction calling forth criminal solutions; lack of concern for sliding-scale costs incorporating notions of ability to pay and tenability for poor; lack of compassion surrounding cult of individualism.²⁰ An early voice of insight largely lost to the political wilderness, Davis' model for youth crisis could be summarized as follows:

¹⁸ In terms of the neoliberal ideological turning indelibly tied to social perception the films, *Waiting For Superman* (2010), and *Won't Back Down* (2012) are instructive in providing a summary arguments of said inadequacies of old model public education using words like "broken." These films are not mere criticisms; the primary theme of the films is the promotion of alternative institutional charter schooling – a phenomenon sweeping the nation integral to the Great Recession/Silent Depression and, ultimately, Great Transformation (cf. Ravitch, Diane, 2011).

¹⁹ Davis provides an early concise structural account of social risk, noting that too often what is taken for the crisis are really temporary indispositions, psychological shifts or transitions to a different status group (e.g., midlife crisis).

²⁰ According to Davis, the systemic problem that generated the crisis in the first place tends to be ignored (e.g., ageism, corporate oligopolies, addictions, violence in the family, and others (Davis, 1999).

High Social Crisis + High Risk + Low Justice = Youth Crisis²¹

While such structural accounts of delinquency and risk continue to remain at the margins of both scholarly and mainstream perception, it is a perspective all but inherent in the beliefs and operational imperatives of the Great Society's attempt at leveling inequality through enhanced socio-inclusionary engagement. From this perspective, social risk in a society having undone its social infrastructure is everywhere; it permeates every aspect of youths' lives impossible to miss.

Having become the *vulnerable among the vulnerable*, the disadvantaged youth of the coming century were poised to have their "twig-bending years" interrupted not by run of the mill friendship scuffles and sports team tiffs, but by deep instability, resource deprivation, surveillance, and governance use of individual responsibility. The poor minority young adults had found themselves in a position analogous to a dependent nation: success was highly contingent on the good fortune of receiving limited opportunity and not the good fortune of flowing through mobility pipelines the lit both schools and the training houses. It was a position virtually antithetical to the early 1970s when the Black Panther Party (BPP) marched down the streets of Oakland in solidarity, attending a local low-cost community college of the urban flatlands melding citizen rights in their defense. At the same time, corresponding to this socio-historical moment is the proliferation of political and educational countervailing forces as increasing numbers pursue socio-economic justice forcing the American socio-political center that much further left. With the rise of mechanical interaction – including police securitization over traditional school security within working class public schools – the criminal state began to soar in the early 1990s. A time when the unemployment rate of, for instance, Los Angeles' South Central, exceeded 60% among young Latinos and Blacks, the illegal economy grew as a more reliable market, not to mention its potential for social respectability, acceptance, engagement and a chance for interaction reifying cultural identity. At the same time, these street markets held a certain allure that was increasingly difficult to find in the working man's grind: hierarchies of "mobility" making the brothers working through street economies pragmatists much more than they were hustlers or hucksters. As observed by more than one young man, a stable gig is hard to find. *And yet, they were still unprepared for the ensuing 'double retrenchment' from a military/criminalizing state fortifying a prison economy in lieu of a consumer economy and social services/state.* Marking the beginning of Krugman's "Generation Recession", the young adults come of age in the late 1990s were not moving generationally from poverty to working opportunities, nor from poverty to poverty as their parents' generation but often from poverty to deeper poverty. For many looking around the streets, something was not right, looking at the trash, the blight, the tensions, the filth, a struggling community spirit, and the base hunger, it was as if the country of their birth was no longer fit the nomenclature 'land of the free' – at least not in particular parts. But no one provided any kind of "head's up" in terms of the way things were moving, instead it was a process of trial and error, hide and seek, survival of the fittest. Meanwhile, the 2000s would be, as one local resident summed up, "a different more scathing kind of desperate."

In the 1990s, the subject of dropouts had reestablished itself as a topic separate from delinquent. The majority of dropout theories since this time continue to reflect America's conservative academic disposition, with most theories able to be set in the larger context of human ecology,

²¹ Davis, 1999, p. 42.

urban ecology or behavioral psychology. These theories include the idea of “tipping factor,”²² “broken windows,”²³ “neighborhood effect,” and job opportunity “pull-out” theories. All three theories use local environment to explain youth action and group contagion. The conservative tendency is to focus on community neglect and in the case of theories of job opportunity pullout, positive job prospects.²⁴ Whether a derelict subject or whether it is a case of positive job prospects, what all theories have in common is that the dropout crisis is not the fault of capital, markets or those aspects of a governance system that ostensibly work increasingly to their defense and/or “betterment”. As a result, a conservative framework advocating universal growth capitalism for all while offering up community as a self-sustaining whole of memory and action undermines and weakens the study of youth risk by forcing it in the direction of antiquated indicators, theories as popular for what is said as they are what it is omitted entirely. In the same way that “neighborhood effect” frameworks are often limited by containing paradigmatic assumptions, stripping back vital aspects of the robust social, the study of youth risk is also limited by the idea of ‘risk’ as revolved around the individual in one’s immediate environment therein fitting neatly into this slightly larger local ecological net.

Despite a major theoretical sea change and the obvious relevance of the world-systems perspective to cities, comparative urban sociology remains heavily influenced by the earlier developmentalist assumptions of modernization theory and human ecology (cf. Smith, 1995). However, Smith believes that they will be understood in a political economic context that appears to be the victory of sixty years of scholarly rebuff. And yet, in 2012, structural accounts remained at the margins battling for recognition of political economy and the structural transformation of control-based operations and systems. Not surprisingly, they are contending with heavily funded conservative theories (including human ecology, post-modernism, neoliberalism and genetic inferiority) creating a fusion of ideas difficult to dispute when historically calling out from the social margins. In terms of high school dropouts, neighborhood effect *could* include the impact of long-term exposure to concentrated social disadvantage in this way forcing the institutional lens into operational hierarchies, but for the most part will not.²⁵ For educator, Russell Rumberger, school performance, absenteeism, and truancy are very clearly symptoms of larger social problems (Rumberger, 2011). For Wacquant, as with many before him including Gary Orfield, Nanette Davis, Douglas Massey, Richard Cloward, and Robert Blauner, neighborhood effect is the material manifestation of a bigger story of power. It is this

²² Crane’s tipping factor argues that percents matter in a neighborhood. That is, when the percentage of delinquents becomes too great the neighborhood youth are at risk (Crane, 1991).

²³ Broken windows, like tipping factor, argued that when there was a preponderance of ‘broken windows’ or other signs of blight and neglect in a neighborhood that it encouraged delinquent behavior as it implied a tacit form of disinterest and/or neighborhood responsible commitment (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). However, since PRWORA welfare reform and the rise of the criminal state in the 1990s, it is arguably more representative of now-closed one-time up and running service centers for community members young and old.

²⁴ Interestingly, both Crane’s article on tipping factors and Kelling & Wilson’s on broken windows are extremely brief. With little actual time in the field, they nonetheless became anchors to the conservative account of risk.

²⁵ For instance, writing in 2011, Wodtke, Harding and Elwert maintain that neighborhood effect has greater importance in the case of excessive exposure to disadvantaged neighborhoods, an old theory reinvigorated. It is said that growing up in the lowest quintile reduced probability of graduation from 96% to 76% for Black youth and 95% to 87% for nonblack youth (Wodtke, Harding, & Elwert, 2011). Though showing a large discrepancy to Whites, these percentages are half the high school noncompletion rates found in other studies (cf. Orfield, G., et al., 2004). In part because of these low estimates, explanations of social disadvantage and localized accounts carry more resonance than structural and/or systemic accounts.

story of power that has come to be animated through a robust Neoliberal City with its nonsocial social. In this context, how is it that youth are made to feel disposable, disengaged, and/or disconnected before even contending with the challenges of political gridlock, weak legal defense, job scarcity, or having yet sought social aid?

***Structurally Seamless Distancing and Dis'-engagement:
Youth Drift thru Cracks in a City's Production Regime Archipelago***

In 1962, Michael Harrington wrote his classic work on America's hidden poor, *The Other America*. Harrington questioned if there were "even a cynical motive for caring about the poor, as in the old days?" (Harrington, 1997) Meanwhile, societal-political forms of exclusion, social exclusion, surplus status and disposability have only been heightened to inconceivable levels since this time. Like Harrington, the following work also takes the view of grossly divided cities far beyond mere income disparities. In an effort to reference these 'two faces' of the city reference is made to the *Hungry City*, that aspect of the city affected by austerity, marginalizing and gentrifying operations often in the extreme. On the other hand, the *Image Ready City* refers to that aspect of the city "eligible" for consideration in media coverage and/or made visible to a commuter class (e.g., large training facility placards visible when riding the Bay Area Rapid Transit to work in San Francisco though serving a limited number of students).

The following work provides a number of conceptual frames to assist in recasting the dropout crisis and the larger youth crisis. In drawing from insights gained through studying the city of Oakland as a case study, concepts and visual graphs are provided to achieve these ends. In particular, central to the work are the following: 1) the move from governance seeking social control animated through multiple social arenas (e.g., education, health, welfare, markets) to governance seeking to construct a *control social* animated through *production regime* operations to include the mobilizing/demobilizing *social production* flows through what amounts to constellative *supra-institutional channels and pipelines*. A second central focus is 2) the search by youth and young adults for a more vital socio-inclusionary exposure-based engagement, political agency/political voice, and 'animated' (socio-economic) agency [i.e., *EVA*] ushering forth a deeper inclusion beyond the single event or task.²⁶ Though taken up in greater detail in the following Methodology Section, a more detailed outline is provided here as part of the preliminary introduction to these conceptual frameworks/theoretical findings.

Both Cloward and Ohlin's (1966) theory of youth delinquency, opportunity, drift, and Harrington's study of America's poor stress political exclusion as integral to a larger picture of systemic exclusion. Similarly, Charles V. Hamilton's (1973) reading of racial oppression includes failed education and training, joblessness, and political powerlessness as part of a 'disempowering constellation' of forces. With widening wealth/power polarization since the 1970s, and a receding sense of the role of social programs concurrent with a receding belief in an inclusive social requiring government commitment to the good of social investment, what sort of national growth model could positively touch the lives of its poor? Emphasizing the dynamic exchange between a city's marginalized and its neoliberal contiguous order (i.e., those aspects of a city animating neoliberal protocol, policy, and directives including values, ethics, and weak

²⁶ Both conceptual frames are laid out in greater detail in the Methods section.

participatory decision-making internal and external to institutional operations), the meaning of neoliberalism reaches well beyond the realm of political economy. And yet, it remains little defined or understood in terms of this extensive structurally-embedded deepening entrenchment and influence.

Jason Hackworth (2007) works hard to define a far more subtle and elusive Neoliberal City than merely a far right politic that rejects egalitarian liberalism and the Keynesian welfare state embracing instead ideas of individualism, free market, choice, and small government. As a mode of city governance and driver of urban change, policy developments and, more importantly, political power dynamics, adhere to the same structured transformation begun at the level of state years before. However, in honing in on contingent actually-existing amorphous neoliberalism, the Neoliberal City is understood as both a series of processes and the operational parameters that define and/or enable processual channels through which singular processes, laws, incentivizing and so on, happens. The Neoliberal City is increasingly built upon a negative liberty focusing on less government intervention though government social state intervention has historically done more for the country's poor than any other institution. It is also built upon the regulation of people and deregulation of profit-making giving rise to an inverse control creating a 'control social' where used to be the more perfunctory 'social control' of the since passed Great Compression (inequality reduction) ending in the early 1970s.

Experiencing increasing forms of hierarchy, inequality, exclusion, invariably reendowing new forms of segregation, and exploitation, the masses are left to compete amongst each other groping for leftovers including, in the *Hungry City*, cigarette butts for smokers and recycling routes for those in on the recycling street economy. Relative to the large support infrastructure upon which the working class mass stood in the mid-twentieth century, the individual worker now teeters on his or her own self-made pedestal. With a new power-to-people dynamic revolved around control/discipline and not social inclusion/social mobility, the military/criminal state grows outward claiming the majority of what remains of the state. No longer just an aspect of a larger state, defense becomes its purpose *sin qua non* creating a state dynamic very different to western nations spending less than 10% of their budget on the military reserving a large percent of the budget for social services. Whether drawing from feudal models, both negative liberty of the Gilded Age and of today have as vital to their production: legalized slavery, highly selective suffrage/political inclusion, debtor's prison, and hyper-exploited forms of disposable labor including workfare and prisonfare. According to Noam Chomsky, such a socio-political dynamic necessarily produces a truncated 'lower bottoms' within the social hierarchy, with rising numbers of social outcast. At the same time, the one-time 'lower bottoms' urban edge neighborhoods are being transformed through production regimes that animate educational, health, job, juridical, carceral, political, housing, and social service operations. Geared towards an *Image-Ready* consumer city, it still uses images of its great artists, including Billie Holiday, and cultures of the one-time bohemian urban outlands, in revamping its streets and thoroughfares. In transforming the urban outer ring, it literally 'paves the way' crafting a new commuter class' home-base cultural milieu as a feel-good counterpoint to a more bureaucratic work environment. Different however than the original era of bohemianism is the loss of tolerance for others when money flowed, the city was "clicking", gambling was legal, music played all day out of people's houses, and front yards were lined with tables and umbrellas as neighbors played cards games in the sun. Part of this difference includes a large reduction in

minority-owned and run businesses. Another part of the difference is the fear factor behind the random neighborhood shooting too common in the opinion of West Oakland's lower bottoms' residents.

The neoliberal project shows an obsessive preoccupation with the "fortress mindset." Fear is widely used to cultivate beliefs systems and action, which in turn welcomes stringent policing and watchdog politics as "necessary and just" unlike during the Great Compression/Leveling when people sought alternatives to stringent policing and watchdog politics. Invariably divisive, the idea of humankind recedes while sensibilities revolve around ideas of legitimate privilege and, conversely, justified suffering of the socially disadvantaged and/or wrongdoers. A fractious and civically ruinous disdain for 'the other' continues to make its return further dividing the country. Since Reaganomics summarily spelled out the new political economy 30 years ago, the Neoliberal City has never come to the aid of socially disadvantaged in numbers that would raise up the same low-income community and/or reassert social mobility between generations as previously established. And yet, its paradigm has hardly slowed in implementation.

The inclination for government to run social assistance through the private sector and ignore the fiscal inefficiency it creates becomes more obvious when factoring the percentages of incarcerated in such neighborhoods, and the newly created "million dollar blocks" often from a one-time working class homes with residential numbers turned \$25k a head annually for numbers incarcerated.²⁷ But the fact of fiscal inefficiency no longer forces government reforms as it would have in the 1970s when the desire was to bring down the Keynesian state with its War on Poverty/Great Society governance and claims of 'bureaucratic inefficiency' could singularly collapse programs (cf. Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Continually building its (inverted) 'control social' machinery through its social imaginary, the influence upon popular belief systems and, most importantly, through the ideological parameters instructing the shape of operational channels (upward or downward as in the case of the school>dropout>prison pipeline). In the spirit of Bowles and Gintis (1976), it is a sequence that corresponds with- as well as corroborates the prevailing neoliberal market gestalt of "profit over people".

Among the detained, it has been estimated that up to 80% are former dropouts, over 50% of whom have less than elementary level reading skills, and over 50% of whom experienced some form of push-out at some point in their education. These statistics are from an era when the idea of relying on the judiciary to come to one's defense has proven questionable. By 2010, the idea of dual juridical outcomes depending on class, race, offense, was increasingly widespread nestling into the larger phenomenon of growing desperation among the underclass contending with weakening civil rights and income losses, both undermining the chance of affording costs and probationary/parole requirements tied to sentencing. There was a growing awareness of the institutionalizing of uneven outcomes most hauntingly within the juridical divide (cf. C. Hamilton, 1973; M. Mauer, 1999; G. Greenwald, 2012). A divided America, separate and unequal, is not a byproduct of neoliberal process but rather its product wrapped around permanent exclusion, which wraps around vast riches and extreme wealth inequality.

Whereas liberals and labor alike once opposed the negative correspondence between inferior education and the production of low wage working classes stirring the civil rights movement, the

²⁷ See The Sentencing Project, <http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/index.cfm>

neoliberal project's *complex correspondence*, seamless between production regimes, produces a more intense version of the same negative correspondence. As a result, the idea of nationalist semi-autonomy or community self-determination – as imagined in the 1960s when the federal government had some form of structural commitment to its self-determination – floats into the political distance. Michelle Alexander explains how apartheid today happens both spatially and institutionally giving way to a new 3-dimensional (3D) oppression requisite to system-wide inequality and what she reads as a reinvigorated Jim Crow. Applying a similar logic, exclusionary forms within neoliberal *complex correspondence* also include 3D modes of political disengagement, spatially, as with heightened policing, and institutionally, as with the repeal of the 1964 Voter Rights Act in 2013. Less discussed, in the case of *complex correspondence*, there is also a 3D oppression tied to educational/training inequality, spatially, through inferior schools, resources and services inequality, and institutionally, through the collapsed supra-institutional socio-communal lattice web –once a heart of neighborhood's *vital social*.

The following work argues for a *complex correspondence* working across key areas of societal production and negative social reproduction for socially disadvantaged largely minority communities. The Neoliberal City is understood as central to the rise as social risk, the latter giving way to 'at risk' youth. Oppressive force and extreme forms of social control are observed through the lens of 3-dimensional socio-institutional operations and organization moving beyond the 2-dimensionality of limited environmental accounts. This oppressive force is deceptive and difficult to dissect. *First*, it occurs in the name of equality, liberty and justice, while continually refashioning the meaning and definition of each in the same way that it has seized and redefined the social system of production. *Second*, it is operating not simply through a constellation of institutions, but through their *constellative supra-institutions* involving multiple institutions and the streaming/crippled operations between them. In examining the Neoliberal City through its production regimes and their *constellative supra-institution*, it is accepted that these supra institutions are greater than sum of their singular institution parts therein decisive in determining social outcomes, as well as the life of a city as a whole. The three *constellative supra-institutions* most destructive to the lives of youth and their community in the contemporary period explored throughout are:

A weak hobbled *supra-institutional consortia lattice* crucial to social mobility, opportunity, stability, purpose, and healthy *exposure-based engagement as active acceptance*. This includes upwardly mobile pipelines (school>OTJ>job) and channels as training causeways, often stipend-based, running through all public schools.

A brash *control social* increasingly defining low-wage employee/public school student standards while amplifying downward mobility pipelines (e.g., school>dropout>prison). Crippled "3-D" participatory political form of dynamic socio-inclusionary engagement crucial to a balance of incorporated forces in the political arena of active voice.

Youths' Search for EVA Amidst Institutionally Seamless '4-D' Disadvantage, Deprivation, Push-Down and Dis'-engagement

A popular slang on the street is when you hear someone explain, "The brother got dis'd," leaving the outsider to wonder is that 'dis'd' as in 'dismissed' or as in 'discredited' or 'disrespected'? Tellingly, 'dis'd' offers the person distance (from an incident) *and* resistance (to the same incident) enabling them to objectify the experience to make sense of it. As a language

that enlightens social condition, it is not unlike youths' street slang incorporating a language of "stuck" when referring to both a (3-D) vertical and horizontal socio-economic stagnation and/or individual bad habits. Words like "dis'd" exemplify how language, like street art, points to a tension-fraught environment marked by- and telling of- repeated forms of disengagement or, in terms of the view from the street: dis'-engagement. Aiding in making sense of social conditions, while students may need a little bit of time to wrap their imagination around the scope of socio-economic or socio-political fields in the tenth grade classroom, if approaching the topics through youths' own language, the scholarly light bulb can light up that much faster. These forms of expression also provide a dynamic street language of alternative interpretations to counter official interpretation in this way shoring up a personal buttress of reason and identity, preventing against being sucked up by mainstream accounts.

The very need for unique meaning in the language suggests a distance between youth perception while come of age and mainstream surroundings. It also points to the social space of the marginalized. It tells of a voice and a perspective that often learns that he/she must work around a system in order to benefit from a system, for instance, where operational barriers, legalization laws, age-out, age-in laws are constantly at work altering the experience of coming of age for the marginalized youth. Resources and services are increasingly legally of an inferior quality. Manifest expressions of inferior standards range anywhere from feebly positioned, feebly resourced, shoddily run, financially unstable and/or requiring fiscal gaming to continue operations, run through volunteerism precluding wage labor, and, in the worst cases, given to abrupt, potentially overnight shut-down leaving a sense of socially disposable and communally disappeared. With this kind of utter uncertainty and instability contributing to the indelible impression of society, youth seek a kind engagement that transcends the classroom. They seek substantive engagement that works at the level of society, that is, socio-inclusionary engagement and/or at the level of community. Examples of these forms of engagement include high-functioning training opportunities with job pipelines, creative arts projects, and/or local gang involvement. For the most part, the socio-inclusionary engagement v. classroom engagement connects the youth to society and community, while at the same time imbuing the young man or woman with valuable skills and a habitus revolved around skill-building.

The decentralization in youth services taking governance out of the hands of public government is integral to the larger neoliberal package, but by 2010-2011, walking the streets of West Oakland, it was clear that this had meant a recession-justified trend of getting less rather than any kind of new and improved system that would level inequality of distribution and operations. In 2011, there was an absolute dearth of services in both West Oakland and North Oakland. While the integrity of non-governmental operations (NGO's) was in question as more stories came forward telling of international corruption, mis-use of funds, and poor management. Youth-service NGO's, it was local youth who paid the ultimate price in experiencing the negative effects of "trickle down" and decentralizing private-run over the former universality of public learning. It is in this context that one youth pointed out that West Oakland wasn't more than a wasteland, noting that, in 2011, there was little else to contribute to socio-inclusionary engagement beyond skateboard parks. In 2012, impressions began to change, making 2011 the high water mark of local austerity. However, this was not because there was a renewed investment in the people or a commitment to inclusive development. In 2012, gentrification was newly charged alongside outside buy-up of foreclosed housing stock, and city government was

finding money to redevelop blighted areas. But, these projects were almost always near gentrifying neighborhoods and/or flatland rims, including West Oakland's north and west edges.

The Gilded Age saw the greatest distance between opulence and poverty next to our own Neoliberal era. At the time, "...society was rent by two opposing influences: the one emanating from paternalism and protecting labor from the dangers of the market system; the other organizing the elements of production, including land, under a market system, and thus divesting the common people of their former status, compelling them to gain a living by offering their labor for sale, while at the same time depriving their labor of its market value." Because of the maladministration of Poor Laws of 1834, there was "an almost miraculous increase in production accompanied by a near starvation of the masses" (Polanyi, 1944). A historical pattern taking in our own era, the more a people are denied authentic political inclusion and meaningful engagement. A plague-like social contagion, the more they are targeted as criminal, the more these people turn away cynically from the larger social apparatus, including education, and political apparatus, including voting, becoming a process of dis'-engagement reinforced through a insular exposure to the local and immediate. The resulting social alienation, laden with distrust and suspicion feeds a negative social reproduction of downward mobility including the prison pipeline. And yet, in terms of what youths seek, there is, more so for the young boy or girl still piecing together his or her own set of social beliefs, a desire for active acceptance, that is, a 'doing acceptance' beyond talk of racial harmony.

Following Polanyi, a tale of individuated at risk youth, delinquents, misfits, street urchins fits into a maladministrated political landscape operationalized beyond the local while defining the local. And yet, seemingly caught, it is this widespread seamless phenomenon of being erased politically, legislatively, economically and socially only to be more exploited that follows the maladjusted person – a libelous shadow. The ultimate dis' is a social 'dis' emanating from institutional and supra-institutional forms and framing. *It is an exclusionary dis'ing that threatens to incapacitate the youth whose emotions turn inward as energy flows outward in part contributing to escalating violence. In terms of the social ecology in which this takes place, it is against the press of an ideological landscape intensely fractured and adamantly or often unwittingly opposed²⁸ to laying mobilizing supra-institutional pipelines for the socially disadvantaged.²⁹* It quickly becomes a kind of push-down/out dis'ing where the bulk of the economic collapse is pushed onto the backs of its "socially disadvantaged" and "resource deprived." An unfortunate tell-tale sign in itself, the 180 degree turnaround as to where the country was and where it has come is embodied in the fact that both its *values* and its reifying *growth strategies* – previously focusing heavily on the "resource deprived" and the "socially disadvantaged" – have led this needy faction to become virtual targets of exclusion or "tolerated" through weak forms of nominal inclusion.

²⁸ The unwittingly opposed are a growing percentage made to believe through, for instance, the media deluge, that they are doing good and serving the socially disadvantaged when, in fact, they are endorsing more of the same hyperneoliberal agenda albeit more "reform" and "community" oriented in these advanced stages of development.

²⁹ The subject of the stranglehold of neoliberal ideology is one of deepening complexity throughout the current century in this advanced stage and pace of the neoliberal idealism against a growing ubiquity and indelibility of its material bulwark. Advanced, the country is driven at accelerating speeds into the embrace of its decentralized, commonwealth puritan past what may well be the antiquated face of the future's late hyper-modern.

The assertion the relation between extreme inequality as social polarization becoming a tool of the political economy in an undemocratic politic of control communities is hardly news neither to the political scientist or the local grassroots movement. Echoing *Michel's (1911) Iron Law of Oligarchy*, it was Pressman who – reflecting on Oakland's politics of the late 1960s under the challenges of socio-political resistance, strength, and organization on the part of the people – noted in his observation of the hazards of public leadership when choosing business management tactics that:

When conflict increases, set expectations break down and the environment may be manipulated by the leader. A mayor may serve as mediator between conflicting groups; he may seek to upgrade the common interest; or he may take advantage of a conflict situation to support the party with whom he agrees. - *Pressman, 1975, p. 46-47*

All too reminiscent of a hyper-modern 'power management' decay governance seen today, it was Oakland's Mayor Reading (1966-1967) who in the late 1960s concluded that the "problem" of city politics was due to uncompromising groups. Specifically, a republican seeking political power in a city becoming increasingly democratic, Reading accused the "black militants" (BPP) of being a selfish self-interest group promoting conflict in refusing the good of the greater community (a euphemism for 'city'). For Reading, this was a root cause of political conflict whereas for the black community then, there has yet to be a community representative more committed than the BPP to community interests and advocacy for its young and old.³⁰

Without probing social framing, what is interpreted as bad behavior, delinquency, and a general unwillingness to cooperate is easily dis'engaged and disassociated from its social context. As a result, instinctual patterns of rebuff against the pressures of a retrenched social state and collapsed socio-communal mobility lattice in a shrinking neighborhood territory are passed over. Progress comes to include a loss of land and territory for the poor of an area in a social pattern dating back to when Jim Crow was legal and local environment was used to explain delinquency. The following work seeks to flesh out the relation between living in a risk society where operational uncertainty and instability mark out neighborhoods touching youths' lives. In accounting for the dropout crisis in relation to the breakdown of the socio-communal mobility lattice, the work observes the youth experience where youth seek solutions to the following crises:

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- I A crisis of socio-inclusionary *exposurial engagement*, disbelief, and disenchantment;
 - II A crisis of *political voice* both spatially and institutionally to the negation of a 3-dimensional socio-communal-charged political field;
 - II A crisis of *animated 'active' agency* reinforced where mutual respect and equal opportunity frame activities.

The tolerated public high school dropout fissure is possibly the largest hole in a city's mobility infrastructure, radically affecting the life of individual youth, the community, societal class

³⁰ Critical to the mounting political shift through the 1970s towards the right, it is critical to note a new adoration held for a said type of apolitical politician, "Reluctants" – as deemed Mayor Reading. Inclined towards what was to be far more disposed towards a business management approach to politics fused with an inclination towards uncompromising ethics and principles absent, it was thought to exist above the at the time slanderous influence of constituent compromise, bureaucratic gridlock and its plague of inefficiency.

dynamics and national perception of deserving and undeserving. Taken off guard, practices within the schools, including social promotion, enhance the probability that adrift youth will be picked up by dropout currents, flowing out of the school towards the street. Accustomed to the street, drawn in by the mystique of hustling in the eyes of a 15 year old, which works for a little while putting food on the table with cash left over, suddenly these youth are hit hard by consequences in ways never imagined, and never thoroughly explained to them in the classroom. Understandably, it is difficult to glean the intricacies of *complex correspondence* but what they do know is that it is increasingly hard to find a legitimate, financially and academically doable, entry point back into society. So many of the resources they need are not there. Looking back, they made a mistake, though in another era, it would not have been a mistake so much as the trade school alternative. They didn't know that they would be paying with their life. And yet, the majority of youth interviewed love their country, that is, the much touted freedom in America to attempt to make it, the prospect of starting a business. They are not resentful of another's success to their own failure so much as they celebrate it. When the money flows through the neighborhood – reasons don't really matter where, in lending a dollar, the man gives back a quarter only needing .75 cents.

Ultimately it works to the benefit of everyone in it, a fact appreciated by most in the neighborhood having watched this process their entire lives as the message from the church pew – to love the person next to you regardless of judgment – comes alive. To be able to celebrate this way, so long obscured, so long denied through misdirection and hardship, is its own authentic high. They know the difference between when a city is alive and when it is collapsing internally, when the clubs are empty and the buildings have “space available” signs outside. They celebrate when their city is clicking, when it is alive. They want a healthy vital city even though some know that entire blocks are owned by one person or an investment firm in Florida. They look past this kind of inequality. They celebrate another man's success, and the very idea that he made it through the sweat of his brow. But they revile the idea that same man was shot dead innocently having labored to build up his enterprise, leaving a child; they are riddled with existential dread should it involve someone else in the community. They could infuse a place with life, that is, if the circumstances were to meet them half way, but currently the circumstances steer youth in the opposite direction. For governance design to not realize this potential, to develop instead school>dropout>prison and recidivism>roundabout pipelines means youths' hands are already ‘tied’ before the physical stop-and-frisk search extinguishes good faith on their part. To hold on to aspects of cheap prison labor growth models, and for-profit prisons, profiting off the backs of the working classes in new hyper-exploitive ways is to fail its people and to squash the vitality of its cities failing itself. This is Oakland as it continues to fight to earn its reputation as the “friendly city.”

METHODS, TOOLS AND FINDINGS

The following study of social risk as youth risk seeks to contribute to the ongoing search for mechanisms, for instance, structural or systemic, of growing social disadvantage and negative social reproduction within largely inner-city neighborhoods that, since the commencement of the Great Recession have undergone rapid change. It seeks to make such a contribution through focusing ethnographic research in West Oakland, while augmenting ethnographic qualitative investigation with preliminary quantitative research in three continuation schools across diverse Bay Area cities.

Research Methodology: A Qualitative Study - Critical Ethnography as Social Ecology

The five-year study involves in-depth ethnographic research in Oakland, with particular attention in the West Oakland area. Participant observation, interviews, engaged volunteerism, shadowing have all been employed at schools, within local nonprofits, at social service agencies, public meetings, churches, and with resident youth and adults. Following a tradition of ethnographic studies that weds political economy to anthropological inquiry in investigating neighborhood operations (cf. A. Ong, 1987; L. Mullings & A. Wali, 2001; I. Susser, 2012), emphasis is placed upon both what is there and what is not there such as the implications of a negated socio-political-economic balance of countervailing forces. By incorporating historical comparative analyses of person and place, the researcher is able to provide a “big picture” account rather than losing oneself in a process of “metonymic freezing” where some aspect of the lives of dropouts comes to characterize or stand in for the dropout crisis as a whole. For this reason, in addition to being weighted towards structures often associated with the new urban sociology, the work is also wed to social history as a sound form of documentary evidence drawing important comparisons from historical particulars.

In an earlier ethnographic study of Latinos in the Neoliberal City, Arlene Davila (2004) focused on the reorganization of space and meaning, the marketization of ethnicity amidst ‘social mix’ models of urban renewal. As with Davila’s study of Puerto Ricans and Latinos, the following work observes dropouts and other at risk youth in the context of the Neoliberal City. However, expanding the definition of Neoliberal City beyond the economy as a project of systemically-bound societal restructuring, the strength of this critical ethnography is in its ability to generate new understandings by illuminating power-laden processes of constitution, connection, and disconnection often maneuvering between scales of operations flowing from local to global.

Building from the insights of earlier ethnographic works focused on the role of niche environments and public engagement questioning the simpler “culture of poverty” where individual choice dominates the anthropological account, the work provides a deep exploration of the urban operational and governance fields (cf. Suttles, 1968; Hannerz, 1969). In the tradition of works which subsequently pursued anthropologies of scale and power (cf. Jacobs, 1998), the design is intended to capture the complex interrelation between place and social spaces of scale. In this respect, it creates what Massey referred to as an “extroverted sense of place,” that is, a local articulation within a wider whole (cf. Massey, 1993). As a work of critical ethnography, consideration of neoliberal modernization is infused with specific histories, memories, aspirations and their personalized inflection through expressive relations in an effort to unearth the deeply layered relation between youth today and the Neoliberal City – as they both come into their own.

With a qualitative research study oriented towards discovery in observing the intricacies of social processes, patterns, activities, and dispositions, in the study of social risk/youth risk, it was determined that a holistic approach probing multiple social ends of qualitative portrayals of environments would be necessary to draw insights into the contemporary youth experience. In seeking to investigate youth risk as a whole phenomenon, linear, sectioned or limited variables in themselves cannot allow for the kinds of advantages found in the qualitative approach. “The advantages of qualitative portrayals of holistic settings and impacts is that greater attention can be given nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context” (Patton, 1990, p. 51). Additionally, with the research focused primarily on *process* rather than product (other than how product provides evidence of process), a series of patterns is sought in observing the “how” or “why” of both youth action and social operations. Social operation is understood as incorporating norms as well as random or “one off” behavior, both, however, constitutes a kind of “patterned” operations when set in a larger investigative context of social environment.

Appreciating that a localized study of why poor, unstable communities often lack the organization and political connections to obtain resources for fighting crime and offering young people an alternative to deviant behavior, would fail to disclose the intricacies of the conflict, a *socio-ecological* approach was applied in the study of social risk/youth risk (cf. Beck, 1992; Davis, 1999). Similarly, explanations of social disorganization as largely contained within a particular neighborhood or area would restrain the scope of the holistic lens. It has increasingly been accepted that social forces involved in neighborhood outcomes are integrally tied to deep programmatic, processual and operational channels extending well beyond some combination of local “disorganized” fallout and politics.³¹

In recognizing the need to study the youth experience in the larger social context, four traditional assumptions aiding in the early rise of social ecology proved instructive:

Multiple facets of both the physical environment (e.g., geography, architecture, and technology, housing markets) and the social environment are integral to a social ecological analysis.

The relative scale and complexity of environments may be characterized in terms of physical and social components including physical and social components, objective (actual) or subjective (perceived) qualities, and scale or immediacy to individual and groups.

The social ecological perspective incorporates multiple levels of analysis and diverse methodologies.

The social ecological perspective also incorporates concepts from systems theory to take into account both the interdependencies that exist among immediate and more distant

³¹ The idea that inequality is a multi-dimensional complexity warranting new forms of critical ethnography developing conceptual, theoretical, and practical language in the analysis of multi-dimensional interconnectivity has recently resurfaced through the American Sociological Association’s (ASA) 2013 Annual Meeting: Interrogating Inequality.

environments and the dynamic interrelations between people and their environments (Stokols, 1992, p. 7)

Taken from Stokols, an early leader in developing UCI's School of Social Ecology, it is understood that human ecological assumptions of spatial/social distance between a community and mainstream culture are complicated by the fact that neighborhoods, disorganized or not, even as border pockets are integrally tied to a largely entwined connectivity. Because social ecology is conceived as an "overarching framework" or "set of theoretical principles" which illuminate the interrelationships between, for instance, people, place, systems, culture, community planning, and regulatory perspectives, it is well-suited as a framework seeking interconnectivity.

At the same time, in wanting to contribute to the body of knowledge specifically addressing the interconnectivity linking micro and macro, the study model accepts that multiple levels of analysis include macro and meso level in concert with consideration of individuals, small groups, organizations, the neighborhood social climate including its frequency of exchange among residents. In an effort to expand the ethnographic 3-Dimensional (3-D) horizon, space is not viewed as a static container used to orient meaning. Rather than a static landscape, the following work follows Lefebvre's (1992) insistence on a conception of space-time as actively produced through mechanical, material, embodied and associated power relations. *Additionally, space fundamentally includes the social production/ reproduction of political economy – a central point in studying youth in the Neoliberal City.* In constructing the research design, space is not approached as separate from the more concrete, tactile 'hands-on' material specific location or locality. Similarly, the study of social/youth risk is not studied by way of 2-dimensional residential landscapes in relation to neighboring youth-based institutions. Instead, space and place are both conceived in terms of embodied practices and processes of production that are simultaneously material and discursive (cf. G. Hart, 2006). From this perspective, inroads are made into precisely the durable patterns of inequality and compression crucial to addressing the ongoing and deepening national youth crisis.

In particular, attention is paid to the *supra-institutional charge*, whether it is a force going upward, downward, backward or forward, its key feature is that aspects of operations stream through multiple institutions in fulfilling programmatic, social, and communal objectives. Hart proves highly instructive in what she calls "relational comparison" because through relational comparison instead of comparing pre-existing objects, events, places, or identities, the focus is on *how* they are constituted in relation to one another "through power-laden practices in the multiple interconnected arenas of everyday life. It is the position of the researcher that these power-laden mobility lattice works gather their force through their inter-connective web-like aspect, making it again necessary to observe traditional mobility routes including: Graduation, General Education Diploma, job opportunities, & summer jobs.

It is this exploration of critical ethnography that enables the person to move beyond mere case studies in an effort to make broader claims allowing for *non-positivist understanding of generality* (cf. Hart, 2006). As nonprofits flourish and public resources diminish when considering the role of the entangled such an understanding, it can easily be what Gramsci dubbed "the terrain of the conjunctural" when taking for granted particulars are better revealed

relationally. Applying a similar logic, the following study has invested a great deal of time in an effort to experience the difference in opportunity, behavior, attitudes, performance and so on – relationally – compared to other neighborhoods and opportunities. Additionally, as Assistant Director of Overcomers with Hope 2nd Chance (OWH), an effort was made to learn first-hand what kinds of barriers and/or obstacles exist that inhibit the smooth rails of opportunity – the latter being a critical piece to actually realizing the potential of a particular opportunity. Finally, the following work expands on Hart’s critical ethnography. However, where Hart is comparing nations accenting the unifying metropole (i.e., the United States), the following work accents the relational aspect of supra-institutional space as social: engaged opportunities; training and political voice; and agency pipelines (*EVA*). Of note, this aspect of social space moves both upward and downward, the latter (as seen in the school>dropout>prison pipeline) is a good example of the prevailing *supra-institutional production-mobility consortium matrix* in Oakland’s flatlands. In this case, the “metropole” to the extent that there is one is the Neoliberal City itself and scaled governance behind it. In recognizing the spatiality of individuated institutions, Lefebvrian conceptions of space contribute to using extensive ethnographic studies for the purpose of doing broader analytical and political work in offering a particularly intense investigative probe of youth risk.

Own Research Design –

The ten underlying principles of Social Ecology were used to construct a robust 3-Dimensional (3-D) research framework and design:

- Identify the phenomenon as a social problem;
- View the problem from multiple levels and methods of analysis;
- Utilize and apply diverse theoretical perspectives;
- Recognize human-environment interactions as dynamic and active processes;
- Consider the social, historical, cultural and institutional contests of people-environmental relations;
- Understand people’s lives in an everyday sense;
- A holistic orientation to address the complexities of activities, entities, processes, and forces in their interrelationships;
- A flexible research design to allow the research to pursue new directions in data collection at times transcending primary frameworks, such as political economy through inter-connective considerations through social, political, economic, and cultural orders;
- An orientation towards detailed description that addresses both the context and specifics of the study development;
- A focus on the participants and the process involved in fieldwork activities.

-- The dropout crisis was initially used as social phenomenon providing a lens through which to observe the larger social problem and crisis of social risk as youth risk.

-- The problem was observed from multiple levels and perspectives of analyses including young/older, financially secure/insecure, and outside of the West Oakland area/inside, male/female – all contributing to a critical ethnography.

-- Diverse theoretical perspectives were used including: social correspondence in social reproduction as positive or negative (usually suggesting stagnation or downward mobility). In addition, in expanding the traditional theory of social correspondence, theoretical graphs

(provided below) were designed in assist in applying my own theories of: emaciation pipelines; social fields turned production regimes; and the new face of the control social.

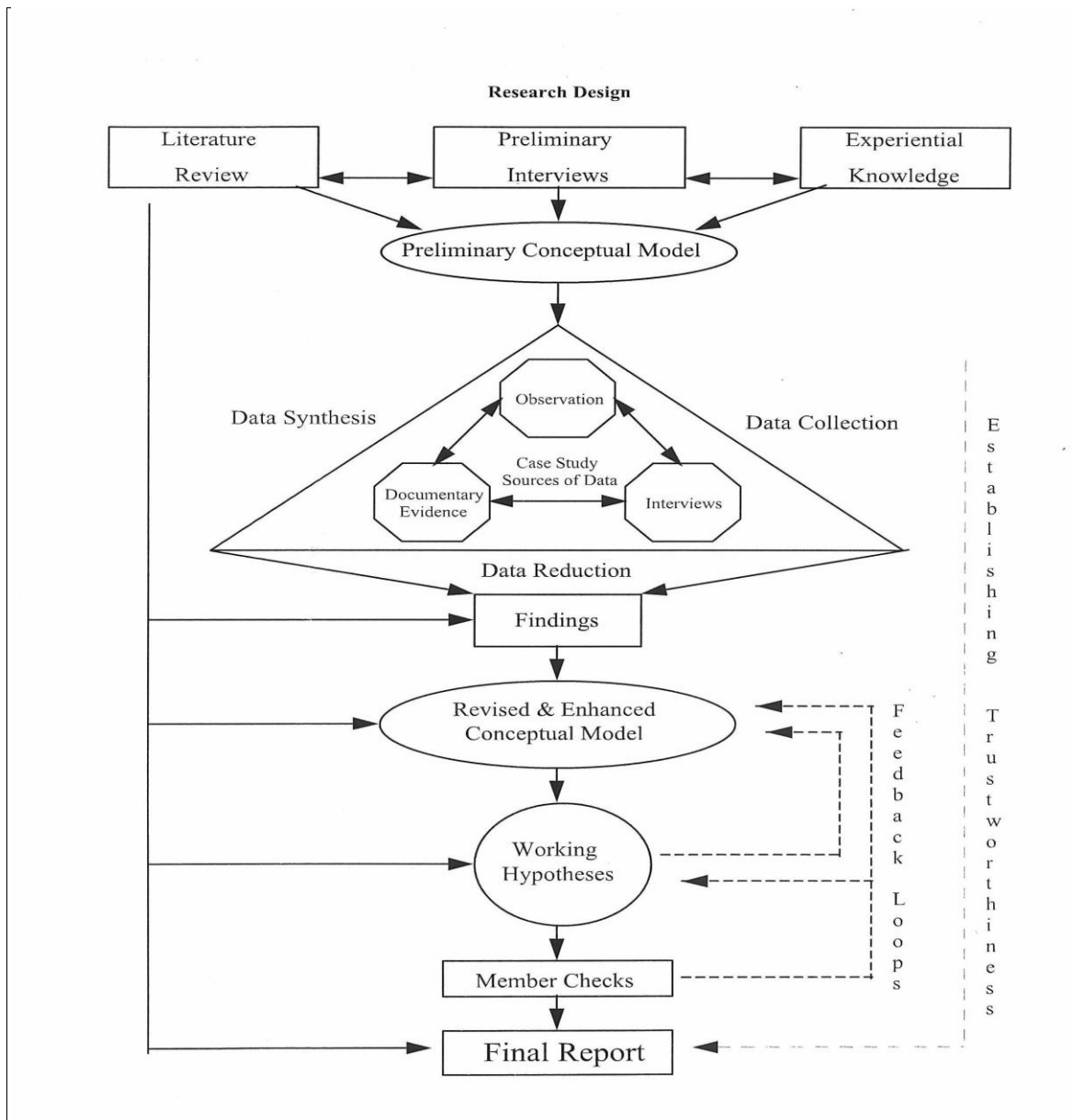
-- Consideration of human-environment interactions as dynamic processes was also considered, particular in addressing the correspondence between youth health as relates to youth risk.

-- The historical, cultural, and institutional contests were given particular attention, drawing on the understanding that the historical record is critical to the value-added data. In addition to the historical record, here drawing from multiple contests including: political economy, local socio-cultural history, and the history of youth patterns in recessed urban pockets and poverty belts.

-- A premium was placed on understanding people's lives in an everyday sense, which called upon five years of field work, and investigation, through multiple associations and institutions. In order to realize the benefits of participatory investigation critical to an in-depth probe, I accepted the volunteer position of Assistant Director to a local nonprofit youth organization focused on developing youth media training services. In addition to OWH, volunteerism was used in a second local nonprofit geared towards social assistance and poverty relief for close to one year.³²

Design Flowchart

³² Since the 1970s, Western Service Workers Alliance (WSWA) has been serving the West Oakland area providing cooperative assistance, food relief, and support services, often voluntary, to its low-income neighborhood residents.



Preliminary familiarizing with youth as early data collecting included:

Classroom surveys in 4 high schools in Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco; 35 interviews from youth, principals, directors of programs, staff and security. Some of the interviewees maintained ongoing semi-structured meetings, interviews, and loosely structured conversations for the course of the last five years.

Participant observation was used during a number of Town Hall meetings including with Mayor Quan discussing her plans as newly elected mayor as she sought support for her *Gang injunction* (2011), which failed to gather adequate support them to be followed by her *100 Block initiative* (2012), which also failed to gather adequate support; more recently followed by her financial and ideological endorsement of *Ccommunity policing* (2013). Participant observation was also used during downtown protests including:

Occupy Oakland and the battle to close Oaksterdam University involving youth volunteers. Other participant observation involved the ongoing volunteer work at various local nonprofits: Overcomers with Hope 2nd Chance (OWH), Western Service Workers Alliance (WSWA), and Prescott-Joseph Center for Community Enhancement, Inc. (WOCC). Presence was also maintained during the ‘annual’ Spring Job Fair held by Mayor Quan on school grounds in addition to routine school ground/hallway walks and at various monthly ‘provider’ meetings.

Additionally, photos were taken over the course of the study to contribute to the historical record. Because the photos date back to the commencing of the the Great Recession, they serve to create a historical contrast not otherwise discerned through pure interview. The photos were taken for both use as historical record but also, again speaking with respect to the relational comparison, with regard to the larger impressionistic effect – as experienced by youth. As explained by Blumenreich (2004), the impressionistic tale, whether written, photographic, and/or billboards is more ‘real’ than realist accounts based on the post-modern belief that ‘objective interpretations are impossible’. Similarly, if, as maintained by Miguel de Cervantes, the translation is often no better than viewing a piece of Flemish tapestry on the wrong side, the five years of photographic documentary, often while in attendance, enables the impressionistic account or tale. With this in mind, the researcher purposefully gathered a photographic record of the urban landscape as experienced by its youth, that is, as impression and emotion, with particular attention paid to educational billboards, graffiti and mural art noting in particular how these youth are steered and directed.

Other evidence included:

Documentary Evidence: Nearly 300 primary source documents contributing to the historical record. The researcher estimates the data collection produced approximately 300 pages of notes that greatly assisted in providing the foundation for the research.

Guided Interviews: Interviews lasted approximately 30-60 minutes involving 35 interviewees.

Participant Observation: Recorded 50-60 pages of field notes, while participating in the activities of local NGOs. From this experience, it was possible to experience first-hand the various challenges encountered when implementing programs.

Impressionistic Evidence: Numerous photos were taken over the 5 years of research, capturing the impressionistic view of the street as witnessed from youth. From this information maps and analyses were further drawn helping flesh out youths’ perception that they are relatively ‘socially disadvantaged’.

Preliminary Interviews with Youth, Young Adults and Professional Staff

The purpose of the interviews was to:

- I Gain preliminary background on general issues and concerns related to information technology standards development;
- II Confirm youths’ understanding of the “crisis”;
- III Provide a basis for developing the scope and orientation of the research.

The interviews served to familiarize myself with the concerns and orientation of youth in the public schools at the same time that the interviews provided a solid foundation informing the researcher's preliminary understanding of the social context, both within and beyond the school yard.

Own Findings

Most of the data collection focused on both the first and second of the two research questions as listed in the Prologue, which are here restated:

Why are more low income minority youth dropping out of high school at a time of peak wealth/power inequality, peak service and resource scarcity, peak unemployment/low-wage underemployment, neighborhood "block busting," in a tighter criminal state?

Focusing on social ecology, how does the neoliberal project in social production-*turned-production social*, animated through its institutional production archipelago, feed into youths' perceptions, experiences, habits, and actions?

Primary Source Material and Documentary Evidence

Yin (2009) concluded that documentary information "is likely to be relevant to every case study topic." Others have also determined that documents of all types can help the researcher to find meaning in working towards insights relevant to the research problem. The work sought to familiarize the researcher with the various youth-based nonprofits in the West Oakland area. The relative scarcity of organizations meant not that many NGOs would be involved in the final research design. This information, however, was critical in indirectly providing information towards the first question, which largely has to do with opportunity or the lack of opportunity (importantly, some steps have been taken to clean the area up, which include building a new Youth Center. However, located at Brochhurst and Market, it is not clear if it is intended for West Oakland Youth so much as the youth of Emeryville. At the same time monies that were supposed to go to after school programs at McClymonds (e.g., in the arts) were ultimately lost.

Guided Interviews

Interviews were usually semi-structured, allowing the interviewee to elaborate or expound if they should want to. Other forms of interview techniques included the "informal conversational interview" and the "standardized open-ended interview." In most instances, a series of interview guide questions was drafted that would be discussed in the interview. Because the age range of interviewees was wide, there was no single set of questions. Instead, specific questions were added to the interview depending on their age. In applying this method, there is an added benefit of flexibility and responsiveness in the 'give-take' of the interview usually making it more enjoyable for the participant especially youth. At the same time, in allowing for a certain degree of flexibility, the researcher believes they were able to better garner the trust of the interviewee. The benefits of the guided interview included:

- Reconstruct previous events
- Projections of future opportunity and agency
- Confirm orientation towards a subject
- Verify family and community orientation and/or bond
- Verify academic aspirations and/or familiarize oneself with possible training pipelines

Participant Observation

During participant observation, particular attention was given to administrative operations, whether in the context of the school or an afterschool program for youth. It is believed that only in really understanding the possibility as well as the limits of opportunity can the *First Research Question* – regarding why youth drop out during these austere times – be answered. Use of the multi-method approach meant participating in multiple NGOs and becoming familiar with internal operations. It also meant taking part in numerous neighboring activities, as in the case of the annual Bikes-4-Life marathon bicycle ride, also a huge draw for youth and young adults. The participant observation was ongoing for over three years, a great deal was learned about the role of NGOs as the emergent service provider for youth/young adults in West Oakland. Because the goal is holistic knowledge of the at risk/youth crisis, while in the process of creating that understanding, certain facts are drawn from the historical documentary evidence, which are open to a certain degree of interpretation.

DATA COLLECTED

Since a qualitative study employing critical ethnographic tools of relational comparison, it was thought that a great deal of field data would be collected employing the four source methods: primary source, documentary/historical, guided interviews, and participant observation. Though the primary source data and guided interviews assisted in laying a foundation in preparation to answer the first question ultimately the data collection was an iterative and interactive process where all four forms were to be used collectively, each providing a kind of check on the others.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

Prolonged engagement: As Assistant Director, the researcher attended weekly meetings at the youth-service nonprofit OWH in order to discuss program design and plan youth recruitment; in addition monthly provider meetings were attended at Juvenile Hall.

Persistent Observation: Prolonged embedded engagement at multiple NGOs allowed the research to observe, collect and analyze data from various places that have some association with “serving youth and young adults.” Ongoing observation enabled me to develop an understanding of essential characteristics related to phenomena internal to the organization and to see and experience many things that I would not have experienced otherwise. Notably, it was an NGO operating under the direction of a Bishop from the Catholic Church suggesting the prevalence of religious influence in youths’ lives in a city said to have more churches “west of the Mississippi” according to City Council member Nancy Nadel.

Recording and transcription of interviews: Recording interviews was a safeguard against simple post-interview transcription. In this way, accuracy in recall would be guaranteed.

Collection of primary source material: Multiple documents were used as primary source material ranging from book, articles, essays, reports, guest lecturer, conferences in addition to newspapers.

Incorporating and Accounting for the Researcher’s Experience and Knowledge of Conditions and Challenges of At Youth Risk

Because of the nature of the study, it seemed fitting to approach the research with a pre-existing knowledge and experience in better preparing the foundation. During the beginning of the five years of study, the subject of youth risk has, relatively speaking, burst to the extent that as a national crisis, it has grown more dire. As the subjects of the study have made their way into mainstream media coverage the intensity of social disadvantage has grown more intense. The type of knowledge pursued, illuminating the answers to the (2) central study questions, was better discerned with heightened sensitivity to the subject, the latter obtained through multiple interview and data forms, and focus groups. In the following study, an effort was made to accommodate the position of the newcomer in developing the (3) methods. In addition, the past was incorporated into the data acquisition notably through comparative historical research. Several of the basic assumptions included:

- I Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) budget has been continuously cut since the study began.
- II When necessary OUSD is able to “find” money needed to sustain its Adult Education when threatened with closure suggesting an unstable frail foundation.
- III There is mounting inequality of resource distribution undermining “survival of the fittest” or “competitive advantage” as a universal standard.
- IV Children in the neighborhood feel like there is nothing for them to do in Lower Bottoms. Adults repeat a similar sentiment asking, “What’s down here for these kids? There ain’t nothing here?” Perplexed by scant spaces of engagement and expressive voice, the right to constitutional demonstration is being denied as growing numbers are left without.
- V Children who would like to work are challenged in their search for societally ‘hooked in’ training channels, especially those with a Juvenile Hall record and/or Jail record.
- VI The Mayor’s Summer Jobs Program does not provide consistent work pipelines annually instead it is inconsistent, foregoing the Youth Summer Program in 2011 and, similarly, foregoing the job fair in 2013 at a high school with over 70% of the students eligible for free lunch there.
- VII Over 40% of public school youth in West Oakland do not complete high school. Since 2004, the percentage has not reversed in a process of mounting negative social production and reproduction. Though more of the youth are staying in school in an attempt to earn their high school diploma, because of the challenges, with various exams, many are not able to pass.
- VIII Youth continue to be wrongly accused by the police and charged, a combination that has resulted in at least \$2,000,000 in fines to the city, a cost seemingly preferred along with a disciplinary model than sound stable investment in training investment in an effort to reverse the mounting negative social reproduction.

FINDINGS

Once having conceived the *Preliminary Conceptual Models*, any time not utilized continued to be used for the purpose of refining the focus on the study and the conceptual models. The preliminary conceptual models – both in terms of the Neoliberal City (i.e., the Production Regime Wheel) and in terms of youth exclusion (i.e., Engagement Pipelines) – have assisted in providing a binding framework to make sense out of the data.

The ideas of correspondence and/or dependency have been taken up and expanded upon in the following framework in what I have called *complex correspondence*, that is, a seamless

processual force operating within and between key governance/operational institutions where youth are a subgroup of affected subjects. Great changes have taken place in America since abandoning the Fordist-Keynesian ‘growth liberalism’ egalitarian model of inclusive growth. Presently, it is not clear what the social dynamic in America will be in just five years considering how many domains of societal operations have already been redesigned following neoliberal building codes including inroads into the dismantling of traditional public education. It seems fair to say that what is not wanted by virtually all Americans is a return to some kind of Dark Age where, as with conditions of working class England of the nineteenth century, women and children are found carrying out the grinding work of the spinning mills and steel industries. Like industrial England, there is in America’s Gilded Age, marked by extremes of opulence and poverty, a problem of child labor in the mines and factories, which gave rise to the Bureau of Children within the Department of Labor in 1913. At the turn of the twentieth century, men, women, and children labored 60-70 hours a week in squalid factories for pay that was often less than five dollars a week. Deaths from industrial accidents were commonplace while the exploitation of child labor was a national disgrace (Kleinknecht, 2010). During the late 1960s, however, this kind of exploitation of America’s most vulnerable workers was thought to have been dealt with. Technological changes, unionization, and the force of public opinion finding voice and expression for higher standards of labor and education all seemed to help eliminate such evils, though the crisis within the most disadvantaged communities would quietly persist. Observing and comparing the two turn of the century periods, that is, the Gilded Age and the current neoliberal era’s experience with extreme wealth/power inequality and extreme destitution of its poor also creates what poet Edwin Markham described as a “drudgery yoked with misery begetting a degraded and degrading humanity” (Markham cited in Spargo, 1906, p. vi). Against the press of weakening societal/political structures that incorporated elements of self-determination politics within districts and their service institutions, including their schools, should the country be expected to slip slowly back to a social dynamic marked by the “bitter cry” of emasculated children born into deep poverty and exploited labor?

This is not suggesting, however, that among these youth and young adults, a diminishing percent will rise through the channels of social mobility. As with the current century’s Great Recession/Great Transformation a small number manage to piecemeal together opportunity until through these makeshift means formal channels open to them. But it is a matter of beating very improbable odds where drugs, gang affiliation and/or doing time are all only that much more pivotal in directing youth down socially stagnant paths or channels. After all, it is an area where victory sounds like this jocular exchange:

Hey, you take something?

- Security guard in the Dollar Store parking lot, 2013

Why I’m gonna take something? Man, this brother you talking to is 48 years old and ain’t got a single arrest on my record. I sure ain’t looking to blow it now over some toilet paper. Black male resident laughingly as he walks away with a bounce of freedom in his step, 2013

And yet, nothing becomes more apparent when interviewing urban residents how the examples of success – as with examples of failure – have the same effect: it backfires in terms of bringing

down conservative assumptions of blaming the victim. The success is summarized as the “possibility of all” and in this way taken as legitimating an otherwise weak system, which was never the point of their victory. At times youth feel as though they are flailing without a rudder, whereas when watching how their successes are interpreted it seems little wonder.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & FINDINGS

In this study, central is the embrace of unbiased perceptions of risk, that is, not reducing risk conceptually as a phenomenon tied to the individual, or any other immediate subject such as family, but rather, like Nanette Davis: to the social itself. Also, important, in accepting the vital relation between strong democratic society and robust participatory politics, it is possible to glean such layers woven between and through layers of institutions while recognizing the countervailing voice/power streaming through all levels of organization, policy, and assembly. Risk is certainly more distinct since the commencement of the Great Recession in 2007/2008 in Oakland, when young men were already proclaiming how what they “need is a job.” Nonetheless, whether the individual is teetering in his/her own risky conditions, conditions surmised from relational comparison, observing supra-institutional networks, suggest a stringent though widespread austerity of means.

Urban sociologist, Loic Wacquant (2008) describes the ‘hyper-ghetto’ as a concatenation of mechanisms of *ethno-racial closure and control*. In venturing into the neighborhoods of Oakland, one recognizes that use of the word ‘ghetto’ or ‘hyper-ghetto’ would take even youth on the block by surprise as no one describes their neighborhood in such terms. It is in fact almost counterintuitive in the case of West and North Oakland not simply because of underway gentrification, and the proximity of a 1200-plus condominium/housing development built at its very edge adjacent the freeway giving rise to BMWs, SUV’s and MB’s gliding down 7th Street as the new commuter class. It is also counterintuitive because of the communal spirit of the submerged community that continues to marshal resources, though suffers as resources continue both deplete while others are aligned with- and embedded in- acceptable and funding-stable neoliberal political economy.

Here, struggling to make ends meet is taken as a given. And yet, a dropout could find refuge where the term ‘hyper-ghetto’ can only capture a portion of the complex weave of the neighborhood. Despite its poverty and deepening impoverishment, the “one comprised of many” spirit of the neighborhood offers a unique experience than when stepping beyond the neighborhood, which many youth will never do precisely for this reason. Stripped down from a time when socio-communal siding shored up its centers, agencies, services, and streets, the distance between the two realities widens: socio-communal and individuated. However, it is not exclusively spatially defined as social space is necessarily concurrently transformed signifying the recreation of the two spheres: the *Image-ready ‘hooked-in’* urban face and its hungry other, the ignored and downplayed *Hungry City*.

Ironically, it was 1964 when Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase “the medium is the message,” virtually sparking its own revolution in terms of how modernist art, thought, and indeed understanding was undergoing its own inclusive explosion. In practical terms, for McLuhan, it came to a question of resources, that is, how something was conveyed depended ineluctably on the medium through which it was conveyed. Power is better conveyed through a 1972 Plymouth

Fury low rider than a zip car, a truism that simply cannot change. In the case of the Fury, there is no doubt that structure plays a big part in perception. Similarly, McLuhan alerted the country to the fact that the subtle realities of structural transformation, less subtle in the case of the Fury while infinitely subtle in the case of decentralized governance of public-private amalgamation, was what was really in need of attention. The following findings, empirical and theoretical, drawn from the field, are provided here with visual graphics in part to provide a solid contribution to the discussion and debate on the evolving conditions and states of urban man, specifically, of the working masses.

Sociologists Grove and Burch, Jr. (1997) explain the difference between early twentieth century human and social ecological studies. In particular noting how:

The emergence of human ecology in America in the 1920s paralleled an emerging awareness of the social, political, and economic significance of cities to the development of the United States. Those same cities are subjects of renewed interest in human ecology today, although not for their youthful vigor because they are losing populations, power, and economic strength and are now the prime locales for ‘brown fields’, ‘asthma alleys’, and toxic waters.

While conditions may still hold or intensify in the twentieth-first century, the piercing force of socio-political, ideological, programmatic, and institutional as operational bidding – are more true than ever before primarily due to greater means of control and weaker provisions for ‘power serving people’ and/or the people’s countervailing power. In keeping with the so-named “urban renewal” that has reduced provision for its poor and socially disadvantaged while disrupting the political balance of forces, the traditional working class communities, spatially bound or moderately scattered, continue to suffer the greatest blow in terms of widespread socio-communal disruption. This has been ongoing at least since the Great Recession/Great Transformation of 2007 if not earlier depending on the location.

The Maturing Face of the Neoliberal City and Its ‘Non-social as Social’ Body Politic in the Twentieth Century:

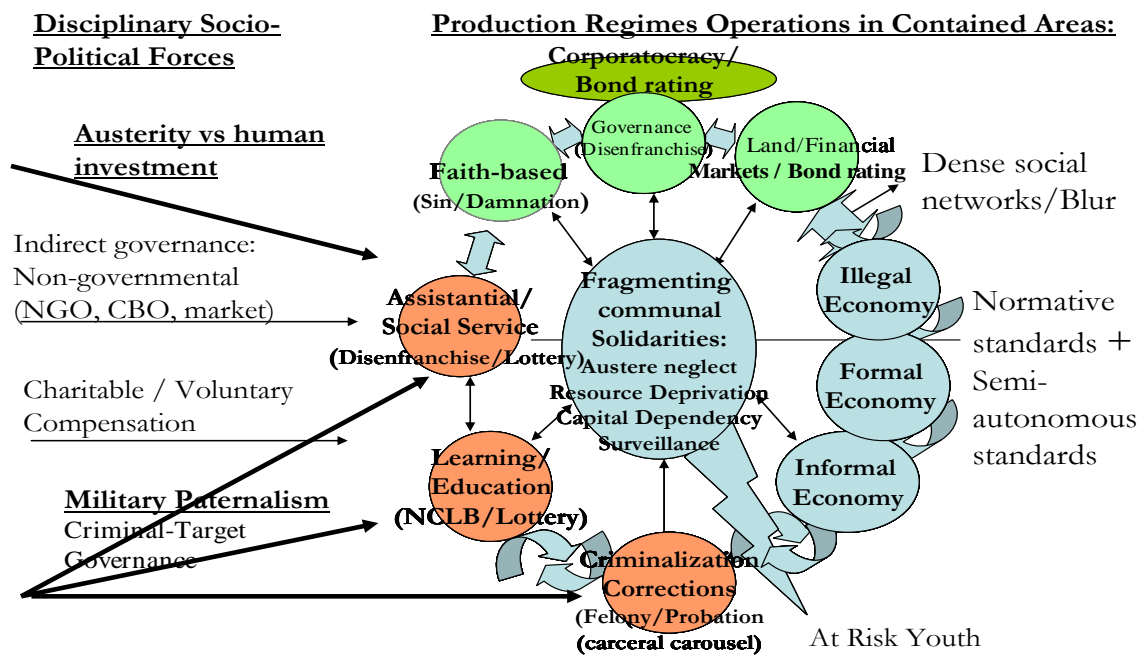
Somewhat paradoxically, a great deal of operational methods, general salability and public sustainability of the Neoliberal City increasingly draw upon the progressive values established in the 1960s. This confuses people including youth who neither experienced the 1960s nor were taught the historical difference of socio-political and production-social value structures. It confuses a large number of liberals who, of their own volition, have eased increasingly closer to private/privatizing self-service values since the early 1970. It confuses the free spirited “live and let live,” as they too see signs of progress in seemingly shared key values with claims to “community-building” and “equal opportunity” at the helm. It also mollifies potential forms of resistance as sparked in 2010-2011 against the press of mass foreclosure threat amidst escalating inequality ensuring that such forms of resistance do not recreate any kind of 1967 burning cities revolt.

Resounding with the structures of imperial hierarchy, key ideological premises for operations within the Neoliberal City include:

- a) A belief in the possibility of recreating America’s cities as spaces of opportunity for the immigrant and nonimmigrant family in an increasingly disciplinary/punitive-working class *control social-based environment*;
- b) Said equality as *equality of opportunity* not equality of experience, engagement, voice or exposure, while actual equality, even of opportunity, further recedes;
- c) An emergent *rule of the experts* and/or data-based scientism/ legitimizing praxis;
- d) Democracy as the *privilege of representative democracy* not as socio-communally robust participatory democracy;
- e) Community-building as mixed-use and/or social mix development (often standing in for a since-dismantled participatory democracy) including *service-driven citizenship* (e.g., *increased volunteerism in the schools and in surveillance as in the case of community policing/patrol*).

PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL MODEL: NEOLIBERAL PRODUCTION REGIME

A Grounded Model of Neoliberal Control Social Production Regimes



Hyper-neoliberal Production Regime ‘Wheel of Fortunes’ with Entwined Polarizing Production Realms

Fragmenting Working Class/Poor/Minority Communities, Neighborhoods Fomenting Risk

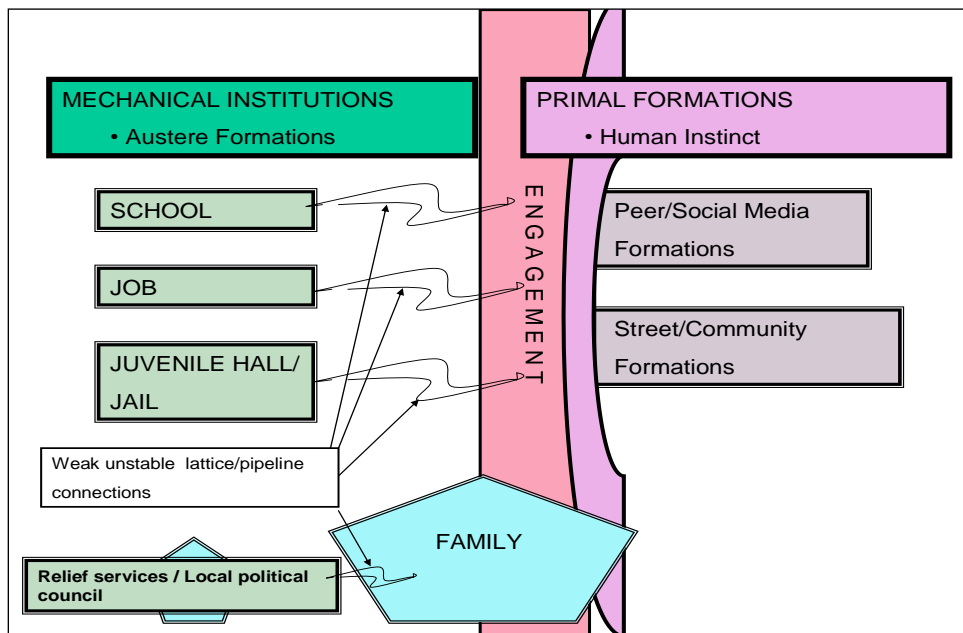
During a lecture on Basic Education Skills Training (BEST), a form of remedial learning increasingly offered in the Peralta Community College system standing in for remedial courses offered through Adult Education schools, one graduate asked just as the students who attend these programs ask, “Are these (e.g., regulations, enrollment requirements) in

fact barriers (to educational mobility)?" In terms of the BEST, the question was asked because the existence of, for instance, a 3-semester series of remedial learning courses bringing a young man or woman up to acceptable standards means that the individual must now be able to make this time/monetary investment. Unfortunately, most working poor or unemployed poor cannot make such an investment as food is the first priority, where it serves as a de facto barrier of means. In fact, however, in pulling forward McLuhan's focus on structural subtleties, this community college-based catch-up system is more than a barrier. When cohered with a series of institutional barriers, it forms a social cross-hatch that serves as a powerful ethno-racial-class filter that does a better job of push-down and push-out than any old guard could. With regard to the powerful socio-institutional filters constantly screening subjects, different production arenas mere policy guidelines, criteria and specifications requirements can more effectively guarantee outcomes in terms of admittance/rejection than when micro-managing spaces of production as in a time of old guard.

Ultimately, when considering the Neoliberal City as a cohered orchestra of production regimes, critical to the analysis of its youth is a much less discussed structure born of its interconnected entangled mesh: its supra-institutional web. Assuming the medium is the message, then whatever supra-institutional patterns are being created and played into radically defines the potential and/or possibility of its people who move in accordance with its motion. What are these supra-institutional formations so much more significant in determining youth mobility than the mere presence of study halls, computer labs and/or libraries? What are these supra-institutional currents so instructive of youth motion, legitimizing social engagement and/or denying social engagement? While a residential area may have a number of supra-institutional structures, the resource critical in advancing the lives of the working classes is the *supra-institutional consortia matrix* and its de facto embedded *socio-communal mobility-lattice web*. It is this mobility-lattice of robust upward-advancing institutions that historically undergirds the efficacy of the urban social mobility experience. For instance, it was through the standards for justice and equality established through the Civil Rights Act 1964 and the Voters Rights Act of 1965 – concurrent with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 – that the local socio-communal consortia of agencies, organizations, public and private operations enfolded mobilizing possibilities for greater numbers of Americans of the inner-city. For the same reason, it is this consortia of webbed socio-communal operations that serves as the primary institution steering its youth – invisible supra-institution though it may be. Consequently, a community filled with school>dropout>prison pipelines is likely a community weak on school>training>work pipelines or so was implied in the following study of transforming Oakland. This aspect of the invigorated 3-D orientation allows the researcher to make inroads into the study of the micro/macro connection. In particular the study of the supra-institutional consortia matrix of working class resources/services does precisely this: it provides a 3-dimensional/3-D window into entwined operational structure steering class and youth outcomes over time where the whole is considerably greater than the sum of its parts.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL MODEL:
EMACIATED PIPELINES OF ENGAGEMENT AND SURROGATE FORMS

SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH SEEK EXPOSURE-BASED ENGAGEMENT, SOCIO-POLITICAL VOICE, AND ANIMATED ACTIVE AGENCY [EVA] as YOUTH COUNTER/ENCOUNTER REGIME PUSH-DOWN PRESSURES AND GREATER SOCIO-ECONOMIC DESTABILITIZATION:



* Note: Political engagement is also attenuated though indirectly through the larger familial and socio-communal political disengagement. Complimenting resource deprivation and emaciation, it is a perfect case of socio-economic correspondence run through the negative channels of deprivation.

In revisiting the “why” of dropping out in the context of a high joblessness, a seemingly stagnant sluggish urban economy, and neighborhood instability, explanations are more closely tied to matters of institutional correspondence both between institutions and in terms of ethical imperatives and/or standards. Because youth experience the effects of production modalities largely through neighboring institutions that service youth, feeling the impact of accelerated institutional austerity, cuts, and/or closures as relates to the production regimes/production social is most often experienced in relation to these- and through these- institutions. All too reminiscent of the effects of the “man in the house” welfare provision of the 1960s in terms of family unit disruption, the rate of incarceration for Oakland youth and young adults is both disrupting effective educational streaming, while disrupting the vital formation of the family unit as increasing numbers of youth are missing parental nurturing due to a prison sentence.

While “engagement” is a popular term widespread amongst neoliberal institutional reform, it is not used with reference to the supra-institutional youth experience, that is, in consideration of pipelines and channels. Often heard with respect to new innovation in learning, “engagement” as used by Oakland Unified School District’s (OUSD) utters a

conceptual framework of youth-focused student-based “engaged” practices in learning. It does not address the larger context of a looming socio-economic dis’-engagement, a splintering of social inclusions/exclusions, of ruptured one-time socio-communal-based mobilizing pipelines.³³ The point being that engagement is conceived at the level of the person. Paradoxically, advertised as an experience occurring at the level of the person, it perpetuates a certain macro dis-engagement of *socio-communal motion* largely for the working poor or more generally, the *Hungry City* less fortunate than to happen upon a hooked-in situation as of the *Image Ready*. In respect to this larger context, wherein the city librarian in the downtown observes that the city “is no longer clicking or moving like it was,” she has in fact touched on a profound underdevelopment.

A concern of well-intentioned educators, a curriculum focused on “engagement” is a double-edged sword embedding the neoliberal individuated lens of society within its rationale. From the neoliberal perspective, institutions are evaluated in terms of internal operations and assessment only, avoiding both the implications of supra-institutionalism and concern for the strengths or weaknesses of the social writ large. In both the domains of health/medicine and that of education, in roughly 2011, the deprivation of any kind of consortia of positive interconnected and/or wrap-around community services was understood as debilitating to the individual, the patient, the student and so on. Nonetheless, the belief in empowering the student, where a preoccupation of “engagement” remains entangled in discourses on what constitutes a “vital classroom,” is accepted as core to combating the stagnant social mobility of the student and therein of the masses. And yet, paradoxically, a preoccupation with “engagement” revolved around the individual, though seemingly combating inequality can easily – for those concerned with the larger supra-institutional currents and flows – perpetuate it.

For better or for worse, the effect of the Neoliberal City is instrumental in contributing to the individuated sensibility of contemporary man. Recognizing the at-times excessive individualizing effects (e.g., of decentralizing) post-2012, the language of “community” burgeoned on the political field as a move to “correct” for the lingering “widget effect,” as explained by one physician, showing up as the compartmentalizing of treatments and educational training services. An excellent tactic of control, excessive “widgetizing” not only reduces ingenuity of imagination but deadens the competitive edge further harming the already stagnant social order in the very arena of its origin: the free market – a combination that feeds a vicious cycle of negation.

With the supra-institutional connections starting to take hold of the programmatic imagination within education, OUSD underwent the creation of its own cohering initiative, that is, the *full service wrap-around community* initiative where every school is. In the case of FSWA, every school in the district will provide both high quality instruction and rigorous academics but also a full range of wrap-around services that promote high achievement (e.g., health care, mental and dental care). In the case of the FSWA initiative, OUSD would seek the engagement of local nonprofits in conjunction

³³ A good example of such supra-institutional ruptures yet to play out in terms of impact and effect is the non-funding of OUSD’s struggling Adult Education, which in 2013 did not receive funding for the Career Technical Education programs (nor for many of the positions providing instructional support).

with Kaiser Permanente, The Atlantic Philanthropies, and the Alameda County Health Department to better provide services, experiential and skill-building training opportunities for its students. Drawing similar “disjointed” and “individuated” conclusions when evaluating operational efficiency further across the Neoliberal City’s *Wheel of Fortune (Regime Production)*, medical research, in the case of UCSF, also began to develop models of “interprofessional” and/or “supra-connected-service” intervention working across specialty areas. In both cases, OUSD’s service constellation and UCSF’s medical research establishment, the structurally corresponding theme involved drawing together a larger more robust interconnected service network in the name of better serving the subject and, in turn, greater efficiency.

In terms of efficiency, the single greatest shortcoming of the decentralized “widget” system of operations (as exemplified with the closure of the short-lived “small schools” initiative in the mid-2000s), is the actual enhanced inefficiency and subject (student, patient etc) profiling that comes. And yet, across the neoliberal state’ *Wheel of Production*, the Department of Defense (DoD) Central Adjudication Facilities relocated into a single building in Fort Meade, Md., taking in: CCF, DoNCAF, AFCAF, JCSCAF, WHSCAF and DISCO/DOHA, having consolidated into one centralizing DoDCAF with full operational capability as of September 2013. Whereas the DoD sought out a centralizing platform for enhancing efficiency, whether or not Oakland’s OUSD is operating through a comparable *maximum feasible efficiency* (MFE) as it moves towards greater outsourcing and decentralizing is doubtful – as determined both by OUSD and UCSF before 2012.

If only because of the perpetual reinventing of the resource/service system as opposed to a more cohered plan of execution given years for perfection that includes a city matrix reaching well into the public schools – a standard of instability and resource uncertainty is expected by its subject student body. In such a macro social context, *maximum feasible participation* (MFP), the ultimate in democratic decision-making, is a priori precluded from the realm of possibility, the latter which manifests through an operational design inherently piecemeal, erratic and inconsistent. Unstable and uncertain – as a system – it moves towards selectivity and stratified levels of quality/inequality all too reminiscent of the country’s early colonial past. In a kind of reinventing of social disunion, the currents that flowed between socio-political pluralism in the early 1970s are sacrificed concurrent with the growing imbalance of political power, the latter undoing the balance of countervailing forces between labor and corporate personhood. While new supra-institutions were being conceived (including OUSD’s FSWA initiative) since 2011, just as ecumenism and interfaith movements were conceived to overcome inner and inter-faith rifts, these efforts signify a recognition of the potential divisive effects of the socially decentralizing/military centralizing neoliberal social.

While attempting to develop new models of supra-institutional engagement – both in education and in medicine – where the country has not seen models of interconnected engagement with its transcendent solidarities is within the area and institutions of labor. To the contrary, it is under the neoliberal vision that, as power is shuttled upward towards the level of authoritative power, a comparable power dwindles from its laboring base –

disrupting Galbraith's democracy as a politic of dynamic countervailing forces. Possibly the greatest testament to an operational model's neoliberal undergirding, the unified strength of the laboring masses continues to be undone by the strains and stresses of its hyper-neoliberal austerity and greater socio-communal spatial configuration, though it is a development little discussed in mainstream news and media. Amidst talk of supra-institutional intervention, little to nothing is heard regarding labor at the level of governance and/or programmatic intervention that would unify in new forms and overcome splintering fragmentation. Though the post-2011 structural adjustment by way of imagining improved efficiency thru new forms of supra-institutionalism serves to counter systemic criticisms of a decentralizing hyper-individuation, it does not disrupt the larger context of the *neoliberal social*. Similarly, it does not disrupt the societal advance into its accelerated hyper-neoliberal condition heavily held sway by the production-inclined social (versus social production) remaining well within the purview of the larger neoliberal umbrella of urban governance.

What these post-2011 "adjustments" do achieve is they serve to highlight the "creative" ingenuity of the neoliberal order itself, that is, to illuminate its degree of give with regard to community control, incorporation, the town model and so on. Most important, however, these adjustments illuminate the potential role of abstract "community," and how the American penchant for community above and beyond county-equivalent levels of governance, easily fits into the promotion of the four-decade old neoliberal social order as includes governance. At the same time, the solidarity – or lack thereof – that continues to go without mention is that of labor. And, predictably, inasmuch as it is state government that historically most effectively intervenes on behalf of its poor citizen body, corresponding to the waning of labor's voice and power is a concurrent waning of a strong conviction in the power of county government predisposed instead towards the incorporated-town level of said local governance. Thus while the language of "community," "town" system, "incorporation" and "free market enterprise" are all heard, painfully missing from popular discourse is any in-depth analysis of the weakening of vital participatory democratic contexts and the fate of labor – a scenario that inescapably touches the lives of its children and youth.

With little programmatic and/or operational analysis of the requisite forms of robust social exposure as integral and undergirding meaningful engagement – whether in the classroom or the local youth-based nonprofit – the fact of America's growing socio-economic polarization widens. At the same time, the programmatic currents lean ineluctably away from the increasingly squashed premium on *social justice in learning as equity in experience* – the same premium so deeply embedded in the governance, policy and operational administrative regulations of the Great Society. The Overarching 'push-down/mobility inhibiting effect of the hyper-production orientation of the neoliberal production regimes is counterpoised with various surrogate and other stand-in forms of socially creative survival/sustainability.

With the persistence of Great Recession/Great Transformation, the reality of slum increasingly manifests as an existential experience. Somewhat difficult to imagine at first, it is an experience that happens at the level of the person or scattered group. It is a

virtually absolute inversion as to what constituted the classic “slums” of the 19th and 20th centuries of Brooklyn, Harlem, the Bronx, and Manhattan’s East Side. In coming up Oakland, “recovery,” happens at the level of person (or scattered people) entering into an individual experience at far remove from the spatially-defined experience. While cyclists who live in the neighborhood cycle straight through recessed areas west of San Pablo Avenue never knowing the condition, many will never know that they are viewing hungry, disadvantaged, and some recently broken up families. Those individuals and families continue to suffer social hardship. This is only possible because of the decades-in-the-making demolition of the working class socio-communal lattice web of mobilizing resources/services.

The hardship that seems taped to particular persons and groups makes the myth-making of “blaming the victim” that much more believable. In the case of youth, the young man invariably asks himself, “Well if they made it, why can’t I?” – where greater cuts to resources/services paradoxically *also* works to benefit a growing system anchored in wealth polarization. And yet beyond shallow tactics of subject blaming, politicians continue to abide by the neoliberal prescription that uniformly envisions political solutions through a market lens transforming governance into a business enterprise; this added operational perspective and means ensures that its methods simply will not die despite the visible collapse of social systems and inclusive solutions (cf. Crouch, 2011). As noted, the entire process continues to self reproduce despite crisis outcomes in part abetted by a reverse incentivizing where effectively serving the poor low-income minorities of the increasingly desirous flatlands only delivers an inverse result from ultimate aims and is therefore avoided.

The ultimate goal of the work is to contribute to the current body of knowledge in the field as part of a larger attempt to grasp the 3-dimensional interconnected nature of mounting social exclusion while offering possible means for healthy methods of inclusive urban renewal drawing heavily on interconnected forms of socio-inclusionary engagement. As an extended ethnographic study, the work focuses on Oakland as its model city. Both an exceptional city leaning towards diplomacy over social movements unlike other cities, and archetypical in terms of the recession recovery transformation of low-income majority-minority cities, Oakland, has proven invaluable in the process of meaning making. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the core belief that analysis and amelioration of complex societal problems requires interdisciplinary efforts works to further usher forward an appreciation for critical ethnography as social ecology capable of a high yield approach to the study of social/youth risk. Ultimately, it is believed that the single focus on West Oakland has provided a valuable resource as a case study to the extent that the challenges in which neighborhoods contend are both uniquely their own while universally shared.

◆ CHAPTER 1 ◆

WHAT PART OF TOMORROW INCLUDES ME? Fragments in a Crisis of Belief Keeping Neoliberal Time

The fact remains that Oakland, to its great credit, came through 1966, 1967, and the first half of 1968 without a serious riot. But, like all our cities, it will remain in precarious balance, on the edge of violence, until far more than is now in view can be done to improve life for those who dwell in the ghetto.

~ Amory Bradford, 1968

The kids don't believe in the system no more – the whole thing.

~ Security staff, public high school, 2013

Rehabilitation isn't supposed to work.

~Freeway Ricky Ross in his new role as youth educator



*Mural art of a self-aware reflective knowing (painted over in 2012),
West Oakland flats, 2011*

What white Americans have never fully understood – but what the Negro can never forget is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

~ The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the Kerner Commission

If I had known it was gonna go down like this, I would a stayed (in school).

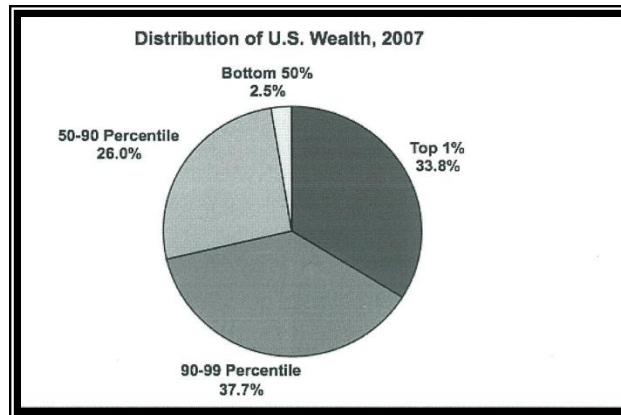
~Former dropout never informed of the fate of dropouts, 2011

America's Youth, "the Future of Tomorrow" and the Look of Social Exclusion

How many times has it been said that America's children are its future? Similarly, many have taken the position that it is children living in poverty, born to poverty, living with remarkable instability and uncertainty are not simply someone's child, but rather everyone's children. With this in mind, we anticipate, as many children of poverty anticipate, policies and programs that should be able to lift them up, lift them out of the turmoil that is their life without severing them from the familial aspect. But, according to many, that is not how it works, neither how the deal goes down nor, for that matter, how the deal is supposed to go down – say youth in an air of bitter irony. This first chapter takes a look at the tales of youth, their own words of recall, connecting this to the larger picture of social investment, both spatial and historical, what has come of it in the past and what is likely to come of it in the future. In order to explore this area, the idea of the *Hungry City* is reexamined, that is, the proverbial "other half" of a city living in an impoverished instability and uncertainty well beyond the "security" of a "month to month" check that (an estimated half of) the working world routinely experience. Less discussed, a large number of people in the *Hungry City* are its youth and its children. The youth of the *Hungry City* can better tell of its episodic nature having navigated its streets daily simply getting from 'a' to 'b' sometimes paying "no mind" to what they see, refusing to let it phase them and then again sometimes succumbing to the weight of its implications.

The inequality captured in the pie chart (below) for 2007, the year marking the official commencement of the Great Recession/Great Transformation shows the intensity of inequality that has since further intensified without signs of tempering its future course or reversing its path of inequitable distribution (Stiglitz, 2012). It was the gross levels of inequality that bubbled forth into the 2011 Occupy Movement against a popular consciousness for those yet having bought the reigning "logic" of institutional inequality as the new measure for equality. Still raging over gross inequality including the unlivable wage and inflated user fees, the high-water mark of national resistance that included Oakland's own Occupy Oakland burst forth Fall 2011.³⁴

³⁴ As a city, Oakland has a long history of a certain degree of political resistance and opposition. In 1967, this took the form of the anti-Vietnam 'Stop the Draft' – draft card burning protests – as class divisions dissolved in an anti-war solidarity prepared for arrest. It also famously saw the organization of the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the late 1960s skilled at organizing resistance as opposed to anarchic rioting. Though the people of Oakland are not entirely adverse to the latter, as a city, such methods are called upon to counter abusive acts of power, both political and economic. Alternatively, 'sit-ins' have been a method of organized resistance since the 1960s throughout the East Bay. This has led to a popular point of conflict amidst the current conservative-driven "recovery" within the Bay Area. Precisely because of such a history, Berkeley residents as recently as 2011 sought to pass a vote banning "sit-lie" laws as criminal rather than have the laws provide legal justification for "street sweep"-styled arrest alongside the "stop-n-frisk" law, the latter defended by consultant-to-OPD William Bratton, though early 2013, Mayor Quan said that she would not support the law, seen by many as racial profiling, in Oakland.



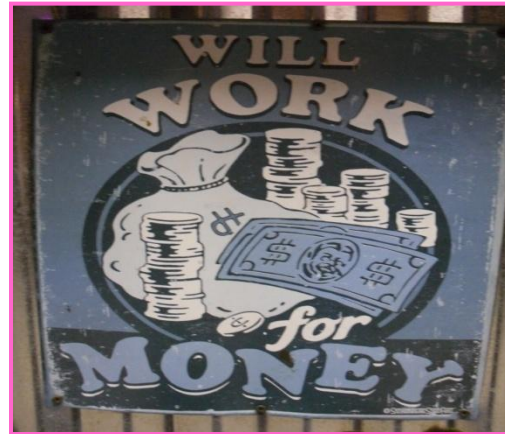
Distribution pie chart, 2007

Integral to deepening wealth/power polarization and socio-economic inequality is the much less discussed *landscape of deepening deprivation/poverty* animated through all the different domains of social reproduction turned regime production, the latter devolved to a *series of production regimes* as seen in the neoliberal *wheel of fortunes*.³⁵ In trying to get a sense of what is involved in this deepening systemically seamless poverty, between 1980 and 1989, real minimum wage had already declined 47%, gross domestic production (GDP) per capita declined 9%, and the percentage of families earning less than twice the minimum wage, used as a rough estimate of poverty, rose to include 60% of the population (D. S. Massey, 1996). Suggesting that the trend has not missed the Mexican-American or Black populations, by 1996, Mexican-American wages had lost 68% of their 1982 value and by 2000, a third of Black children were born into poverty. Near this time of untenable living expense rise, it was estimated that 1 in 3 Black youth (often male) born after 2000 would spend time in prison (or 1 in 2 once controlling for neighborhood income). Hardly coincidence, both these adversely affected ethno-racial groups, Mexican-American and Blacks, are known to have excessively high dropout rates among youth. In terms of neighborhood disadvantage, over 65% of Blacks are exposed to forms of neighborhoods that are, on average, extremely disadvantaged compared with 8.4% nonblack exposed to most disadvantaged neighborhoods. As a result, Black children are seven times more likely than nonblack children to experience long-term residence in the most disadvantaged 20% of American neighborhoods. In fact, Blacks more often experience life in the lowest quintile of socially disadvantaged, that is, with 68.71% living in the most disadvantaged quintile of neighborhoods at age ten while a mere 3.6% live in the least disadvantaged neighborhoods.³⁶ Does this mean that the 65% dropout in some California counties just confirmed by representatives of state government (October, 2013) that the Great Society conviction in correspondence between social disadvantage and mobility is reaffirmed once again, here folding into its reifying web criminal dropout rates in its poor urban schools? Likely more than coincidence, it is a hard sell in a historical time when the theory of social correspondence has been dismissed as the apologist's tale; this work seeks to tease out the intricacies of this correspondence. *In sync with these earlier trends carried over from the 1990s, in 2008,*

³⁵The theory of social reproduction devolved to an austere regime production/negative social reproduction stripped of securities while putting markets and profit before the humanist good of all. The implication of this negative social reproduction in terms of youth is explored in greater detail throughout.

³⁶ This compares considerably with 14.93% nonblack children living in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods at age 10 and 19.14% Latino/as living in the least disadvantaged neighborhood at age ten.

joblessness among youth highlighted for the country a historical fact the weight of which waxes and wanes: the structural correspondence behind multiple factors of which includes dropout trends. In the case of jobs, with only 62% of Black men twenty and over employed, only 17% of Black teens employed, the decline of minimum wage when adjusted for cost of living and eroding labor rights for minimum wage workers only exacerbates already-existing challenging conditions. These statistics compare strikingly with a 72% rate for White men with jobs and 33% for White teens though even this is relatively low compared with the unemployment rates of the 1960s; modest to today's jobless rates, the under-10% jobless rate was nonetheless read as cause for fierce government intervention at the time (cf. Wodtke, Harding, & Elwert, 2011). Further down the Great Recession/Great Transformation road, the national jobless rate for youth 18-24 is known to be at least double the national average. This also suggests depression-like rates of deep structural poverty for these disadvantaged youth, often minorities in disadvantaged urban graying Gray Areas attending resource scarce and training-emaciated schools.



Streetwide impressions educating the sidewinder, 2011-2012

In 2010, the Black male, in keeping with a history of disposable labor's "last hired/first fired" is once again harder hit by a kind of double-barreled blow involving both the Great Recession's permanent structural transformation of vanishing employment and its "strategy" of 'jobless recovery' blow-back. This of course does not get at the ramifications of ongoing austerity cuts grown out of an earlier and ongoing (e.g., the Obama sequester) welfare retrenchment.³⁷ *However, it is in situating this experience of job market realities in the deeper social context of emaciated social fields turned production regimes operationalized around a control social discipline that the larger image of structural correspondence across production regimes becomes crystalline.* On more than one occasion, youth simply let loose with regard to feelings of unfair termination, mistreatment, weak labor services in seeking to defend one self. Recourse, the word and its meaning, was a missing ingredient to the extent that youth were equipped to defend themselves in, for instance, a court of law.

It ain't nothing like it was when I was here. Back in the day, there'd be people walking all up these streets greeting each other. This restaurant would be filled for lunch. Now people

³⁷ Though associated with Reaganomics inasmuch it included the 75% reduction in Great Society programs (cf. Self, 2003), official "welfare retrenchment" is principally associated with the radical cuts to program under Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996.

gone their own way. Houses look like they're about to fall over when they used to spend their weekend trimming the yard. It ain't hard to see the plan. It won't be long now.

- Ex-inmate, entrepreneur, 2013

There ain't no training here. I had to go to San Francisco. Then when I got my license, I was hired. It was supposed to be a union job. I was paying union dues. But then a few weeks into it, he just shook my hand and said I was dismissed. I've been calling him and leaving messages but he doesn't answer.

- Ex-inmate, former student, 2013

I'm taking a certification course, but it's all the way out in Albany because that's where the Adult Education offers the program and I live in East Oakland but they're offering a job with the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). And, it's a good contract.

- Ex-inmate, student, 2012

These particular comments are highly reflective and capture a general mood in many of both youth and young adults. In particular, even to an ex-inmate from Pelican Bay, the area is blighted compared to “back in the day” as the one-time sense of community has somehow been decimated at the same time that the language of ‘community’ grows large within city governance. At the same time, training opportunity is difficult to find forcing men from the most south-east area of Oakland to commute to the North Berkeley’s Adult School (BAS) again posing as a distance barrier on top of the challenges of immediate environment. As with the young man commuting – on foot – from 25th at International Blvd to West Oakland’s De Fremery Park (approx 5.5 miles) for work, the distance barrier demands that the person is intensely committed to the new labor standard: a stable instability. *Under circumstances of a growing matrix of interwoven barriers, absent the job-creation based recovery once advocated by politicians to grow the economy and therein reduce crime and cohere communities, the percentage of youth and young adults enduring the rigors of wage instability invariably declines and communities further divide.* In the case of the ex-inmate or the ex-institutionalized awaiting trial in claims of misconduct, there exists a similar politics of negation hedging probabilities in the direction of abandon, that is, when forcing the individual to live in deep poverty until his or her case is heard. Meanwhile the student with the radical thesis also increasingly undergoes a similar intolerance of opinion, though here in the realm of academia. It is as if all, despite the distance of institutional purpose, were once again living through a Cold War social and political intolerance, which for Michel (1966) must necessarily continue to grow absent a serious rerouting of the social course.

Right or wrong in terms of best practices in programmatic services, what is especially absent from this kind of “carrot and stick” structural development seamless across regimes and social fields is simple recognition that this is the prevailing dynamic of the neoliberal system and that this is how opportunity is found. Inherently unpredictable, it is predictably antithetical to the inherent stability embedded in the foregone school>training>job channels and circuitry:

I am convinced that employment is a factor of economics much more than of civil rights. Granted, there may be areas of discrimination directly or inadvertently, and we should continue breaking barriers, urging realistic employment standards and emphasizing full opportunity. But in my experience many of the unemployed are just not adequately prepared to take advantage of these opportunities. -- *Mayor John Reading, 1967 cited in Pressman, 1975, p. 45*

In juxtaposing the liberal and neoliberal era that followed in the early 1970s, there is more than ever a need to stop and assess the situation. With such a pro-labor vision emanating from the republican right above and the popular democratic majority at the time, how is it that with forty years of neoliberal implementation, nothing akin to what devolves increasingly to negated objectives has been lost by both parties and constituents? Critical to any assessment, to what extent has the fact of decentralizing mania and regulation standards contributed to this enhanced power management governance with its paradoxical military/criminalizing centralizing standards in its heightened control social environment?

Estimates of youth joblessness have been found to be as high as 60% for those twenty and over (including young adults with a high school diploma or GED) depending on the city. Exceedingly distinct from a history of tradesmen pipelines that may have once steered the young teenager towards stable work, justifying dropping out, currently the Black male high school dropout encounters jobless rates as high as 80 percent (cf. Giroux, 2003). If the 2013 California state 65% dropout rate for Alameda County public schools is correct with its 80% dropout-to-incarceration rate, it 80% recidivism rate – the riddle of the fractious community has to be, in part, emanating from this contagion. It is a governance assistance model tragically flawed with outcomes determined an unfortunate mistake ultimately breaking up households and communities just as the “man in the house” welfare clause triggered an explosion in single parent homes through a twisted policy incentivizing until its policy reversal. *Yet, while talk of ending heavy incarceration has gained greater support and wider media coverage post-2011, there is little evidence that youth are well-educated on “big picture” correlation/correspondence between levels of education, ethno-racial divides, changing vocational training and employment trends, and what might constitute “best practices” for today’s youth within the country’s low-income urban pockets.* Instead, as noted by the parents of students, aside from a handful of public schools, either extremely esteemed or showing extreme academic challenges as in the continuation schools, the likelihood is for a chartered public to take its place as part of the Great Transformation post-Great Recession advance.

If it is a school in the blurry flatland area once dominated by urban poor though with over 50% now representing a growing white commuter class as in Longfellow and Temescal there has been as ongoing neglect in terms of stable program pipeline intervention from within the schools.³⁸ It is in these schools, unless and until converted to charters like hundreds of schools in the district since the Great Recession/Great Transformation that parents feel the pain of inequality. Some adults and youth describe them as a kind of caldron mixing together a strange brew including: 1) excessive use of criminal/surveillance at the hand of the prison-industrial complex; 2) the elimination of job training/skill building and other resources and services; and 3) a compounding

³⁸ There is a suggestion that these trends may be responsive to some kind of effective intervention as representatives of the California Governor’s office entered at least one of the inner-city high schools the week of the federal government shut-down, October 1, 2013, explaining to the school administration that there was an actually-existing dropout rate of 65% for Alameda county.

social drift that includes physical ill-health giving way to “babies having babies.” From this perspective, the challenges of a politic of neglect and its effects on a destitute youth could respond positively, as other schools have, to positive intervention though too little is forthcoming – a subject reviewed in greater detail in the next chapter. While discerning youth think they see the “bigger plan” in terms of neighborhood decay, criminalizing and gentrifying, often unfamiliar with the scope of the political playing field or the transformation of working class standard: they do not usually see them as intertwined. However, they have a great deal to offer by way of opinion at the suggestion of such continuity of transformative change.

The following chapter makes use of historical comparative analysis observing differences in the pre-neoliberal socio-political landscape of representation/opportunity/assistance in an effort to observe the current ‘nonstate’ state of the socio-political landscape of the hyper-neoliberal twenty-first century. Through observing operational and programmatic infrastructure during the Great Society having achieved the country’s stalwart historical high watermark of reduced inequality, a correspondingly robust social mobility, and a premium on inclusive participation transcending social fields: political, economic and socio-cultural. Historical comparison is used to disentangle the contemporary *coming of age centrifuge* where more youth of the bottom 40% cascade in a downward spiral that often includes dropping out of school unlike those of a similar socio-economic status who in the 1980s were unfamiliar with the process when considering tenable routes to coming of age. Together these fundamental structures reinforced through thousands of supports structures as microscopic as policy protocol and as large as legislation feeding the *coming of age centrifuge* that pushes individuals down and keeps them down in a permanent societal bifurcation between ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’, tomorrows members of the *Image Ready* and the *Hungry City*.

When considering actual income needed to meet household expenses today, research consistently shows that, on average, families need an income of about *twice the federal poverty level rendering the set poverty level questionably low and conceivably pushing up actual households in or near poverty*.³⁹ Children living in families with incomes below the double-poverty \$40,000

³⁹ The current U.S. poverty metric is widely acknowledged as inadequate. Although considerable research has been done on alternative methods to measure income poverty, the political will necessary to implement a new relevant metric is lacking inasmuch as cost of living to food costs remain central. Data collected in the 1950s indicated that families spent about one-third of their income on food. Poverty is still measured by multiplying food costs by three. Yet food now comprises far less than a third of an average family’s expenses, while the costs of housing, child care, health care, and transportation have grown disproportionately. The official poverty measure takes into account a variety of income sources, including earnings, interest, dividends, and benefits, such as Social Security and cash assistance. It does not, however, include the value of the major benefits that assist low-income families—the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps, Medicaid, housing and child care assistance. Many of these benefits have been cut since the commencing of welfare/social state retrenchment, that is, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). On the expense side, the official poverty measure does not include the cost of payroll and income taxes or work-related expenses, such as child care and transportation. Nor does it take into account varying family needs, such as the cost of out-of-pocket medical expenses, the latter which has gone up considerably over the last 20 years. And finally, the poverty measure does not adjust for the substantial variation in the cost of living from state to state, urban and rural and the heavy cost to renters of deregulated housing markets. See http://nccp.org/publications/pub_684.html. Retrieved December 2010. In 2013, new measures were emerging where poverty frequency was being determined by a combination of factors including unemployment, welfare, income below 150% of the poverty line. This metric recently concluded that over 75% of Americans experience such a life standard at some point in their life.

for a family of four in 2006, are referred to as “*low income*” though many are poor in terms of disposable income. In 2005, approximately 39% of the nation’s children, more than 28 million, were members of these low-income families. *Increasing percentages of minorities were living in poverty and deep poverty such that, by 2013, 30% of the new generation come of age was living worse off than the generation before them.* For these reasons among others, the universal challenge of maintaining one’s self, family, community, working connections in addition to school grades, while coming of age, is rushed to the forefront of life’s challenges absorbing youth often towards a place of mental angst and deep social insecurity.

Even when remembering the systemic seamless terrain of exclusion, recalling a Hamiltonesque (1973) insight that it is in areas of employment, training, education and political exclusion together that there is structured push-down of any group – the complexity of push-down is continually forgotten in a landscape of compartmentalized accountability. As one high school staff member pointed out, youth today are experiencing untold levels of exclusion with fluctuating levels of inequality where previously the very existence of a more ethical, inclusive, equitable operational standard meant the measure of systemic failure is buried within itself, within its own system.

Making matters infinitely worse for the youth of *Generation Negation* when drugs are introduced into this equation fates lean heavily in the direction of severe drift, of a scavenger class, a tale deserving of its own volume. Meanwhile, folding into the matrix of decay the physical deterioration of bodily organs that comes with excessive drug abuse, it is unclear if “normal” as upheld by the status quo could ever make sense again further distancing the permanent sidewinder. This operative blurring is suggested in distinguishing between the pre-neoliberal operative development daisy and the neoliberal undevelopment bulb:

Wealth-Polarizing Market Production Regimes Blurring the Four Primary Social Arenas, Public/Private Authority, Control and Profit while Sacrificing the Socio-Communal

The Great Transformation grown out of the Great Recession has meant that whereas a vital socio-communal was the ultimate objective emanating from the central point in the growth liberal ‘*development daisy*’ it is non-existent in the neoliberal ‘*undevelopment bulb*’...

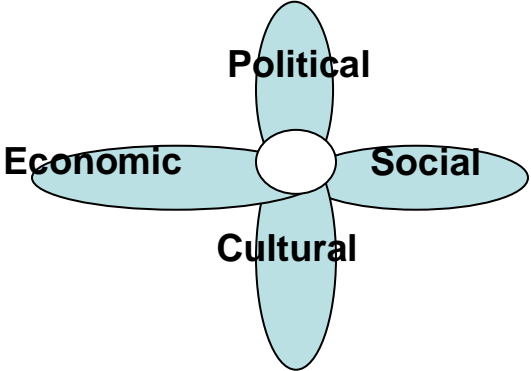
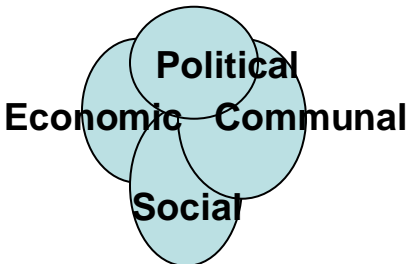
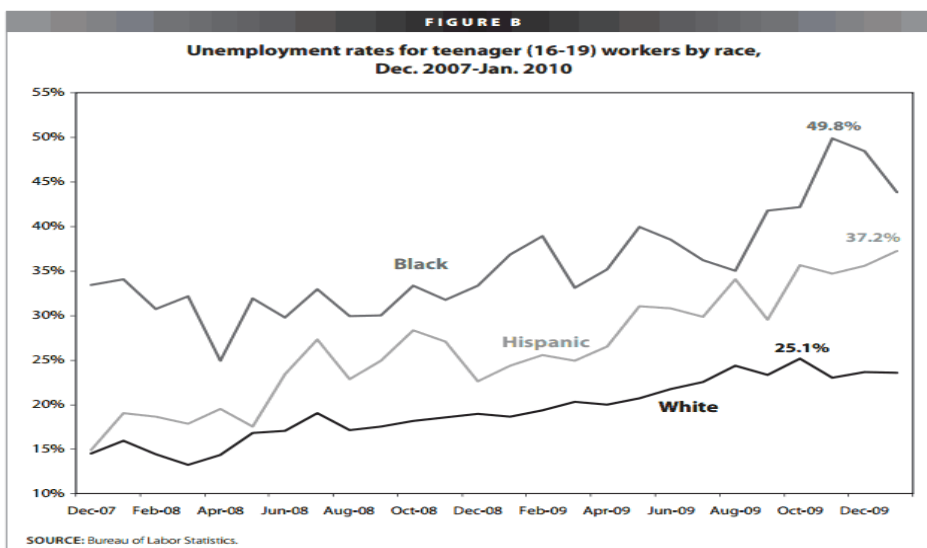
<p>20th Century 1930s – 1980s Keynesian State/ Growth liberalism Semi-autonomy of social spheres [Big Government balances Big Business]</p>	<p>Neoliberal Blur 1980s + Overlap of authority, profit, power limited autonomy of operative fields though under auspices of community-building</p>
	

TABLE 1

Unemployment rates for 16-24-year-old workers by sex and race

	Dec. 2007	Jan. 2010	Difference
<i>Workers 16-24</i>	11.8%	18.9%	7.1
<i>Men</i>	12.7	22.5	9.8
<i>Women</i>	10.7	15.0	4.3
<i>White</i>	7.0	15.2	8.2
<i>Black</i>	21.8	32.5	10.7
<i>Hispanic</i>	11.0	24.2	13.2

NOTE: Rates by race not seasonally adjusted.
 SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Looking at youth jobless rates through the last four recessions and considering the Great Recession spike, fears and anxieties are not without historical justification.⁴⁰ Economist Paul Krugman refers to contemporary disadvantaged youth as members of ‘Generation Recession’, a generation savagely hit by the negative effects of a recession that harbors a deeper Silent Depression cutting down certain ethno-racial lines. Yet, even with this call out to a specific group within the population as unfairly impacted, it is not clear if their fate as collateral damage is in fact a part of a larger ‘Great Transformation’ involving the pivotal conversion to neoliberal forms in all key areas impacting the social: educational, political, economic, social dynamism and culture. All fields and their interconnected associations are radically affected through a deep repositioning of power and means.

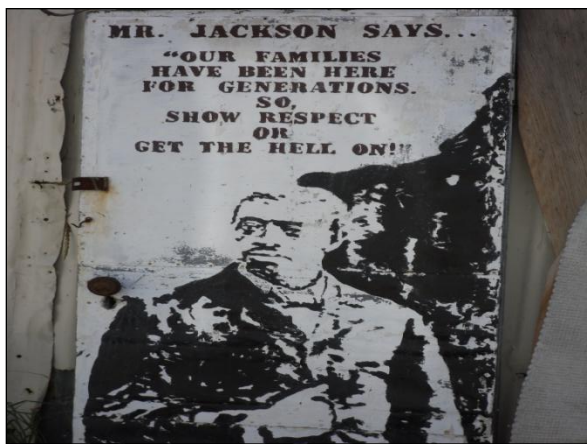
If the country is indeed in the throes of a Great Recession-qua-Great Transformation deeply embedded in urban “recovery” solutions and responses to crises, early urban ecologist Louis Wirth’s (1928) “zone of transition” is no longer sufficient in depicting the urban core slum areas of contestation. These “areas” are ineluctably social and more than ever before are animated through a conservative engineering defining the operational dynamic of the various social fields and its production regimes. This provides the means through which powerful production regimes usurp the nascent social production form, a mere social field, the latter having been organized around bottom-up solutions of inclusion and equal universal opportunity standards of the Great Society (e.g., *maximum feasible participation*, the Civil Rights of 1964, Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962, and the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity in 1964). If legitimately cast as a “recovery” strategy, it is a governance premium unseen during the present urban Great Transformation “recovery,” which neatly splices through the political, social and economic countervailing strength, leverage and solidarity of labor.

Whereas in the 1920s, the “zone of transition” was place-specific in a city’s core filled with immigrants in a transitional phase of their life, the “zone of transition” today in cities attempting the neoliberal-prescribed urban restoration find that the aspect of instability is not so much place specific as carried on the backs of the individual person navigating emaciated withered channels of assistance, inclusion and mobility. The same region can easily receive a four million dollar investment for a new building or stadium, the point being not so much incomparable funding budgets but rather intensions and the incentivizing that comes of it. Specifically, is the funding for the concerted social service assistance aiding the resource deprived along paths of social mobilization and not merely after school crafts and sports? Or, is this recovery so well within the fold of the larger neoliberal transformative social and its city that it continues to work towards an ultimate end of free market gains with social assistance ostensibly to come through

⁴⁰ As emphasized by Edwards and Hertel-Fernandez (2010), an unemployment rate of 49.8% for Blacks 16-19 in December 2009 is over 10% higher than the unemployment rate for Hispanics of the same age and over 20% higher for Whites the same age. It is over 14% higher than what it was for Blacks of the same age in December 2007, when the recession is officiated. In addition, the actual rate for the Black male is considerably higher in that females have had considerably more success in finding employment than males, and unemployment rates in general do not include the “discouraged worker,” that is, he who has ceased looking for work. In general, Edwards and Hertel-Fernandez are alerting us to a critical situation often passed over where young adults represent only 13.5% of the workforce while accounting for 26.4 percent of unemployed workers (EPI Briefing Paper, April 7, 2010). And yet, the findings of Wodtke, G., Harding, D., & Elwert, F. (2011) are even more dire noting that in 2008 only 62% of Black men, 20 and over, had jobs and only 17% of Black teens compared with 72% for White men and 33% for White teens (American Sociological Review, Volume 76, October 2011, p. 713-736).

the indirect “trickle” down mutual benefits – a “long finger” politic yet to play out again with youth to suffer the consequences?

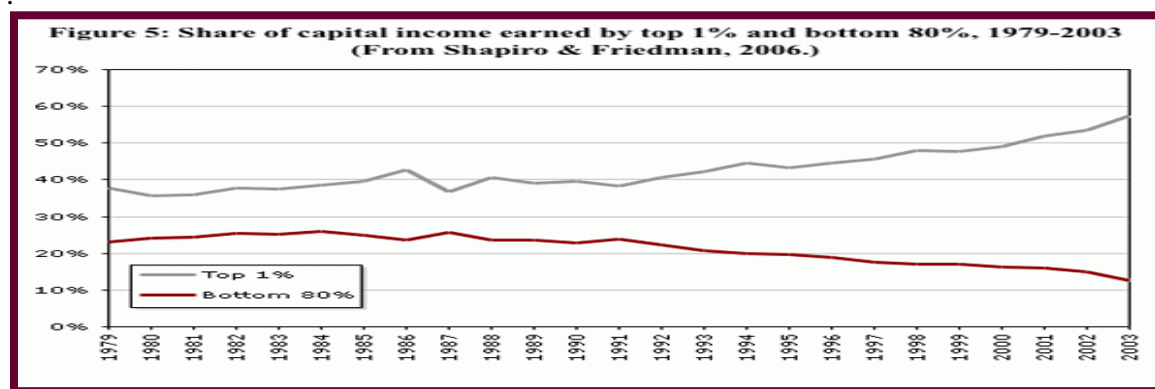
With no less instability than those of the early twenty century’s zone of transition, there is now an expansive socio-institutional terrain that the disadvantaged must maneuver extending well beyond the own neighborhood for this or that particular service. In the new “zone of transition,” tumultuousness is not so much synonymous with place as institutional health or lack thereof and the feeble *socio-communal lattice web* extending from a more feeble *supra-institutional consortia matrix* ill-conceived and underfunded. Poorly interconnected and poorly conceived with respect to its supra-institutional aspects because of competitive individuated contexts, what exists by way of master plan is often a kind of post-facto piece-meal resource mapping. Meanwhile, the uproar seen just three years ago, in 2011, to hold the area down or to ensure that the revitalization of the flatlands included everyone advocated under Occupy Oakland has also receded. Many local residents, some having lived in areas of Lower Bottoms as in South Prescott for over 50 years are wondering if the battle has been lost. As argued by Hamilton (1973) over forty years ago, in order to measure “loss” there is a need to consider *sociological tipping factors* much more than say the number of broken bottle or windows. *For Hamilton, a black historian, socio-political leverage is measured in relation to the leveraging of strength as political voice, educational and training institutions, and worker rights. To this list I have added the emotionally nuanced features that also radically contribute to the larger leveraging prospects and the solidarities they nurture: exposure-based engagement; involvement as belonging, skill-building and licensing; and equitable rights and opportunities integral to truly vital active agency.*



West Oakland mural art seen on side paneling in de-industrial gentrifying Lower Bottoms, 2010

Where the traditional “zone of transition” continues to surge ahead it is no longer in the urban downtown margins as in the industrial era when filled with on-the-move immigration and minority populations serving as a convenient cheap labor pool. To the extent that it persists spatially, it has been relocated to urban ‘graying Gray Areas’ and blighted pockets, areas that for whatever reason escaped priority in the Great Transformation market rate redevelopment plan.

Having studied the nation-state, political sociologist Gianfranco Poggi concluded that the nation-state needs a healthy social state for healthy growth. And yet, many of the youth of *Generation Negation* have a difficult time even conceptualizing what ‘the social’ might signify or mean because so much of it no longer exists providing very little exposure to, for instance, healthy school>training>work pipelines. The youth of *Generation Negation* are simultaneously raised to have a certain distaste or repugnance for the notion of welfare, social service, with individual inability (e.g., as symbolized in the case of food stamps receiving giggles or a look of pathetic contempt from other students). Meanwhile, suggesting the extent of operational turmoil, in the case of hunger relief, a large number of OUSD’s student body, eligible for free lunch, are found to go hungry during breakfast absent comparable and consistent relief and/or absent the required number. The combination of hardship and acculturated disdain for hardship can easily force the poor child into an ideological corner caught between need, one’s own ideal acceptance in an *Image Ready* society, and a new desire for ‘drift’. Absent the concrete stable social, youths’ choices are invariably embody an aspect of society’s own polarizing, splintering condition. These youth are not anomalies to a system but instead embody its anemic state and its pattern of negative downward social reproduction that can often include the eraser of their own intimate history, once including the vital interventionist social state. Here dozens of available metrics (including but not limited to the core housing, family, health, education, and work) cloud their mental state as they pass from place to place in what appears a kind of slow disintegration or decay of a people and the social space as the place or communal boundaries of these people. Again, the mere observation of such trends lead coming of age youth to ask, “Why we ain’t got a stable neighborhood area to call our own like the Chinese do or Korean town?”



Moderate fluctuations in a continuously polarizing inequality begins in the early 1970s

Writing on the devastated social as spatial landscapes (horizontal) and those writing on the social betrayal of the country’s low-income youth (vertical), both stress the correspondence between poverty and various trends such as teen pregnancy, incarceration, and mental health (cf. Davis, 1999; Mauer, 1999). With little incentivizing social assistance-based intervention, reminiscent of the early 1950s, minority youth have been more invisible in terms of need and more visible in terms of “block-busting, there goes the neighborhood” sensibilities. Meanwhile, as harsher policing and penalties are imposed for social resistance including arrest, stop-n-frisk, use of tasers and stun guns, the incentivizing that once propelled the country towards a systemically concerted (corresponding across social arenas) holistic social progress further dissolves. Disparaged, blamed for their life course, stripped of official political and economic capital, increasingly without influence and civil rights, without skill-building, licensing, and exposure to

different crafts, careers and life skills – the element of ‘drift’ takes hold in the very tangible and material area of economic production. When drugs are added to this social “site,” it is a virtual implosion of social space animated as in the case of the repeatedly burglarized local café with its broken windows and busted door where drug habits, like the risk of popularizing such a place, contribute to its internal recession. While technically exposed to global markets through technologies, the locally-based/government sustained (often through the OEO) social mobility ladders that once served as operative bridges between the equivalent of West Oakland’s Lower Bottoms and New York City as mid-ground socio-communal infrastructural matrix made of programs, channels and pipelines has only scant remains. In which case, the downward fall from what was supposed to be an upward social mobility climb is an inevitable *byproduct* in a negative social reproduction marred by its own downward reproduction.

The deconstruction and dismemberment giving rise to myriad forms of system-wide seamless dis’engagement has silently and accumulatively taken place over the last four decades rendering youth born since the early 1980s part of the new *Generation Negation*. Because birthrates peaked in the country in 1990, as youth transitioned to young adult, there would be heightened need for social assistance.⁴¹ Instead, youth coming of age during this time were dealt a crippling blow. Specifically, they were forced to contend with a concatenation of retrenching forces including: welfare retrenchment, the elimination of the largest remaining federal youth jobs assistance grant, that is, the Youth Opportunity Grant, the commencing of the official Great Recession, the unmitigated ongoing job contraction for youth jobs 16-24 since the 1960s, ongoing cuts to training programs and reduced funding to public schools, and the *coup de gras* or so it seems: a retreat from civil and voter rights post-incarceration. At the same time, just as crack hit the inner-ghetto of the 1980s against the press of new forms of social exclusion, Afghani heroin was hitting the same inner-city areas via prescription, over-the-counter pills or under the same counter dime bags on the street.

So much more of the current century’s Great Transformation is political. One-time addressed by the Ford Foundation as the troubling “Gray Areas” of American cities, that is in between the central downtown zones and a city’s suburban edge, though 60 years has passed and the aid programs created to assist in the same socially deprived “Gray Areas” has long been terminated, the reality of socio-ecological drift remains.

Though the language of neoliberalism fell from use during Bush’s second term as did the attention given to its critics, it was not because it was outmoded but rather because of its recasting and reclaiming of the social itself. As warned by its critics and the Latin American nations subject to NAFTA to collectively reject its development logic in the late 1990s, the new poverty is a deep poverty working across all social arenas of societal operations and production savagely dividing the country into two areas: *Image ready* and *Hungry*. Does it opt for such selective growth because of its hobbled economy that cannot risk including or enabling the excluded masses? Does it create risk, as with youth risk, in the name of avoiding market risk? While recession can better account for the large numbers of homeless eager to do early bird recycling routinely pushing his or her grocery cart with trash bags of bottles hanging from every side in the early light of morning for the coins it brings, we find ourselves coming to the close of

⁴¹ For the same reason, there is a growing need for senior caretaking and general geriatrics’ care in the 2010s as the American median age continues to rise.

a tumultuous 2013. Mainstream news continues to praise the “economic recovery” forcing youth of the *Hungry City* to ask, “If this is ‘recovery’, what does recession look like?” and, alternatively, “How come this recovery doesn’t include me?”

In hindsight, they are fair questions as too often the woes and concerns of youth are muted through mainline opinion with their unique exclusion having gone unaddressed for the better part of the century. This particular trend, however, looks poised to change as documentaries explore the depths of exclusion, with the combined release of *Fruitvale*, the documentary of Oscar Grant, Paul Krugman’s focus on “Recession Generation” in his new book, *End this Depression Now!*, and the Trayvon Martin verdict to name a few. By 2011, youth and a growing number of adults were accepting the idea that there were certain social experiences where wealth and race were increasingly decisive including education and incarceration. Partially because of such proof of the hazards of polarizing inequalities, by 2013, it was increasingly common to hear talk of “the turning tide,” how administrations and individuals were revisiting aspects of the progressive solution that focused on full-service, the whole person, the social aspect of the psychological state, and the need to reinvigorate inclusive services models. Whether it transcends the boundaries of the operative social either by way of transcending different social arenas or by transcending the larger market political economy is still to be seen. What was clear, however, was that the social imaginary was seeking solutions to fractious separation and disunion amidst a system of compartmentalized “widget” treatments and services as well as to the individual experience of a community “gone its separate ways.”

The Social Ecology as the Art and Artifact of Impressions, Ideas, and the Imagery of Spatiality

Social theory has maintained the alienating effects of urban life for generations arguing for inherent isolation, alienation, and anomie (cf., Wirth, 1991). Yet, having involved myself in the community of West Oakland for a number of years, the position is taken that the members of a *Hungry City* in areas like West Oakland’s Lower Bottoms and Dogtown filled with members of the city’s “accursed half”, that is, those poor in a city where poverty is predicted at 1:2 versus 1:5 among its working masses, were nonetheless less predisposed to the dread of white man’s nihilism, existential dread and alienation. There is a natural solidarity of an oppressed community even in the communality of recessed pockets as seen in the “communal ghetto” (Wacquant, 1997) provided, that is, that institutional engagement, including political forums, persists. And yet, as explained by Cornel West, today the specter of nihilism has trumped haunting many of the unsettled, with youth and young adults numerous among them, feeding the impulse towards dread, despair, uncertainty, homicide, and, often, suicide. Part of the roots of this triumphant nihilistic dread is disbelief that the future holds a space or a place for the person or includes them such that they matter. Politically, feeling increasingly caught in a web of misrepresentation, while demoralized, misinformed, penalized, issued inconceivably high fines on top of difficult to pay user fees, ridiculed, rejected and so on with a triumphant nihilistic dread transcending social arenas, there is literally few places to turn. Nihilism, like the system itself, is ubiquitous whereas social intervention and the larger social state has been decomposed to the level of organization and event. In accord with the historical record, against the press of ribald individuation and compartmentalism, in this polarized context of extreme negation, youth, like adults, turn increasingly towards the religious embrace.

It is not uncommon to hear among youth in the neighborhood and adults that the problem is in “the system itself.” However, as reasonable as it may sound, the fact is systems theory flourished in the time of growth-liberal Fordist/Keynesianism only to be dismissed thereafter as “conspiratorial” and/or “far-flung” in terms of perceiving the political playing field. Preferred in the narrative of post-modern individualism, following its rise through 1980’s Reaganomics, was the popular trope of ‘individualized responsibility’ *complimented by* a ‘hyper-functional’ theory which, echoing an evangelical determinism, upheld that the disciplined effort of one can be greater than group solidarities whether of the institution or at the level of community.⁴² This development of thought fit perfectly with the larger advance of the neoliberal state in its promotion of decentralized privatization of operations and of governance authority/power. This aspect of the neoliberal state is particularly noticeable when considering the inversion of decision-making authority once its more direct forms and forums are removed from the authority/powers of the working masses. Whereas *maximum feasible participation* (MFP) of the 1960s was a well-intentioned policy standard based on engaged inclusion with particular attention on the politically excluded or overlooked such as the poor, particularly poor youth, Reaganomics saw a reversal of precisely this kind of inclusive political decision-making between labor, the working poor, the unemployed, youth, and formal government bodies. Reversing political progress through advancing representative government, “voice” would be reduced to the token “3 minutes on the Town Hall floor” that may or may not result in anything as far as actual legislative influence. It is a “3 minutes” that persists today as with the West Oakland Environmental Council (WOEC) urging attendance at one of its meetings impacting East Oakland development where locals declined to attend such a meeting noting that, “It’s a done deal at that point, the planning is already decided.” Ultimately, for those who felt the counterforce of the working bodies undermined, the representative format of the prevailing Town Halls or representative meetings was a tokenism that, in terms of probabilities, a large number of previously participating residents would not show for such already resigned to its ‘political theater’.

As gleaned by Nik Rose (1996) when writing on the *death of the social*, there has indeed been less interest in any semblance of a robust social state. Problematically, however, absent a kind of fibrous social weaving through the urban core of effective supra-institutions, divisive identities emerge involving, for instance, resegregation and the rise of discriminatory hostilities – a sociological conundrum addressed centuries earlier.⁴³ Nonetheless, since the 1970s, the USA has experienced this structure-driven ‘excising’ of the social aspect of the urban milieu both through: dissolving participatory democratic forums of power that had numerous provisions for the poor and polarizing the remaining institutional/service landscape. Though it is the case that, for instance, drug rehabilitation in-house facilities will advertise their “social approach”

⁴² The Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, more routinely known as welfare reform, embodies the turning political tide touting a new individualism, here taking the so-called premium on individual responsibility advanced through Reaganomics with its distancing from Great Society’s social state, to new structurally embedded operational production heights.

⁴³ Gary Orfield and the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s Civil Rights Project have been writing on resegregation in the country’s schools for over 15 years. For Orfield (2004) there is a direct correlation between school districts with few whites, poverty, and lower educational achievement, an outcome that reverses the successes of desegregation following *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

seemingly reasserting the role of the social, far more incidents fold over daily collapsing the same vital social in what is for now a losing proposition. In particular, this annihilation of the social has been effectively hidden through the advance of a number of surrogate forms of social presencing not the least of which is: 1) a new socio-political focus on an largely abstract and/or residentially-anchored “community” of people; 2) a preoccupation with the potential unifying force of said “network society” despite experiencing instead a deregulatory devolutionary rise of the town-system of socio-political identity and 3) the use of *community* as the *social* where the former is to stand in for a one-time vital socio-political though in a compartmental widget-like ‘township of commonalities’ fashion. *As is always the case, youth are no exception to the rule; they too have lives impacted by large massive, often invisible, structural changes, which only after at least a decade appears as an undoing of working class identity and/or comparable solidarities/bonds.* In particular, the youth among the socially disadvantaged have experienced ongoing intensifying levels of disadvantage when calculating the repeatedly imposed austerity cuts and/or the rise of barriers via operations requirements and/or standards across social domains of production.

Just as Herbert Marcuse’s “one dimensional man” is still a man, systems remain no matter how decentralized, entangled and/or structurally broken, the larger state of production remains a “system” just as- and where- the negated social prevails as a kind of social. Sealing the seamless aspect of the *systemic cycle of predominately punitive logic*, complimenting the high fines that hold the individual down, youth are denied access to numerous upward mobility pipelines often through some combination involving monetary requirements, age, geography, family SES, arrest history and/or basic skill requirements. Working with piecemeal relief, *the fact remains the socially disadvantaged need systematically operationalized assistance – with all its program satellites of stable organization, operations, regulated accountability of outcomes – as relates to guaranteed funding, and predictable life longevity in general in order to join in society proper.* Less than such systemic structurally-anchored “intervention,” large percentages are left to drift with lives hanging in the balance precisely as is seen with the advance of the neoliberal social as system. Only through the concerted efforts of the former has there been the positive transformation to vibrant communal ghetto or urban Gray Areas such that the ambiguity of poverty is transformed into an invigorated poverty of possibility affirmed through numerous tales of social mobility. Similarly, only with programs seen as contributing to the goal of absolute social inclusion and not just institutional inclusion – where success is measured by the total number assisted in a particular area (e.g., an entire district, city or county) and not simply by institute or ‘community’ (the latter rushing a society towards divisive resegregating standards) measuring programmatic efficiency of the entire supra-institutional consortia – can the measure of social effectiveness be held.

There is a sense of abandon and of drift, in part, perpetuated by the post-recession stagnation where locals note that “money is no longer flowing” and similarly that “the city is no longer moving.” Additionally, there is a crisis of dimensionality and, in turn, urban vitality where money flows. The former crisis of dimensionality is a political crisis where the apparatus that ensured 3-D dimensionality in politics between the classes and their constituent bodies – has been decomposed in joint correspondence with other assistential services. Paradoxically, with voices of poor and low-income increasingly muted and/or excised from processes of decision-making, while the larger social polarization streams through and polarizes the political playing

field itself, current political dimensionality is *flat* at a time when it lauds its far-reaching globality. Under the circumstances, absent a vital socio-communal consortia to effectively fold the individual student into the social, there is little to lend itself to the view that – adrift in an economic wasteland, excised from spaces of political and socio-economic opportunity, deprived of equitable voice, opportunity and outcomes – it actually makes sense to plug away in school for what might come of it. For the poor ashamed of his or her own social standing, whose jobless rate increases even for those with a high school diploma, whose sibling is suffering in their own attempt to reenter society from prison despite his effort, school presents itself as a possibility making less ‘sense’ especially for someone with academic challenges. It is a far cry from when “school was what you did” and the term “dropout” was foreign. In such a context confounded by the Great Recession/Great Transformation, over 50%, closure to 65% of youth, are thought to be dropping out in an edge city like Oakland that, laying development plans in preparation for a growing commuter class, has relentlessly cut programs serving these same youth.

My Hood Your Hood, Mi Casa Tu Casa?

Youth interviews are in keeping with the historical record: exposure-based opportunity in a majority of social arenas can effectively mitigate against the risk of delinquency (cf. Cloward & Ohlin, 1966; Davis, 1999) while active agency, as when involved in political outcomes, can answer the crisis of a frail sense of belonging. As one former dropout potentially drifting towards street markets boldly proclaimed when swiftly stepping up to manage the 2011 Occupy Oakland’s occupation of foreclosed homes, “This is our house now... all we want is the same thing for our children, our nephews and nieces that people in the hills have... ain’t nothing wrong with that.”



Key to the essential Occupy Oakland struggle: Opposing neighborhood bust-up, foreclosure, and buy-up, which looked like a well-conceived scheme for push-out with an ultimate end of a new advanced level of control of an area that included North, East and West Oakland in an economy sustained through its housing market over and above any vision and implementation of a jobs-based recovery, Fall, 2011

Transcending ethno-racial/neighborhood divisions, by 2011, there was a powerful understanding that collapse as economic collapse was strongly entangled in a housing market premised on rampant foreclosure where government lending schemes (concurrent with property repossession schemes through, say, Kaiser Permanente's "official" evaluation of so-called incompetents⁴⁴) were deeply implicated in the Great Transformation bust-up neighborhoods. Alongside a strong housing market was a no less rampant drug-driven illegal street market. Here, the fact of America's approval through the Drug and Food Administration of the harshest street drugs in existence (i.e., cocaine and methamphetamine) as legitimate prescription drugs, did work its magic "trickle down" spilling over from Oakland's Pill Hill into the outlying neighborhoods in the production of deep addiction and co-occurring mental disorder or COD. Often, these neighborhoods were home to underperforming schools and/or schools with exceedingly high dropout rates. In this case of Occupy Oakland, the phenomenon of widespread repossession and/or take-over of homes was enough to bring different sides and neighborhoods together focused on a new intent against the proverbial "block-busting," one which was attempting to reclaim entire blocks for the people as a unified front.

Still, the fierce internal feuding that invariably resurfaces in a climate of scarce resources, territorial disputes, questionable loyalties, and competitive-based relief – forcing a sense of a perennial race poised atop instability, uncertainty, and a lonely individualism – often manifest especially when illegal drug markets are added to the equation. Absent a more vital stable inclusive social animated through a vital jobs-based recovery program widespread throughout the city, while youth and young adults succumb to the pressures of "getting high on their own supply" fidelities of all sorts are compromised.

With these internal and external pressures ongoing at one's door, where have all the children gone? That is, with a rough understanding the social environment, the question is better poised: If McClymonds High School of West Oakland's Lower Bottoms had 1000 students in 2002-2003 in a neighborhood with over 50% poverty and 50% dropouts in 2004, though has only 180 enrollees in 2012-2013, what is causing its internal decimation and structural blight? A school whose building has survived the Gilded Age, initially constructed in 1915 with the title Vocational High School serving a largely working class neighborhood with a premium on trades, why does the school now speak to a history only dating back to 2005? Questions arise as to whether it was the effect of the 2004 termination of the truancy program that included a truancy "patrol" officer combing the neighborhood where today one sees the police of the OPD, whether it was the effect of OUSD's decision to accept open enrollment in 2005, the break-up into (3) small schools the same year, was it the effect of economic blight amidst a rising trickle down drug-driven street market or simply escalating dropouts estimated at over 60% in 2013 historically unaddressed through institution-focused action until officially signed out? As close as these years are and as interconnected are the changing policy measures, one has to suspect a volatile snowball combined impact, a vision which in itself utters why youth feel compelled to work around a system rather than through it yet realizing that its margins, the place of the outsider and outcast, are no less part of a much larger constellative social. With the ubiquity of

⁴⁴ In the case of the medical determination, when a single aged homeowner is said be incapable of self-care, their home is at risk of being repossessed should they be put in a Kaiser-managed nursing facility. No small influence in Oakland, homeowners of both San Francisco and Oakland were forced to contest charges of medical incompetence at the same time that the foreclosure watershed continued to raze neighborhoods.

the neoliberal ‘politics of the individual’ unfathomable and incomprehensible for those experiencing how it quickly devolves to a ‘politics of neglect’, Generation Recession has easily become a continuance of *Generation Negation* where negation is felt through the compounding of forces that work like waves beating at the shore of the young man or woman. It is not simply ‘a job thing’ or ‘a housing question’; with a view from the inside of a city, it is everything, including unlikely odds, the assistance barrier mesh in school and out of school, even the internal rifts are all part of the greater social polarization or splintering that has been allowed and structurally propelled. Against the press of a dismantled Great Society-constructed mobilizing *supra-institutional consortia matrix*, today’s destitute are left to wander in the overgrown fields of “self-enterprise” with few viable routes for upward motion that are something other than short-term assistance at far remove from the one-time social norm or operations standard.⁴⁵

In the same fractious fashion seen, however, in domains of educational and training operations today, there are disparately scattered sources for counsel, legal aid, health services, rehabilitation, GED preparation and testing taking amidst a long list of other emaciated local services. The fact that youths’ feeling of being left out or abandoned by the system was acknowledged indirectly at the level of education operations and administration is testament to just how perceptive these youths’ feelings of abandon and/or exclusion are once, that is, administrators consider actual percentages achieving social mobility. Predictably, dismissed views of youth on opportunity, insecurity, small school inequity by design, social injustice, racial profiling, and social disadvantage have more often than not been the tragedy of *Generation Negation* for most of the Great Transformation twenty-first century experiment in public education. In the case of OUSD, by 2011, Superintendent Tony Smith (resigned in 2013) was already discussing its 50% dropout rate with the public whereas previously the rates were deflated. In this context, the implementation of its ‘Full-Service wrap-around’ (FSWA) schools tried to correct for the experiences of fractious institutional disunion and student neglect. The neoliberal social conviction behind FSWA was that the decentralized system could stomach its weak training channels and make good on its relation with local organizations countering objections of fragmentation and the limited experiential engagement of the *Hungry City*. Invoking aspects of the archipelago operations of Great Society extended learning, the stream of organizations included in FSWA constituted a smattering of uncertain services in the Gray Areas of the city where once stood large companies, work houses, and enterprise cohered through established pipelines. Something needed to be done as popular criticism was mounting. Either make good on what looks particularly troubled in terms of assistance, services and uniform supra-institutional flows or, alternatively, address the concerns of decentralization’s critics who highlight the strengths of the Great Society centrally administered service archipelago blanketing the flatlands of Oakland through the 1960s until dismantled piecemeal in the 1980s. The city chose the former.

⁴⁵ A good example of staying within the purview of the larger market model, short-term relief for the long term socially disadvantaged is seen in the financial assistance offered through Federal Student Aid/FAFSA to cover course fees and text material at the Peralta Colleges during the 2012-to-2013 school year. A questionable effort to mitigate the recession-induced reduced enrollment, the realities of financial hardship and higher costs for higher learning will remain and continue to increase – a seemingly short-term “government-to-the-rescue” intervention-based answer to a long-term crisis.

Because countries with greater inequality of incomes also tend to be countries in which a greater fraction of economic advantage and disadvantage is passed on from generation to generation – there is a direct impact on the inequality of a nation and preempted social mobility of future generations, that is, today’s youth when considering yesterday’s “future”. Referred to by Alan Krueger as the “Great Gatsby Curve,” it is a fact that the United States, below only Italy and the United Kingdom, is home to rising inequality in direct correspondence with declining social mobility. In the United States, this is seen in statistics showing increases in child poverty/children born into poverty since 2000. As noted throughout, the ultimate context of the social transformation of the historical urban working class flatlands and its attendant supra-structures is America’s growing social polarization. For the same reason, the fact that “bust-up” of working class flatlands is fast at work forcing graying Gray Areas out of the clear parameters of geographic border into alleys, pockets, and side streets is magnified as social polarization’s ultimate spatial anchor. Together the two processes merge in a complex singularly interwoven process signifying not so much the death of an area as the area’s loss to a particular people of lesser means for whom robust supra-institutional mobility programs have since been dismantled.

More disadvantaged than the “truly disadvantaged” of the 1980s (Wilson, 1987), who were stuck in urban geographically core trouble spots of total destitution, in analyzing the social infrastructure of operational channels of contemporary “truly disadvantaged,” youth today are arguably more disadvantaged; they are told, asked and expected to make good with infinitely less even though the historical record has found that it is precisely this sort of assistance that is needed to achieve social mobility. In a process of negative social reproduction yet to recognize itself for what it is, this social polarization shows up and is reinforced through the polarization of society itself into two realms here referred to as its *Hungry City* and its counter, *Image Ready*. Problematically, the vision of greater “ownership” of one’s governance has, repeatedly and more intensely with time, shown up as corporate deregulation, decentralization, austerity, retrenchment, and greater self-autonomy of accountability. Still, devices, policies, and production means that further advance these changes are pushed through ostensibly with the goal of “eradicating poverty” and “creating full employment for everyone” – that is, for and on behalf of “the people.” And yet, large swaths of “the people” are worse off than at any point in the last four decades – a contradiction confusing youth who must then reconcile a more recent twenty-first century political platform that professes nominal concern for the socially disadvantaged while extolling self-enterprise and the beneficial justices of inequality. These youth are often among youth adrift angry and when not angry, haunted.

In the 2000s, at the same time that Clinton’s “new democrat” third way undid traditionally liberal forms within the party, claims for a conservative politic that would eliminate poverty and/or create full employment are no longer heard. Social service austerity/welfare retrenchment saw its piece of the Great Transformation through and continues to do so, while poverty reduction not only failed but fell remarkably short against the press of rising poverty. Less mobility of the socially disadvantaged has numerous consequences especially in the dense urban flatlands. It invariably breeds forms of disbelief, disengagement, disassociation, exclusion, marginalism, anger, the fragmenting of former socio-communal solidarities and the breakdown of community just to name a few. The fact that mobility is lower in the United States than any other Western nation is largely demystified. What is not yet fully demystified is how this reverse negative mobilization or downward mobility has and continues to play out in its urban streets, though one

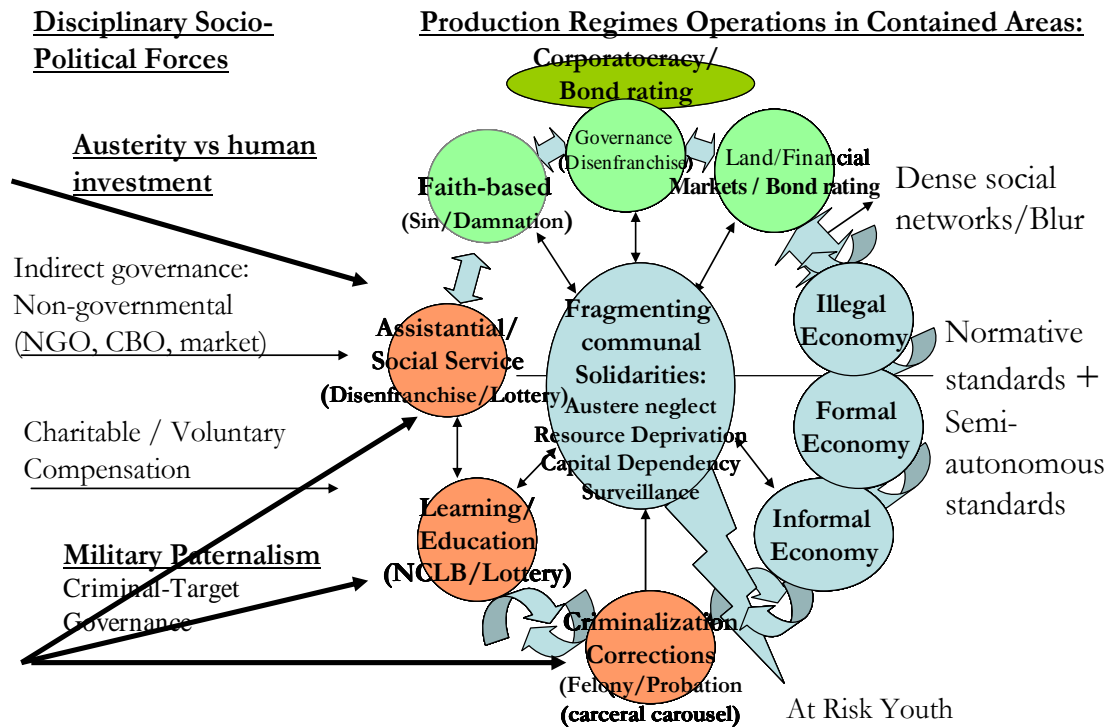
thinks the image of the corner street market watch-boy, approximately 80% of whom are high school dropouts, speaks to this tension harbored unwittingly within the person.

With far reaching implications, youth born after the 1980s will likely experience a level of social mobility as low – if not lower – than the previous generation with inequality lowers mobility having sculpted opportunity. In asking how it shapes opportunity, and probing the complicated intricacies of programs, policies, and operations, it becomes increasingly clear that in seeking to understand the frustrations of today’s urban sidewinders, the dissolution of such a larger programmatic playing field must be considered. Transmitting opportunity, habits, and skills in the creation of self, these institutions and more important their supra-institutional mobilizing strengths also decide the vitality of the *socio-communal lattice web* through the vitality of its extending *supra-institutional consortia mobility matrix* as found in any neighborhood. Approximately 59% of jobs being created between 2010 and 2012 have been in the quick services. Still, though a cashier position at McDonalds is normally associated with young workers, youth remain the hardest hit in terms of job losses, *losing approximately 2.5 million jobs for those between 18 and 25 years of age*. Addressed on a per city basis, small programs are often found to be faulty, held on corruption charges, where youth pay the ultimate price. What tools and equipment have youth been given to counter this condition of hardship and its unrelenting strain on the individual psyche? When a youth in the neighborhood explains that his or her history has been “erased,” this is not simply referring to the radical history of, say, the Black Panther Party (BPP), that they must learn through independent documentary films rather than the classroom, but also to recent history as with the carceral explosion against rising joblessness and muffled dropout rates since the 1990s.

The neoliberal negated social is behind its Neoliberal City, which in turn crafts the city’s homologous or complimentary operational structures transforming social domains into production regimes. In the context of an accelerated hyper-neoliberalism advanced through the 2000s and marking a great deal of Great Recession/Great Transformation “recovery” solutions, those come of age in its context are inescapably its product. Because they are systemically homologous, all regimes enable profit-enhancing while giving rise to:

- I) Heightened top-down operations marked by greater institutional autonomy of self-regulation and decision-making;
- II) Greater wealth/power ‘weed and seed’ socio-economic polarization and increasing modes of social exclusion;
- III) Growing in direct people-based markets (e.g., housing and illegal drug/addiction markets) supporting an economy in lieu of a strong working class;
- IV) A rising centralizing military/criminal state of the social amidst an antithetical decentralizing socio-political governance.

A Grounded Model of Neoliberal Control Social Production Regimes



Meanwhile, it is in its evolved, embedded twenty-first century hyper-neoliberal phase that the four modalities cohere within the *Production Regime 'Wheel of Fortunes'* pointing to a deeper more intense wave of resegregation with the power to cut down class and/or ethno-racial lines as wishes operating at the level of a redefined social and at the level of its supra-institutional mobility flows. Echoing George Soros, the collapse of the global marketplace would be a traumatic event with unimaginable consequences. Yet it is indeed easier to imagine than the continuation of the present regime. Thinkers including Foucault saw *nascent* neoliberal liberalism as enabling the *domain of society* to emerge precisely because it defied the logic of an *ancient regime* that sought total control. However, contemporary critics of twenty-first century hyper-neoliberal production see it as providing the infrastructure for precisely this sort of quasi control-based regime operations seeking the very same or similar top-down domination in its newly fashioned *control social* state and its control-driven remnants of a social order.

Regime-like modeling is born of the fact that unlike the constitutional frame, concerned with rights enforceable by law, the neoliberal regime is concerned not with citizens or (civil) rights, but with production, big profits, expanding possibility for deregulatory action, nominal self-monitoring and evaluation, eliminating the one-time Great Society-enforced inconveniences of, for instance, the worker/management pay ratio. These relations of radical inequity have displaced a former 3-D-dynamism of shared and/or collective bargaining power leaving a city

without its dimensional dynamism. Instead, Oakland has become a city that is politically “flat” as well as “broke” and, for the youth that cannot get a leg up experientially “stuck” as time stands still. By incorporating multiple forms of push-out, preclusionary and/or fee-based exclusion, stratifying forms of inclusion, hierarchy and overarching polarization within the different regimes of production, it distances itself from the constitutional state while incorporating single protocols within the larger institutional operations reproductions of the oligarchic state...

What year did you drop out?

I don't really know.

You don't know?

I started going to Glide because I was in a group home and they make you go to school, Y-Tech. It's basically a school for everyone who got kicked out of school goes to that school. They p-test you every day and they scan you in the morning. So I ended up getting off probation so I couldn't be in that school anymore. I started going mainly cuz they paid you – who wouldn't if they paid you?

I had a job through the Mayor's Youth Employment and Education Program, MYEEP. But it was only part-time and minimum wage. I got placed at a Boys and Girls club, so I was working there since I was 15, participating with activities with the kids, basic clerical. I still volunteer there even now. My mentality was when I'm done with High School I'm done because I hated it.

I hated Y-Tech –just because it was a probation school, we would have to take off our belt, our shoes... and it was just like 'really?'... every morning same old routine and there was always a counselor like a security guard in the back of the class just to be constantly watched in a class of ten people in bungalows. I don't know if this is why I started hating school but I said, 'That's it. When I'm done with high school, I'm done with school.' When I was going to Y-Tech I had 9th grade credits in the 11th grade

But you had gone through school up until the 10th grade?

Hmmm... or the 9th grade... something like that. I did classes in the prison and their classes were hecka easy. I don't know what it was that put me in the 11th grade at 9th grade credits...I don't know and I'm like 'but you guys are telling me I have 9th grade credits but you're putting me in the 11th grade... so hmm... it was the kind of thing where they didn't separate the grades.

It sounds confusing.

I don't know what grade I was in ... Then I transferred to Glide and they really pushed me. They were really helpful (the principal) said, 'You need to do this, this, and that (in terms of coursework). I think that's where a lot of my motivation came from. He gave me packets of

work, so yeh, I did it. It was really hard, but I did it. I was two grades behind but I caught up and ended up graduating earlier than I was supposed to... You know what it was.. I know.. I know what it was... I flunked the 7th grade so I had to repeat a grade so I was behind after I flunked the grade then I went to a different school but they knew I was a year behind.

It was justified (being held back). I didn't do very good – but my friend who transferred with me, I had a higher GPA than her but I guess because she had mouthpiece – she talked with the principal and the principal put her in the 8th grade. At the time, I thought it was cool, but now I think how was she that persuasive with a principal at 13? I finished the 7th grade year and the second day of 8th grade, I got put on probation and kicked out of the school.

And what was your offense?

So stupid. Ok, you know the mechanical pencils with led, well, mine was out of led so I asked my girlfriend for some led and she said she didn't have any.. I said, I just saw your led, so finally I was like 'give me some led before I stab you with this pencil' – ha ha – I started laughing, she started laughing. She ended up letting me borrow her phone until lunchtime which was three periods away, but the next day the police officer accused me of threatening her with her life and robbing her for her phone with a pencil. I don't know how they did it, but they played me... I got locked up for two days and sentenced to a year of probation and made to switch schools and then from there I just kept offending. Then they told me that if I take a deal they'll let me out early, then they said, if you fight it and you lose – you're going to risk the longer sentence and at 13 or 14 it was kind of overwhelming so I said 'ok, I'll take the deal'.

What about educating through exposure to new places? Could it change the 'I don't care' wall surrounding youth if they increased exposure to things outside the 'neighborhood'?

It depends how much time has passed. I mean some are in their 30s and have never been out of the area. They don't have any desire to go somewhere else. They really couldn't function somewhere else. Why would I want to interact with someone totally different than me, doesn't look like me, doesn't do things in a way I'm used to?

This “take the deal” bargaining cited above thrusts youth into a world of ‘conditionality’ and ‘dependency’ operating not at the level of the small indebted third world nation but at the level of the child where they have to quickly choose the smartest option regardless of their actual innocence. Unfortunately, for many youth, it occurs at the level of administrative policy creating an incentivizing modality heavily weighing in on their actual sentence and/or restorative service. They are exposed at a very young age to types of conditionality and arbitrary justice tied to the juridical system forcing them to question actual equality before the law and in the street. Whether falsified reasons for suspension, falsified accounts of theft, elevated values of items involved in theft, cases of being wrongly accused – with each one of these anecdotes shared by youth, youth are made to quickly find their feet amidst a certain social unpredictability and chaos.

In terms of analogous working relations found across the education regime of the new inverted control social, this “take the deal” is not unlike the funding contingency and conditionality deal

where greater funding is tied to compliance and punishment is tied to resistance (i.e., less money). In this case, a capital dependency quickly emerges that forces the hand of accelerated structural changes without the worry of administrative resistance or a democratic quorum of consensual opposition. In both modes of control as ‘liberation’, whether monetary and juridical, is somehow tied to the equivalent of a bribe, the world is rendered politically flat at least from the view of the advocate of 3-D democracy.

The option given to youth to ‘take the deal’ should not be confused with plea bargaining. Though it is a kind of bargaining, it occurs under the table of the formal plea bargain. Many youth experience this kind of deal making, believing that this kind of a guilty plea will reduce their sentence whereas refusal will prolong it. Unlike the school district administrator who is more aware of the consequences of their actions, it is a confusing moment in a complex justice system where too often youth profess guilt for the sake of a reduced sentence never fully informed of the benefits that they will lose in making such a confession. As a result, they are thrust into a whirlwind of probationary constraints and intense surveillance where residents unanimously cited the “virtual impossibility in not breaking a lengthy probation,” and the imminent recidivism. In addition, there is the issue of deep psychological terror foisted upon the individual potentially leading to mental breakdown as with Oakland’s attempted implementation of the Gang Injunction in 2011.⁴⁶

Should they break probation, the city has yet another recidivism case on their hands, though quite possibly for an initially minor offense or, worse, for an offense since no longer deemed a legal offense. Since 2002, Oakland has swiftly been remodeled after the Neoliberal City prototype utilizing an intensifying *control social* with a premium on control, minimal social supports, individuation, and individuated blame where the relation of ‘power over’ increasingly recasts the circuitry of the former Great Society-crafted programmatic mobility circuitry. Whereas the country was sold “abuses” and “wrong doings” of welfare since Reaganomics, infinitely less discussed is how integral to the dismantling of the Great Society *social* was and continues to be this ‘sideshow’ attack on welfare. Hidden from classroom curriculum and/or media discussion is precisely this much larger dismantling of an entire ‘growth liberal’ development paradigm, with its seemingly threatening and disruptive focus on strong participatory democracy and dynamic engagement. For the same reason, much less discussed is the near absolute loss by the 2010’s, of the growth liberal commitment to universally inclusive growth across the horizon of social domains touching the lives of households from politics to household income. It is in this larger social context that, against the press of NCLB (2001) engineering a testing standards within the public schools that in many cases legitimized school closure, Oakland’s former vocation high school, McClymonds, watched enrollment decline amidst mounting poverty, the dissolution of enabling services and programs and rising crime...

I mean most students go into the school like – ‘Man, this is a waste of time’ – because there is so much outside mess that is going on – like they can’t really focus – who can focus – I mean just come in and sit down in school when you just came from a house where people be

⁴⁶ Though ultimately a failed initiative, as discussed later in the chapter, the accusations already in operation under Gang Injunction premises of certain individuals within the city was known at the time to lead to the mental breakdown of at least one young man who maintained his innocence.

yelling and you ain't got no money. Who, seriously, is gonna come to school and focus on American government?

- Senior, continuation school, East Oakland

This position is in stark contrast to the growing phenomenon where NGOs and the private sector are increasingly taking up the managerial and administrative responsibility of one-time school/after-school/summer programs, forcing youth to bus, walk, cycle or somehow wind their way at times substantial distances in order to reach the hands-on component of their vocational skill-building needs. This necessity that includes commuting to North Berkeley Adult School from East Oakland is opposed to knowing it as integral to the neighborhood and feeling it as part of the community of one's origins.



Giving the Sculpted Impression of Unbound Possibility: West Oakland's 'Social Mobility Ladder', 2012 The sculpture seems symbolically revealing surrounded by a campervan and a 1940s "lift yourself out of the depression" truck. Additionally, the symbolism of the art itself has led youth to ask, if success is 'rising above', that is, up and out, what symbolizes success as communal bound? Some also are left to wonder if 'making it' is a case of 'either/or' with an inborn division between community and legitimate mobility despite political talk of an abstract community?

Then and Now: Growth Liberal Socio-Political Standards of Universal Inclusion and Oakland's New Directions for Negative Mobility, Danger, and Exclusionary Social Disunion

Oakland's reputation for an exceedingly high homicide rate is known across the country.⁴⁷ As recent as July 2013, two girls were killed point blank when an armed man rang the front door bell. A number of young men have expressed disbelief at the heated state of the city, noting that there is a constant stream of sirens and yet, often, victims lay dying. Is this the same city famed for its civic countenance and control? For Viorst, stability is measured in the individual life, but it is also measured at the level of community, and if expanding community to the level of the city

⁴⁷ As of July 2013, there were a recorded 54 homicides for the year, some solved while many remained unsolved.

as a whole, to the social itself when posing as safety zone. Oakland was renowned as a city for having a low-income high minority demographic, while being the only such city that did not riot in 1967 unlike the four days Watts riot of 1965 protesting discriminatory exclusion and the imposition of highly unequal ghetto standards. But, the real trigger that caused Oakland to pull back from civic empowerment was fear that the people of the city were coming too close to the political reorganization of City Hall, that is, the issue was the threat to city power in the context of scaled 3-D participatory decision-making that made express provisions for the poor. In terms of the social milieu, there was serious concern as to the threat of robust democratic decision-making undoing the preferred outcomes of a reigning oligarchy of political elite. Uprooting the status quo and combating publicized images of “the next best thing” with alternatives models, members and solutions two-fold with a rising social mobilization of a formerly uneducated and/or low-income was as politically untenable as it was culturally distasteful. In fact, it was the latter that forced liberals into a more conservative embrace of political management tactics through the 1970s (cf. Pressman, 1975; R. Self, 2003). Echoing sociologist, Seymour Lipset’s (1963) early conviction in the need for political authority when it came to the possibility of direct participatory decision-making of the undereducated, growing numbers of liberals were embracing a more conservative politic concurrent with their own socio-economic success.

It is probable – although it cannot be proven by any measure – that the energy consumed by anti-poverty projects contributed during this period to the stability of Oakland’s minority neighborhoods. Unlike poor blacks in many other cities, Oakland’s were not rioting. But, as this energy was diverted increasingly into organizing, city hall quite rightly perceived the trend as a threat to the status quo.

- Milton Viorst, 1977

With forty years of back peddling since the early 1970s, we have a very different understanding of what ultimately poses as a threat to the status quo and the significance of the vital participatory democracy in which it is implemented. It appears that the strength of embedded structures of democratic political economy, with its assurances of countervailing power distribution, and the simple freedom to express political opposition or resistance came and went as one. And yet, in light of the current fundamentally class-based hyper-polarized hierarchy of order, this political threat to the democratic status quo has not erupted in the sort of riots that a similar undemocracy had delivered during the late 1960s. Though Oakland is still a place of occasional protests, there is not the socio-political coherency of agendas if only because opposing a fractious social, replete with fractious authorities and enhanced deprivation, is far more difficult than taking on a single government or single issue. This Great Transformation – that is interwoven straight through the larger political landscape – has radically influenced youths’ lives as it has any resident seeking structured engagement, voice and agency.

Some wonder why such relative passivity among the people prevails in a time of unrelenting austerity, accumulative cuts, and growing inequalities as the new democratic standard. If Viorst is correct in his assessment, passivity is integrally tied to disunion and a disunited people is integrally tied to promoting a status quo no less interested in leveling inequalities across production regimes between its classes than in shoring up robust inclusionary standards. It is the kind of negative incentivizing seen in an elite inner-circle of power that reigns over policy forcing the gradual move towards oligarchic rule from within the democratic state. It is also the

kind of negative incentivizing that forces neglect of youth, young adults, and adults generally in particular areas where neglect is ‘more effective’ than support in light of the ultimate goals.

The use of historical comparative analysis exploring past social conditions and context among low-income urban youth suggests conditions that surprise today’s younger generations yet educated on their own social historical. For instance, jobless rates in the 1960s might surprise some inasmuch as notions of “crisis levels” of joblessness (i.e., warranting government intervention) were less than a quarter of the current jobless rate among young minority males 18-25 considerably higher for dropouts. The question as to why contemporary society is without a comparable jobs program amidst heightened social inequality has no short answer, but it is clear that negative incentivizing plays its part as in the case of the urban youth program charged with corruption where youth job services are made to suffer negative funding versus forcing funding. In considering the social ecology of Oakland in the 1960s as contrasted with today, we are able to contextually make sense of youths’ emphatic plea that “what they need is a job.” True in 1966, realities are no less true today as when Eugene P. Foley, as Assistant Secretary of the newly formed Economic Development Agency (EDA) declared that,

“The heart of the problem is Negro unemployment. Jobs are the great need in a land where people are judged by what they do” (Foley cited in Bradford, 1967, pp. 2-3.)

It is said that the American middle class has been especially hard hit since the Great Recession/Great Transformation. However, as explained by Edwards and Hertel-Fernandez (2010), young adults, 16-24 have been *especially* hard hit by the current recession, a reality that escalates an already-existing downward trend in entry level working class jobs, grossly impairing early job experience scenarios as college tuition costs rise beyond the realm of what’s doable for the disadvantaged member of the laboring masses. *It is a reality that stratifies down gender and racial lines, such that the male, black, working class of the urban flats suffers a ‘4-fold’ jeopardy with a high school diploma and a ‘5-fold’ jeopardy without.* While unemployment rates for the Black male high school dropout hover over 60% to as high 80% in certain cities (e.g., Chicago), the unemployment rate for Blacks, 16-19 years of age, was still 50% in December 2009, creating a kind of “ain’t no making it” disincentivizing for those trying to earn a legitimate income against the press of an illegal market hovering all around them. It is indeed the tension of the young man whose summer job is ending, with three brothers on parole, confounded in his own mental torment as he tries to be something other than a fast-paced hustler.

It is an experience of impending exclusion or inconceivable debt for many of these youth comparing starkly with previous conceptions of labor inequity and exclusion. In 1950, unemployment among Oakland’s Black workers was 20%, though twice the rate of White workers *it was less than half of what it is for young adults in Oakland today, even before adjusting for “discouraged workers.”*⁴⁸ While the loss of research funding may indeed affect mid-range research and technology jobs, it is at the level of institutional Gray Areas, of

⁴⁸ Seemingly high at the time, unemployment among Bay Area black men was more than twice the overall California unemployment figure and six times as great among black women. As with the current crisis, young adults fared much worse in the postwar job search than older workers. And yet, with a 29% unemployment rate for black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-four in 1950, the situation seems idyllic compared with current jobless rates (Self, 2003).

questionable inclusion, of neglected joblessness, and dissolved forms of constituent advocacy among the peripheral masses that webcam porn, prostitution, drugs and anything and other “working with what you got” enterprise is considered a kind of “making it” survival of fittest. It is often in these same institutional playing fields and borderlands that recent convicts are released into the Neoliberal City with two weeks to locate a paying job or slide towards recidivism. The unlikelihood of staying clean under such conditions, with its hefty fines, intense surveillance including ankle tags and testing, can quickly make sense of the city’s 80% recidivism rate. As stressed in the neoliberal production regime *Wheel of Fortunes*, transformation in production regimes does happen at the level of the individual. Importantly, however, it also happens indelibly at the level of operations heavily influenced by changes in programmatic policy and consequent incentivizing, particularly with respect to ethical budgeting priorities, where very often a subsequent policy-making conviction follows. Additionally, operations are heavily influenced at the level of systems as profit-making steers everything from the *socio-communal lattice web* vitality to production and perception. In this case, the structural transformation of the job market is just a slice of the larger ‘Great Transformation’ of a *social production-turned-production militarism* set against the mounting authority and power of what is perhaps best conceived as the New World’s version of the ‘Second Estate’, that hybrid of financiers, corporate and landed elite, and governance officials.

Relative to just the 1990s, social goals have changed considerably, that is, at a time when the said national goals were 100% employment and the elimination of poverty – an agenda that extended through the Clinton administration.⁴⁹ Though utilizing a free market political economy, the claim was that the ultimate victor would be all classes. Through a combination of trickle down market gains and a handful of remaining social service programs, greater percentages served was increasingly the battle cry of both democrats and republicans. Importantly, this kind of political claims making targeting heavy reversals of social exclusion and resource deprivation, especially among the destitute, are rarely heard since the Bush administration. And yet, if youth are known to be some of the most adversely impacted since the Great Recession, contextualized in a larger capitalist economic contraction begun in the early 1970s, then it seems that cutting jobs and training programs and the like could only prove hazardous (e.g., PRWORA in 1996, Goal 2000).⁵⁰ In the 1990s, the low-income Oakland flatlands had to increasingly make due with less, while social service through churches and nonprofits began to rise. There was increasingly less in terms of systematically cohering structured resources – a situation seemingly exacerbated ever since. When youth ask rhetorically what it is that West Oakland has or doesn’t have, comparing themselves to the heavy investment

⁴⁹ President Clinton’s agenda echoes a similar agenda by key international development organizations, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF, and UNESCO to realize the goals of what it called the “2020 Initiative.” Drafted in 2000, the goal was to guarantee world social services by 2020 by advancing a fiscal strategy of shared responsibility, 20% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and 20% of the budget in each developing country, to provide for basic social services. Services would include: health, education, nutrition, low cost water and sanitation.

⁵⁰ A good example is the Clinton administration’s Goal 2000, which set as its 2nd objective virtually eliminating high school underachievement: “The high graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.” The goal setting signified a centralizing of goals where the federal government was responsible for promoting its comprehensive *approach* to help all students succeed in life, though reducing funding. Problematically, Goal 2000 and the 20/20 Initiative failed while underachievement exploded as Clinton’s PRWORA welfare retrenchment succeeded in cutting the welfare state. See: <http://www3.nd.edu/~rbarger/www7/goals200.html>, Site referenced December 2012.

of Emeryville or the familial cohesion of Chinatown, they are piercing a profound aspect of the city's own Great Transformation that receives little mention in terms of how it impacts youth – or labor more generally.

What we got? We ain't got nothing. Seriously. We ain't got no theaters, or they be hecka far away. We ain't got no parks – our parks are dirty with needles in them. We ain't got nothing.

– Former dropout, returning student, 2011

Feeling the pangs of austerity in terms of resources and services, another youth mentioned how he had to travel to San Francisco just to enroll in a 1-year certification program that would lead to union work. Having heard repeatedly from youth that there was little by way of enabling resources as in the case of exposure to training programs, I was forced to probe the history of the current programmatic body of service/resource austerity twofold with the shifting landscape towards a growing conservative political economic ideology.

1967... a time when universal inclusion was the definitive standard and a ghetto jobless rate of 8-15%, double the national average, had the country up in arms...

Unemployment Rates: Ghetto Areas and Surrounding Metropolitan Areas			
SMSA *	GHETTO AREA	Unemployment rate	
		GHETTO **	SMSA †
Boston	Roxbury	6.9	3.7
Cleveland	Hough and surrounding neighborhood	15.6	3.5
Detroit	Central Woodward	10.1	4.3
Los Angeles	South Los Angeles	12.0	6.0
New York	Harlem	8.1	4.6
	East Harlem	9.0	
	Bedford-Stuyvesant	6.2	
Philadelphia	North Philadelphia	11.0	4.3
Phoenix	Salt River Bed	13.2	—
St. Louis	North Side	12.9	4.5
San Antonio	East and West Sides	8.1	—
San Francisco-Oakland	Mission-Fillmore	11.1	5.2
	Bayside	13.0	

* Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area
 ** as of November 1966
 † average for year ending August 1966
 SOURCE: 1967 Manpower Report of the President, page 75; metropolitan area data are based on special tabulation of data from the Current Population Survey.

Data

Source: Leinwand, G., et al., *The Slums*, 1970

Roughly one generation before the commencement of the Gilded Age, the phenomenon of such things as child labor, slavery, urban blight and destitution were becoming increasingly common. In the case of Lower Manhattan, the famous Bowery Gangs quickly took shape among immigrant poor, including both adults and adolescents. Feeling excluded from the production successes and yet possibly exploited by their directors, they took to claims of “turf” possession with a certain savagery predictable under the circumstances. But this sort of fighting savagery was far from the only platforms of social identity. Its increasingly enlarged urban Gray Areas of exclusion was invariably counterpoised by corrective policies, as with President Roosevelt’s

New Deal of the 1930s when labor was officially recognized politically.⁵¹ With the 1960s being the largest most comprehensive implementation of social growth paradigms in the country's history, it is during President Johnson's Great Society War on Poverty that a richer, deeper application of the growth liberal model is devised by rendering total inclusion across all social arenas its cornerstone. Foremost this meant programs and policies would be designed around a premium of totally inclusive engagement, including vertically through enriching mechanisms of social mobility and of politically determinative voice (i.e., influential in political outcomes and not purely representative). *Multi-faceted and politically scaled/multi-level inclusion was the new ideological benchmark informing policy standards that defined growth liberalism in government and stood as its backbone when questioned by its opponents.*

Consequently, it is at this time that a new premium on community involvement as maximum socio-political and economic inclusion is born.⁵² Highly ambitious, costly and risky to begin the bold project of digging deep into the country's operational and processual landscape cutting a straight path between federal government and community, so began the most comprehensive supra-institutional programmatic restructuring ever conceived. *The Community Action Programs (CAPs), anti-poverty agencies funded to represent poor, coupled with effective socio-economic mobilization were transforming the dynamics of the political playing field. An essentially integral component, the equity in education focus was invigorating school>higher learning for larger percentages of students as the school>work pipelines in the secondary schools, with rigorous jobs training, jobs opportunity exposure, and wage remuneration infrastructure, was also transforming the strength of economic mobility. Together, the altered landscape would wholly transform and refashion the youth experience.* Government's best guess as to what could end delinquency was a comprehensive experience in social engagement, which demanded a truer equity achieved through integrative mutually reinforcing policies and programs across all social arenas.

At the time, it was both accepted, while reflecting a political climate where it was politically and instrumentally taken for granted, that in terms of the minority youth crisis, including the threat of delinquency and risk, the issue was one of social exclusion and social disengagement and what comes of it as in the case of youth drift. For the War on Poverty youth agenda, effective intervention needed to reach the young man and woman at the level of maximizing social

⁵¹ Unique to the 1930s, the difficulty that unskilled labor had in fighting for the rights of labor was brought to light. In the case of iron, steel, autos, rubber and meat packing none won the right to organize until the Wagner Act of 1935, which further contributed to the fractious relationship between unskilled labor and their skilled comrades. Ultimately, it took the creation of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) to both have the right to organize and to contend with the racial discrimination experienced within the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Though addressing much of what was previously tacitly accepted discrimination with the merger of the AFL and the CIO in 1955, embedded racially fractious habits would survive (Quadagno, 1994, pp. 22-24).

⁵² The new emphasis on total inclusion is uttered continuously through political decision-making, the orientation of new government departments created solely to serve the issues of poverty as structural inequality, as in the case of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) created in 1964, running the bulk of the War on Poverty programs. Inventing the language of "maximum feasible participation," this dedicated commitment to total social inclusion as engagement is woven into social, economic, political and cultural policy. For example, Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Section 3, passed in 1968, use of the language "greatest extent feasible," measured success as social engagement of the largest outcome numbers, that is, based on how many lives influenced. These measures are antithetical to the neoliberal representative democracy eliminating the possibility of these large measures of social inclusion leaving the already-existing socially weak and resource deprived to fall through the systemic cracks.

engagement, political voice, and active integrated agency, or what could be thought of as a programmatic equivalent of the contemporary crisis of **EVA**. In 1967, Schrieber explained the dropout situation at the time as a national crisis. Even though actual numbers of students dropping out were declining since the 1950s, relative to the dominant growth liberal view of what constitutes a high functioning social order, the political bar concurrent with the demand for high social standards was as a concatenation ethical snowball higher. Included in this snowball, the changing landscape of post-secondary school opportunity feeding a national agenda for intervention at the time was such that a citizenry was concerned over the loss of training pipelines and job prospects for its lowest income youth:

“In the past, a youth had alternative paths for growing up. A young person could quit school, find a job, discover what he was good at, and eventually become a successful participating adult; or, he could reach adulthood by remaining in school and graduating. Today there seems to be only one way – the school way...For the overriding fact is that there are fewer and fewer places in our society for the dropout, and becomes increasingly clear that he has no future” (Schrieber, 1967, pp. 4–6).

A crisis for Schrieber, a similar view was held by Huey Newton of the BPP of Oakland who maintained that drift and nihilism are bound to a reality of joblessness and job stratification in hiring. The 1968 Kerner Report laid out the extent of ethno-racial inequality born of the lack of economic opportunity, noting a 1: 5 unemployment rate among blacks, an infant mortality rate three times as high as whites, heightened frequency of prison and police brutality, inferior schools, lower pay jobs and the list went on. Advances were made at leveling inequalities through the various programs at the time that addressed such things as inferior schools and the inequitable jobless rate. What was all too clear at the time not to be hidden from the public was the relationship between rising jobless rates for youth and the potential crisis awaiting school dropouts.

Such observations are repeated throughout history for decades and actual youth in the city have been stating how “they need a job,” whether in school or out of school, at least since 2007 when I first approached them. Through a welter of conservative reforms since Reaganomics dating back to the passage of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, there has been a growing fiscal autonomy to states and municipal governments over federal appropriation of funds. Potentially destabilizing in the context of political corruption or uninformed appropriation, this 1981 Act is an ideological tip on which conservative Reaganomics moving from universalisms of standards and expectations in all the various social arenas feeds a new anti-universal standard for intervention cut down city, district, neighborhood, business, and school lines to name a few. The Mayor’s Summer Jobs Program and how it impacts Oakland’s youth is a good example of the kind of erratic operations seen through this kind of uneven application of program funds amidst shifting administrators. In 2011, Mayor Quan provided a personal anecdote of how she learned that youth prefer jobs to crime noting with a certain evangelical conviction that when a youth told her that he would take a \$20 an hour job over crime, “she believed him.” And yet, other than the Mayor’s Summer Job program, conceived under the Great Society, there have been little by way commitments to jobs/jobs training programs. Eliminating the program in 2011 entirely, city residents were indignant contributing to the prospect of mayoral recall. Reinstalling the program in 2012, a job fair was held in the lobby of McClymonds High School

with news vans lining Myrtle street just outside. In Spring 2013, though the Summer Job Program was offered, the job fair never showed up in the school's lobby, which meant that youth from that particular school, McClymonds, suffered a barrier of disinformation uninformed as to potential job offerings for the summer of 2013. Hardly insignificant, this lack of basic consistency in administering programs has left many youth at a loss trying to navigate a exceedingly complex network of scarce resources. In the case of jobs, many youth from McClymonds said they did not even know about the Civicorp Corpsmember Academy and Civicorp Job Training Center down Myrtle Street towards 7th Avenue. Though carried forward as an effective Great Society manpower program, even if students did know of it, it would likely prove disheartening since it is the single largest program geared towards youth, 18-24, not in high school, predominantly dropouts unlike a time when trade pipelines simply existed in abundance as part of a recognized necessity Black or White, 16 or 24, dropout or student.

Historically, references to recession usually cite very specific relatively brief periods (e.g., 1980-1982, 1990-1991, 2001, 2007-2009). The facts contradict the economic reading of history. By the late 1960s, the alarms of post-industrial minority youth marginality and its attendant job loss had already gone off. For historian Immanuel Wallerstein, the historical peak of the global capitalist system's economic production curve is in the early 1970s. Wallerstein's world systems theory situates the early 1970s global production u-turn in leveling inequality and declining capitalist production as part of a larger process of historical systems production rise and fall that he refers to as the "kondratiev phase" (Wallerstein, Immanuel, 1979). Considering American socio-economic growth successes with its Great Contraction of social inequality running through mid-twentieth century, and considering the rising job challenges of youth 16-24 dealing with job opportunity reduction continuous since the 1950s, Wallerstein provides insight into youth risk that contained recession-economics cannot. From the socio-historical perspective, the ensuing twenty-first century catastrophe involving youth dropout and drift, though not exclusively, is already being seeded through a natural growth contraction then exploited through hyper-neoliberal grow logic further polarizing wealth/power disparities. Which austerity cuts will touch the lives of youth depends on who they are, where they live, and so on, the larger message is that few can escape its strong-arm all-inclusive influences.

In the case of Oakland, with its continuously staggeringly high rate of public school dropouts called both an abomination and a disgrace in the 2010s when confronted with the rigorous accountability tied to three years of state receivership, OUSD appeared to be giving new priority the dropout crisis.⁵³ In 2011, then Superintendent Tony Smith spoke of the need to address the shame of a 50% high school completion rate and on OUSD's plans to create a new administrative position specifically targeting these youth. What is not discussed in the debates over dropouts, suspension, rigorous subject testing and drift is the larger disjuncture between the growth liberal Oakland of 1968, as a city whose political arena was constructed in such a way that it had to weigh in the opinions of the poor and low-income families at the district and municipal level, that is the democratic vitality of the city itself, and its complimentary socio-political space. This socio-political vitality was implicated in the city's successful prevention of youth delinquency, drift and a corollary achievement at the time precisely because it social space ran straight through educational achievement from policy through beliefs to attitude. The point

⁵³ Examining OUSD in its pivotal transfiguration integral to the larger Great Transformation of the city with particular attention given to its implications on inclusionary/exclusionary trends, is the subject of Chapter 2.

being, once again: a story of correspondence. In stark contrast is Oakland's rising Neoliberal City, which is busy advancing its transformative agenda dismantling countervailing political force, strengthening the power of the city's elite, making maximal use of tactics of subject blaming and reconfiguring education, redevelopment and housing. What is not heard, however, is how concurrent with the rise of a hungry, destitute, poor silenced and sidwinding youth made to navigate opportunity's edge – is the massive and growing disequilibrium of structured political representation both in terms of mounting inequity internal to the schools and indirectly in terms of class power. What is further not discussed is the well-documented reach of social disadvantage under extreme austerity and how it impacts school achievement, that is, the socio-communal context as bound to a larger supra-institutional matrix of inequitable funding and inequitable growth, that is, divergent mobility (cf. Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1999). What is not heard in the plans to address the youth crisis is the kind of historical comparison that would point to its mounting systemic crisis therein giving rise to the muffled disquiet of groups like Occupy Oakland.

Equally problematic, while feelings of inequitable representation loom and sometimes rage, the problem of structured social, economic or political recourse used as counterweight against myriad forms of oppression literally shrinks in size and strength against the rise of systemically reifying empowering elite. As one mother explained to the crowd poignantly and tearfully during a Town Hall addressing perceived injustices of mayoral policy and militant tactics of the city and its embarrassingly racialized police force within the OPD:

When I was told I was having a son – I cried terrified by the idea of trying to raise a Black boy in the city of Oakland

- Local mother speaking out at Town Hall opposing “stop-and-frisk” policy and blatant racial prejudice in sentencing, January, 2013

Since 2012, while the movement towards heightened surveillance and police patrol grows, the move away from standardized large training and experiential circuitry from OUSD's public schools direct into society is completely forgotten as it has been decades since some aspect of its operations was even mentioned or contested as part of operations debate. Although dropout rates are declining in the 1960s, the concern for improving education, which at the time is taken for granted to include reducing dropout rates, is still synonymous with the larger concern for the blow suffered by labor-in-training. It is also synonymous with the correlation between dropping out, declining job opportunities, the street market territoriality of an otherwise desperate subgroup, and the mounting experience of post-industrial job contraction. Similar to the Great Society politic of intervention though antithetical to the approach of markets/profits-oriented governance which has broken social service down by subject, even a moderately funded program targeting ‘whole person’ growth will not be reborn in the Oakland public school system until 2012 through its FSWA program. By 2012, an entire generation has already passed through the emaciating channels of OUSD since the mid-1990s. Admirably, FSWA is an attempt to reinvigorate the educational experience countering the at times wholly dismantled channels. Many questions rise up as to which CBOs and NGOs will be involved, and what, when and how, will they offer the training component of their services? How will, conversely, officials, ensure the integrity of these outside organizational operations ensuring that whatever is constructed in terms of engagement channels is of value and of the public standard? In 2012, no one really knows the answer and all that can be hoped is that the best hearts of OUSD are behind early

forms of OUSD wrap around service construction. In terms of program modeling, the fact is, reconstruction of programs requires experts, and careful consideration of past programs, pulling forth its best practices. But because the model was embedded within the Neoliberal City, with its negated social *as social*, total consideration of past programs was not on the table for debate. Specifically, the movement away from large concerted public school standard operations towards localized individuated decision-making and inequitable levels of engagement is not open for debate. Best practices be damned just as devolved and/or decentralized authority is core to the political aspect of the city's Great Transformation, it is education's core political context as well in a Neoliberal City.

Hardly comprehensive, the accumulative losses to youth since welfare retrenchment in 1996 extend far beyond the realm of literal "welfare," effectively rendering welfare, good or evil, a political sideshow diverting the attention of the masses from the infinitely larger and more complex Great Transformation. The list of actual change is extensive. Accumulatively and intertwined in terms of the larger social reorganization effect impacting vulnerable youth, there is the subtly corresponding carceral explosion with acceptance and support for social service resource deprivation/inequality that includes cuts to housing and food services. When combined with the carceral explosion, also over two decades old begun in the early 1990s, that is, heightened chances of arrest against the pressures of dwindling welfare, including forms of workfare relief, growing numbers of youth are pushed into more dire levels of deepening poverty. At the level of the school or the neighborhood, this kind of deepening poverty shows up as inflated numbers of youth living out of cars while parents serve time, despondent, suffering psychological trauma, as with drifting homeless adolescents waiting for parental release trying to lay low and keep out of sight of authorities. Seemingly contradictory for those who have taken to social movements in Oakland's streets, despite the intensifying desperation tied to poverty policy, "the poor and vulnerable" continue to be used in the political pulpit to justify *removing enabling countervailing forces* of authority once effectively obstructing authoritative motions within the different domains of production. In the name of "better serving its poor," while OUSD administrators advocate for shifting budget authority away from OUSD to individual city districts, greater authority is actually being given to the city's elite: the City Council, the City Manager, City Hall and a new rotating, therein largely acquiescing, yet appointed district elite working in accord with conservative premises also advanced by state and federal government creating a near perfect consortium of political power holding the reigns to change.⁵⁴

With tragic insight, Charles Hamilton's (1973) conclusion that what was needed for the social emancipation of one minority low-income subgroup was nested within a united front that was comprised of myriad unions of race, trade, and class has proven true especially in the congested highly sought-after regions of the urban inner-core. Here disunion is the greater tool in a production-based control social where there is less and

⁵⁴ The idea of districts having greater voice in educational decisions seems sound. However, the context, which includes a redistricting law passed in the 1990s forcing Oakland district redistricting every ten years, means that the group actually vested with political power at the district level will be far more elite and compliant than district groups of the 1960s chosen based on location and class, which often meant a concrete political floor for the poor. Whereas district political advocacy achieved through the 1960s community action programs (CAPs) worked with the city's federally funded anti-poverty agency while surrounded by enabling poverty relief programs that provided the confidence to act as a countervailing political force, the future structure is one of uncertainty and vulnerability against the steadfast wishes of city governance elite.

increasingly little incentivizing efficient intervention anymore than sewing machines grind corn. Whereas in the late 1960s, an abundance of laws like programs existed solely for the purpose of engaging the poor so much so that either the Democratic Party embrace such a working class political philosophy or the working masses could endorse their own. That is, until its mass complex edifice was slowly, brick by brick, dismantled with the same working masses exposed to political winds and market currents showing little concern for their own fortification, which by 2012 was more than purely figurative.



The first of a series of public education's buildings to close, this turn of the century building was home to Adult Education and bi-lingual learning closed early 1990s.

The splintering and division internal to the working masses stomaching the worst of the country's larger social polarization has meant that a Garveyesque vision of universal improvement, with its main support among work-class blacks at the time in 1916 is subsequently dislodged of such social moorings. Critically, the idea of universal standards was an idea that gained traction when the mood of labor was in the air and less than two miles from the Marcus Garvey building in West Oakland, the Vocational High School was built in 1915 later to become be officiated as McClymonds High. Today in its Neoliberal City, the move to devolve budgets to the local level while charter-making leads internal school reform has less than a flickering suggestion that these policies will work to unite racial divides and class as community instead promoting less accountability, less universality and the invariably loss to the politically and economically poor. Though the Garvey building is a historical landmark to the black community, why is it that, writing with almost a century passed, Marcus Garvey could already see what is so highly obscured today:

With the economic affliction of nation-wide joblessness stand the liquidation of the farmer, the small shop owners, the middle class...the foreclosure of hundreds of thousands of mortgages upon the homes of the workers and the lower strata of the middle class, with no prospects of permanent rehabilitation by the hectic sketchy, patchy, and makeshift capitalist program.

Consequently, this same community that would suffer in its muted 3-D political might would be the community that suffers in its 40-50% high school graduation rate, 50-60% poverty rate and countless tales of less than universal standards as with "last hired/first fired" and court orders

imposing broken families. The negative “black hole” social services have weighed on youth of *Generation Negation* who have been exposed to little other than token remains.

Denied *both vital resources and the mere suggestion of resources*, they are among the first generation to be stripped of a social imaginary where resources and services are held as crucial to development by government. They are among the entirely indoctrinated where the new political orientation increasingly accepts inequity as a “fair” and therefore “equitable” growth model, and where needs-based intervention may rise up for administrative debate having fallen off the social radar of expectations having been trounced by notions of family caring, volunteerism, and charitable giving. Abandoned in terms of the one-time commitment to reverse the conditions that harbored the threat of risk, the structural underpinnings of this total abandonment is wrapped around austerity roots as more than mere cuts; rather, it is in a way more akin to the structural adjustment of the indebted third-world nations.⁵⁵ Having lived without the basic resources that foster opportunity as well as without the memory of a development model revolved around socially inclusive objectives and fair opportunity systems, *Generation Negation* is the first generation exposed to the absolute decimation of the growth-liberal ‘whole person’ exposurial-based experience of growth.

Correspondence Again: The Making and Unmaking of Universal Education and the Lost Values of Universalism Just as 3-D Democratic Dynamism and Worker Solidarity Wanes

Noted in the Prologue, Bowles and Gintis’ *theory of correspondence* held that the health of the market and the experience of K-12 education in low income neighborhoods corresponded to one another to rise and fall in unison tied largely to the tendrils of operations, funding and policy unfurling. In the 1970s, a time with a great deal of contestation taking place as to the preservation of union halls, labor rights, the potential strength of a united worker front, an appreciation for the strength in striking and the like, Bowles and Gintis showed the clear relation between mounting inequity in the classroom and the fate of labor, between education and worker strength. In hindsight, it was a theory that complemented the structuralist ideas of the 1960s implying the universality of intervention as the more effective aid in working towards the growth of the total person, the total student and not simply, for instance, improving specific schools, securing rent ceilings, and debating the removal of fried food from school cafeterias. The following section builds on these early conceptual writings, fleshing out a since-grown more *complex correspondence* between different social arenas seamless between the once vital city and its 3-D dynamic political democracy bound to standards of universalism and inclusion. It is a *complex correspondence* not limited to a relation between any two social arenas but instead touching upon them all. With the Great Society, there was the ethical striving for inclusive universal growth the great emphasis placed upon developing improved mechanisms of universal growth including needs-based assistance to raise the socially-anchored *participatory standards* (i.e., ethical standard and not testing standards) of the disadvantaged. When inclusion was the goal, powerful pulsating intervention was the means with circuitry made to run through the public education system, specifically its high schools, with additional programs in its low-

⁵⁵ Structural adjustment belonged to World Bank SAPs, that is, Structural Adjustment Programs requiring that in return for loans, a country complies with structural adjustment requirements, which included privatizing government, decentralizing decision-making, and severe resource austerity cuts that included massive cuts to the public education system. Often the effects were devastating.

income schools as needed determined by economic need. This is visible in the economic, political, social and cultural arenas of the Great Society, including but not limited to markets and education. Unmoored as a process that at its best skates across all social arenas and does not belong to any single arena as means, *3-D dynamic engagement* too easily loses its staying power, political, social or economic – *concurrent with the loss of the growth liberal values of universal rights and equity that serve as guideposts for program standards (e.g., testing) and legal standards*. Under the circumstances a nation must anticipate the return of exclusionary sentiment and practice. Set in a reifying ‘snowball’ effect, it will unfold into heightened racial profiling; it will grow in its seething disdain for ‘the other’ both as a matter of economic necessity and as a matter of conviction (cf. Kozol, 1992; Gary Orfield & Eaton, 1997).

In 1957, Mobilization for Youth (MFY), a program for youth, was conceived to address the rising delinquency in New York City. Contributing founders, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, experts on risk and poverty, already explained delinquency as embedded in terms of a socio-structural correspondence including and extending beyond the pure relation between opportunities and coming of age. Legitimate aspirations and what constituted opportunities were seen as engaging social, economic, political, and educational opportunities – already complicating any idea of a simple market correspondence between youth attitude and delinquency. The need for greater legal and political representation among youth and the poor, including due process before the law, was used as a point of policy reform departure. The programs operating under MFY were grouped under four major divisions: Educational Services, Employment Services, Services to Individuals and Families, and Community Development, which, if the latter includes political engagement begins to resemble the future Great Society vision for which MFY is used as a model (cf. Weissman, 1969, p. 19-20). MFY is not only a muted aspect of history dismantled as a program addressing youth risk along with a federal Committee on Juvenile Delinquency as under Kennedy, the very idea that delinquency or risk was a subject of widespread national concern is also largely extinguished. In such a context, the idea that a delinquency program would be used as a model in creating nation-wide adult and youth-based social service programs to achieve *maximum feasible* growth through maximizing participation is also far removed from the panorama of a political imaginary witnessed in the national absence of a jobs-driven recovery program emanating from the country’s low-income public high schools. If youth ever knew such a program once existed, the first question to the President would be: “Where is this recovery program, Mr. President?” Not in the name of competition, but in the name of inclusive growth and shared contributions, such a vision has little staying power in the neoliberal state. Instead, compartmentalizing major aspects of the vital social, the two topics, social services and youth risk, are rarely considered as part of a shared agenda. *Instead, there are continuous cuts to social services with corollary cuts to public education fomenting the accumulative blow to the children of labor*. Still, the services are conceived as existing in their separate silos or somehow separate despite the rise of child poverty – universal in its reach where once was the universality of training programs – set against welfare retrenchment, disdain for a mythical “welfare queens driving Cadillacs,” and the retrenchment of youth training production.

In the 1960s, the move towards maximum feasible participatory politics was achieved initially in rough form through overlapping authority between the executive of Associated Agencies, Evilelo Grillo and the Community Action Programs (CAPs), the latter which would evolve into the

citizens' committees – *by district committees with veto power over the mayor with regard to district politics*. Grillo's orientation is significant in that he had the insight to stress the importance of the execution of the supra-institutional cohesion as far as the youth experience flows through numerous channels including health, education, housing, recreation, and law enforcement. A man embracing "comprehensivity," Grillo took the approach that it was not so much the richness and adequacy of specific services so much as the "*vertical and horizontal*" integration of what we already have. *The CAP angered power elite in City Hall since it appeared to undo authority by a selection of empowered poor in politics*. In some ways sounding a lot like OUSD in 2012, when OUSD maintained its new focus on integration or what it called its FSWA schools, vertical and horizontal, where OUSD is contained within its institutional bedrock, Grillo's vision was for nurturing the total person including youth at risk of delinquency or drop out. The post-Occupy stepping up by OUSD signifies a seeming move to redress the fractious nature of an educational system integral to the larger neoliberal social – contending therein with its own paltry means and training services – beyond mere after-school activities. But inevitably there remains an aspect of "what methadone clinics were to heroin in the 1960s, weak training webs are to skill-building and healthy psychological development: stopgap answers in a society *now driven by maximizing profits and not maximizing participation* rather than simply being the crooked timber in the occasional program."⁵⁶

While still ironing through what 'maximum feasible participation' (MFP) would mean in terms of policy, a makeshift volunteer Interagency Project was put on the city payroll to quickly become the Oakland Economic Development Council (OEDC), the city's anti-poverty agency comprised of representatives from labor, management, minority groups, civil rights and religious organizations. By 1965, the poor of the actual neighborhood communities became board members and by 1967, the poor were in solid command of the direction of Oakland's anti-poverty program. With 20 actual poor comprising a majority on the board, anti-poverty programs began to be revised and redesigned. There was a new emphasis in the programs on organizing and the vertical aspect of political voice and what could be gained from it in terms of complex skills, as explained by Viorst:

All of the programs provided jobs in the neighborhoods, among people who would otherwise be unemployed, if not unemployable. They also provided invaluable experience in the initiation and administration of relatively complex enterprises.

- Milton Viorst, *The Citizen Poor of the 1960s*

Unfortunately, with hundreds of large federally funded programs attempting implementation, instead of giving the Great Society's Great Transformation in social engineering the time to settle in – while taking America off the gold standard, reversing economic regulatory laws, and corporate tax laws – the reduction of wealth/power inequality associated with the Great

⁵⁶ The methadone programs of the 1960s were focused on cleaning up the street image preventing calamitous addictive behavior from getting out of hand. However, as a stopgap program concerned with such things as car-jacking, it accepted risking the 'price' of prescription overdose, which had many victims. Any nation with such serious challenges pays the price in relying on the makeshift measure. Fortunately, in the 1960s, weak programs were surrounded by a field of efficient programs that collectively delivered societal inclusion where the rehabilitated could more easily wind their way and find their way back. Today, there is no single in-patient detox facility for Oakland residents closer than Fremont and San Mateo meaning that the Oakland patient does not have county priority at the ready.

Compression ground to a halt under Nixon and Governor Reagan who vetoed funding for OEDCI ensuring its collapse.

Still, it is considerably more difficult to dismantle the socio-communal lattice webbing, which would take some time, a composite of miscellaneous storefronts, walk-in services, corner markets and liquor stores, social services, treatment houses, and the numerous services and resources offered its youth. As noted, the infrastructural lattice is built over generations, in part, through a more expansive entangled supra-institutional consortia matrix conceived and enabled by the federal government. As with the early MFY, many of these agencies and programs had youth emancipation and empowerment as key to program objectives. In Oakland, with the 1961 grant that launched the Oakland Interagency Project (OIP), focus was from the start concerned with school and public health department projects. Fearful that Oakland would become another inflamed city reminiscent of Watts, 1965, if politics was a game of strategies, poverty relief had become its flagship. The Mayor's Manpower Commission, working in conjunction with OEDC, created a Concentrated Employment Program (CEP), utilizing a \$4.5 million federal grant to establish the East Bay Skills Center (EBSC). Located near the Berkeley/Oakland border, about 1,400 trainees enrolled in vocational training courses and 550 other trainees obtained basis education and pre-vocational instruction through the local Community Action Agency (CAA) between 1966 thru 1969 annually.⁵⁷ Other job training projects in the city included the Mayor's On-The-Job (OTJ) training program providing job training for 800 persons. The status of the city as an economically depressed area meant the city received much more in federal assistance as grants-in-aid amounting to near \$100 million per year involving over 125 federally funded programs. These programs included 30 separate manpower projects including programs working in collaboration with large foundations (e.g., the Adult Minority Project of the State Department of Employment financed in part by the Ford Foundation) and the Demonstration Service Center in West Oakland costing close to \$1 million.

As the War on Poverty got underway and additional agencies were created, including the OEDCI (having incorporated in 1967), the city's own Community Action Program (CAP) drew on Johnson's 'maximizing' of community representatives, which in West Oakland was called a Target Area Advisory Committee (TAAC) comprised of local representatives. While negotiating decision-making among more than four political factions with vested interest newly charged with a degree of political say, the efforts at politically charged community action were predictably troubled, though not where negotiations did not live up to democratic outcomes. Tellingly, notwithstanding differences, the first program conceived by the West Oakland TAAC was, again, an educational program for high school drop-outs.⁵⁸ Other programs involving established agencies extended or expanded in 1965 included legal services, family counseling, family planning, parochial school compensatory education, neighborhood organization, and *remedial instruction for dropouts* -again targeting the total person whether adult or youth, officially tied to the institution of education or not.

Meanwhile, the schism between OEDCI, the city's (federally funded) anti-poverty agency, and Mayor Houlihan continued as it would with future republican Mayor Reading. And yet, as some

⁵⁷ Additionally, some would leave the EBSC program accepting other employment or having completed training or for other reasons. See <http://www.gao.gov/assets/210/202383.pdf> Site referenced April, 2013.

⁵⁸ This program was to use VISTA volunteers, and a leadership training program.

have argued that the political playing field has shifted so far to the right that even Nixon was in many ways more liberal than the new “third way democrats” since Clinton, political difference was of a different ilk in the 1960s if only because of the embedded leverage of labor in the formal socio-political structure. In this Keynesian landscape, ripening in the late 1960s (and early 1970s), both Mayor Houlihan and internal political opposition, OEDCI, made resolving the crisis of unemployment their priority. In such a Keynesian climate, it was not possible to not embrace the crisis of contracting jobs through vowing to shore up job growth programs. However, Houlihan, a former police officer and felon, had a mind to reduce social service pipelines and instead achieve intervention wholly through use of education and job development programs – two political arms run direct through government though both with large components using direct federal funding absent direct federal administration procuring a new greater autonomy in spending. Such a political strategy would also dislodge Oakland’s political playing field to the extent that it was nested within the larger Keynesian/growth liberal landscape in which all national politics unfolded. One of its first “achievements” in the dismantling of the social service arm would be in denying funding to OEDCI, a program with over 50% of its Board representation from actual members of the city’s poor neighborhoods therein often voting in opposition to the will of the mayor and city manager. In fact, from such a conservative perspective, social programs were far too costly and – if the political leverage that they delivered was any indication – too successful in achieving their ultimate objective of greater participation indicative of greater equality. How else, once might ask, could Bobby Seale of Oakland’s Black Panther Party push a very close run-off election to incumbent Mayor Reading in 1973 taking 40% of the vote just one year after OEDCI was closed due to defunding? It seemed that, for the city’s influential power elite, in 1972-1973, things had gotten out of hand and change would come.

At this critical juncture, with the political field of Oakland as a testing ground, the equivalent of a sneak offense radically advanced the conservative politic inasmuch as political will had gained that nascent edge regaining the line in the political skirmish. Never again would the city’s political power elite be hindered by popular voice such as the allied response of OEDCI and district bodies (CAP/TAAC). Suffering extinction, it was no longer possible that such a constituency could ally with one another overriding the will of City Hall, instead popular voice would be set in a position of compromise, while its councils, agencies, schools, were left to fall. Meanwhile, the position of mayor gained in political jurisdiction while mayoral salary rose from, from \$7,500 in 1960 (Houlihan) to \$183,000 in 2010 (Quan). As noted, although the much criticized inflating of elite remuneration, including salary but not limited to, continues to rise, it is against the press of an actually *declining* real wage of low- and middle- income. Slowly polarizing since the 1970s when the movement leveling inequality ceased, in terms of structured leverage as the requisite equity of countervailing political force shared between the classes – it was when Reaganomics called for the reversal (via extinction and not mere reduction) of 75% of the Great Society programs that real distributive polarization took flight. Vindicating master economist, Joseph Stiglitz’s, warning of the great polarization, it is here animated in the city of Oakland at the level of the adolescent with the elimination of in-school public school training, in-school Corp training, on-the-job (OTJ) training, New Careers Program training, and the East Bay Skills Center (EBSC) training facility. That same year, the Peralta College administration

systematically defunded the Grove Street College Campus – the think-tank of innovation where the BPP grew from its inception to global strength – and let its building fall into disrepair.⁵⁹

In 1968, it is in large part because of the relatively high levels of political engagement – both in terms of grass-roots mobilization and demonstration (e.g., through the BPP) and in structured political engagement with express political sway given to people of different class scaling (i.e., below the poverty line, low and moderate income, middle and high income) – that “Oakland is not for burning” (Bradford, 1968) but a growing city of political diversity. In this way, people “took their struggle to the street” in an organized fashion at the same time that they took their struggle to Town Hall, councils, agencies, boards and other advisory bodies. Legislation followed empowering their constituencies forcing a positive spin to a social reproduction entwined in a complex battle of wills producing a more “best for the people” understanding of political best practices if only as political compromise and concession in a field of countervailing forces. Enabled through the vitality of socio-political space, they were without the need for the shakedown of urban riot, which though appearing beyond the pale of the political field actually holds a place at its margins for the voice of its socially negated who resist the negated social.

In 1970, echoing Cloward and Ohlin’s telling *Delinquency and Opportunity*, Oakland was a model city in terms of fighting delinquency through robust opportunity alternatives. In 1970, aiding in holding down dropout rates and youth jobless rate – in addition to the vital training circuitry streaming through districts and schools noted above – there was an overlapping web of (4) district-based service centers involved in job solicitation, (3) Youth Opportunity Centers (East, West and Central) involved in assisting youth in job application processing, and various volunteer-based Associated Agencies. Still, police brutality was real and the internalized anger, distrust and the ultimate nihilistic dread it helped foster was also real as was the popular will to do something about it politically. In the late 1960s, the BPP was calling for justice in the courts as, for instance, a trial of one’s peers, and an end to police brutality. Repeated examples of the OPD’s racist and brutalizing use of power confirmed racialized tendencies among its police force, a reputation following the OPD still. Sociologically, it is a tendency that can only intensify in a context of plague-like societal polarization and deterioration whereas in 1970, the socio-political circuitry was interwoven into the socio-communal web of political motion and social mobility as one...

Insert Big Picture: Federal programs woven into local politics and the socio-communal web

⁵⁹ Another of Oakland’s beautiful Victorian buildings, once reclaimed by Children’s Hospital on the renamed, “Martin Luther King Jr. Way”, the building would receive funding for repair.

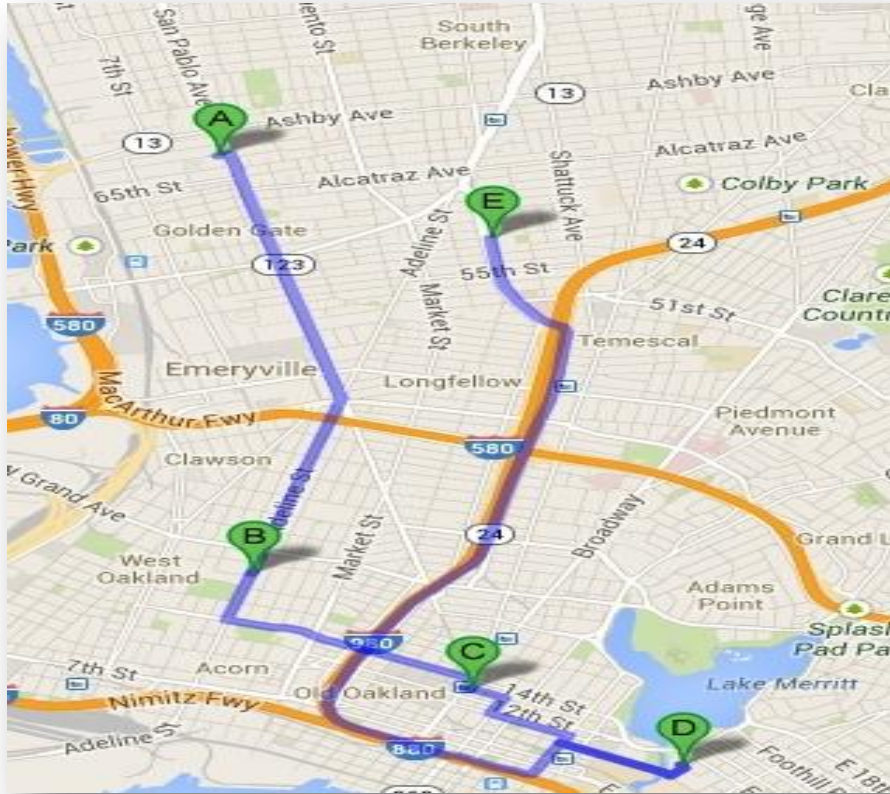
Echoing the early insights of W. E. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Frantz Fanon, in the late 1960s, during a period of ethnic tension amidst democratic passion, then Secretary of HEW, John Gardner, highlighted the critical role of social engagement, and not just institutional engagement, as the quickest cure to social unrest:

Many of our best young people today wonder whether they have any place in this vast and complicated society of ours. They feel anonymous and rootless and alienated. They are oppressed by the impersonality of our institutions. In my judgment there isn't any quicker cure for that ailment than evidence that their society needs them. – John W. Gardner, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) under President Johnson, 1968

Since this time it has become increasingly difficult for poor to gain traction particularly in terms of the readily accessible exposural training or within any kind of service matrix forcing the current condition of widening downward mobility flows and dis'-engagement.

The Strength of Inclusionary Channels Streaming Oakland's Working Class Flatlands

As with the Great Society war on poverty that attacked poverty at its source, social disengagement, and for this reason designed a “big picture” engagement matrix, in the urban ‘Flats Training’ flowchart (below), youth training programs (16-24) are considered alongside adult training programs. Almost incomprehensible when considering the widespread disengagement of the ‘crabs in a bucket’ or ‘bowling kettle’ of today, in an urban flatland that includes approximately 40,000 people between West and North Oakland in a city with a population of 360,000, approximately 50% of the low-income ‘people of the flats’ are utilizing the *social advantage* tools offered through these programs operated both in and out of the high school. And, invariably drawn to question the weak threads in the lattice of freedom, it is this socio-culturally charged liberatory context in which the BPP and other student representatives at the Grove St. campus of Merritt College fight for the right for an Ethnic studies program in “their” college.



Map: Key institutions servicing youth/young adults among the socially disadvantaged minority majority working masses of the Oakland flatlands in 1967 with organizational and mobilizing pipelines incorporated into federally supported operations.

EXPOSURE-BASED FREE/SLIDING SCALE TRAINING INSTITUTES and the representative ANTI-POVERTY AGENCY, Working Class Flats, 1967

	<u>Institute</u>	<u># Served Annually</u>
A	East Bay Skills Center, San Pablo Avenue	1,400
B	Neighborhood Youth Corp, Adeline Street /in-school	180
C	Oakland Economic Development Council, Inc. (OEDCI)	*n/a (indirect political rep)
D	Adult Education, 11 th Street (with other sites)	15,000
E	Grove St. “Flats” Merritt Community College	5,000
F	McClymonds High School, 2608 Myrtle Street	800

ANNUAL “SOCIOALLY ADVANTAGED” IN TRAINING = 22, 380

With Great Society “big planning” held as the “taboo” of urban planning since the 1980s, in 2012, OUSD appeared to be making an effort to recreate something reminiscent of what it had in the 1960s in terms of robust service pipelines and socially cohesive channels. Still, though committed to wrap around service networking as improvement, it was not with the federal

funding and direct administration/accountability that was integral to active agencies in its former service matrix. Attempted at the level of public schools amidst an a priori deconstructed 3-D political dynamism of a similar vitality, this would mean that the networks would have to grow out of the frail environment that is its origin, to rise up slowly, hopefully deliberately, over time as a youth-based series of NGOs and CBOs. Meanwhile past graduating youth would suffer as part of a larger “unfortunate” collateral damage in a system still grappling to get circuitry relations right. *Compounding the problem, the city was eager to further deconstruct public schools by moving budget administration from the OUSD office to the neighborhood/district level instead of putting the children first: shoring up a solid system of network motion, experience, engagement and mobility whatever the price and then debating issues of improved finance.* This necessarily means that it engages a weak social ecology rather than committing to transcending its local environment through a series of agencies brought into the area with new stabilized funding and administrative power as a joint commitment from the federal, state and county governments. It means that there cannot be a “big picture” frame in which youth production fits because the institutions of its frame remain unknown and/or continuously changing (e.g., for the NGOs accused of fraud and denied funding). Instead, the city accepts a framework of profound instability for its citizens including its youth, though through the same system has ensured sizable profit-making for its power elite. Unknown to youth, though suspicious that too many professionals do not have their best interest at heart, they are made to pay the price.

A context that makes blaming youth for their behavior difficult, the flatlands remain without a kind of series of large one-stop centers that would be that powerful link between school>training>work. Meanwhile hidden in its sidestreets are its abandoned buildings, one-time centers, with broken and boarded windows, graffiti or with potted plants lining the staircase leading to some kind of empty space-turned-studio rental for its growing artisan class. Whether or not youth come to feel as if “society needs them” once come of age is largely contingent upon exposure to these earlier opportunities with different skills and talents. Many in a resource-stripped school filled with poor minority youth in the deepest recessed areas of the city will not have had such experiences. Nor will they be familiar with technical training, construction, wood or auto shop, photography, film, radio, professional writing, law, theater, acting, culinary skills and onward in this way developing personal confidence. As argued throughout, it is a crisis that invariably reduces the dimensionalism of the personal vision and the social imaginary as part of its negative social reproduction.⁶⁰ Inadequate experience, training, employment, civic engagement and socio-political exposure is the direct consequence. The indirect consequence is an emaciated social reproduction where the personal worldview continues to grow more contained, collapsing within itself for the rootless and alienated denied experience, exposure, meaning, and the tools of meaning-making.

Absent institutional skill building and life training with hands tied as to acceptable recourse, with identities hanging in the balance made accountable for their own successes, young men easily feel confounded by life’s prospects. Others are prepared to mobilize and risk arrest as seen in the boots-on-the-ground Occupy Oakland Fall, 2011. A local Bishop explains the youth situation as analogous to a “boiling kettle,” its lid bubbling over on the brink of explosion with a handful of pastors situated on its top holding it down. For youth, there is often an emotional tide fluctuating

⁶⁰ For a similar reason, the small school experiment was also deemed a failure, both because of the compartmentalizing of student bodies, and because of the compartmentalizing of engaged opportunity.

between melancholy, exuberance, a passionate tuning-in, a stony tuning-out, disbelief, fear, and anger as if the world of extremes had designed the emotional state. As one youth explained who was without a big picture historical context, living in Lower Bottoms was like “crabs in a bucket.” Unfortunately, crabs in a bucket would have proven a difficult claim had services been in place as they were generations earlier when the cornerstone of youth services was maximizing participation (MFP) across the social arenas and socializing mobility, a truism that makes the larger claim of historical progress the harder sell.

When youth question why they do not have any resources in West Oakland, it is a sentiment echoed by locals who also view McClymonds as a place where amenities are few and far between. As a full-service wrap-around service school, McClymonds seeks to address part of this through its recently opened Community Center (2012), which is to be a “one-stop shop” though harbors elements of “one-stop shopping” for students and families in healthcare, nonprofit services, job searching and parenting classes to name a few. And yet, when viewing the former version of one-stop centers in the area (e.g., the EBSC and Adult Education), McClymonds’ post-Occupy effort appears conceptually, fiscally, and operationally hamstrung. Partially for this reason, it hasn’t nearly the participant numbers passing through its doors as these earlier institutional training houses. As a result, its presence as a central service house for youth – in itself or in combination with other local services – does not undo current youth perception of the definitive resource deprivation and scarcity of systems serving the people of the low-income flatlands. Not because they are not interested in such services, and not because such services are not built with good intentions, but because youth today, come of age in a period of hyper-neoliberalism have been weaned on caution in the best of times and distrust of “poverty pimps” in the worst and if they don’t see actually existing change, they are skeptical.

In the 1960s, while tensions may have been high, so was recognition of a people and a place, namely: the flatlands. While these large full service institutes were positioned on the flatland border (e.g., Oakland/Berkeley border, the flatland/hills border) in this way intermixing student bodies – the fact that they are situated in the flatlands at all with the aim of serving the poor of the flatlands – utters a tacit commitment so difficult to sustain from political representatives today. As spatially inclusive, socially inclusive streaming large percentages, with a 3-D politically inclusive dynamism that gave voice to the poor even in the political arena, poor representation is able to achieve such victories as fighting for the right to have over 50% poor representation on organizational boards existing in service of aiding the poor – a direct political linkage of the poor that has since been broken.⁶¹

⁶¹ The urban flatlands, home to growing percentages of Black immigrants from the south and other working classes, were usually bordered by neighborhood boundaries or main thoroughfares such as Market Street and San Pablo Avenue. By the 1960s, the Black residential base spanned from Berkeley’s Telegraph west to the Bayshore and north into South Berkeley. Since the post-World War II redevelopment, including decades of social mix growth models with forms of often-strained heterogeneity, beltways are no longer so much geographic as they are socio-institutional, evoking a racialized service segregation akin to Jim Crow. During the 1950s and 1960s, there was an outer suburban beltway veering towards San Leandro inhabited largely by a middle-class white population, while minorities represented growing percentages of Oakland’s inner-city population. No longer a simple division, the city’s graying gray areas has grown considerably more complicated undoing group solidarity politically, geographically and socially, in terms of vital arteries, in addition to economically of the working people’s flatlands.

In part related to the spillover effect of contagious learning, the flatlands further solidified its identity through its own newspaper, *The Flatlands*, a newspaper aimed at the minority poor, started in 1966 informing locals of West, North and East Oakland. It would generally address issues of social action and grassroots action challenging, for instance, school administration, or the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), an orientation that was growing.⁶² A people more united, the message of *The Flatland* was of a class solidarity and commonality unlike in its absence where too often turf identities and/or street market affinities dominate in the hustler's market. Between strong training circuitry and educational pipelines actively engaging youth and families, the prevalence of churches in the area (notably more than any city west of Mississippi), and the general experience with growth shared among the households – the feeling of community was strong where a man of truth was richer than a man of coins. Lawns were kept, sharing was widespread, mutual growth prevailed since trumped by the ethic of competition in a field of scarcity, and barbeque cook-offs could fill the community parks. It was indeed the case that drugs had its own market as an economy of the street. However, with 50% of its community members engaged to the social-mobility pipeline of political voice and action – the street markets could not dislodge the role of education from its elevated status, the latter only possible in a flatlands of emaciated school resources, student disbelief, and even less in terms of job opportunity assistance. What made sense for the community made sense for its youth in terms of *EVA* as vital life. In which case the percentage of at risk youth simply could not grow like it has since grown because such a social reality was effectively thwarted as it was held down and held back.

In a context where drug markets rise to the fore as one of the few concrete markets in an otherwise hobbled economy. And yet, concurrent with the dismantling of precisely these mobility pipelines, the implementation of new acceptance/application barriers of every administrative form conceivable – political punditry continues to draw far more heavily than before on the strength of “community” as an ideological and symbolic image to give to its constituents. This political hyping of the great American community is taking place at precisely the time that actually existing communities of cities like Oakland have long since been undone, stripped of political, social and economic capital, suffering the greatest blows since the mid-2000s as its children born in the early 1990s endured the unfamiliar hollowed terrain of the contemporary twig bending stage.

The new focus on community since the 1980s meant that many federal programs would be cut, while the local community councils would pull together to form some sort of oversight committee. In West Oakland, there are a few nonprofits that have taken up this task with varied scales of effectiveness in terms of representing the district equitably. In hindsight, the CAPs created as part of the federal attack on poverty has proven considerably more inclusionary socially, politically, and collectively as a vital socio-communal body – a consequence directly influencing the experience of youth asked to find greater success while working with less tools of empowerment. The difference is comparable to the difference between a heavily utilized Adult Education service with tens of thousands of students benefiting from its Basic Education

⁶² Opposition to the BART, as with the laying of the Nimitz freeway, received opposition on many levels, not the least of which was resistance to the leveling of housing, and the failure to deliver the promised jobs to locals that was committed with the original approval of these sorts of large-scale development projects (cf., (Rhombert, 2007; R. O. Self, 2005).

Skills programs as in pre-neoliberal America – and a notification on a church window, yellowed having been up for two years and nearly fallen off, informing the possible viewer of possible GED prep courses, which may or may not still be available. The point being that the latter could not be any further removed from claims of effective intervention or a system of poverty programs in a democracy. With the socio-political state promoting misinformation and disinformation/non-information, it allows a widespread ignorance of potential and possibility to reign over a people unwittingly succumbs to a kind of informational and practical dis'-engagement darkness. Obviously signs will be forgotten and information expires to grow extinct leaving youth to once again sidewind their way in crafting their own viable course of social mobility. As scarce as GED prep courses have become, youth are not in a position to have this sort of information obscured, hidden, invalid or a matter of market profit-making (e.g., through internet sites). For such reasons, here in the tangle of austerity's 'systemless system', youth may glean the significance of political philosopher Gianfranco Poggi's claim when concluding that a healthy social state is the best way to healthy national growth as social mobility among its diverse population.

Seemingly paradoxical and yet no longer paradoxical once recognizing the integral role between the social and community, when lacking in parochial imagery and "community" political rhetoric, instead emphasizing society, the social, inclusive growth, social responsibility and mobility – *it is under the auspices of this theme of social vitality that community enrichment finds its way into the furthest reaches of America's troubled inner-city transcending its gray areas.* From this perspective, the health of society and the social are integral to the vitality of community through the strength of its socio-communal lattice webbing that very much includes training and service flows. This entangled relation is implied by local residents ruminating on the vitality of an inner-city passed, as when one former resident of Bayview-Hunters Point in San Francisco observed:

Back in the day (in the 1970s), it felt like a community. It was cool growing up there. San Francisco State University was just a bus ride away and I loaded up on video equipment, which had a loose weekend lending policy at the time.
- Counselor, Bayview, 2010

The reach of governance is seen where the impoverished slum is enlivened socially, communally, politically and economically in direct correspondence to the reach of the national body politic. As noted, it is because of these micro successes in the individual cities that the country reached the historical height of reduced inequality and redistribution in the early 1970s.

Federal intervention was about systemically digging deep into America's poor neighborhoods and fortifying its socio-communal body through the vibrancy of its supra-institutional matrix. With a country schooled on the differences between dictator and democracy, the political pendulum hung that much closer to participatory democracy and the clear necessity to engage members of society through institutionalized forms of MFP in the political, economic, and social arenas. Developing society was on the minds of its people, which meant shoring up institutional infrastructure looking well beyond one's own neighborhood. At the same time, this fight for societal growth was critical precisely because it was perceived as inherently tied to the strength of any particular community; the fact that federal governance and the back streets with their waning industries, hidden jam houses, wayside cafés, roaming teens, and empty industrial

architecture of the inner-city had risen and would fall as one was a concern on the political agenda. This contrasts with the neoliberal assumption that makes community- and national-growth largely antithetical to the other with the exception being serving one's country, that is, in preparation for the feudal dynamism with its militarized core just over the horizon of assumed political innovation and intervention (cf. J. Hackworth, 2007).

The 1970s witnessed a slow retreat from the growth liberal beliefs and methods anchored in inclusion. And yet, acceptance of non-inclusive political methods – while harboring political exclusion for members of the lowest strata of society – was subsequently embraced where a shifting political climate after 1972 saw new support for claims of “poor judgment” on the part of the politically undereducated and often poor advancing their elimination in political domains. While the 3-D political dynamic of MFP-based inclusion had its own challenges, in hindsight, its replacement with increasingly top-down decision-making was in the last analysis a mounting bid for the current state of political oligarchy.⁶³ It also signified the beginning of the end of vital community, a political paradox inasmuch as that which displaced vital community claimed to better deliver community vitality as synonymous with its own (neoliberal) political economy (cf. Altshuler, 1970). Instead, it has effectively paved the way for new forms of inequalities that build on one another in the stagnant streets with its varying levels of opportunity, a condition that invariably hits the poor youth hardest absent committed intervention when located at inequity's lower bottoms.

The desire to preserve the “American community” emerges as a battle cry of the far left and the right, both suspicious of the imposition of national standards detracting from community autonomy and disgruntled with county level governance. During the 1960s, communities asserted the rights to democratic say over their district and were for the most part successful. The fear was against a kind of centralism of government that in the name of community usurped its liberties through a kind of soft-totalitarian standard making. But this was not to be confused with a need for central government in establishing critical resources, services, standards, providing in many instances a much needed direction in turning the most disadvantaged communities into bastions of vital exchange. As seen in West Oakland, taking away these mobility channels and vital pipelines does correspond to the rise of inversely negative pipelines and downward mobility including the school>dropout>prison pipeline amidst a new born socio-communal decay. From this perspective, youth slang, “stuck” as in “stuck on summer” or “stuck on fast cash” catches a social phenomenon of precisely this impaired mobility and/or a bad habit that didn't see beyond itself. Because youth social reading is never black and white, “stuck” harbors this complex social meaning with its embedded cautionary tale reminding the person to keep pushing just as it reminds them of seductive pastimes and the ultimate price of derailed ambition that otherwise requires twice the normal concentration levels. It reifies the idea that “it ain't easy,” getting harder all the time – as well as the idea that the partial responsibility of the person is not always comfortable but it is part of being real with oneself. A complex account, all social institutes, educational, political, could benefit from recognizing the

⁶³ Both the OEDCI and the CAPs would be eliminated as a countervailing force in city politics defending the needs and views of the poor by the end of Reagan's first term. But first, OEDCI would be denied funding by Governor Reagan of California in the early 1970s then suffering the same terminal end, while central authority gained in power, including city control and its corporatocracy much in the spirit of the Michel's Iron Law of Oligarchy (1966).

poor youths' complex social reading. Instead the accountability mantra of individual responsibility is hammered into them at times fomenting a bitter silence having grown convinced of divergent readings, resigned, hardened and indifferent to the fact that a different vista of experience renders their position "foreign" even when confronted on the same block.

Images of the End of the Line of a Foregone Inclusive Growth Precedent, Disbanded and Dissolved on the Playing Fields of 'Generation Negation'

More recently, intergenerational social reproduction in the Black community of the Oakland flatlands looks more like the following 2004 West Oakland demographic at far remove from its own former progress only generations earlier, while the greatest change post-recession is in a new "Black flight."

2004 West Oakland

- Blacks 77%; Other 23%
- Renters 79%; Owners 21%
- Median rent: \$1,314
- No High School 45%
- High School Degree 42%
- College degree 11%
- Graduate degree 2%⁶⁴

Back in the day, Jack London Square used to be alive. Whole bunch of kids used to go there after school. Now there ain't nothing going on. People gone different ways or something.
- Former twenty-something dropout, West Oakland, 2010

The West Oakland community has always been hurting (disadvantaged), but not like it is now.
- Senior, South Prescott, West Oakland, 2011

Seriously. What is there for these kids to do? And then, they're hungry also!
- Security officer, West Oakland, 2012

The place don't have nothin' going on but sirens all day playing like someone's boom box.
- Youth, West Oakland, 2013

A lot of families have moved out of West Oakland, better to live somewhere else than go to jail.
- Youth, West Oakland, 2013

⁶⁴ See <http://www.planning.org/communityassistance/2005/pdf/WestOaklandDemographicProfile.pdf>
Site referenced July, 2011

The 1973 recession provided justification to alter program funding streams as the political climate moved increasingly towards a new conservatism supercharged in California by California's Governor Reagan, as he showed a new commitment to slash social programs. This would include job programs just as it does today, followed at the time by the newly introduced Proposition 13, pivotal in the education arena the way eliminating an anti-poverty agency was in the political arena with such pivotal structural shifts concertedly driving the new conservatism. Reflecting on these social progress gains, the old were often poorer than the new generation of young adults and the middle aged. But the tension of inequality would invariably give way as in the late-1970s when the new "youth unemployment problem" gave way to a rebounding poverty rate for young adults aged 18-24, which began to match that of 55-60 year olds. At the same time that poverty among young adults was on the rise and educational budgets were being cut, a conservative ideals, such as individualism, seized the student imagination. Suggesting a new impasse for youth in facing off to poverty that the government had temporarily found a way to overcome through inclusive principles of *EVA*, Reagan would take the growing sentiment of individual responsibility to new heights under Reaganomics (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1996, p. 155). In tracing job losses for minority youth and corresponding rising dropout rates, by the early 1980s, the promise of mass social mobility had dissolved as a new inequality spiked amidst a recession that would radically impact the job prospects of high poverty minority communities from this time onward. The new inequality was offset and made less intense by the strengths of Great Society programmatic leveling, including higher rates of educational achievement among minorities carrying into the late 1980s. Inasmuch as high educational achievement and low dropout rates correspond to social inclusion in a healthy economy, by the late 1980s, the accumulative effect of an anemic social service circuitry embedded in the larger social polarization ongoing since the early 1970s signifies a new social field for the life experience of minority youth; here minority youth dropout rates begin their late-modern rise in sync with joblessness yet to reverse.

By 2009, it was found that one child in four (one in two Black) lives under the official "poverty line" in a country that spends vastly more than any of its competitors on healthcare as a percentage of its GDP, yet leaves some 45 million people (including 12 million children) without medical coverage at any one time. For Wacquant, it is a society that sacralizes work, yet has no national framework for supporting employment worthy of the name (Wacquant, 2009, p. 47). For youth, discrimination comes in all shapes and sizes.

It's always been the case that the powers that be don't really want an end to gang rivalry. For \$20k a year, they could keep a kid out of trouble instead of \$90-\$150,000 to keep him in jail. Where's that money going?
- Bishop, local nonprofit executor, West Oakland, 2010

A Pseudo 3-D Dynamic Politic Through Claims of Community Engagement for the Politically Powerless

The sense and deep guttural feeling of local residents, including youth, is something very different than what has actually come to pose as "shared decision-making" largely because the poor have increasingly less political voice.

These days, if you are poor, your voice doesn't mean anything. It's like no one is listening to you.

- Local young man, West Oakland, 2010

Why do local residents feel silenced, without political voice in a city that previously had political committees where representative bodies were forced to have 50% of its decision-making board from poor communities in this way ensuring equitable representation? How are residents silenced in a city politic when vestiges of a tripartite board division between business, private sector and low-income has been retained for the majority of nonprofits servicing communities? First “low-income” is not synonymous with poor, the two class scales with very different income ranges mean that actual board members have been ratcheted up to an entirely higher income bar than under the growth liberal strategy to level inequality and achieve effective redistribution. Second, a tripartite where business and private sector have a majority means that business interest will likely hold the majority. Third, because nonprofit status does allow profit-making through other means, such as investment and tax write-off, profit as influential in voting outcomes also prevails. In the same way that the poor lost political sway with the defunding of OEDCI in the early 1970s, they have continued to lose structural political voice against the corollary social buttress of the vital socio-communal mobility web.

The flattening of the dynamic political arena can be seen streaming through politics at all scales of governance where power has greater authority devolving towards hierarchical power sharing and/or some form of an oligarchy of influence elite. A relatively recent example, in 2011, the California Supreme Court upheld two bills that were part of the State's effort to close its budget deficit to go into effect February 1, 2012. One of the bills, ABx126 eliminated Redevelopment Agencies in the State of California. Striking down ABx127 meant that even Agencies that made payment to the State were eliminated. Combined, there was no mechanism remaining for reinstatement of the Redevelopment Agencies throughout the State. For the City of Oakland, the loss of Redevelopment funding created a potential budget gap of approximately \$28 million between fiscal years 2011-2013. In January 2012, the City Council closed the gap by applying significant organizational restructuring into a “*flatter, more traditional structure.*” This flatter political-economic structure invariably has meant the elimination of the alternative 3-D political “*power sharing*” playing field where power is redistributed along multiple scales of political power including the residential committee or council.

It also signifies a revamping of development departments that better compliment the wants and needs of business. In the case of Oakland, this includes the consolidation of departments into single departments and reorienting the new politic down market economics/business relational lines by way of department revamping as with the new Office of Economic & Workforce Development.⁶⁵ In this respect, Krugman's observation that more than meets the eye regarding

⁶⁵ This “flattening” of the political playing field towards market economics/business relational lines necessarily means the flattening of the participatory democratic 3-D political dynamism that once included the “challenges” of fragmentation and contestation of oppositional committees and councils vested with political power and funding. This loss of political dynamism can also be seen in the mission statement of many charter schools that unequivocally assert a goal of raising future generations for success in a “capitalist economy,” as with the American Indian Charter of Oakland.

the relation between Generation Recession and the Great Recession is entangled in politics could not be more accurate. When probing the type of politic, then the deeply embedded structural reconfiguring of every aspect of American life touched by politics is revealed. At this point, the Great Recession becomes the Great Transformation as witnessed in its “recovery years” in Oakland. Here, political policy further accelerates the move towards hyperneoliberalism, that centralizing ‘flat and firm’ power in the economic and militarizing/criminal domains against the fractious decentralizing of feudalesque small localism. In the realm of learning, budgetary authority devolves from one of the public’s socio-political power blocks – its public schools – through a new autonomous (city) district authority – a design firmly endorsing the charter-chain inequality to come of it.

This is a very different dynamic than what was attempted in preneoliberal Oakland when engaged learning was the goal and a complex matrix of opportunity was its means. Considering both what the city is prepared to pay on incarceration and sentencing over and above training and incorporation only confirms this fact. It is a social observation heavily influencing the reading of one’s environment as it does the poor high school pre-dropout confounded by a system for which he receives very little representation. Not entirely wrong, at the level of national politics, the young Black men are the “least popular group.” As noted by Peter Edelman (2006), somehow the only potent lobby that looks after their food, clothing, and shelter is the prison-industrial complex, which thrives off of incarceration – with no sign of let up (cf. Gilmore, 2007).



Largely young adult residents voice on Mayor Quan’s proposed gang injunction in opposition – and win due to its racialized undertones, Town Hall, 2011.

The residents of Oakland have strong feelings when it comes to the wrongful treatment of their children in the name curbing city violence:

When the young man said (sarcastically) to the police car that his crime was “walking while black,” the police car u-turned, stopped, pulled a gun on the two young men sitting outside the café, accused one of gang affiliation because of his red shirt, and told them to get in the car. How many people where red shirts?

- Local woman speaking out at Town Hall opposing the prospects of “stop-and-frisk” policy as racial prejudice, January 2013

In avoiding the historical record and the city’s own successes in a context of vital political voice, Mayor Quan has been consistent in her commitment to the “third way” conservative political strategy. During her term, risking recall in 2011, she has consistently sought to address youth delinquency, dropout and drift through surveillance/policing. Examples of her embrace of the military/criminal state are seen in: 1) the partially failed gang injunction initiative; 2) her failed 100 Block initiative; 3) her silent imposition of “Weed and Seed” (borrowed from far-right Bush Sr.); and 4) the more recent ‘community policing’ initiative (advanced through “consultant” advisory) escaping the otherwise fiery outrage from local citizen groups. Still, the passage of the North Oakland gang injunction signifies part of the city’s own Great Transformation with 2011 a critical year of confrontation for and against the mayor, that is, when it was discovered that she arbitrarily outlined her “100 Block safety zones” where the injunction was applicable. The gang injunction received a great deal of local opposition from young adults to mothers fearing wrongful arbitrary claims of gang affiliation of their son based on the color of his shirt – or his skin. The injunction mandated that certain residents, based on their records of criminal activity, including drunk driving, drug possession, and/or felony, would qualify for the injunction. It was criteria that would heavily influence minorities sentenced for petty drug sales, the latter which was a crime contested all over the country as unjust considering the amount of possession weighed against the criminal status and permanently preempted learning track that followed. Even Quan had said that she was committed to curbing the city’s 80% recidivism. Youth were outraged wanting to know if she was trying to play both sides of the street? There it was again, a new law using drug sale charges as criteria for injunction just as the laws themselves are contested as unjust. With the injunction, people would not be allowed to associate with certain said gang members, assault witnesses, carry a firearm or dangerous weapon, do drugs, recruit persons, and trespass where its requirements appeared borrowed from the city’s probation standards. Violation of the injunction was to be considered contempt of court with a six month jail sentence and a \$1,000 fine.

In his analysis of the Rodney King riots, Mike Davis explains how Los Angeles officials were not interested in probing the connection between extreme inequality and destitution and the LA riots that followed:

Distinguishing between "need" and "opportunism" in poor communities is a rather fruitless semantic exercise; people looted both because they could and because they needed things: food, shoes, Pampers, cockroach spray, beer, motor oil, and video players (aka electronic baby sitters)... When the hotel workers released a short film a few months later that vividly made the connection between poverty and the uprising, there was a memorable freak-out in the Convention Bureau and City Hall... No one wanted to hear the voices from our own intifada.⁶⁶

For *Generation Negation*, a newly modeled *control social* appears as a kind of Surveillance City where the stories shared by youth make the most sense considered in terms of the deeply ongoing historical correspondence and correlation in the decomposition of the people’s arenas, political,

⁶⁶ See (“Los Angeles Review of Books - The Embers of April 1992 by Mike Davis,” n.d.)

economic, and social. Both youth stories and sociologist, David Garland's analyses illuminate the deeply entwined gray area of structural correspondence. For Garland, urban change in the modern city occurring in late modernity in both the UK and America can be summed up as the decline of the rehabilitative ideal. *As such, the welfare of deprived social groups, or the needs of maladjusted individuals becomes much less central to this way of thinking emanating a preoccupation with 'criminal justice' and 'victims' over and above an infrastructure of social democracy* (Garland, 2001). Since her election in 2010, Mayor Quan has consistently retreated from substantive rehabilitative solutions with only nominal programs, scant commitment to public training solutions that historically leveled a city's inequality, while thoroughly committed to shoring up the political power of a political elite rather than advancing any kind of redistribution through countervailing bodies.

Repositioning the central axis of governance further to the right has ground American political machine in what Pieterse (2004) refers to as "Dixie capitalism", that is, an age old form of capitalism executed in the South since the day of plantation oligarchs. Unmistakably growing her Neoliberal City in keeping with the values of Dixie capitalism, policy has moved from a premium on the older administrative search for social control amidst shared political power throughout the city, to the new governance tactic of pure control social in a production social. The *control social* tact can easily include curfew, gang injunctions, street patrol, beat patrol, more police in the schools, weed and seed, stop and frisk, heavy fines, as well as the use of flashbang grenades and rubber bullets during the Occupy Oakland protest. Though she has proposed all of the above, not all were implemented due to overwhelming opposition and corruption charges. Oakland fits perfectly into Garland's concern for a culture of control defining the modern city. For the same reason, it models the rise of the criminal/military wealth/power oligarchic state – the core of the neoliberal state as reflected in its military/criminal budget compared with its domestic budgets for social rehabilitation and generative growth.

The flipside of the mounting culture of control is unmistakably a culture of fear, which unfortunately shores up the culture of control as it does disunity and a "mind my own business" approach to making it, all of which stand in for a quasi divide-and-conquer. The fear that haunts Oakland youth is difficult to imagine without considering the symptoms like post-traumatic stress and attention deficit that follow being told at gun point to get in the car and taken to the police station for questioning at 11 years of age terrified at the prospect of a police record while fully innocent. While there is indeed the crisis of street violence that for Websdale appears to have borrowed its hierarchical power structure from the capital system itself (2001), a top-heavy power structure gives way to a local version of the same as the neighborhood waits on pins and needles for real vital forms of rehabilitative, empowering, engaging intervention. Alternatively, in the neighborhood, there is the mercurial reality of *la boheme* with its vagabond and street urchins that too touch the lives of youth to where the arrested 11-year old boy comes to embrace God, sermonizing at 13 years of age, he is no less real and no less true to himself because of his past only more true, more real.

The new managerial power dynamic within Oakland bears remarkable likeness to that of the template Neoliberal City. Under the growth liberal model, a system of city government had ingrained in its very structure forced compromise and negotiation in decision-making creating a situation of countervailing forces of participatory democracy – despite its at times annoying

gridlock. Undoing the potential for governance tyranny through a shared power infrastructure, it was not possible to undo the growth liberal paradigm that embraced diversity in political power integral as it was to its larger moral objective of maximizing participation. However, the Neoliberal City has silently dismantled these countervailing forces forcing a new unanimity of power in the hands of an elite few, while making it almost impossible to unseat the new political economic paradigm regardless of party affiliations precisely because of its increasingly dis'-engaged political status. In terms of the city's political infrastructure, this criminal/carceral emphasis suggests a retreat from strong democracy in doing away with "annoying and inconvenient" countervailing forces that run counter to the wishes of City Hall. They have been replaced with a said representative democracy including mayoral and city council elections, having done away with the directly representative political bodies of the poor.

The fact that the city's political infrastructure is largely in the hands of a power elite better mirrors the current national top-heavy inequality of wealth/power and a hierarchical military/criminal state than it does the country's growth liberal history of political power-sharing, strong democracy, and leveled inequality across arenas of social production. The nature of Oakland's model city in the late 1960s meant that it was common for sociologists of the day to study the challenges of shared power and the potential for inhibited decision-making and/or stalled development – because this issues were the contentious issues that needed to be solved. By 2000, it was obvious that the solution had been to strip commoners of a landslide of empowering strengths that enabled them in the political playing field. These former strengths included: equitable education focused on a needs-based distribution of services and resources; local affordable training centers, bargaining power among labor – all of which corresponded to political bargaining power.

As seen above in the Town Hall meeting contesting the proposed gang injunction, there was indeed opposition. Of course there was as the climate of social mobilization was peeking with many of the people in attendance also aligned with the Occupy Oakland movement opposing the 1 percent. Resistance has largely moved to the streets with a series of placards, signs and voices of opposition. While the representatively tolerated form of inclusion is little more than the individual's "3 minutes" on the floor to share one's view – it is difficult to conceive of a more individuated model, and therein of reduced influence and effectiveness. No longer are these same voices of the people politically enabled through their own committees, councils, and agencies where their "voice of resistance" is undergirded by veto power, strength in numbers, and political voice as a political block. Under the new model, City Hall has the political power analogous to that of a small fiefdom. These increasingly diminishing countervailing political powers authentically challenging the will of City Hall is rendered impossible by the nature of the decision-making structure that in some instances a priori decides without even weighing public opinion. The design is so extremely discriminatory that unless directly impacting the lives of citizenry as with the 'gang injunction' and the '100 Block' surveillance initiative – the rising strength of its Neoliberal City continues in its radical advance of power often unnoticed.

When political philosopher Immanuel Wallerstein concludes that the '1972-1973' pivot is inherent in a much larger economic global contraction, is this contraction purely reflective of an economy that must necessarily shrink at some point? Or, is it indicative of a people opting out of growth liberalism and development as social production/participatory democracy advancing

instead a politic of greed where its natural slow-down points to the fact that greed cannot be sustained? Once upon a time in America's recent history amidst the howling winds of contentious politics and robust democracy, there was a multi-pronged advantage for the poor and socially disadvantaged. Not only because of practical value the position of their residency had in terms of urban renewal writ large, but also because the ubiquitous growth of political democracy amidst the social climate of growth liberalism, the training, skill, job, and education pipelines numerous throughout a city – for both adults and the city's youth.



The 1968 Kerner Report further pushed for everything from massive job creation to improved schools/education, crackdown on police brutality to more affirmative action and expansion of the social safety net. Its successes relative to program costs relative to contemporary cost-to-outcome ratios, were nominal and social gains were vast – evidenced by the fact that the country reached its historical low-point of inequality shortly thereafter between 1972-1973. With the fact of socially comprehensive investment integral to the successes of big planning, the Community Economic Development Agency (CEDA) targeted everything from affordable housing to weathering, food, health, education, financial and resource assistance to preschool tutoring, adult literacy and entrepreneurial training for low-income and the currently socially excluded. While Great Society programs are criticized and targeted for moments of “bureaucratic inefficiency”, far less stressed is the fact that Great Society programs and its guiding ideal of inclusive growth with leveled inequality reduced poverty from 22% to a nationally inclusive low of 11 % (Anyon, 1997). Invariably drawing into its undertow other socially corresponding trends together surging to a social movement of big picture inequality, race-based discrimination and criminalizing were also declining as an equity-based sensibility prevailed. Even the republican Mayor Reading of Oakland defended Affirmative Action (AA) as the “right” thing to and the necessary thing to do tied as it was to federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants (Pressman, 1975, p 39). With the rise of CBOs and NGOs currently undertaking many of the above needs in a soft scramble of service outlays, absent juridical incentivizing (cf. Greenwald, 2012), absent financially-contingent administrative regulatory incentivizing with funding (as with EDA requirements), and absent the influence of a pro-social justice as equity status quo – the pendulum continues to swing further to a silent right ever since this time. Having seeded its own silent majority by defining standards of operations, administration, social perception and funding connections, it becomes increasingly difficult to reverse. Far less stressed when reflecting on the country’s high watermark of reduced inequality, at the time social schisms and fragmentation were often situated *inside* the spaces of structured socio-institutional debate and the healthy tug of war between different classes and other representative bodies requisite to vital 3-D democracy. The fact that something is not right and that it is directly impacting the resource deprived inequities of the socially disadvantaged is not lost on a generation of seemingly silenced and sidelined youth.

◆ CHAPTER 2 ◆

**Socially Disadvantaged Youth in Oakland's Neoliberal City -
Graying 'Gray Areas' and Blurring 'Mobility Lines'
Seeding Social Spaces of 'Generation Negation'**

We do not believe that community control and desegregation are inherently incompatible or in conflict unless they are made to be by the advocates, white or Black, of racial separatism.

- NAACP

There's hecka outside problems that be messin' with the school. In terms of who could give them the support... I think... uh...uh...the community – but the community ain't giving nothing positive to the students. In Oakland, we ain't got no clean parks or places to hang. In West Oakland if I needed help somewhere there's school but school only lasts so long - and they ain't even got the stuff you need... You have to work around it to get it to work.

- Female, high school senior, Oakland, 2010



One of the earliest, this Oakland border billboard went up on Stanford Avenue in 2011. And yet, shortly after, Oakland's own dropout rate is cited by OUSD's former Superintendent, Tony Smith, at 50 percent. The billboard was put up at the Berkley/Oakland border in gentrifying North Oakland, while skirting the recessed neighborhoods west of Market Street of the Oakland flatlands. *Fall 2011 taken down Spring 2012.*

How Seamless Operational Calls for ‘Democratization’ Across Educational Production Regimes Pad Undemocracy

Reviewing a certain horizontal seamlessness of governance administration and policy at the level of elite institutions, governance elite, and foundations, the value of inequality is shown to be used vertically between the different scales of authority once accepted as a governance standard including within the public schools. In California, it was under the 1999 Public School Accountability Act that low performing schools were subject to various sanctions and possibly state take-over if showing no improvement after three years. This (temporarily) centralizing accountability put a large percentage of state schools at risk of closure. For OUSD, as with the majority of other majority minority/high poverty districts, the early 2000s challenge was daunting with 43 of 56 district elementary schools receiving a rank of 5 or less, meaning that over 3/4s of its elementary schools ranked as “low performing,” 50% of its middle schools were ranked as “low performing,” while, at the level of the high school other statistics including its 25.2% dropout rate and 19.66% suspension/expulsion rate were also read as signs of failure (Noguera, 2004). Dismal rates of failure relative to percentages in the 1970s and 1980s in these same communities, NCLB incentivized administrative/teacher push-out forcing up the dropout and suspension/expulsion rates precisely when schools were said to be improving their methods, the oxymoronic context that concluded meant the federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR’s) negative district evaluation forced reform of discriminatory practices.

To the cheers of educators, California passed Proposition 30 in 2013. In support of the Act, Governor Brown asserted in his state of the union address a sentiment shared by former Assistant Secretary of Education, Susan Neuman, that “equal treatment for children living in unequal situations is not justice,” noting that he would like to see greater spending in areas with low-income families and greater numbers of English as Second Language learners. Governor Brown also cited the 2 million of 6 million (33%) children in the state living in poverty as a call to channel more funding to these low-income district and schools. Problematically, however, in using non-categorical discretion while channeling funds to county and districts, an educational institution like Adult Education is easily made extinct at the district level despite its history of providing the best channels for upward mobility for precisely these low-income often poor families and communities.

As expressed in city Town Halls held between 2011 and 2013, many residents remained doubtful as to the potential for real change as they felt that they had heard and seen it all before, that punitive measures were receiving the bulk of city funding and growing more intensely pervasive as a result at the same time that the language went headlong into a populist preaching. Drawing into the fold a leery, tired, beaten down public by reworking the meaning of “community,” “democratizing,” “participation,” “self-ownership of outcomes,” and “equality” in fact little had changed in terms of the limits of governance tactics. Some residents distrustful of mayoral tactics and the OPD were coaxed into a reinvigorated support for an old paradigm. Some were naturally confused as it sounded like democratizing, like community-based enrichment, appearing to include tepid forms of participation. However, no core participatory value was actualized in such a way as to threaten or upset the balance of powers that be or the governance hegemony of corporate/institutional elite big structure decision-making. None of

the reforms meant an actual funding of communities structurally interfaced with a political empowerment that would enable communities of low-income and poor to engage with City Hall as an empowered constituency. Other city residents' anger continued to boil up over the years witnessing the decay of the streets, the brutalizing tactics of police, discrimination in juridical and criminal systems mixed with hefty fines, and anger born of a transformed pain that has no resolution, a pain in witnessing the lives of victims' for a lifetime. For many there is a wake of funeral processions in areas grown more desperate and divided left to stir in the heart grown bitter to the extent that surely government is responsible on some level.

In probing the seamless transformative tactics and strategies of cities, it is useful to observe the parallels between World Bank's structural adjustment and the rating systems imposed on cities. The strategy of governance-induced funding dependency and/or structural contingency ripples across the various scales of politics from World Bank (WB) development's structural adjustment (SA) to the city rating systems of Moody's and Standard and Poor's (S&Ps) to Bush Sr.'s 'Weed and Seed' to Bush W.'s educational program, NCLB. All are forms of governance-secured hierarchical funding dependency and structural compliance contingency; it is a relation that plays out in the lives of an institutes subjects, youth and staff in the case of education, as part of the urban landscape.

Vestiges of World Bank Country Loan Dependency Structural Adjustment

- I They prescribe cutbacks, "liberalization" of the economy and resource extraction/export-oriented open markets as part of their structural adjustment;
- II The role of the state is minimized;
- III Privatization is encouraged as well as reduced protection of domestic industries;
- IV Other adjustment policies also include currency devaluation, increased interest rates, "flexibility" of the labor market, and the elimination of subsidies such as food subsidies;
- V To be attractive to foreign investors various regulations and standards are reduced or removed.

As the poor sink deeper into a deep unforgiving poverty, with increasingly less political leveraging power over the last four decades countered by a rising oligarchy of privilege, systems are concurrently imposed on cities and their mobilizing constellative supra-institutions ensuring institutional compliance with the larger neoliberal operations matrix. Key in preventing the recalcitrant and headstrong from transforming city governance, a rating system is used subjecting cities to a rated assessment, which in turn forces trickle-down operational compliance. While the promotion of World Bank (WB) international development schemes in the 1990s applauded the myth of naturally occurring "comparative advantage" and "self-correcting" markets, the truth was it was the suite of intermediary agencies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WB that had the greatest oversight as to the "sink or swim" fate of a region as it had oversight over capital "purse strings" investment. Applying what are very similar conceptions of top-down control, while the WB was rating countries, a comparable bond-rating mechanism was used to rate the American city. In an analogous control over city governance, City Hall is more vulnerable to the decisions of capital market gatekeepers in part because they are more dependent on debt but also because of a larger capital dependency where they are forced to expose themselves to capital markets.

The tactical details behind ‘governing through crime’ (Simon, 2007) include:

- I Federal mandates requiring cities to resolve their own social problems;
- II Receiving less tax revenue with less spending discretion;
- III Contending with rising order maintenance/policing costs having opted for order through an expansive criminal state.

Under the political context of control maintenance, City Hall is then forced, having spent what it often does not have, to apply continuous austerity cuts to social services in a process inching increasingly towards disequilibrium and increasingly further from equilibrium or equality of standards.

An insider’s rating game, the city rating received by Moody’s Investors Service is another example of internal controls strong-arming outcomes, in this case, municipal governance discretion. In the case of subprime lending, the powerful rating mechanism of both Standard and Poor’s and Moody’s is the lynchpin in a scheme no better than speculative capitalism legitimizing the unsound and legitimizing deals of questionable worth. In the case of the city, bond-rating agencies are the single most influential force in determining the quantity, quality and geography of local investment. Challenging assumptions and ideals of local autonomy, these institutions are able to place powerful limitations on the choices that city officials can and cannot make. Fear of capital flight has powerful implications in terms of city politics while the relative security of (bank) lending and investment has been replaced by a more volatile system of direct lending (cf., Hackworth, 2007).

The fact that municipal government operations are balanced on a standard of fiscal risk and speculative markets with capital dependency invariably fuels a condition of liquid instability and uncertainty that solidifies as part of social environment. For many youth, life includes a great deal of gambling, and risk in general, which they have grown resigned to. Foremost at the level of a city politics no longer being funded for adhering to the participatory democratic shape since past, living instead in communities where the one-time groundbreaking semi-autonomy of the 1960s has since been sacrificed in substance, less resources are granted across a range of services for the youth of McClymonds High School. The rating game is not only found steering city politics and behind the stock market crash of 2007, it is also used as a regulatory tool within the realm of education, specifically public education. Weil asks why it is that charters and private companies, like Kaplan, with problematic track records, are not forced to comply with evaluation and assessment standards like those imposed on public institutes of higher learning and public (non-charter) high schools?⁶⁷ *The very fact that regulatory assessment has become a tool of control/compliance over public institutions, having devolved from an original mission of ensuring quality in learning, utters public institutes’ current status as extremely vulnerable context nested in a larger education paradigm that is quickly ousting the public option.* In Spring, 2013, a protest held by San Francisco City College (SFCC) was being held outside San Francisco’s City Hall. Demands included greater *participatory inclusion in the decision-making* process as students and faculty criticized the negative evaluation from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), the latter which had put the highly

⁶⁷ Danny Weil. (2009, August). Neoliberalism, Charter Schools and the Chicago Model: Obama’s and Duncan’s Education Policy: Like Bush’s, Only Worse. *Counter Punch*. Retrieved April, 2012 from <http://www.counterpunch.org/2009/08/24/obama-and-duncan-s-education-policy-like-bush-s-only-worse/>

acclaimed community college at risk of closure. SFCC had dropped from receiving the highest possible rating in 2006 to the status of “show cause,” one rating removed from recommended closure. It was an assessment that would ultimately hasten the neoliberalizing/structural adjustment transformation of operations including cutting staff and courses while enlarging classroom size. A case of institutional déjà vu in terms of the operational changes that precipitated the drop in Adult Education enrollees from 25,000 to 1,300 in Oakland in the span of five years, the evaluation stranglehold did not bode well for the future of SFCC.

It is in this larger context of ongoing federally-imposed reforms to the OPD since found guilty of racialized and discriminatory practices concurrent with government-mandated reforms to California state juvenile corrections, including the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) – that Oakland City Hall commits to reforming its juvenile detention tactics through use of restorative and rehabilitative methods. It is in this larger context that OUSD was evaluated by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and also found guilty of discriminatory practices in disciplinary tactics disproportionately applied to the Black male student. It is also in the context of a combination of civil rights offenses and “low performing” assessment, and administrative misconduct that the ‘chartering’ of the public school system was expedited across the country, otherwise subjecting its proponents and funders to an annoying transformative slow slog. And yet, a great deal of assessment is contingent on the larger neoliberalizing rating/ranking system, which, as with city ratings, is received and experienced in the area of education through sheer funding capacity above and beyond attitudinal orientation in execution. As a relatively broad-reaching evaluative reach when following evaluative commands that incentivize negative reviews from routine accreditation boards putting the pressure on the institute to implement changes or be shut down, San Francisco Community College, one of the largest in the country, will shut down in July 2014.⁶⁸

Like state juvenile corrections under fire for misconduct, abuse and recidivism, Oakland’s Mayor Jean Quan, under threat of 2011 recall, OPD under threat of federal takeover for misconduct, and OUSD under threat of state receivership; all central in the city’s youth governance and operations matrix have been forced into a position of reform. In lock step with state prison and county jail reform having to account for their own recidivism failure, accusations of misconduct and overpopulation crowding, there is a prevailing theme across the different administrations of corrections, abuse, and discrimination in resources/services rendered. In the case of Oakland’s youth institution matrix, they are being uniformly forced to reform having had their methods questioned as well as their budget priorities. The uniformity of the operational paradigm and the unwillingness to go beyond the paradigm, but instead only to embed it more deeply leaves Town Hall attendees angered and circumspect. Residents ask why it is that they will pay out massive sums in settlements but not in social investment. A good example, the over \$28 million city pay-outs in settlement fees and other non-settlement expenses tied to the 2000 “Riders” case against OPD.⁶⁹ Coupled with anticipated future

⁶⁸ In the case of SFCC between 2006 and 2012, the community college dropped from a high rating to its 2012 “show cause” reprimand two steps from revoked accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

⁶⁹ The so-called Riders case was a scandalous case against the OPD filed in 2000 with charges against four OPD police for misconduct, making false arrests, and planting evidence. The Riders settlement led to eight years of federal oversight and forced reform of the Department. A case with extended consequences for the city, it is nonetheless one of a string of cases of misconduct that cost the city and its tax payers.

settlement costs (e.g., in the case of the pending Alan Blueford case), it is clear that despite costly outlays the city is devoted to advancing its military/criminalizing 'control social' means with its fractious exclusionary fall-out believing it has the channels to manage the unruly and willing to pay should officials overstep the line of professionalism.

At a March, 2013 Town hall, Mayor Quan boasted to the audience that she had already "invested a lot of money" in the 'Ceasefire/Community Policing' program. The idea that the model was somehow unique and something other than a conservative policing "prescription" taken off a shelf was repeatedly conveyed to the audience despite its association with the 'Broken Windows' policing model originally modeled as part of the Reaganomic 1982-push. The cost just for consultancy fees for these policing experts in Oakland run as much as \$240k-\$270k each, including for Robert Wasserman, William Bratton, and Thomas Frazier. The individual salary is already (for any one of these fees) considerably more than, for instance, an annual budget for a small youth training NGO/organization in the West Oakland area. Some of these NGOs are made to scrape by with an annual budgets of \$150-\$200k including rent overhead costs. It is this discrepancy that causes public outcry at the streaming of city funds.

As for further advancing the Neoliberal City, in Oakland, influential organizations now include Business Improvement Districts (BIDS), an antithetical force to the one-time anti-poverty agency (OEDCI) able to leverage federal support to contest city government. BIDS, registered as non-political organizations, are free to heavily lobby elected officials and civil servants influencing how city general funds are spent, shaping policy in ways supportive of landowners. BIDS work to reshape public space as well as people's rights through distinctly undemocratic modes of city governance as with:

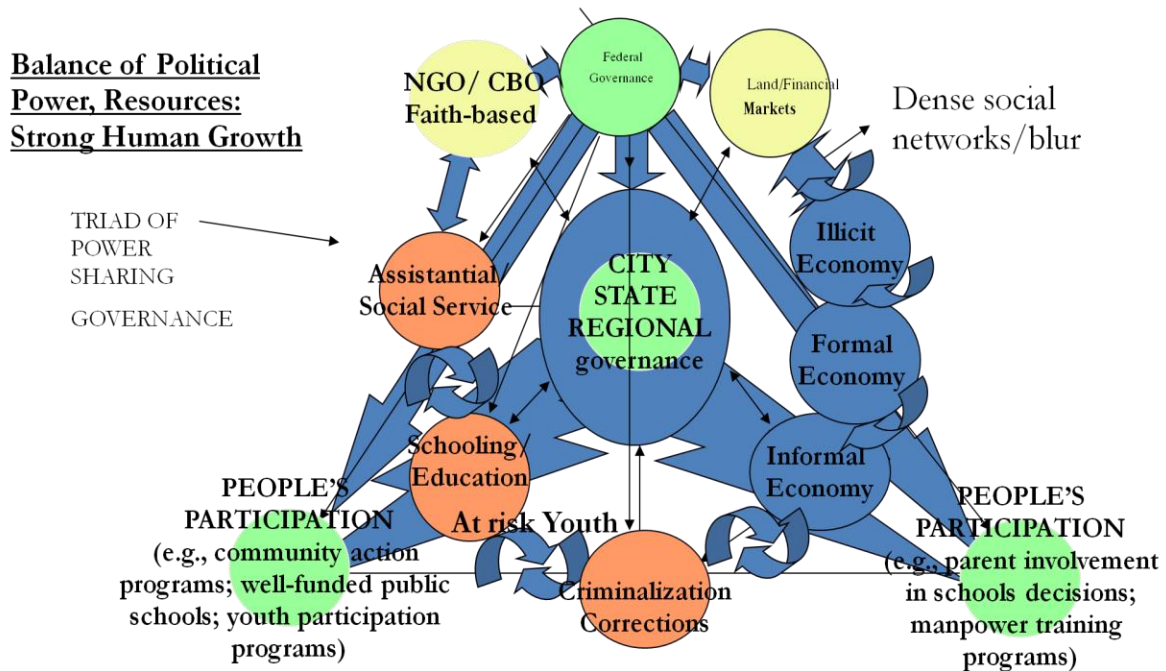
- 1) A small alliance of property owners can effectively circumvent Prop 13;
- 2) A handful of large organized property owners can raise taxes on all other property owners in a district; and
- 3) In the name of "special assessment," taxes cannot to be used for school district or other state agency to improve under-funded public services.

These rights are effectively antithetical to those of forty years ago when OEDCI stood against Mayor Reading on behalf of the rights of the poor. Historically, they point to the slow creep towards business-led oligarchic forms of city governance as warned and prophesied as inevitable by Michel over hundred years ago, absent the government that is committed to challenging the business/monied elite key to Galbraith's countervailing balance Adversely affecting the country's *Hungry Cities*, as they continue to be denied financial resources, the rift between the two Americas grows more distant as what is, in fact, a kind of structured class warfare plaguing if not ousting its poor.

Ideally, a healthy balance of 3-D dynamically exchanged forces and decision-making involves well distributed countervailing forces:

Political Participation as 3-D Dynamism & Social Balance as Countervailing Forces of Production

Balanced Domains of Social Reproduction



However, it is the people's participation that has been transformed where the idea of "ownership" and self-possession is emphasized, as in the community policing, while in reality the actual voice of the people in the political field is reduced, with hierarchical and oligarchic forms to follow.

Ultimately, tearing through the city with vested interest politics, the voice of the people as countervailing political force requisite to Galbraith's "strong democracy" devolves to the level of grass roots street mobilization. It is a combination that further secures a politics of fiscal privilege above and beyond an already uneven political playing field left by the political muting of a strong political presence on the part of the people. Absent the political capital obtained through federal legal codes, politicians no longer "gain" from gathering the support of these political outsiders; it is a situation that further disincentivizes maintaining the political field of countervailing forces.

Under the guise of representative democracy and "law and order" values – the meaning of which is pulled in the direction of a control state opposite to the social state grown in the 1960s – the voice of socially disadvantaged is then radically muted in the political arena. And, here there is a dynamic in line with the sentiments of youth:

How you gonna tell me you ain't got no money for the school, for supplies, for jobs, for food,

for housing, and then you gonna say, but don't you step out of line? How you gonna push me to the limit to survive and then you gonna say, but don't step out of line? I'm already out of line cuz you put me out of line! It's a joke! For real.

- Student senior, OUSD continuation school, 2010

This sentiment was also shared by parents and youth alike...

How can they estimate that it costs \$241,000 to raise a child – without college -- mostly just for room and board, and then say 'ok, now you and your family live off of \$700 a month? The system is absurd.

- Father of daughter living in poverty while working seven days a week, 2013

Together, what is being asked is precisely how can the system continue to pinch from the already destitute, while at the same time denying these same destitute folk the political 3-D dynamism once funded through federal coffers? Absent the political dynamism, absent the socio-communal lattice webbing, do these working class neighborhoods of the flats devolve to fractious streets filled with liable and disunion, wanting of a social mobility unknown for generations?

In the 1970s, Oakland fashioned its “Model Cities” on options anchored in the socially-rich principle of socio-political inclusion at the district level through the CAP/TAACs structured participation. Since the creation of BIDS in 1994, however, the BIDs have been fashioning their own urban districts based on the political power of landed privilege, that is, the upper elite echelons of wealth/power. Using the deceptive language of the “New City,” and though spanning a number of blocks, political control is held in each district by its board of directors, a select group of large property owners/real estate corporations. Predictably, BIDs have little interest in inclusion, and cannot really claim to support holistic urban growth models unless redefining the meaning of ‘holistic’ as substantially less inclusive or encompassing. Rather, they lobby for policy that leans towards “law and order” policing often making the urban outcast and undercaste illegal in their districts while simultaneously drawing on the support of the OPD shoring up an elite group of political persuasion. The Great Society social premium of Maximum Feasible Participation (MFP) – a socially engaging premium – is forfeited for the institutionally specific evaluation, assessment and data reading where youth are left to ponder the meaning of ‘social’ seemingly so abstract.

During the rise of BIDS in Oakland since 2010, Mayor Quan attempted a series of order maintenance schemes including: gang injunction, curfew, the 100 Block initiative (scrapped), ‘Weed and seed’, and the possibly forthcoming ‘Stop-n-frisk’, ‘Ceasefire’, and ‘Community Policing’. In addition, the mayor has brought conservative ideologues on board advising on ‘community policing’ initiatives for costs exceeding one million dollars to the objection of many local residents. Since 2012, she has promoted her newest plan through a language of community “best practices” co-opting the public rather than merely operating above their heads. With her current attempts to solidify a hard hitting policy of “law and order,” the actual plan is presented surrounded by a great deal of talk of “community ownership” of the policing configuration. At the same time – the fact that the larger design premium is anchored in a control social and militarizing/criminalizing paradigm and not in fortifying social infrastructure

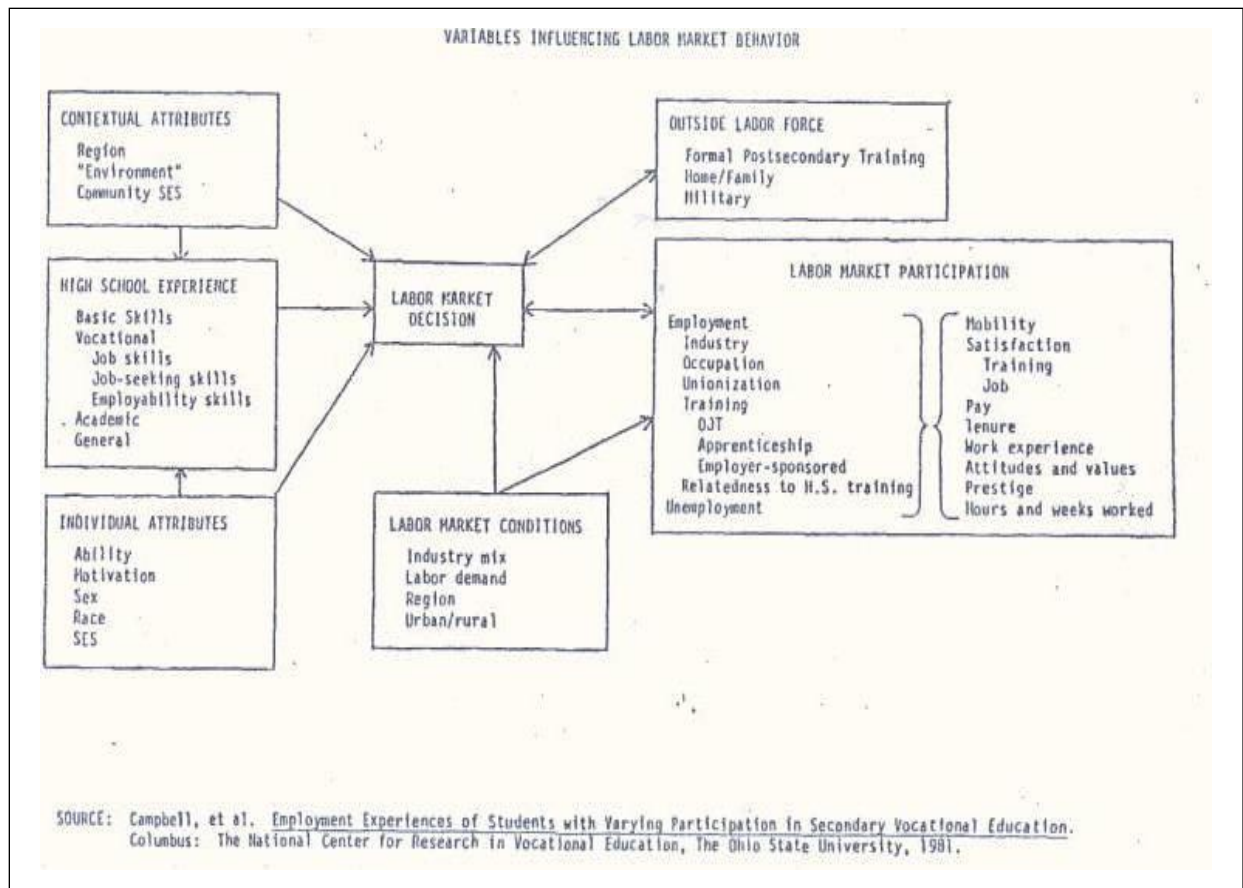
means omitted is talk of how or why it can be deemed a model of the people, by the people, and for the people.

How Great Society's 'Youth-Start' Voc-Ed Supra-institutional Channels & Pipelines Had Previously Flooded the Oakland Flats with its Triple Entente: Opportunity, Mobility and Services ~

In the following diagram, circa 1981, the supra-institutional consortia matrix connecting the high school experience and social acculturation/indoctrination through society's labor market is critical to exposorial/engaged learning. During a period when the country sought socially inclusive growth, the relation between high schools and the labor market was inextricably linked. It is precisely this sort of connection and this sort of direct exposure provided to disadvantaged youth that ensured the positive effects of social inclusion as a *supra-institutional* mobility channel. Conversely, its absence is a gateway to potentially permanent social exclusion. The high schools of OUSD located in the Oakland flatlands do not so much serve the working class families that attend their schools and socially disadvantaged with a mission to link these youths' educational experience, while still in school, to paid on-the-job (OTJ) or skill-building experiences. In so doing, these youth would receive a myriad landscape of experience, exposure, and wage remuneration enabling them to segue into the labor market and compete once come of age in the skilled markets. Such experience would also give them cause to believe in the future and to believe in themselves as integral to that future. Such a channel internal to the high school was once included as simply essential and structurally integral to the coming of age maturation of youth, though it has since been eliminated. Similarly, under the Great Society model, while marked out by less talk of socio-communal shoring up, there was an indirect fortification of the same. Whereas, in its absence, filling the void of social order of the urban flats is, paradoxically, a centralizing corporatocratic power via BIDS and, for instance, the American Legislative Executive Council (ALEC).

As seen in this 1981 diagram, the flowchart implies a national exposorial/skill-building base of the educational pipeline with programs that include multiple forms of skill-building and exposure. More recently the experiential component is so stripped back that learning feels again like a case of "chalk and talk" at the same time that educational administrators seek to reinvigorate a particular piece of a much larger picture, as in the case of the after-school programs. Absent such channeled application as seen in the Variables Influencing Labor diagram, the solution invariably perpetuates the larger crisis of selectivity/social exclusion – while seemingly vindicating its own commitment to civil rights and social justice in essence duping the people.

Noteworthy is the common knowledge that variables influencing labor market behavior was in a society striving for collective growth whereas increasingly it appears an area of taboo social discourse as with the mention of class standing:



In the pre-Reagan diagram, formal postsecondary training only occupies a small corner, whereas labor market participation is considerably more robust for the student while in preparation for the “outside labor force” of their future. Ideally, there would be exposure to industry, unions, OJT, apprenticeship, wage remuneration, tenure, and other work experiences. Here, attitude and values are a small component of a bigger more total picture. The diagram implies a far more comprehensive educational design and role in the labor channels. It is virtually antithetical to the high school hallway poster instilling fear, docility and obedience for the job seeker of today informing them that all jobs require a positive attitude with the tacit implication that joblessness is their doing.

At the time, the multiple tendrils connecting vocational high school education and the labor market connecting youth to adulthood smoothing this historically tumultuous transition included the beliefs that:

- I Vocational education may further affect earnings and employment by influencing the efficiency of a person's job search and application process;
- II It can help students to assess their own abilities and interests better, thereby narrowing the focus of the job search;
- III Students may also learn where and how to find job openings, or they may even be directed by teachers or counselors toward specific job vacancies;
- IV These factors can contribute to a more efficient job search, thereby reducing the expected duration of a spell of unemployment.

During the 10 years between 2004 and 2014, had the city opted to use funds in the creation of school>training>work programs it would currently be benefiting from consumer spending, resident wealth, lowered need for social services, decreased dropout rates, joblessness, and criminal arrests – all feeding a larger general urban rejuvenation. Though, this interlocking correspondence of social vitality is well documented, Oakland continuously refuses to take what is seen as a “Keynesian with socialist undertones” social investment as part of its rejuvenation (cf. Rumberger, 2012). Absent the vital pipelines between the school and training facilities, buildings such as the East Bay Skill Center (EBSC) remain empty as does the Clorox building in industrial Lower Bottoms. Thus the contagious effect of termination and closure is additional termination and closure...



The operative edges of the working class flatlands, 16th and Peralta to 59th and San Pablo Avenue have been gutted. From hard labor to the Great Society’s “one-stop training shop,” the East Bay Skills Center, the future is uncertain for its original working classes. Source, 2011-2012

The crisis of vocational training and the misgiving of a hard-line “basic education” focus in the schools only began to be reversed by the school district in 2011. By 2011, the inflated dropout rates in Oakland, a majority minority city with 95% of its Adult Education students living in poverty and comparable percentages of students in its public schools, had been allowed to germinate for over ten years. *By the 2010s, the Neoliberal City of Oakland with its military/criminalizing focus was firmly established in the distinct areas of education, city governance, and the carceral system itself.* Uttering a half-hearted commitment to a rehabilitative vision as something that would actually pull governance operations outside of the realm of military/criminalizing solutions – amidst promises of rehabilitative corrections – education was being cut from corrections budgets and, compounding cuts, education budgets were being cut from underachieving schools.

At the same time, state prisons were still considered a living hell never intended to rehabilitate and reintegrate the detainee according to its former inmates. Former dropouts swore to a similar *planned failure* on the part of the schools, that is, with planned suspensions or planned push-out. The parallels were both subtle and striking leading graduates to swear that “they were never supposed to graduate.” Part of the reason for the conclusion drawn has to do with the environment, in particular, the closure of the one-stop centralizing skill-building training facilities, as with the East Bay Skill Center (EBSC) before closure.

In 2011 through 2012, Mayor Quan expressed concern over the failure of punitive-oriented programs explaining how she intended to advance programs oriented around practices and goals of “rehabilitative” and “restorative” justice, usually involving positive often community-based service and/or service to the victims on the part of the charged. A seemingly more inclusive, and more democratizing approach, the mayor happened to be talking about the tragic rates of recidivism for juveniles and young adults, the overcrowding of persons sloshing through the prison pipelines, not to mention the exorbitant costs. Often exceeding \$25,000 per inmate and much more for solitary confinement, local residents ask repeatedly why it is that the city cannot simply find these people jobs? Most agree that, in terms of fortifying communities, job pipelines are essential as well as practical relative to the alternative and yet, the city shows an overarching reluctance in terms of actually curbing the carceral flow with substantive durable labor. And, in terms of political voice, there is little room to stand one’s ground. As identified in geomapping from NYC, certain densely populated neighborhoods in Brooklyn and elsewhere have located “million dollar blocks” where over one million dollars is being paid out in taxpayer dollars annually to incarcerate just one block. Residents of Oakland want to know if Oakland is moving in a similar direction, and more importantly, can they stop it?

The assessment of the crisis and the humane solution could have easily been heard from former OUSD Superintendent, Tony Smith, talking about the school district’s failure to properly provide for the Black male student population and the pipeline tied to the larger rates of recidivism stemming from dropouts. Further, a similarly humane approach was also expressed in the plan for reform of the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center (ACJJC) advocated by the former Chief of Probation, David Muhammad (since dismissed). Ultimately, the three key youth-involved institutions: City Hall; OUSD; and the ACJJC provided seamless assumptions as to at least part of the issue of failed behavior, including integration/reintegration, rehabilitation, the need for greater focus on restorative justice and generally engaging strategies for young men of color. All three institutions happen to be under some kind of watch either through the state or federal government. All have received accusations of misconduct with respect to minority populations. And, all have provided very similar reform rationales to correct for the failure of the different institutes.

In terms of larger reform, it appeared that “community” and “true democratization,” were once again policy agenda vogue whether referencing the Mayor’s “Community Policing” program or OUSD’s “Full-service Community Schools” (its motto being “Community Schools, Thriving Students”) or Mr. Muhammad’s hope to decentralize probation authority with greater authority

at the county level.⁷⁰ With each marching to the tune of presidential second term populism, swearing greater commitment to correct for the hardships of the working masses, greater engagement, inclusion and participation, enhanced community building and community activism on the part of the working masses, Oakland's municipal government, its school district, and the Juvenile Justice Center promised what appeared a lock-step shift in methods. And yet, all scales of governance continued to advance neoliberalizing methods including, which had grown more intense since the commencement of the recession amidst job scarcity:

- 1) Heavily funding military/criminalizing methods;
- 2) Tolerating a social state department/program dependency on the private sector and/or the military/criminalizing state;
- 3) Pulling funds previously designated for social services into the fold of a military/criminalizing agenda; and
- 4) Following private sector modeling of what remains of central governance institutionalism including City Hall and the school district, OUSD.⁷¹

Invariably, these tactics embed power/authority hierarchies into the mechanics of these institutes and necessarily undermine democratic inclusion/decision-making for customers/clients/students and lower-rung staff.

All (4) forms of institutional reform stream through the lives of the city's poorest children if not in the context of school, then in the context of community activity, in the context of neighborhood involvement, in the context of after school programs, in the context of visiting a sibling in the ACJJC and so on. Alternatively, for those already given over to drift, having dropped out of school, these reforms may impact youth at time of heightened arrest, for a stop-n-frisk citation for marijuana possession. In this case, the youth's opinion of officialdom does not change as there is an overwhelming sense on the part of youth of a strange inexplicable dis'-engagement where they swear they are on the outside looking in.

After receiving its negative assessment in 2010, OUSD promised the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) that it would address the underachievement and excessive use of suspensions when dealing with its, largely male, Black youth. First, it would create the Office of African-American Male Achievement (AAMA). Second, it would have the AAMA address disproportionate suspension rates, the achievement gap, retention and recruitment rates for these males in part through the work of the district's still-developing 'Full-Service Wrap-around Community School program (FSS) managed by the highly committed Hattie Tate. The FSS includes a new Youth and Family Center, a dance studio with sound system, new computers, and towards the back a living-room-like area with a small stage, a big-screen television and sofas for informal meetings or gatherings. By way of the FSS, youth are to experience "wrap-

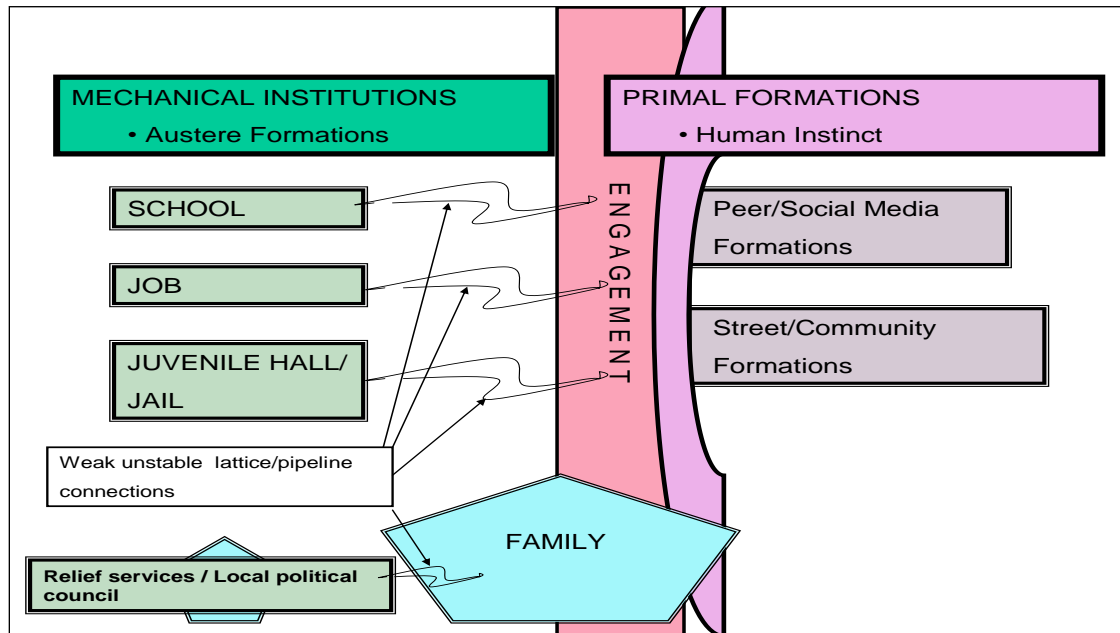
⁷⁰ Because of the early dismissal in 2012, the efforts and strategy to reform the ACJJC of Mr. Muhammad were not realized. The new Chief Probation Officer, LaDonna Harris, is thought to be "getting her feet wet" and has yet to put forth a full strategy for reform.

⁷¹ Hackworth observes that, "local governments are now not only expected to ally with business to improve its plight, they are also increasingly expected to behave *as businesses* as well. In addition to shrinking during recession (as opposed to the Keynesian tendency to expand during such episodes), local governments are more keenly pressured to produce tax revenue generators than before (J. R. Hackworth, 2007).

around” services with the school as a hub for “family, schools and community” having noticed an outstanding deficit. Including on-site medical clinic, dental, after-school meals, tutoring, college counseling, mental health counseling, dance classes and music. The integral relation between nonschool factors that influence young people’s lives and the academic success is reestablished through FSS reminiscent of structuralist accounts of the Great Society that looked beyond family, school and peers drawing heavy connections between well being and economic opportunity and academic achievement. Still, the ‘FSS’ intervention model remains well within the larger context of Oakland’s advancing hyper-Neoliberal City. The dominant orientation addressing federal evaluation is not designed in such a way as to upset class differences by introducing exposorial skill-building as engaged training, activities fortifying the primary links between the school experience and the four primary social arenas: political, social, economic and training. Outlined by Hamilton (1973) in observing the black political crisis four decades ago in its nascent stages, simultaneous upset in the four key areas remains central to mobilizing society through engaging its largely low-income and poor youth and/or to destabilizing the hyper-neoliberal advance seen in the newly transforming charters throughout the downtown.

While charters benefit from such charitable contributions as entire building tax write offs, in promoting “FSS” community services, OUSD avoids committing to the restoration of vocational education pipelines channeled through the public high schools as expressions of vital youth engagement despite the fact that it was an essential component in the city’s leveled inequality. As explained by Superintendent Smith, “If a child’s hungry it’s not the child’s fault.” While difficult to dispute the idea that socially disadvantaged youth (e.g., poor, sick, traumatized or lacking in constructive family support are more likely to struggle, the building of the school>skill-building pipeline essential to the “full” full service educational experience of the working classes remains extremely weak, tenuous, and fragile. Though there is talk of building the *school>NGO>training* network experience as part of the FSS, it is still in the development stages. As a result, at least *Generation Negation* – come of age in the early twenty-first century amidst recession, the silent depression, and four-fold retrenchment across the four primary social arenas – has been forced to make do with emaciated supra-institutional currents of weak experiential job experience and/or OTJ training. The socio-institutional environment of youth looks to have increasingly weak, emaciated channels running between the public school and the child’s experience:

DIS'-ENGAGEMENT SOCIAL MAPPING...



* Political engagement is also attenuated though it is indirectly through the larger familial and socio-communal political disengagement. From the diagram, it is clear that because the engagement conduits are so thin and weak from the various institutions, it creates a situation of overarching dis'-engagement, and, in turn, drift.

What is the ultimate objective? Where are these youth to conclude once having come of age? Are they intended for the carceral system? Whereas in other countries, children are routed into skill building or academic/scholars pipelines in the fourth grade, ours are left to flounder instead of committing to robust dual tracks as existed under the Glide Memorial Youth Build / Scholars tracks complete with generous monthly stipend for financially challenged youth.

Alternatively, the idea of the “one stop service training center” is equally sound having proven itself for the historical record. However, unless there is an acceptance as to the redefining of “one stop” as less than centralized full service, then it seems the term should be avoided otherwise confusing a public already adapting to the reworked meaning behind: participation, community, democracy, and democratization. With the issue of ‘efficiency’ already in doubt in the eyes of educational administrators, there is the critical question of efficiency in the eyes of youth who often find these decentralized services erratic, remote, sometimes unprofessional with disorganized training schedules, untrained staff, requiring large bundles of registration paperwork, potentially costly or time consuming due to transit time, and generally awkward as youth are forced to travel to neighborhoods outside their comfort zone. This model is the alternative to the one-stop centralized center, which though touted as part of the ‘growth liberal’ bygone is being revitalized in some cities as the most efficient model for disadvantaged youth in the flats showing strong gains in the idea of ‘direct direction’ as offered at these local centers.

Mitchell comes to a similar conclusion regarding the strength of social networks as might be said of the decentralized method overall, that is, they conclude balkanizing a region where once stood public voice, the voice of the poor leveraged against the city through the TAAC/CAPs

and OEDCI. *“It has proven, despite the importance of electronic communications for organizing, to be more a dream of control than liberatory democracy. This is so because public democracy requires public visibility, and public visibility requires material public spaces... Without these spaces, ‘the public’ is balkanized. Occupation of public space, then, militates in the long run against separatism because it assumes an orientation that is publicist.”* (Mitchell, 2003). Applying a similar logic in the realm of education, youth are better served through ‘direct direction’ in learning whereas dispersed thin networked points of operation cannot substitute for the concrete stability of one-stop centers of operation nor are they closer for youth looking to develop skills in different areas in deciding their future career path.⁷²

With extensions of the public presence increasingly mimicking a private option, including city governance modeled like business – both anchored in standards of inequality absent organizing principles rooted in social justice – the public realm eventually suffers a cooptation in its core operations as to blur actual distinctions between the two realms: public and private. The loss of the public option through cooptation of operations signifies the ultimate hegemonic victory of any counteroffensive of the public option as countervailing force. Previously sustained with an organizing principle revolved around social values of inclusive growth, it is hard pressed to muster a version of itself that comes close to its former high-minded inclusion where instead it continually “settles.”⁷³ Sounding somewhat like the slow slide into a Dark Ages, inequality is perpetuated at the same time that only some youth are drawn into its mobility channels and others are cast out in a social free fall becoming the street urchins and destitute of tomorrow. In terms of operational standards, it is increasingly difficult to pull apart and distinguish public from private means. Amidst decentralization, there is peculiar gluing of mindsets. While the individual household lives in a land of decentralized individuated choice, much further up the ladder of social control is the universalizing centrality of design radically favoring the caprice of capital at the expense of defending the minimal needs of labor.

The net effect of operational design, the deeper crisis stirring in OUSD reflected a crisis of targeted push-out often falling down racialized lines, and self-preservation terror within the schools, that is, would they still be here next year. While OCR cited OUSD for faulty administrative standards, requiring reform in how the district deals with its student population, the people of Oakland were considerably less inclined to think that school district reform could correct for a systemic crisis of social exclusion of which racialized school practices were simply one manifestation and for-profit incarceration another. The people, not only the people of Occupy Oakland, wanted to see an end to the *school>prison>pipeline* in a context of engaging alternatives. The difference in the vision of the people and that of OUSD is that the people want healthy mobility pipelines flowing out of the schools where engaging alternatives would be made universally available. And yet, with Glide Memorials skill building and scholars

⁷² Interestingly, Boston, as shown in an RFP of Boston’s Workforce Investment Board from 12/17/2012, appears to be initiating the recreation of a “One Stop Career Center” system having concluded a higher functionality than disparate points in a weak network of services. Retrieved from Boston Private Industry Council at <http://www.bostonpic.org/news/one-stop-career-center-rfp>.

⁷³ To demonstrate, for those committed to preserving vocational education as part of the educational experience, engaging youth and adults, there is, even in this current battle, a stepping back from the original ideal of Adult Education as “beginning where vocational education leaves off” (Lindeman, 1990). It is because of the current skewed landscape of labor’s struggle that demands are situated in a territory of “settling” and not reaching for its former human ideal.

programs – the closest thing to an educational model taking into consideration the assistential needs of the youth and family as well as hardships – being eliminated overnight there are few burgeoning models to weigh against the privatization of public education and the growing ubiquity of the charter alternative. This solution invariably perpetuates the larger crisis of selectivity/social exclusion while seemingly vindicating its own commitment to civil rights and social justice, in essence, duping the people who continually grow socio-politically weaker.

As with Quan’s “Community Policing,” the school district invokes heavily decentralized solutions carefully engaging ‘outside public institutions’ options, that is, private institutions. At the same time, the mayor not only avoids ‘job making’ or ‘job production’ intervention, she grossly exacerbates job scarcity in continually amplifying ‘volunteerism’ across various realms of social production (e.g., mentoring and community policing walks), which had once been sound job terrain for newly trained low-income job applicants. Though seemingly slight, the constant turn towards volunteerism in, for instance, charters, nonprofits, and City Hall programs, precisely where people once were financially remunerated and had political bargaining power, they now have neither; it is a dynamic further upsetting the social disequilibrium in rejecting these needs as places for Keynesian job-making.

With estimated 6 million in costs tacked to the OUSD budget to address the internal crisis with failed Black youth through creating its AAMA, in sync with Mayor Quan’s claims of reformed community-policing, by 2011, both Quan and OUSD were touting greater ‘democratization’ whether at the level of city planning or its public schools. In the case of OUSD, democratization and greater leveling of inequalities was supposed to be achieved through implementing such needs-based provisions as the AAMA. For community members, however, establishing services formerly denied is no substitute for democracy. Similarly, it is no substitute for government implementation of stable educational systems that include strong grounded school-work pipelines and other forms of exposure, experience, and engagement.⁷⁴ In reality, neoliberalizing logic tapers down and recasts the actual meaning of ‘democracy’, which no longer signifies Great Society’s social *maximum inclusionary* benchmark for effective programs and policies. Instead, democracy comes to mean the mere sharing of information/data in an increasingly data-driven administration with the public at far remove from its Great Society participatory standard. While AAMA states that it will focus on Black male achievement/graduation, it omits dropout information such as percentages dropping out and/or success rates with reintegrating/re-entrants into the schools/vocational pipelines. And yet, where inclusion is the objective, the standard becomes one of incorporation, a standard above the in-school standards that easily devolves to mechanisms of control.

In the case of city order maintenance, Mayor Quan cultivated a language of democratization by emphasizing “community participation,” “community ownership,” “community policing,” while talking up the “I am Oakland” campaign more so than in any of her earlier campaigns, which coincidentally had been rejected by the public.⁷⁵ In the case of OUSD, Full Service Schools

⁷⁴ OUSD further got into the democratizing groove with claims of “democratizing” information, that is, in making data sets available to the public (in the Cloud) in what it calls its “place-based” school district (as contrasted with the wholly cloud-based district of the future).

⁷⁵ Mayor Quan has advanced numerous military/criminalizing solutions in the name of both public health and order maintenance. Most controversial was the “100-Block” initiative, a highly criticized scheme said to be biased in its

(FSS) draw community organizations into the educational experience while recognizing the ‘whole person’ a method dating back at least to the Ford Foundation’s support of ‘voc ed’ programs. Problematically, however, they settle for the spatially irregular, sporadic, unpredictable, inconsistent, and unstable lay-out of the current available network of services rather than put the money into an in-school compliment to match pipelines outside of the school. Said to “wrap” around one another forming a “full service” community, the “wrap around” was the district’s answer to how they were going to fill the black hole left by the retrenched “social services” that the communities now see meant the retrenchment of youth training programs. Problematically, however, the social services that had wrapped around communities as part of the larger Great Society socio-communal connector webbing was inherently more systematic in its layout, considerably more evenly distributed based on need, age, location. In fact, with such systematic layout, its design would prove integral to the socio-communal vitality of the “communal ghetto”⁷⁶ and other low-income neighborhoods cohered through a webbing of engaging connector points thwarting the austere alley. However, in the case of the Great Society, socio-political mobilizing growth entwined politically-charged maximum feasible participation (MFP) initiatives along with the youthful enthusiasm of, for instance, the Grove community college campus of the flats, where young enthusiastic politically savvy students also took a stand against city control in their own right. Thus, mirroring their own socio-political autonomy, the campus was quick to become a place of representation and confrontation, with the BPP members of its active student body. In terms of the current FSS, absent other supportive and engaging infrastructures, specifically, politically and socially, what remains of active engagement is, again, skeletal relative to the robust infrastructure subsequently rejected.

While it was certainly the case that social services were overwhelmingly lacking amidst service retrenchment, areas like West Oakland were virtually bone dry by 2010 when it came to school>work or school>training>jobs pipelines. The remedy was marked out by new forms of inequity and subsequent social exclusion. In the realm of education, the new “wrap around” service could never equitably capture all youth in its program nets precisely because, organizationally, it was the embodiment of decentralized selective methods. Meanwhile, the same individual organizations were forced to compete with one another for funding survival, with the bulk of funding going to primary youth nonprofits (e.g., Youth Uprising and The Mentoring Center). It was a combination which made it impossible to put clients’ needs, in this case youth needs, first. Instead, one was forced to compromise one’s mission with a constant eye to self-preservation much as had grown de rigueur and commonplace among the status quo.

More problematically, it has proven immensely difficult to regulate local nonprofits for corrupt practices such as embezzling funds, falsifying budgets, or inflating numbers served. While the government was scandalized for ‘bureaucratic inefficiency’ in the 1970s, the kind of inefficiency to follow has yet to be fully examined (cf. Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). The mandate to include a percentage of low-income on the nonprofit boards carried over from the

targeting of certain residential areas forcing the mayor to abandon the proposal. Her gang injunction proposal in 2011 had also received a great deal of protest among those defending innocent persons wrongly accused.

⁷⁶ Wacquant distinguishes between the ‘communal ghetto’ and the ‘hyper-ghetto’ of the neoliberal era noting that the former is marked by cohesion, solidarity and union undergirded by supportive services whereas the latter is marked by decay, disunion, individualism, and escalating levels of crime (Wacquant, 2008).

1960s is also watered down such that authentic representative voice on the part of the people is in question. And yet, these are where youth must currently go to take part in an after school program.

A good example of the confusion that follows a strategy of nonprofit “wrap around services” is the confusion of sectionalism or compartmentalizing of tasks. Uttered in a 2013 West Oakland Community Collaborative (WOCC) meeting, one director commented, “We really should put some kind of chart together drafting out available services so we know what’s available.” Though no NGO volunteered the service, the idea was put “on the table” for this very small collaborative indicating a level of organizational confusion, which means greater confusion at the level of OUSD with its “full service wrap around schools” for parents, and foremost at the level of the youth experience. The wrap around service is a neoliberalizing alternative to the in-school public ‘voc ed’ training centers that in the 1960s entwined with those on the outside including the larger official training centers, such as the East Bay Skills Center (EBSC), the Neighborhood Youth Corp (NYC) training center for youth under 18, and Adult Education training centers for those over eighteen years of age. Absent this entire infrastructure of affordable training, a skeletal husk of affordable training remains creating an uneven landscape of services moving closer to a third world model of “scattered services” posing as ‘holistic’ or encompassing.

Confusing to administrative leads, it continues to be an especially confusing network for the parents and youth themselves with little knowledge as to available services, whether they are within district borders making them eligible, commencement dates, and the like. A telling example of the confusion was displayed when a mother was summoned to the school for her son’s suspension though was not provided homework, nor was she provided any information as to available services that she could use so that her son’s three days were something other than time wasted. Leaving the school in the dark as to institutional opportunities for her son, she also had no idea as to youth-oriented organizations where she could register her son or secure employment for the upcoming summer. Known to be associated with a local street gang, instead of interrupting his street affiliations, his institutional ties were interrupted leaving him to drift if only temporarily towards the street falling further behind in his studies, which in turn shored up street affiliations and identity. His mother was at a loss. The young man was enraged claiming his innocence swearing how f*cked up the school was, how it would not allow him to leave on his own accord and then suspends him. Swearing all the way down the front stairs, if he dropped out during the three day suspension, it wouldn’t be out of sequence with events already unfolding. Unfortunately, to survive this performance pressure schools are forced to cook their own books, fudge numbers, trip up unwanted youth sent spiraling through suspension/expulsion push-out centrifuge, hold on to other unwanted youth seeking school transfer just for the sake of annual figures, and so on. Here again, “the lower bottoms” of the population, youth of disadvantaged communities, pay the highest price as broken mobilization channels increasingly push these youth to the streets.

The centrifugal spinout loop of the “problem student” is just one example of the ‘confusion in the crevices’ that follows a system refusing in-school pipelines as the best way to guarantee serving all youth transitioning to adulthood seeking, needing, and eager for hands-on, direct, guided experience. In a good example of ‘direction direction’, Operations Coordinator at the

West Oakland Youth Civicorps Schools noted that the students, the majority of whom are dropouts for whom this is their first paid job, benefit greatly from the training set-up. In an excellent case of ‘direct direction’, in one room students learn the material and then, *in passing through a door into another room*, they receive hands-on experiential training. He also noted that the program does not have a large turn-around unlike the Community College Basic Educational Skills Training (BEST) program in remedial learning, where students, often former dropouts needing remedial courses, are said to “drop like flies.” If the Glide Memorial Youth Build and Scholars’ Program are any indication, the stipend may indeed have something to do with Civicorps’ stable committed student body again pointing to the very real considerations of socio-economic disadvantage and its attendant assistantial need.

The deeper crisis stirring in OUSD reflected a crisis of targeted pushout, often falling down racialized lines, mixed with self-preservation terror within the schools, that is, would they still be there the next year. While OCR cited OUSD for faulty administrative standards, requiring reform in how the district deals with its student population, the people of Oakland were considerably less inclined to think that school district reform alone could correct for a systemic crisis of largely social exclusion of which racialized school practices were simply one manifestation and for-profit incarceration another. The people, not only the people of Occupy Oakland, wanted to see an end to the school>prison pipeline in a context of engaging alternatives. The difference in the vision of the people and that of OUSD is that the people wanted healthy mobility pipelines flowing out of the schools where engaging alternatives would be made universally available.

*They don't care about us. If they cared then why does it take an ambulance hours to get to a scene while someone is dying in front of you but a cop can make it there in ten minutes?
What do this look like, Boyz n the Hood?
- Young adult, Oakland*

Increasingly, educational programs and their websites targeting the underclass masses are sponsored by the US Army (e.g., boostup.org) retiring the older attempts at universal standards in part sought through compensatory funding streams of the Great Society. This structural dynamic has the clear consequence as it gathers strength in size overturning earlier educational structures in ushering forward a traditionally imperial design splintering, foremost, intended goals of education and, second, the quality of education. Where one stream is working in the direction of America’s select and preserved society, the other works in the direction of its disposable society where the sidewinder is left to his or her own devices to hustle their way to the surface. Of course, nothing is absolute, there is wiggle room, though the persistence of this structural wiggle room was never intended to be America’s litmus test as to the integrity of its democracy, which is what it becomes under deliberately polarized tracks. It is closely aligned with the control state of a tightly controlled social of managed faux ‘democracy’, where voting rights and civil rights can be and have been sacrificed. Ultimately, it veers away from strong democracy of inclusive voice demanded in the 1960s towards relations between the same disposable underclass and privileged classes of its hyper wealth/power polarization. The persistent myth of cost-efficiency and/or cost effectiveness is tirelessly made use of to impose greater austerity and for-profit often excessively corrupt and costly solutions. If these ‘signs’ are at all symbolic of the move towards imperial design or vestiges of the *‘inverted control*

social,' it is in the messages to students read into the operations in these disadvantaged schools, many with over 25% of probationary re-entrant youth, leading one to ask:

How someone gonna tell me, 'Education wouldn't make a difference in this area?' I'm saying, if you don't think it'd make a difference, then you need to do something about it instead of arresting people. It don't make no sense.

- Local male entrepreneur, ex-offender, reflecting on the challenges of youth, 2012

This is a 'Weed and Seed' Community for Who, What, When?

In the case of the growing affinity between City Hall, OPD, and OUSD an institution historically aligned with the mayor in, first, eliminating guidance staff from the school budgets, including dean for grades, dean at large, counselors, psychologists, security guards, and second, replacing this diverse guidance staff with OPD officers – there is little to no consideration for the probationers uncomfortable in a schoolyard lined with OPD virtually pushing them out. In the eyes of youth, once a neutral zone between at risk youth, police, and the larger carceral system, the school has blurred into a larger officialdom pushing the sidewinder back to the streets, it does so having previously been the “ticket” to school>work pipelines. Meanwhile, its vocational training programs and interconnections to the city at large are severed with limited operational preparation for 100% of its youth. Instead there is a tendency to no longer think in terms of experiential/operational pipelines out of the school, and to no longer think in terms of the social necessity of such mobility rails, that is the just reinvestment.



Criminalizing “WEED and SEED” community signage and “yourGED.org” advertising went up simultaneously in the summer of 2012 two blocks from West Oakland’s struggling McClymonds High School. Spring 2013, Adult Education for the entire city of Oakland was threatened with closure forcing dropout/(GED flow into the private sector/nonprofits for those who could afford it). Though youth desperately needed jobs, additional jobs/job

programs were not included in the Mayor's "SEEDING" programs for the West Oakland area creating a concatenation of confusing signs that seemed to mean little. The walk-away meaning was apparently, "whatever it means, it's threatening", again confirming the student observation that one must work around the system if the system is going to work for them.

Instinctively one assumes the above image is a snapshot of a ghetto strip taken during the first Bush administration or, absent the "Weed and Seed" signage, possibly from the 1970s when caricature stereotypes of the working class struggle were used in advertising during a period when the country professed to be fighting poverty and beating it.⁷⁷ But, it is not a token from 12 years of hard line Republicanism or the 1970s, rather it is from West Oakland in 2012, reflecting the social policy of its democratic mayor, Jean Quan, who through a run-off won the democratic ticket. Reflecting the seamless continuity of policy hegemony strung through the decades, Quan's party affiliations are a sidebar to her policy not unlike the "third way" democratic line of Clinton and Obama.

Implementing order control policies carried forward from Bush Sr., Quan compliments her own "weed and seed" with a string of social order policies. Following every president since Reagan, there is a sheer veneer of sparse services and resources placed upon the city providing a visual aid legitimizing governing policy. A mayor struggling to articulate her legacy, Quan draws far more heavily from the hard-line military/criminalizing base. Though, like Bush, the real extent to which military/criminalizing solutions are emphasized over social solutions is further obscured from the people as they have been amalgamated at every level including funding streams and program objectives. A revealing image in terms of the imminent social transformation of what the city would soon call its "Model City," there was to be:

- I) Far-right military/criminalizing solutions fronting as social policy; and
- II) Political hierarchical dependency created in the key realms of social production: social organization, education, governance, and economy.

Official "weed and seed" is an arrest policy legislated under President Bush Sr. establishing a new arrest-based precedent in addressing social need and urban security. In a system marked by seamless forms of institutional centrifuge that cuts across domains of social reproduction/production regimes (ranging from criminalization to education, social services, and governance engagement) the fact that the educational system implements its own "weed and seed" policies (e.g., dividing the student body, establishing hierarchies of achievement/competition, structurally promoting push-out by teachers and/or administration fearing the taint or rating of "underachieving"), schools, like worksites and prison pipelines, steer youth in polarizing directions.

School push-out plays a little discussed though important role in inflating the dropout rates of *Generation Negation* marked by the newly imposed standards of Bush W's, NCLB. In terms of the larger subject of entrenching a neoliberal political economy anchored in social marginalism, shifting social standing from the relatively benign 'underclass' exclusion to the intensifying 'undercaste' indelibility - the current dropout crisis is a perfect fit in terms of the negative social reproduction achieved through institutional praxis. At far remove from participatory

⁷⁷ Bonnie Franklin pictured in the ad was the mother from the 1970's working class sit-com *One Day at a Time*.

democracy, social balance, and equity, Quan rationalizes the implementation of this structure in the name of “community participation” despite the fact that large percentages of local youth are not educated as to what “Weed and Seed” actually means with many inclined to associate the sign with the legalization of marijuana cultivation as in “seeding weed”.

Also unclear is precisely what is meant in terms of the Mayor’s ‘community policing’ at least upon introducing her newest urban control strategy to the public. At the time of its introduction in 2012, aligned with the “third way” new democrat line, Mayor Quan drew on a conservative social theory known as “broken windows” (1982). According to originators, Kelling and Wilson, who later all but recanted the theory as overly simplistic, neighborhood decay in urban slums or gray areas can be explained in what became a conservative urban decay battle cry (both academic and political) justifying tough practices in the name of catching the minor and petty. Arguing for heavy surveillance in the name of preempting the otherwise minor before its contagion becomes widespread and/or “goes viral,” it was a perfectly fitting theory for precisely the “tough on crime” changes tied to neoliberal reform despite being unproven in terms of effectiveness.⁷⁸ Ultimately, it superbly reifies the conservative inclination to “blame the person” or as commonly heard since by its critics to “blame the victim” based on this early 1980s two page analysis that is still spinning out an ideological epicenter justifying the tough transformation of criminalizing and policing due to a ostensibly community based effort to address occasional misgiving before mayhem runs wild.

When speaking in a North Oakland church in early 2013, Bratton immediately unveiled his vision of “community policing” drawing on the dated “broken windows” as its ideological anchor. Inclining the church-pew audience towards a Reaganomics 1980s accountability/legitimizing lens, Bratton also roused the largely middle-to-upper middle class white crowd behind the idea of vested interest and the ‘give-take’ logic of individual volunteerism as community policing in protecting their own streets. Ironically, the “tough on crime” tactics legitimized through the contagion theory tied to neighborly ‘one-bad apple’ “broken windows” meant, as observed by one concerned female at the January 2013 Town Hall where critics defended their opposition to precisely such hard line tactics in Oakland, a admittedly tough city, though one impassioned at the opportunity to resolve issues without use of force, she was terrified at the prospect of raising a black son in the area. Other concerns included the realities of the give-take losses by way of social state governance: In the case of NYC, gross cuts to social services, programs, resources and scaled political participation of the commoner. Coupled with the over ten million dollar outlay spike in lawsuits in NYC for citizens having won when defending their innocence, it was easy to argue for its higher order financial and operational inefficiency. Indeed, it was around this time, 2012-2013, that it became increasingly common to hear comparisons to the feudal township breach of hierarchical controls when seeking to make sense of the rapid changes transforming Oakland.

By attributing neighborhood decay to some kind of deficiency within the character of its residents, specifically some form of ‘bad boy’ domino effect of the already degenerated or

⁷⁸ As with Michelle Alexander’s (2010) more recent argument that criminal arrests will not drop merely through tough on crime standards without addressing the racial profiling entangled in these or any other policing standards as seen in the job profiling crisis, the ACLU found that from 2002 to 2011, 90 percent of people stopped in NYC under Bratton’s stop-n-frisk program were in fact innocent black and Latino.

moderately decayed, the theory of “broken windows” remains a sociological axis while entering into the 2010s. Though Quan appeals to her audience when talking about the role of political economy, for instance, when noting that she is absolutely convinced that “a job can stop a bullet,” she does not follow this conviction by unveiling a detailed job-training/job connection pipeline agenda. Though all the while maintaining the need for financial cuts/generalized governance austerity, it is the tax dollars of the people that time and again pay for the misconduct of a city’s police department. At sums significantly higher than the costs of adequately providing the services, programs, resources, and scaled political inclusion for its young adults and youth in its schools, it matters little as those resources will be sliced from the budget following the NYC example. Whereas in 2011 Mayor Quan did not so much as sponsor the highly stabilized *Mayor’s Summer Job Program* providing 1000 summer jobs for youth since the Great Society, 2012 saw scant improvement. Since 2012, other than Youth Civic Corp, another program borne out of the Great Society serving 80 youth of the West Oakland community relocated to 5th street with a colorful warehouse front, very few pipelines/channels training/employment programs are made to stand forth in such a fashion for these needy youth.



As much of the Bay Area learns to contend with something yet called the Great Recession, struggling to understand its underbelly, here a young man walks innocently down the mid-day street contemplating what looks like a silent depression though may be something else. As a young man, he is hardly without hope, *Fall 2009*.

Instead, looking more and more like a third way democrat, Mayor Quan advances her seeds of social recovery revolved around “community policing” (costing a quarter of a million in consultancy fees alone), it is clear that the ultimate logic of the method involves stepping up the actual numbers of officers on the street and on the beat. But, it does more than this for heightened policing had originally proven unpopular with large sections of Oakland as the mayor witnessed in her failed attempt to promote her own 100 Block initiative when it was shown that she discriminated in her mapping out of the area in the Fruitvale district. And yet, referred to as “Bratton’s” vision, community policing is supposed to be different than heightened surveillance of target areas. The underlying question is, in the last analysis, how

different is it? Whereas heightened patrol of particular areas seems quite similar, community policing has greater appeal and selling power presenting itself as ‘emergent from and for community’ going to far as to draw upon the volunteer support of community members satisfying a “task” (the word “job” is rarely uttered) or need. Problematically, absent training pipelines, that is, remuneration-tied forms of work involvement, it isn’t long until such a dynamic feels a lot like exploited labor for lower-income volunteers. It isn’t long before such criminalizing/policing of a city further fractures socio-communal identity casting one extreme in the light of area surveillance and employment for actual cadets/police and the like and the other extreme in the light of the socially disadvantaged of the *Hungry City*. Further, it isn’t long until a large swath of twenty-something young adults with minor records are driven towards militarizing solutions that have grown more attractive inasmuch as doors and opening to the social alternative had shut decades ago. Driven towards the ‘logic’ of command opportunity while seduced by the pragmatics of employment and record clearance, pipelines affording record ‘clearance’ are made available as part of a deal-making career exchange. Their channels jettison straight out of the city’s own community colleges, its largely low-income majority-minority uncharted public high schools, and the internet. As for many of the other offspring of poverty, it isn’t long before a large swath of low-income academically under-exposed minorities of Oakland’s *Hungry City* are funneled further into a more deeply polarized extreme made to inhabit the hardened spaces of social outcast.

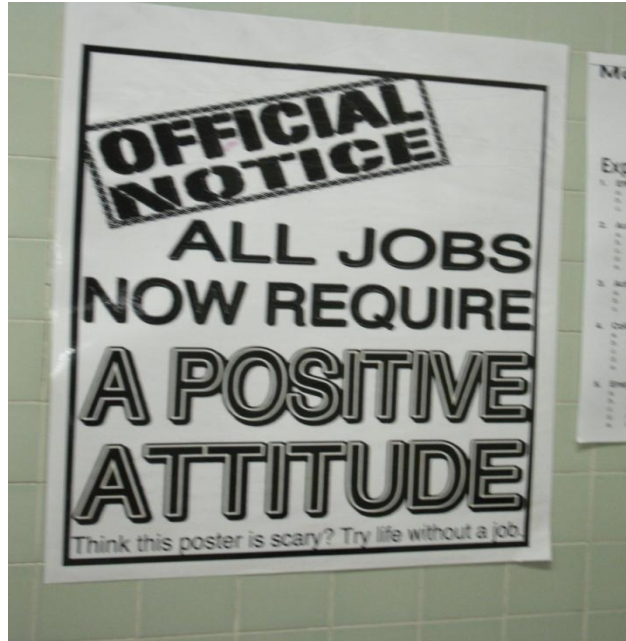
It was not long since the “recovery” that the minority-majority flatland working class grid saw the infiltration of their neighborhoods through various policies bound to a ‘tough on crime’ criminalizing: 1) a strong community partnership for Alameda County Model of Probation (placing probation officers in the community); 2) community policing (placing police in the community); and 3) community partnership (“engaging” local residents in the patrol/surveillance of the area voluntarily). As this early deep structure transformation grounded itself into common control social standards, there was little being offered as a countervailing force formed around socio-political structure in the quadratics of input organized around, for instance: the district (TAAC), particular social issues, anti-poverty/class representation (OEDCI), and the Coordinating Community Council (of 16 school-community councils, its own counterpoint to the City Council, historically conservative). Absent scaled political voice, a jobs-based recovery/growth premium for all ages, and skill building/training pipelines emanating from the local public schools, there was literally little but a sort of dry autumn leaves of social services tying youth to community while their districts were being craftily re-defined in ways hurting the low-income vote and voice.

Absent such dynamic engagement and exposure, the culminating feel-good sense of achievement once satisfying youth on their walk home from school as they developed a growing tool kit of experience, has been sacrificed to the Great Transformation. Today, if you stop a youth even in a group walking home from school inquiring if they are indeed walking home from school, in West Oakland, a common instinctual reaction is an understandable suspicion and/or fear, especially if white to their black, asking, “Why you say that?”

Too often far too little in terms of political sociology connect-the-dots is taught or imparted to youth in the schools even in the World History/World Cultures courses, the primary social science courses that cover ethnic origins and evolution but less so the story of, for instance,

primitive social mobilization rebels. For the boy or girl plagued by his or her own indescribable series of irresolvable concerns, classroom exposure to the historical structurally taking new form and/or desisting would be one important way that the youth could find some kind of mental reconciliation with truisms such as parental lock-up and family break-up rarely broached. To what extent is this academic omission embedded in a larger systemized negation for youth from the very low-income communities for whom the urban flats were once home embroiled in this century's Great Transformation? In this respect, the world is indeed flat (cf. Milton Friedman, 2005), though not because of an enlightenment born of technological advance so much as a singularity born of select curriculum, exposure and opportunity including a flattened political representation.

Posters in the schools speak directly to 'tough on crime' socializing and the omission/negation of the former structured sociality making it extremely difficult for youth to fit themselves into history in terms of historical time. Invariably, the idea of historical exception of some form or another crosses one's mind as does the other possibility that the system is built upon a towering edifice of selection. Of course, these unanswered quandaries are only the beginning as hard times adds insult to injury, energy grows more intense with less outlets, and attitudes grow more extreme and polarized even the opinion that there is some truth in all the different positions and it's better to blow the whole thing off, which fails to comfort. While seeking connections and meaning making that might include forms of engagement and inclusion more mental, political, and disposed towards social justice than day-to-day 'swim team' inclusion, the latter still poses as a low level exclusionary challenge. As a level of competitive-based exclusion, it remains part of the larger complex matrix of social obstacles/barriers that so often take youth out precluding them from entrance into the *production social* as at least *semi-independent agents*. Again, most telling regarding the barriers is the detrimental impact on the prospect of social mobility achieved through interfolding compound means that include excessive suspension, criminalizing, tactics of push down/push-out, testing, and tailored knowledge so common among select schools. A seeming administrative choice, the posters in the schools still imply the recalcitrant child in need of discipline as an unquestioned dominant narrative. At the same time, in a seeming paradox of circumstance that is itself a truism in an age of polarization, extremes, and the general abandonment of inclusion as the core directive, Foucault's warning as a social order fostering "docile bodies" in its schools replacing the one-time cultivation of the vital participant citizen is also realized. Such a turn in the child development script is antithetical to earlier tactics of supra-institutional systematic exposure, engagement and assistential service; similarly it is antithetical to the corresponding proven social mobility tracts jutting forth from its schools and its vocational programs, contributing to the large urban sense that a city was moving, was alive:



This boot-camp styled ‘disciplinary’ learning poster in a West Oakland high school was shown through the 2012-2013 and into the 2013-2014 school year as one of the first impressions upon entering the school, *Spring 2013*.

Like the sign intimidating youth through a concert of amplified authority, discipline and fear, this poster is also used to lure youth in a desired direction. The bold instruction as to the new discipline is not only reminiscent of the military model, but in the public schools it increasingly exists in lieu of the actual career development, work study, skill-building, hard trades and life-skill exposure that would have trained the child solidly transitioning through adolescence. The difference in the two models is analogous to the difference between ‘bottoms up’ development of shared societal values (specifically, values anchored in equality) and the abrupt top-down authoritative command thrust upon the youth as he or she enters adulthood, the latter denoting a disregard for person and a preoccupation with human production. Whether a society opts to indoctrinate youth through boot-camp disposed academies or if a society ignores value enrichment as relates to job skills and career growth only to swipe up youth upon entering adulthood for use in regimes of discipline, neither bodes well for democratic systems with both leaning heavily towards oligarchic/imperial dimensions of social control/order.

The poster above is in the hallways of public schools conveying a message of fear-induced obedience with an undertone of accusation promoting ‘docile bodies’ within a disciplinary motif. The poster happened to be up throughout 2012, a period when “student-based” learning was the educational vogue. Meanwhile, students are left to tease apart polarized messages including the difference between liberty and docile acquiescence. Complimenting a disciplinary-inclined educational production regime, the following provides a sense of non-charter public schools in low-income recessed flatlands and the larger encroaching military/criminalizing state:

Context: Neoliberal Great Transformation of Publics	Yes	No
Heavy Recruitment For US Army/US Army funded	✓	
Heavy Surveillance & Disciplinary Approach ; (Incentivize Push-out)	✓	
Social or Economic Safety Net		✓
Robust School>Jobs Training Pipelines Outside Militarism		✓
Police (OPD) used as New School Securitization Staff	✓	
Robust After School Vocational Programs Besides Cadet Training		✓
Private Sector/OPD/ US Army Dominant Public Student Ads	✓	
Robust Youth/Family Political Voice		✓
Robust School>Prison Pipelines w/ Over 50% Recidivism	✓	

In the surging motion of the twenty-first century *inverted control social* with its order maintenance premium, its social selectivity/exclusion de facto inequity, and its negating of constituency-based balancing in the political realm, the policy and administrative mandates of public schools located in low-income districts are interwoven with the military/criminalizing state as to be increasingly entangled with one another.⁷⁹ Not simply in terms of the school>prison mobility constellation flowing from school into the carceral system, these ties are shorn up more definitively in terms of internal structuration. Both institutions lean increasingly towards methods drawn from the military/criminalization state, including teaching to the test, hallway policing, disciplinary pedagogy, austere breaks, and the turn away from human development towards functionalist investment returns. From this perspective, it is easy to see how the city’s ‘Measure Y’, its Violence Prevention & Public Safety Act of 2004, used 75% of the \$19 million dollars allocated annually for ten years on some form of community policing services and not, for instance, in-school training development having been eliminated amidst earlier budget cuts that literally hacked away at the former public schools’ unionized administrative and security staffing structure.

The blurring between Oakland’s Neoliberal City military/criminalization hierarchy and public education is unmistakable in Measure Y’s use of OPD’s police officers for use as school

⁷⁹ In 2012, when asking staff why a job poster informing probationers and foster youth of a job program created just for them was not up in the lobby, I was instructed that public institutions are not permitted to “discriminate” by preferencing a subgroup of youth (for instance, through a poster on targeted job opportunities to the most at risk populations.) Clearly, the Mayor’s afternoon job fair in different schools (held in 2012 at McClymonds, though not in 2011 or 2013) would have left a more indelible impression on youth if followed with a poster highlighting job opportunities and/or participating agencies as presented at the job fair.

officers. Formerly comprised of a lattice of securities providing for 1) the in-school student security (security guard), 2) general oversight (dean for grades), and 3) dropouts/cutters (truancy officers), the bulk of this security apparatus would be eliminated with its remains largely served out by the OPD. Specifically, Oakland's truancy officer program funding *in-community* officers to circle an area seeking cutters gathering them up and holding them for the day – though effective in convincing its students that it wants them in attendance, and in holding down the dropout rate – was eliminated in 2005 just before the official recession. Also growing increasingly weak hereafter was the parent responsibility measure meaning that where parents were once held responsible for their child's absence by 2010, schools had grown so slack that a youth could miss over two months before the parent received a phone call. Inherently expressions of socio-communal coherency and control, these early cohering methods were sacrificed to the post-facto probation officer in the street and the police officer in the street equipped with the powers of stop-n-frisk. While terrifying for many youth, both patrols shored up a post-facto paradigm of intervention and regulation while eradicating the remains of the earlier socio-communal order. Nonetheless, governance attempts to sell the OPD as 'in-school-security stand-in' officially failed in 2013 for the obvious conflict of interest between a public education environment and a police force still battling claims of racialized practices and misconduct though likely a temporary concession considering the mounting militarization bulwark of in-community/criminalizing operations. Still, absent the policies and standards that once showed youth that their presence literally counted, contending with emaciated opportunities against the pressures of a criminalizing post-facto model of youth street regulation, many youth glean the hole in the attendance watch that lays open and over 50% seize the opportunity and drop or "split." Tellingly, "to split" is an expression that hardly makes sense in an institution built upon social coherency and inclusion in this case falling from popular usage.

The blurring of resource authorities, programs, policy and funding could also be seen as (define) ODHS would share an annual budget of \$4 million with OPD, further urging ODHS towards community policing programs whereas previously providing and administering for traditional "human services" (e.g., Head Start programs, transitional housing services, poor relief, adult and senior services). The fact was the operational blur that entangled OPD, ODHS and OUSD operations had more to do with the rise of its Neoliberal City than it had to do with serving community need. Just as Simon (Simon, 2007b) concluded that an increasing number of social problems are solved through-, first having been reconceptualized as- criminal problems, Oakland's blurring of political, public health, and educational has proven no different. While former Police Chief Howard Jordan swears to the individuality of the city's community policing plan, the city continues to walk in lock-step with a social transformation seen earlier in NYC under republican mayor Rudolph Guiliani. Whether indirectly through violence prevention programs working with ODHS or independently through direct police services, military/criminalizing solutions prevail when funds could be used to stave off crises of inclusion. More compelling still, funds could be used to address the dearth of universal opportunity, the lack of engaging forms of skill-building, and the broken mobility pipelines at the educational start gate.

Animating chaos and calamity having felt it through impressionistic reception, which includes word of mouth, combined with what was seen with one's own eyes, in the lost decade of the

2000s, the heat was on. In the middle of the decade, crime was up as was the homicide rates of cities like Chicago and Oakland, but what was driving the commotion, the deep embedded corresponding linkages between joblessness and crime, surrogate economies and drugs – was only part of the story. The face of public schools was changing as inequity of funding was being reestablished against ongoing funding cuts to marginalized schools catering to outcast or sacrificed groups, low income and/or minorities. It didn't feel like that stomping ground that was intended to level inequalities. Instead of fostering social inclusion, the inequities, and the corresponding operations of the different schools operating under different capability maximums, some well-funded and others not, the system fostered dual tracks for the haves and the have nots.

And then came the *coup de gras* that crystallized differences. Critical to the advancing hyperneoliberalism of the twenty-first century was a confused social milieu absorbing: deepening poverty/child poverty through welfare retrenchment, underemployment, wage degradation and joblessness, rising levels of dispossession, austerity-driven resource deprivation and legalized forfeiture of assets and heightened fines for convicts. But, arguably, most critically in terms of the deep structural shift towards traditional empire's hierarchy of power where the desperately poor who experience total regime dispossession are found at the base was an Act granting the military greater access to public schools becoming de facto way stations of military recruitment. Predictably, that is, once recognizing the accumulative dispossessing of the poor executed more or less seamlessly for the life of neoliberal politics since the Reagan advance, through a clause in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) of 2002 passed under President Bush was Section 9528, a requirement that all public and private high schools receiving federal funds must "provide access to students' names, addresses and phone numbers" to military recruiters.⁸⁰ The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA's) civil liberties were questioned as the age in which youth were exposed to military recruiters dropped from 17 to 13 or 14 years of age. Not long after changes to California law was changed (re: habeas corpus), to where youth 13 and 14 year olds could potentially be sentenced to adult prison.⁸¹

In these ways, adolescent youth a mere 13 or 14 years of age were exposed to new kinds of intensified vulnerability while exposed to the recruitment and markets in general. The 14/15 year old bridge also happens to be the high point of youth dropout rates. Many youth have explained how plenty of adolescents "don't just got that uppity way of doing things," or "how they need to be trained to get up early" and so on. Many also were frustrated and fed up of how illogical it seemed, that is, the sequence of things. Why, they asked, would you expose an adolescent to militarism while waiting until emancipation before exposing them to skill/job/career/life skill training? Just what were they waiting for? Many were suspicious of the military and continue to be to this day sensing that they are a kind of sacrificial lamb. Alternatively, feeling that they needed an out, it was one of the few outs available to them in

⁸⁰ Opposition to the clause followed though the risk of losing federal funding meant that federal support of the public schools had become conditional upon granting military access. Military recruiters were to have the same access as employers and colleges.

⁸¹ The predilection of the schools towards military recruiters is witnessed in a job opportunity logic where the military has clearance to expose adolescents to recruiters, and youth the same age, 13-14, can be sent to adult prison under California law, but California public schools cannot post job opportunities for some of the most challenged youth subgroups hit by the 'silent depression'.

this way steering their hand through a tailored force of circumstance at far remove from the representation of countervailing force as lived on the steps of the flatland Grove campus in the late 1960s. Still, in terms of the generational divide, grandparents defended enlistment thankful for the discipline. Skill-building in the schools threatened to undo the forces that steered their hand, but as made clear in the diagram from the pre-Reagan era (1981) above, when the aim was to raise citizens through experiential inclusive means, hefty skill-building pipelines between schools and jobs was common sense.

Policy circles have recently seen a return of the language of “socially rehabilitative” renewing the confidence of a critical public that has yet to see a job-based recovery or a halt to mounting inequality. Relatively in sync with Obama’s second term State of the Union address noted for its more populist appeal than the first term with its neglect of a job-based solution/program pipeline infrastructure investment for young adults 15-25 years of age, Oakland told of its 80% recidivism rate and its plans to improve a failing system of incarceration as rehabilitation. At the same time, California was preparing for the release of 30,000 inmates from state prison due to overcapacity. Still, funding preferences appear to have changed little as the city chooses criminalization and subsequent millions in lawsuit payout versus rehabilitation. Recent budget allocations included the over \$5,000,000 in gang injunction lawsuits, a \$4,000,000 allocated to the CDJJ for 2012, and \$10,000,000 allocated to City Police enforcement to cover the cost of 25 police in the schools for three years, \$60 million on Measure Y for public safety funding fire, police, and violence prevention. Measure Y funds are used for 10 years of violence prevention programs including paying for fire safety and additional police officers called Problem Solving Officers (or “PSOs”) in the low-income high schools.

Meanwhile, as observed by Edelman, Holzer & Offner (Edelman et al., 2006) in their study of disadvantaged minority male youth, “somehow” the only potent lobby that looks after their food, clothing, and shelter is the prison-industrial complex. For many students, if the infiltration of the schools by the police force feels like a major loss in an ongoing battle, it is, in part, expected in a school where 25-30% of the male student body are probationers. Using the OPD as security (though a metal detector for security guards may have sufficed), it is a security that at the same time breeds insecurity, with this duality as the final “take-away” lesson where students are convinced they have to work around a system to benefit from the same system. Meanwhile, the OPD option more deeply ingrains Oakland’s Neoliberal City within the operations of its noncharter public schools.

The dropout crisis has started to receive renewed interest at the federal, state and district levels as its socio-economic toll threatens a costly future. The increasing challenges faced by dropouts in terms of job stability and social assimilation against the press of the country’s overflowing prisons pose as a constant reminder of the likely fate of today’s urban sidewinders. Dropping out of school impacts the individual student and the economy. It strains government coffers at the same time that it facilitates the social reproduction as *splitter social reproduction*. Researchers have estimated the social costs of dropping out as relates to higher unemployment, lower wages, increased criminal activity, poorer health, greater reliance on public assistance, and lower civic engagement to where:

- I A high school dropout earns about \$260,000 less over a lifetime and pays about \$60,000 less in taxes than a high school graduate;
- II America loses \$192 billion in combined income and tax revenue for each cohort of students who never complete high school;
- III Increasing the high school completion rate by just 1 percent for all men ages 20-60 would save the U.S. up to \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime;
- IV High school dropouts have a life expectancy that is 9.2 years shorter than high school graduates.

Despite the fact that a line of dropouts forms four miles long every day, this is not what the students are educated on, instead they are educated on the possibilities of the GED through and directed to websites such as yourGED.org.⁸²

Missing from the abridged list of social costs is the cost of social drift, that is, a drift that follows the majority of dropouts caught at the social margins. Though some programs show a net investment loss when factoring in these other ‘costs’ as with income and tax revenue losses, ultimately, it becomes beneficial as expressed in the shared remarks expressing gratitude for the opportunity to step into a new career and given a real 2nd Chance...

I turned my grades around when I found out that I was going to be a daddy. I was going to have to step up and take on responsibility of being a daddy and a student so I did.
 - Youth, continuation school, Oakland, 2010

The opportunity that this business gives people is a second chance, but it's so much more than just a second chance... They give you an opportunity to believe in yourself again.
 - Adult female, former felon, Oakland, 2013

One young man enrolled in a certification program to learn the hard trades, but was disappointed with the result. Was it simply a case of the young black male being quick to be let go shortly into the employment hiring in ways that break union policy despite his buy-in to a system when agreeing to union dues? No one knows, but the young man has his suspicions. He phoned many times trying to make contact with his boss once terminated, but could not establish contact. Fortunately, he was not on probation, which could have posed the crowning blow in terms of trying to digest an unemployment that came without warning and simply unfolded before him, while he stood there without an option. He had his suspicions, and he would surely share them with his friends as word spread of his fate when he entered this or that certification program along with other low-income young black males from the flatlands. What were these young men to think when they look out to see middle-aged men in the community who worked hard for their successes only to be terminated during the recession, unable to find work, unable to re-assimilate from prison, unable to receive government assistance in assisting with the challenges of re-assimilating, cast into debt by the heavy fees tied to the sentence all while contending with the new comprehensive social exclusion seamless across arenas. Additionally, what were these young men to think when hearing the stories shared by one another of age-out, user-pays courses, of how high school meant less in terms of getting a job

⁸² See http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/3082_SocialCostsofInadequateEducation.pdf. Data retrieved July, 2009.

and a few community college courses was not enough to make a difference? Who were their role models then – those who cherished the authenticity behind the ‘2nd chance’?

The Boys and Girls club is funded through a federal program started in the 1960s, along with Headstart. There is a large club no more than 3 blocks from McClymond’s High School in West Oakland. Unlike the East Oakland Boys and Girls club, it is not a facility that caters to skills training, but instead offers a safe place to go after school and play or hang-out. For these very reasons, it had little appeal to youth 16-18, the same high risk ages that mark the beginning of the *coming of age centrifuge as social reproduction*, that is, where money begins to weigh heavy against the austerity of opportunity.

The older guys (17 and 18) don’t go to the Boys and Girls club.

It’s not for them?

No. It is. They can go there, but mostly its got younger kids. When you 17, you ain’t thinking about playing. By the time you 17, you be thinking about making money.

- Young adult, 2012

For the young man, it is like walking on unknown streets in a foreign neighborhood where they can only dream of returning to the familiarity of the known and its security, though interwoven with social insecurity. Increasingly heightened forms of direct action are needed to hold the people down. At the same time, because inclusive forms of political council have been eliminated, the voice of the people is pressed towards more exaggerated forms of expression. Thus a polarization of political council occurs concurrent with a larger wealth/power polarization, concurrent with the rise of dropout drift, many of whom would have established a social anchor in the context of a robust political voice. Ultimately, the division ripping through society moves increasingly towards extremes.

The pattern to fund what the system wants and defund what it doesn’t want has meant that, in the case of traditional public education, including community college, while there are funds for ROTC and police cadet training in the high schools, funds are continuously cut for Adult Education with programs shrunk. At the same time, local youth are left to contend with the new police presence, with the Police Cadet training recruiting local residents where they earn a certificate in training for new community policing while also dividing youth within the community amongst one another.

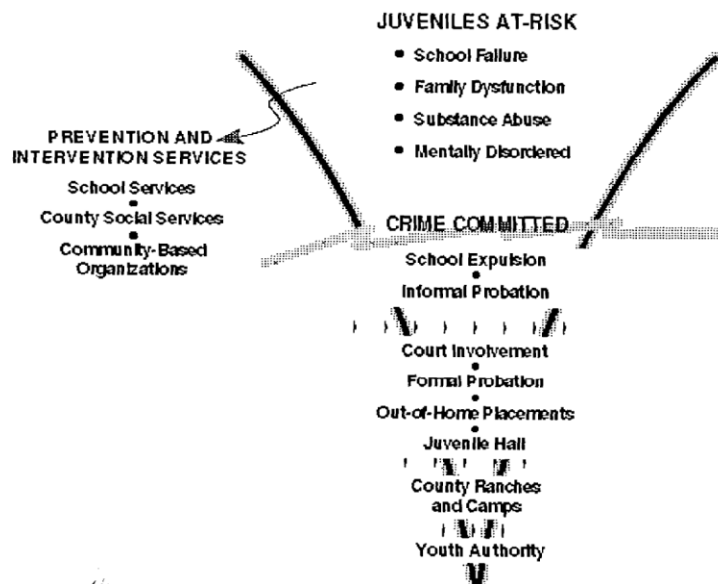
Whereas during the Great Society, centrist politics for an excluded people meant seeking political inclusion, it would segue smoothly into “talking not so much about participating as control” (Viorst, 1977). *On the other hand, while the idea of direct people control would unsettle the political status quo even in this period of egalitarian politics, the current neoliberal project has entirely removed the prospect and instead made the indirect, mere political representation of the people at the level of communal and municipal voice, the new radicalism.* The Neoliberal City’s political elite, animating its *inverted control social*, repeatedly institutionalize mechanisms of control over mechanisms of participatory incorporation. Its *inverted control social* invariably experiences, amidst its growing polarization, a rise in

militarization, policing, surveillance, injunctions, curfews, representation, and/or other measures and mechanisms to control and divide the same youth and young adults potentially ignited by a political epiphany of systemic oppression. It is a system moving towards heightened forms of internal tension marked by the deeply ingrained division between insider and marginal sidewinder.⁸³ Politically, a *control social* orthodoxy leans heavily towards top-down decision-making continually advancing this operational model necessitated through its own failing mechanisms of carceral rehabilitation two-fold with the emaciation of quality training, anemic exposure-based education and a paltry remunerated work experience.

Though there are networks in these inner-city neighborhoods, “network society” cannot capture the networks that determine effective operations or individual life outcomes as it etherealizes channels which in reality, for people attempting basic ground-up mobility, can only do so much absent concrete channels moving from block to block, lighting an area’s social routes. As in the case of the one-stop job training center, centers were located in the area or near the area. It is this element of concrete form that contributed to its success as a social channel or pipeline through which increasing numbers of optimistic individuals, youth, young adults, and elders, would experience social mobility.

To appreciate the seamless modes of youth orientation and to see how they work across supra-institutional fields, it is useful to consider commonalities within a treatment service plan for juvenile offenders in contending with juveniles at-risk and the larger landscape of offenders and the new larger foci on ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘restorative’ justice...

Wide Variety of Treatment Services for Juvenile Offenders



⁸³ Stearns and Glennie explain push-out as the tendency for schools to, through a combination of subtle and direct means, push the youth out of the school (Stearns and Glennie, 2006). Less obvious are the ways in which other larger institutions steering youths’ lives incorporate modes of push-out such that the concept applies to all areas of social control and societal operations.

Alameda County probation template corresponding with traditionally conservative accounts of youth crisis revolved around family, school and peers, though to rightly add substance abuse, which is all too widespread often serving as a causal lure. In fact, the drug phenomenon is so widespread having grown until exploding (following only Russia) in youth drug addiction despite the country's ongoing "war on drugs" behind which so much of the home security/national guard control social has been legitimated.



Inside view of the school where the new emphasis is on restorative practice and what it means for students and staff on display is seamlessly consistent with juvenile offenders, 2012. At the same time, the Home Ec. classroom is transformed into a computer lab, and Home Ec. is eliminated from course options. In focusing on discipline, there is an overarching absence of opportunity/skill-enhancement – needed for enriching the educational experience.

The Beat Goes On ... Why Talk of “Whole Person” Holistic Growth and Democratizing Amidst Dismantled Socio-communal Lattice Webbing Seeds Dis'-engaged Youth Drift

In the 1990s, the popular educational reform surge, including Clinton's *Goals 2000*, combined basic skills *and* the revitalization of vocational education. Neoliberal business value ethos was heard in its wording emphasizing 'efficiency' and 'quality', codifying, monitoring, and rationalizing teaching with a bottom line tied to successful productivity measured through

testing standards. For educator, Pauline Lipman (2003), writing on the Chicago experiment with NCLB reform, NCLB is found to “crystallize neoliberal, business-oriented education policy” using “business rhetoric of efficiency, accountability, and performance standards and the redefinition of education to serve the labor market” (p. 170). And yet, in these “early” stages, these conservative reforms were wrapped in a larger seemingly balanced reform package that also called for the revitalization of vocational education countering the singular structural reform that alone crippled opportunity for the vocation/training-inclined children of the working masses: the elimination of vocational education programs in the high schools advanced under Reagan. By 2001, while NCLB pushed ‘one-size fits all’ testing standards of efficiency in the schools, penalized underachieving schools by cutting funding, pressured these schools and staff, threatened to close schools and replace them with experimental charter schools, the countervailing pitch of revitalizing vocational education was lost to the new austerity governance of Bush W.

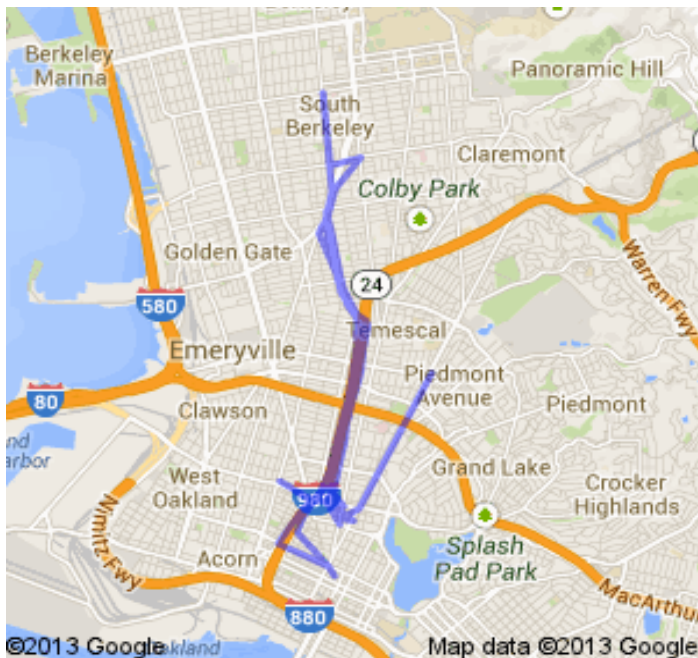
In 2010, when attending Oakland Town Hall meetings, throngs of concerned parents objected that there were so few vocational programs in the schools. “When do our kids get programs?” They pushed the mayor for a date that they could expect change, criticizing the city in neglecting its low-income youth saying it had simply gone on too long. Their anger was heightened by the sunken economy where these drifting youth were contending with this thing called the “Great Recession,” though many parents suspected that it ran much deeper than a temporal economic dip and it surely was not over, though official records said as much. In sacrificing the countervailing working mass aspect of reform, affordable training in the trades, the effects of NCLB policy would exemplify what is meant by large-scale internal policy design that is its own centrifuge polarizing outcomes between, simplified, two groups: the *Image-ready America* and the throngs of its *Hungry City* filled with invisibilized, dis’-engaged, and destitute.

While NCLB continues to claim success based on improved achievement ratings, this measure obscures the push-out effect and the explosive rise of dropout percentages during the ‘lost decade’ under NCLB in low-income schools/districts. Deepening a career achievement divide, many youth would drop out simply because they were interested in vocational training, possibly in creative arts, woodshop, photography, film, home economics, metal shop, and so on. But they were not being offered such opportunities in the schools of the *Hungry City* during the ‘lost decade’ of *Generation Negation* having lived a politic of neglect. Instead, emaciated underfunded schools were penalized for their poverty; they were penalized for their resource deprivation and disadvantage. Schools that showed low achievement would receive less funding as a result, while steady and increased funding would go to high performing schools and experimental charter schools that worked through largely semi-autonomous independence from the district. *As a direct result, instead of revitalizing vocational education as discussed in the 1990s, in troubled schools, NCLB actually revitalized ‘push-out’, sparked by the extra pressure put on the school to transform achievement rates or suffer punitive funding cuts, creating tension between the main office and teaching staff. On the one hand, the presence of police officers replacing school security officers in a school with a large percent of probationers pushes youth towards dropping out out of sheer discomfort in greeting a gun-caring police officer in the front lobby.*⁸⁴ Though evaluators still maintain NCLB successes

⁸⁴ In the early-1970s, push-out as one feature in a complex system of resistance to desegregation began to receive attention. However, more recently, as relates to dropouts, it is actually little discussed. Instead, a great deal of

based on improved achievement, critics contest even this improvement, after adjusting for dropouts, early exit, and the slow achievement occurring before NCLB took effect – is a case of massaging the numbers.

Since the implementation of NCLB in 2001 actual dropout rates were creatively hidden in the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reports sometimes by as much as a stated 1% as contrasted with actual dropout rates in the school as high as 30-50 percent. In Oakland, California and the nation, an adjusted figure for dropout rates for the former president’s educational reform were revealed during the changing of presidential administrations, when the country’s schools were said to be “failing its youth” and looking to advance the charter alternative. At approximately the same time, that is, 2007-2010, the country quickly learned of its failing public schools. Billboards for boostup.org – though sponsored by the US Army – went up on the main streets and yet failed to have advertising go up west of Market Street in West Oakland. By 2008, it was suddenly to the advantage of policymakers that the country knows of its 30 % dropout/noncompletion rates. However, details of how ethno-racial factors, especially when controlling for income, radically altered completion/dropout rates, remained beyond the pale of ‘billboard worthy’. Still, America’s public school system was in the throes of its own *Great Transformation* and more than simply a point of mention in the Sunday Tribune, city streets were lined with these production-worthy billboard alarms. Though, in terms of the dropout crisis, it was ten years after the fact and through a volunteerism-based mentoring service, provided little other than a temporal remedy to mollify a student mass as they adjusted to the pangs of wide-scale *Great Transformation* operations adjustment. In an effort to discern the blurring lines of Oakland’s ‘gray areas’, much can be learned when studying the placement of these billboards over the course of the ‘Great Recession’, the delicate line cut through the city, and the production of *Generation Negation* having made due without.



blame remains centered on the behavior of a particular subject, be it students or teachers, in this way obfuscating systemic causal factors, highlighting individual inadequacy or, possibly, cultural.

Boostup.org billboard

41st Avenue at Broadway, Oakland, CA
West Grande at Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA
Thomas L Berkly at Telegraph Ave, Oak, CA
20th Avenue at Telegraph Ave, Oakland, CA
Telegraph Ave at 20th Ave, Oakland, CA
Franklin Ave. at 13th St., Oakland CA
Market St. at Athens, Oakland, CA
MLK Jr. Way at 18th Street, Oakland, CA

2011-2012 (2-3 in South Berkeley 2013+)

Adeline St. at Stanford Ave, Berkeley, CA
MLK Jr. Way at Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA
Shattuck Ave at Ashby St., Berkeley, CA
Adeline St. at Alcatraz, Berkeley, CA
Alcatraz at Adeline St., Berkeley, CA

In particular, when the boostup.org billboard campaign went up, Oakland had received warning from the government, it had promised to correct its ways regarding excessive suspension, expulsion, and dropouts of male minorities. It seemed inconsistent to attempt reform on behalf of the minority male youth, while advancing schemes for gang injunction and stop-n-frisk. Indeed, it was inconsistent but consistently so in terms of city administration. The billboard, plastered throughout Oakland, funded by the US Army, is misleading if only because of the percentage downplays what was hailed as crisis levels by its own school district, the city and the federal government. But this kind of misrepresentation, the negating of representation through ostensibly national averages is common for Oakland youth or for any youth of the low-income urban graying gray zones of its *Hungry City*. And yet, at some level, the statistics of the neighborhood are not lost on its youth if only at the level of environmental pulse. The fact of the West Oakland 2004 statistics, with its 50% high school completion and 50% poverty rate are quickly eyeballed by its youthful population. Interestingly, the billboard advertising maintained a silent border without add campaigns west of Market Street entering deep into West Oakland. And yet, the ‘yourGED.org’ campaign, directing the viewer to GED services, flooded the flatlands, virtually surrounding McClymonds High School West of Market Street, a vulnerable student population in need of encouragement and mentoring indirectly denied

In 2011, early boostup.org billboards began to circulate through Berkeley and Oakland with a reference to the Bay Area on the bottom, along with the US Army sponsorship. Its timing was well fitted, as 2011 was also the year when Oaklanders’ politics slipped indelibly into the street cohering as members of the 99% with Occupy Oakland taking to the lawn in Frank Agawa Plaza. The billboards referenced what then OUSD Superintendent Tony Smith referenced with respect to his school district, that is, the deplorable state of dropout. Though Smith cited a 50% dropout rate largely among minority males, the billboard cited a national 30% dropout rate without reference to ethnicity or race. The organization was a welcome aid, offering volunteer assistance, mentoring, tutoring, or some other form of “adopt” a student sponsorship including job shadowing, in this way, facilitating a variation of old-school on-the-job (OTJ) exposorial training experience. And yet, the fact that at the same time that dropout rates continue to hover near the 50% mark for some minority groups increasing numbers of one-time would-be students are turning away from higher learning, both within Adult Education and the community colleges, says more about the American crisis and subsequent transformation in education than any account of overseas “brain drain.” Resigned to the fact that they are unable to sidewind a current obstacle course of cut courses, waiting lists, long commutes, costly books, and excessive

fees, low-income learners are being forced – at every level from dropout to an Associate’s degree (AA) – to follow a flow of opting out/push-out convergence. At the level of public high school, many were pushed out succumbing to centrifugal pressures that were exacerbated by NCLB’s own rating game that conflated funding with performance stripping the underperforming schools of equitable funding.

Mayor Quan, offering the Mayor’s Summer Job program in 2012, was said to be without the funds in order to run the Program in 2011, though managed to scrape together funds in 2013. Still, there is a thin tightrope of volunteerism growing under the mayor when it needs to be shrinking. Mentor programs have been around at least since the 1960s, though at time, they were in addition to very concrete upward mobility pipelines often with early exposure to certain trades experienced in secondary school – precisely the kind of engaged experience that youth of the flatlands claim to be missing. And yet, despite a context of mounting socio-political exclusion, elite power oligarchies, and the image of a top-down hierarchy depicting actually existing dynamics between the people and political power, promises of new and improved “democratizing” methods continue to flourish. Though seemingly incongruous when considering actually occurring big structure change⁸⁵, talk flourishes in Oakland politics from City Hall to the school district as to the new and improved forms of “democratizing” decision-making and, its compliment, “enhanced youth engagement.” This new turn promising democratic inclusion and enhanced democratization of process could not come at a better time against a growing urban poor, and a tired working class living through an unlivable wage ready to resist. In truth, the campaign promises and the general political spin towards greater inclusive change would, in the least, be halted by the federal sequester with its across-the-board cuts to social services. Dwindling down social services with across the board cuts, it happens to be occurring at the same time that the nation moves further towards the singular military/criminalizing order, and, in terms of OUSD, enhanced privatization and/or charters.

Possibly taking their cue from Washington, both Oakland’s City Hall and OUSD were making use of a language of enhanced democratizing. Specifically, OUSD was under pressure to make changes addressing what appeared as discriminatory stratifying of outcomes. A district in state receivership heavily indebted to the state also receiving a negative assessment from federal evaluators for excessive suspensions of Black males, Superintendent Tony Smith inherited the responsibility of implementing substantive reform.⁸⁶ The larger socio-political context delivering a crisis of engagement was to be resolved by way of the district’s “FSS Wrap around” program. It is the conclusion of author, however, that the initiative could not correct for the democratic deficit precisely for the reasons outlined, particularly considering the hyperneoliberal context in which reforms in 2012+ have been made. The actual scope of the youth crisis, however, is nationwide with the federal government also failing to invest substantive funding in solidly structured programmatic solutions addressing the current “youth

⁸⁵ In addition to rating systems triggering compliance, Mayor Quan’s desired use of strong “law and order” tactics, the already dismantled people’s political countervailing force to that of a Business Industry Districts (BIDs) through OEDCI and TAAC/CAPs, other structured changes include continuous austerity cuts, heightened use of street sweeps, the fusion of police force and standard security, and the illegalization of previously legal practices as part of the criminalizing process all against the press of a jobless dirge for the unskilled hands-on worker.

⁸⁶ As a result of the assessment, the school board agreed to accept five years of federal monitoring to address inequity in suspension rates, that is, 6:1 Blacks to white suspensions resulting in 20% of the Black male student population being suspended at least once in the school year.

unemployment problem” though jobless rates are 4-5 times higher than during the 1960s when addressing the “youth unemployment problem” for minority male youth at the time.

If part of the larger game plan in education was to salvage public education rather than to cut it down and erect private sector/business model alternatives in its place, then resolving the “youth unemployment problem” would likely begin by reinvigorating the in-school vocational education (voc ed) pipelines slashed under Reagan. However, such an expansive revitalizing of the public schools’ scope and services, a form of enhancing the public option, is hardly seen in educational reform on a federal level unlike the centralizing NCLB and centralizing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) reform. Reagan justified eliminating the vocational education channels in the name of promoting a new premium on Basic Education for all for a future of said universal professionalism where learning is “unequal but adequate” – a political prophecy that died the quiet death of misrepresentation.

Instead of universal centralized solutions, increasingly since the 1980s (accelerated in the 1990s), the call for vocational training has meant growing a complex web of NGO/CBO-based training programs to take the place of the public (secondary school) option. *Once again, the youth of America’s public schools are made to bear the burden of social fallout and (voc ed) preclusion: bored in school, disengaged, unable to take courses in creative forms of production, auto shop, carpentry, woodshop, home economics, photography, unable to see the “connect” between school and the world outside, unable to attain on-the-job experience as part of the educational curriculum or, even better, to receive a small stipend – youth tune out stirring in their seat and then to often drop out.* The very population to benefit most from guided localized ‘direct direction’ in studying something like woodshop that is, a guided direct training ideally offered both in the public school or in a neighboring training site with established staff, are made to weave their way through intermittent, unstable, unpredictable programs scattered across the city in a tiring to-and-fro. At ever further remove from tactical agendas is the since faded prospect of work-study stipend based studies in an on-the-job training site, with this lack of job opportunities/participation touching on the pulse of the crisis though receiving scant attention...

Every male I think in Oakland want to work and you can hear them they be talking about how “I need a job” but they go to the block – cause they know that’s where the money is. If people could just get a job they’d be satisfied with just getting a check – You feel me? - Success for the average Oaklander is having a job, having some decent clothes and having money to eat. That’s all they want to do. They be scraping up change to pay for meals and shit – for meals! Success is having a job – ain’t no one tripping’ off being a rapper. We just trying to get money so we can feeeeeelllll a little betttteerrrr – and buy us some shit. People don’t want to buy extravagant things. We just want to buy the basic necessities like shoes and underclothes – You feel me? They ain’t hoping for a big house. Ain’t nobody even trippin’ on that. They just want to know that they can provide for themselves, have respect and dignity.

So you think they’re just looking for stable ground, a break from the commotion, the chaos and some relief?

You got it. I mean, most of the people who drop are colored and most colored people don’t

really got nobody to push them tellin' them to stay in school – and – I think the other main reason is money. If you got money you can buy stuff – education is valued but ain't nobody really looking at it like that – they lookin' at what you can buy right now.

- Short-term dropout, Oakland, 2011

Youth sentiment captures a harrowing frustration at the absence of engagement for themselves and others. In the 1960s, the attempt had been made to curb delinquency through positive engagement. Specifically, in the case of *Mobilization for Youth*, the intent was to “organize the victims” of poverty... Social change was to be brought about through the activity of- and pressure exerted by organizations of poor” (Weissman, 1969, p. 1). Memorably, this was a proposal for the prevention and control of delinquency anchored in expanding opportunity.⁸⁷ Not purely action, but organized social action, conceivably political, was thought an effective and just way for youth to overcome a sense of powerlessness, apathy, and degradation. Whereas the idea of engaging youth has not lost support, the context of engagement, that is, as in organizing aspects of the social plateau – this aspect has been excised from the model – unfortunately taking a sense of empowerment with it much as predicted by the MFY program and its supporters. Expressing sympathy for youths’ plight, President Obama in remarking on the lack of services noted metaphorically that when youth “swipe their arm, there is nothing there.” It was an indirect reference to the dearth of constructive resources and services that previously flowed through the social state into low-income neighborhoods and schools. Taking resource deprivation to new heights, the dismantling of K-12 vocational educational pipelines begun under Reagan coupled with the ongoing retrenchment of the social state (also begun under Reagan) accelerated under Clinton – together – prove a fatal blow to youth engagement in low-income districts and schools. If the working man’s unsuspecting “double retrenchment” (Wacquant, 2009a) of the labor market and social services took him by surprise by the end of the 1990s, the corollary experience among offspring/youth transitioning to adulthood was worse as a “four-fold retrenchment” to which is added *public school vocational pipelines* and engagement as *socio-political mobilization*.

Relative to the early 1970s, the conservative wooing of disheartened minority communities used to have them turn on the state in the name of a politic promising greater community semi-autonomy, possibly a nationalist movement of semi-independence; it was a politic that sold false promises and failed to deliver. Having observed the effects of institutionalized deprivation leaving a black liberated people of mid-twentieth century structurally bereft and barren feeding a deeper spiritual and physical malaise, and a material bondage, Charles Hamilton’s 1974 warning as to the end result of seamless structural failure working across social realms, that is, the conscious and systemic production of an uneducated, untrained, unorganized and powerless subaltern, still holds true: *Seamless across realms of societal production, including education (uneducated/un-trained), socio-political (unorganized/powerless), and economic (unorganized) it was a combination that would feed internal decay and destruction of the socio-communal spine of local neighborhoods. Meanwhile, fused to military/criminalizing solutions and*

⁸⁷ In the case of the *Mobilization for Youth* (MFY) experiment in social work of the 1960s, a grant was obtained from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW) allowing for a Division of Research between July 1966- June 1968. Besides the Division of Research targeting areas marked by both poverty and delinquency, programs were grouped under four key divisions: Educational Services, Employment Services, Services to Individuals and Families, and Community Development, which included group services (Weissman, 1969).

exploited labor surviving on an unlivable wage and a declining real wage, community solidarities also grow divisive with the introduction of good cop/bad cop. (This division is well understood and seen, as in the small school experiment, which, in dividing the high achievers from low achievers, gave way fairly instantaneously to school rivalries.) Aside from a sense of torpor, depending on the competitive nature of the game, be it basketball or school achievement, the competitive underbelly of the system is likely to give rise to fractious disunion and a survival of the fittest frenzy – an alien environment for the vulnerable child seeking reassurance. Absent the vital training/job pipelines the likelihood of assimilation was as improbable as Hamilton had warned, making these residents primary candidates for the future’s four-fold retrenchment: uneducated, untrained, unorganized in terms of labor representation, and, less recognized, increasingly powerless politically.

Writing on the history of Black political participation in America, Hamilton determines that, for better or for worse, national government has historically been more responsive to the concerns and needs of the poor, including minorities. “With increased political fervor, Blacks began in the 1960’s to turn more and more to the national government for alleviation of their grievances. It is true that that level of government had always been more responsive to Black demands than local or state governments” (Hamilton, 1974). Conversely, when socio-political intervention is retrenched, the government must be anticipating the greatest hardship to hit within those neighborhoods previously showing the greatest gains and life turnarounds through government assistance and/or intervention. If accepting the Great Society logic that in order for the country to rise above its ingrained inequities it has to at least partially fund the programs to raise the level of opportunity for the disadvantaged, the absence of such universal intervention cannot better provide nor has it showing Great Society inclusive logic sound and historically accurate.

Like other schools caught massaging dropout figures without the accountability and monitoring to ensure that underachieving youth are not belittled, criticized, and pushed-out of the schools, Oakland also conceded to its 50% dropout rate from earlier estimates of 12-14 percent. From the changing of administration’s new Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Superintendent who said his district was “good at sending youth to prison” to the president who said “the American school system currently fails over 80% of its students (four out of five was the claim, though since corrected to focus on America’s poor and the public schools in impoverished resource deprived areas.) Educator, Joanne Barkan, helps make sense out of the airing of dirty laundry in the educational reform efforts. Barkan notes that it is even more subtle than this. *A large percent of schools are not failing, but rather only some schools or regions are considerable failures, particularly when factoring in dropout rates.* For Barkan, it is more accurate to say that America’s top schools remain global competitors, though its bottom schools are increasingly a kind of dregs (Barkan, 2010). In this respect, they are dropout factories, which quickly devolve towards prison>pipelines with little else on offer and a substantial number of probationers contending with keeping their record clean – a challenge when wearing an ankle tag at sixteen.

Barkan’s depiction mirrors that of the early sixties, where the ghetto school served the socially discriminated and resource deprived. Starting a punitive process of punishment early on, it is a process that further drives the wedge between *Image-ready America* and the people of its *Hungry City*. But in the twenty-first century, it is temporary, part of a larger dismantling

particularly in gentrifying inner-city areas. Here, these schools will be transformed into charters, with their unions dissolved, and the countervailing political force once posed by schools and school districts, striking in opposition to City Hall, will be transformed into a hierarchy of capital-dependent compliance to City Hall. Comprised of mostly charters, there will be unanimity of ideological vision embracing the ideas of the Neoliberal City.

In the Neoliberal City, police patrol and enforcement replace program assistance....

In county (jail), there is a job training inside but you have to be selected for it. Out of 120-150 guys, only 2 will be selected for training. And it depends on your charges. Some charges mean you cannot take advantage of the little stuff they offer. Like the kitchen. You used to be able to work 10-12 hours in the kitchen. They used to pay people to do it, but now it's free labor. They don't pay the inmates. They say you get credit for it, but I don't think it really plays out like that. In the end, it only took 1 day off my sentence.

- 3-year term probationer, Oakland, 2011

You got to train a person's mind. Not everyone got that get out of bed uppity morning personality. A lot of these kids need to be trained just about basic stuff, writing a resume and stuff. How is that going to happen? Boys and Girls Club is for playing.

- Former dropout, Oakland, 2012

As uttered in these two quotes, many youth express a desire to be their own person, where true autonomy takes the form of equality of standards, for instance, in Juvenile Hall. Many youth are seeking the kinds of training and exposure that is little on offer though would benefit them a great deal in attempting to segue into the labor force. If many of the students ever learn about the mentorship program through boost.up.org, it could prove useful in training them in life skills. Problematically, however, very often, youth don't know of a program as it was not presented at their school (e.g., the Mayor's job fair for 2013 was not held at McClymonds High School and many of its students are unfamiliar with opportunities at Civicorps Corpsmember Academy absent a similar introductory fair). Alternatively, many students will never know of the mentorship offered through boostup.org if only because of the positioning of the billboards seamless down central downtown with virtually no billboards west of Market Street, the official border of the West Oakland district. Finally, a great many will never know of such a program because it is not routinized into the day-to-day conversation nor is it a part of routine students' expectations where it remains, instead, part of the exception to the day, which is the routine. For young men in the Oakland flats who dropped out in the 2000s, it has more often than not proven a degenerative job/income slide, if not a case of turning to the illegal economy to make ends meet and/or cycling through the carceral system at least temporarily to where this scenario has its own routinized nature.

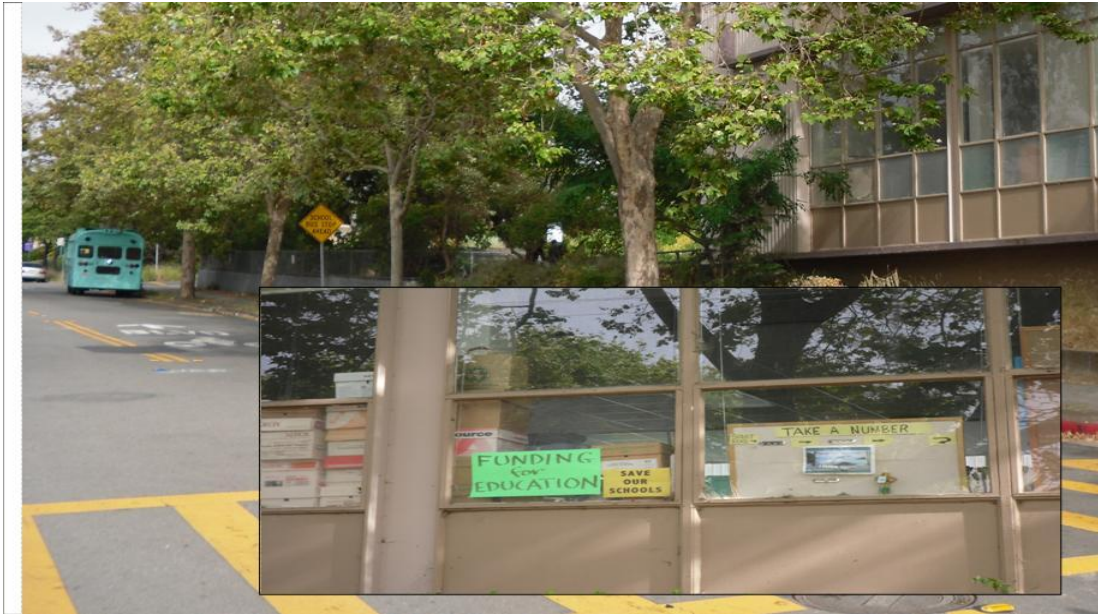
This fact is captured in numerous interviews with youthful students, former students, carceral system re-entrants, and prison or juvenile hall probationers. When asking the young man of East Oakland why he is enrolled in a certification class at the Adult Education in North Berkeley, he simply responds that that is the option provided through probation. "Tired of living the life," as

he explains it, he is enthusiastic about the prospect of becoming a driver for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), which was, he stressed, union labor. What is not seen in these billboards, however, is an education campaign informing youth as to the hardship tied to dropping out in the twenty-first century period of hyper-neoliberalism compared with the 1960s and 1970s and, in particular, how this disadvantage cuts down ethno-racial lines. Where youth are bombarded with your.GED.org billboards up and down the flatlands, what they are not bombarded with is a clear concise summary of the downward mobility tied to dropping out and the implications in terms of skill-building...



Currently, the GED is offered at the Adult Education at 2607 Myrtle Street where it has traditionally been offered, and at the Next Step Learning Center, a nonprofit at 2222 Curtis Street. Should the Adult Education have closed, that would have left one remaining center in the flatland area at a small nonprofit. However, in blasting the flatlands with such advertising, the message instilled in its youth is not to stay in school, but rather where the ideal center is offering GED preparation. In the meantime, the campaign advertising is curious to say the least, as central flats, Longfellow, is one of the fastest gentrifying neighborhoods with home prices rising 3-5% more than in other nearing neighborhoods. Four of five of these 'yourGED.org' ads shown are situated at the Longfellow border.

If There Was a Social Standard Behind the Profit Standards Anchoring Community...



North Berkeley “East Bay” largest remaining Adult Education. No such building of equivalent size exists in Oakland, 2012

In wanting to probe backboard standards, it is interesting to consider that current condition of Adult Education with the North Berkeley Adult Education considered the East Bay’s Central Adult Education facility, while Oakland has a small corridor in McClymonds High School reserved for Adult Education offering a few credentialing services, the GED and ESL. For Adult Education, a branch of affordable higher learning that had benefited many single mothers and fathers, closure seemed imminent. The branch run out of McClymonds was anticipating closure, though the director remained uncertain with his job hanging in the balance. Ironically, considering its planned funding reduction in sync with a discourse of growing democratization, Adult Education, as originally conceived during the Progressive Era of the 1890s, did indeed have as its highest reaching social ideal an educated populous in this way creating the context for robust participatory democracy and advancing as a nation. *The original place of ‘2nd Chance’ learning, Adult Education was conceived for adults 18 years of age as a doorway into society proper, as a local affordable opportunity and means to advance one’s skills, and, in terms of cultivating the whole person, its purpose was to put meaning into the whole of life creating a life interfused with meaning (cf. Lindeman, 1990).* Currently, districts, not to mention the youth within them, are not clear where their 2nd Chance outlets are located as numerous nonprofits that work with youth have claimed a “2nd Chance” title.

Foreseeing a cold future of automated labor, it was to create more to the life for the working man than the mere drudgery of automation, ideals which the federal government would stand behind in the creation of the Adult Education system. President Johnson’s Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963, which established 5-year program of federal grants for public and private education was the first Education program passed that was not tied to post World War II

National Defense. It established the construction of institutes for trained manpower. Similarly, the Vocational Education Act provided the extension, improvement and development of vocational education programs, and the revision of part-time work for needy youth participating in the program. Through Adult Education facilities, persons of all ages over 18 would have ready access to vocational training or retraining. The large numbers of enrollees in Adult Education in 2007 was a great testament to the fact that OUSD's Adult Education had realized its mission as the original 2nd Chance institute providing for a variety of students, including prison re-entrants, immigrants, single mothers and fathers, those interested in personal growth and/or a second career. And yet, the substantial enrolment was not enough to sustain the institute. While today, held sway by a neoliberal mind-think, many balk at the idea of "free education" or nominal fee (since conflated with "free ride"), facts run counter to the historical record the latter which shows large social gains through such Keynesian-modeled social investment.

In 2007, at the beginning of the Great Recession, OUSD had an estimated student population of 37,000 students. Also large, its Adult Education program had an estimated 25,000 enrollees (many part-time). It was one of the largest school districts in the state of California. Then Superintendent Tony Smith maintained that the district was losing students by the thousands explaining the need to close numerous schools and convert other "failed" schools to charter schools. Superintendent Smith also explained his regret at the state of the district with respect to its excessive underachievement with a dropout rate of over 50% for some subgroups and its low high school graduation rate of less than 40%, particularly among the Black male.

Problematically, however, the inordinately high dropout figures, ACJJC detention, and equally high recidivism better corresponds with low district enrollment than any kind of low-income flight out of the district. Similarly, it could be said that actual drop in enrollment in K-12 better corresponds to the nose dive drop in Adult Education enrollees since 2007, having dropped to 1,300 in 2012 due to program cuts and cost increases, than it does to any actual drop in the number of youth living in the district who are eligible for free lunch and therefore living below the poverty line, while interested in higher learning.

In 2007, of the 25,000 enrolled in Adult Education, 95% were living in poverty. And yet, not because life became any easier after 5 years of recession, the Adult Education enrollment rate experienced a radical though silent drop from 25,000 to 1,300 by 2012, a difference of 23,700 students. Almost too predictably, the same phenomenon was occurring in California's community colleges, where cuts in staff and courses gave way to waiting lists, increased class size, and increased fees (up 130% in five years); it too was experiencing an administrative barrier-induced drop-off cliff in enrollment. *The hierarchy-driven structural transformation continues to work seamless between the public education option (K-12 -to- higher learning) historically providing the 2nd chance channels for those of modest means. The fact is ongoing declining enrollment mirrors the national wealth/power polarization while undereducating the socially disadvantaged, which in turn exacerbates a process of negative social reproduction and wealth/power polarization. The American public education system is no longer that bastion of critical thought qua countervailing force and power challenging a system at the level of the socially disadvantaged. In fact, its very structure has come to emulate the hierarchical dynamic of corporate capital.* Whereas programs designed to reintegrate dropouts and ensure effective

reintegration of probationers would have returned district enrollment to the kinds of numbers from just a few years ago, neither a dropout/probationer-committed program nor one revitalizing Adult Education was taken.

While the country continues to polarize against an extreme wealth/power polarization begun in the early 1970s, youth sentiment in Oakland is often suspicious of officialdom's intent regarding youth with reasons that include ongoing resource deprivation and weak skill-building programs seemingly cultivating drift. Where some youth are spun out of the system, others simply burn out. To the extent that the social is in part a working class social comprised of accumulative actions, it requires places of political engagement not at the level of politicians touring the city on the campaign trail or simply at the polls but rather deep within civic and political spaces. Historically, these spaces were fortified through the 2nd *Chance* means of the public option – an option increasingly emaciated and whittled down, while less accessible and/or affordable for a one-time central student subject: the socially disadvantaged student body. Lindeman (1990, xxviii), in articulating the inter-connections between learning, Adult Education, and social man as political man observes:

Social action is in essence the use of force or coercion. The use of force and coercion is justified only when the force is democratic and this means that it must be derived from intelligence and reason. Adult education... turns out to be the most reliable instrument for social actionists. If they learn how to educate the adherents of their movement, they can continue to utilize the compelling power of a group and still remain within the scope of democratic behavior. When they substitute something other than intelligence and reason, social action emanates as sheer power and soon degenerates into habits which tend toward an anti-democratic direction.

In sync with political push-out/exclusion and feeble volunteer/township forms of undemocratic participation amidst faux political manipulation of 'community', the country is in fact experiencing the rapid hyperneoliberalizing of its educational infrastructure where new forms of push out/exclusion are on the rise. Schools, districts, colleges are all having their administration questioned as the public option that once brought the disadvantaged into the learning circle is transformed into another expensive higher learning institute while touting the public nomenclature as the ultimate conquest of the private sector.

The fight for equality in education dates back to before the pivotal *Brown vs. the Board of Education of 1954* making illegal segregation in the country's public schools. The laws enacting segregation were further strengthened with the force of the federal government when, in 1963, Johnson wrote that the federal government would sue offending institutes in a gesture signifying federal defense of the social state taking on the States and municipal governments in terms of setting the larger socio-political parameters of regulated operations. Similarly, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set the federal position straight on segregation – outlawing discrimination in federally funded programs and giving the U.S. Department of Justice authority to bring school desegregation suits. At the same time, however, Johnson allocated greater powers to the states and municipal governments in granting greater administrative oversight of educational services proving again that the two, federal oversight and greater decentralized oversight were not antithetical. Absent this kind of federal cohesion and defense, the country

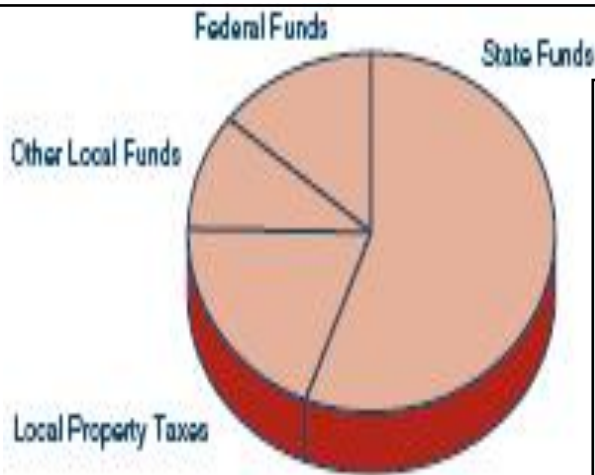
has experienced a slow slide towards resegregation detailed by Orfield & Eaton (Gary Orfield & Eaton, 1997) since the 1990s.

NEOLIBERAL ERA INEQUITY AS EQUITY MODELLING

2009-2010

Federal government :14% of all K-12 school revenue.

Inequity Modeled: Following Reagan’s “A Nation at Risk” thru Clinton’s Global 2000 to Bush W.’s NCLB, and Obama’s Race to the Top all build on predecessor conservatism seeking privatization of public education, charters, vouchers, shrinking Dept of Education advancing inequitable funding as “deserved” or “earned.”



2009-2010

California state: 56%

Inequity Modeled governance:

1999 Public School

Accountability Act

Underperformance leads to

state take-over / closure

Governor Brown’s Proposition

30, 2013

2009-2010

Local Funding: 30%, largely property taxes.

Inequity Modeled: Since passage of California’s Proposition 13, 1978 tying school funding to neighborhood property tax base

Non-categorical state funding

Launching the inequality premium that much further into the stratosphere of the new American standard, NCLB ground the growth liberal standard of providing resources where needed to a halt and proceeded to move the country in the opposite direction temptingly rewarding privilege (Murray, 1984). Advancing hyper reverse logic of the Great Society, rather than create programs to foist up the disadvantaged as to join the majority at an imagined starting line (a kind of conceptual middle ground), the disadvantaged schools have come to be effectively

penalized for their underperformance and for the social disadvantage they carry.⁸⁸ Instead, there is a process foisting disadvantaged youth into a Sisyphusian performance loop: because social disadvantage is the assumed effect of early academic weakness, which is tied to family, school and peers, which culminates in academic weakness of future generations in an ecologically-closed loop, the student must posit blame within him/herself, the family or the school. Such localized accounts of failed social mobility mean that, as in the case of the 1980's crack epidemic, there is little need of experts to reflect on the role of political economy or larger society instead fueling criticism of poor practices and weak habits of a genetically or culturally fallen people.

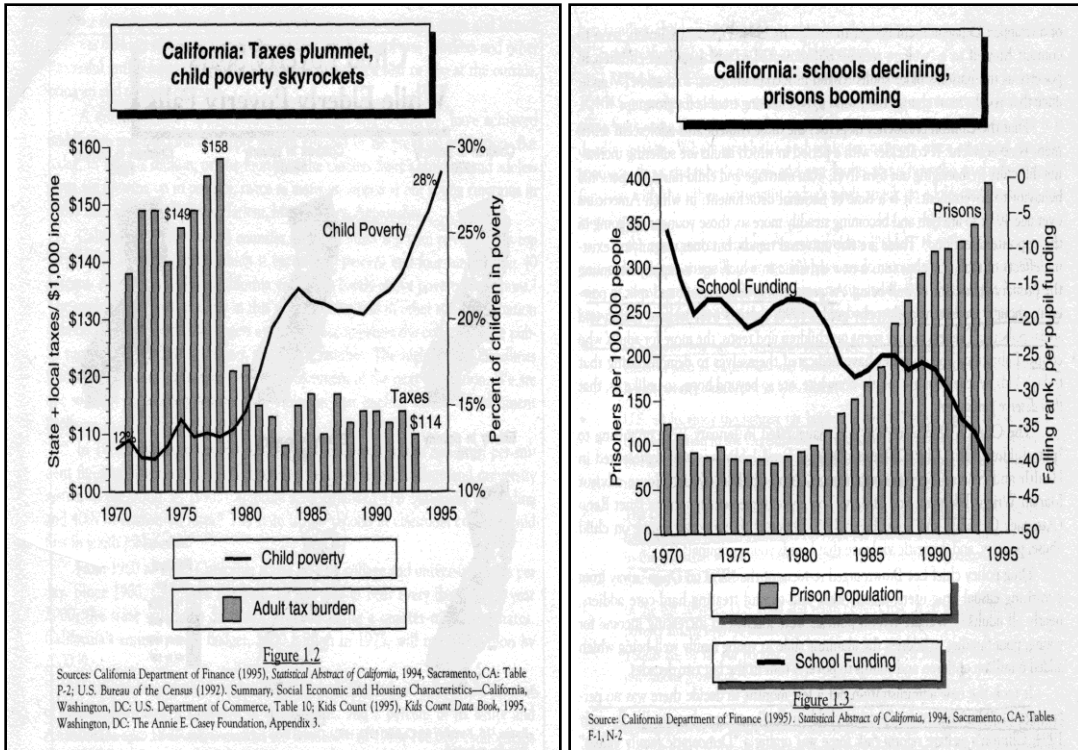
Fortunately, some members of the Department of Education continue to hold to a no frills realism in creating a human standard. Susan Neuman, former Assistant Secretary of Education to the Department of Education for Elementary and Secondary Education explained ...

In the most disadvantaged schools in America, even the most earnest teacher has often given up because they lack every available resource that could possibly make a difference. . . . When we say all children can achieve and then not give them the additional resources ... we are creating a fantasy.

Meanwhile, under the radar that is the fight to return educational premiums to a standard of leveled inequalities for all students, a growing number of youth among the socially silenced and forgotten surge forth at society's margins including dropouts, probationers, parolees, aged-out, homeless, and emancipated foster youth – as an extending list of outsiders.

Meanwhile, tales of social correspondence and negative social reproduction could be this straight forward...

⁸⁸ The progressive effect of these reforms is to concentrate poverty and, in turn, resegregation, whereas Great Society educational reform sought and succeeded at desegregating poverty through mechanisms of integration such as busing. Poverty is especially intensified spatially and institutionally as a result of NCLB. In data from school assessments of the early 2000's, all of the schools that received an Academic Performance Index (API) rating of 1 or 2 out of 10 were designated "low performing" served student populations where over 90% of the children qualify for free or reduced lunch living in or near poverty (Noguera, 2004). These poor youth will be negatively impacted by funding cuts, which is problematic for anyone believing that resources large and small, including school>training>work pipelines and other experiential forums make a difference in academic and life outcomes (Clark, 1989).



Source: *Scapegoat Generation* (1996)

For standards behind the NCLB standards, there is the more indelible polarities between California taxes, which plummet, and the rise of its child poverty. Similarly, there is school funding plummeting against the rise of the California prison system. Taken in the 1990s, these charts have indeed proven portents of things to come. At the same time, the standards that drove the in-school, civil rights and/or educational standards of the Great Society are continuously being whittled down. This includes the standards behind the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voter Rights Act of 1965, and, in terms of new frontiers, the relative wasteland come of the types of training pipelines once generated through the urban flatlands such as Oakland through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. From this perspective, social standards to use behind a particular educational initiative, such as NCLB's standards, are best remembered when looking at such things as the Great Society Program and what it included when the idea of comprehensive intervention was undergirded with programs in all the different arenas affecting the individual life.

New Frontier

Program	Provisions	Impact
Manpower Development and Training Act (1962)	Retrained farmers and chronically unemployed farmers	Provided opportunities for the very poor to become self-sustaining
Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1963)	United States and Soviet Union banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere	Helped to increase security for all Americans
Space Program	In 1961, Kennedy committed United States to putting man on moon by 1970.	Allowed United States to take the lead from Russia in space program
Medical Retardation and Health Centers Act (1963)	Provided funds for research and treatment	Gave needed support for a group unable to speak for themselves

Great Society

Program	Provisions	Impact
Civil Rights Act (1964)	Banned discrimination in jobs, public hotels and restaurants, and voting	Marked the first legislative success of the Civil Rights Movement
Economic Opportunities Act (1964)	Funded a variety of "war on poverty" programs, including the Job Corps, VISTA, HeadStart, Upward Bound, Neighborhood Youth Corps, and College Work Study	Solved few problems because the war in Vietnam required an increasingly large share of national budget
Voting Rights Act (1965)	Allowed for federal registering of voters and federal monitoring of elections and outlawed literacy tests	Strengthened earlier voting laws designed to guarantee voting rights for African-Americans
"Medicare" Act (1965)	Provided federal funding for medical care for the elderly under Social Security	Removed a major inequity in health care
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)	Federal funds given to public schools and funds for instructional materials supplied to public, private, and parochial schools	Helped to increase educational opportunity, particularly for poorer areas
Higher Education Act (1965)	Provided federal funding for student loans and college construction	Helped to make college education affordable for less affluent students
Appalachian Development Act (1965)	Supplied federal funds for a particularly depressed area.	New roads, land improvement, and new health centers in the area
Immigration Act (1965)	Gave priority to keeping families together and promoting national needs	Eliminated discrimination based on national origin
Demonstration Cities Act (1966)	Provided funds for rebuilding deteriorated urban areas	Aimed to inspire creativity in solving tough urban problems
Civil Rights Act (1968)	Banned racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing	Helped to integrate some neighborhoods

City members were angry as they watched monies potentially channeled into social programs rerouted and ultimately used for a "public health" that had come to mean "public safety," the

latter which increasingly came to include “public security” allowing the rechanneling of monies back to the criminal/military state. Even under the auspices of social programs, which historically include public health and education, the funds were reserved for securitization. Meanwhile, the people wanted out of the criminalizing loop of municipal governance, which Mayor Quan was further entrenching through her community policing.

They’re camouflaging poverty by calling it crime!
- Town Hall addressing selection of William Bratton as consultant for urban safety, 2013

◆ CHAPTER 3 ◆

REAL COMPARED TO WHAT? Valuing Socio-Communal Productive Flows or Accepting Myriad Tracks of Our Great Transformation Leaving Youth to Roam as Tomorrow's Undercaste

“...Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire and choose the leaders you please...It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates... We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.”

~ President Johnson

“If the quality of life and mind in the city leave something to be desired – if men are submerged, if there is excessive conformity and a failure of sensitivity and feeling, if each is preoccupied with personal gain and personal comfort, if there is an absence of communication and community – then it is to the institutional structure that we must look for solution.”

~ Lawrence Haworth, The Good City



Photos donated by a local community church and center.

This church-run corner store provided a friendly safe space for local girls and boys in the neighborhood strengthening the socio-communal lattice web while also providing the traditional corner market for stock household items closed in 2011, Photo 2010

This is a very different scenario than what was diagnosed by Bowles and Gintis (1976) in the 1970s as “negative social reproduction” between education and the laboring classes of a capitalist economy where the educational system was inescapably a “secondary institution” to that of economy. In this reading, opportunity is central, specifically economic opportunity. For a lot of young men in Oakland in their late twenties and thirties, the prospect that there was an 80% guarantee of positive social reproduction where education would lead into a stable job better captures a meritocratic fantasy than actual experience. Fortunately, these men are realists. The new class-based vulnerability of the century’s disposable labor in its *push-down disposable centrifuge* far better mirrors the deepening wealth/status polarization and its attendant widening poverty- and widening opportunity- inequity than it does intergenerational mobility of the country’s working classes. For this section of resource deprived, socio-institutionally disadvantaged youth of a social “lower bottoms” writ large – the fate is unfortunate. It is as if there is increasingly no way out via old-school institutional mobility lifts, pipelines and channels. In the current century, a particular service entangled in the *socio-communal mobility-lattice webbing* is difficult to locate as it may or may not be offered, and it may or may not be at a particular nonprofit or local organization, which may or may not be involved in a school event fair, where youth may or may not attend from one year to the next. The uncertainty and inherent instability is at far remove from a dynamic where entire communities come of age within the larger mobility matrix as was the case with Great Society programmatic systems as they streamed through neighborhoods and defined communities rendering the one-time “negative social reproduction” a privilege.

In terms of academic catch-up, should the individual make that choice to return to school, the growing trend is to move these vocational courses to the community college level, no longer near-free for the poor, no longer surrounded by familial settings and faces, no longer made to feel secure so much as vulnerable and different. Predictably, the youth enrolled in the basic skills (usually math and science) in the remedial courses at the community colleges are said to “drop like flies.” Still, the high schools in the recessed neighborhoods remain program starved, while performance measures still apply potentially forcing push-out. Meanwhile, youth seek a different kind of standards as relates to ethics and social justice, standards that could make sense of the chaos outside, that could set a new precedent in terms of moral codes of conduct, security and acceptance. Instead, they are resigned to a contagious instability and insecurity that Stiglitz (2012) associates with the political economy. Davis (1999) warned of mounting youth risk precisely because of systemic changes and the inherent instability associated with systems. Similarly, most of the youth interviewed had little expectation for career guarantees.

And yet, often those who must accept the risk of, say, course investment, are the same people who cannot afford the risk of tuition debt because they are trying to stay free of debt. This is especially true for prison re-entrants who have an added sensitivity to the threat of mishap being returned back to the *carceral carousel (of recidivism)* in this way failing to put the horror of probation behind them. High fees for the poor simply deepen the wedge between the two Americas. At the same time, weakening the *socio-communal mobility-lattice webbing* that once resounded with the familiarity of family and community, the structural architecture that served as a kind of fortress is also rendered weak and delicate further incentivizing social disconnection, disunion, and ‘silo-like’ forms of estrangement. Risk, for youth, is not simply embedded in the system, it is the system. Risk is thrust on the person, even the disadvantaged

who cannot afford risk. If lucky enough to find the money to seal a criminal record, a clear sign of fiscal privilege, a re-entrant wants to start over, but he has no wiggle room for risk under the current risk-prone system.

In Oakland in the 1960s, drug-running was not so much an economy as it was a past-time, with the use of mild substances, usually cannabis. There was a strong working class providing visual evidence of educational investment outcomes. Dropping out of school was “just not done” in the Black community with many elders unfamiliar with the term asking for clarification, “Dropping out from what?” Individual and group belief was reinforced through institutional incentivizing and opportunity, though this deep solidarity seemed to take its blows. In 2011, one long-time senior resident in the South Prescott area of West Oakland estimated that the real “bad seeds” were no more than 1% of the youth. He explained, as was repeatedly explained and evidenced by familial habits, for most people there is a lot of sharing, caring and pulling together. Sharing means if you got it and someone needs it, you give it up and they’ll do the same when the situation reverses itself. The understanding is that the situation will reverse itself precisely because the underlying assumption is that uncertainty and poverty are constantly meddling with people’s lives. This much of familial solidarities has survived, though it is for the most part absent the corollary supportive *supra-institutional matrix* largely inclined towards training and political solidarities.

All of this seemed an revealing aspect of a high-poverty community in one of the country’s most dangerous cities. As with the surrogate familial, there are codes of conduct that are shared, though never outright articulated, not to tag someone’s art, not to steal from one of the locals, to defer to church members, not to obstruct one of the local’s mission to do good, to pull together resources in support of the hungry, to take only what you need and give the rest, and the list goes on. For the young man, it takes a certain stability and security to venture beyond the neighborhood where their protection does not follow just on a possibility that he can better his life and beat the 50% odds of poverty reproduction that suggest otherwise. Thus, against the press of enclosure is the pressure of venture-ism forming its own internal tension. Similarly, the schoolyard seems to be nested somewhere in between the two worlds with its actual intention in question again harkening back to Bowles and Gintis’ depiction of the educational system as secondary to that of the economy. Not all youth are any more certain how to read the educational core objectives. Many cannot make it out: Is it a safety zone or an area marked by the predatory means of push-out and continuous contorting of standards and norms? The impressions of predatory schemes are not foreign to America’s slums or its inner-cities. What is foreign is how slum social reproduction persists amidst talk of transcending earlier slum conditions.



‘US Urban Programs’ targeting the leviathan of “conditions” or from the view from the street, as seen below, the leviathan of gentrifying programs targeting neighborhood conditions?



The Central Station sign is advertising for the 1500 condominiums built at West Oakland's west edge along the freeway with the view to San Francisco. In this photo it is nestled into the impressionistic conflagration of a subtle communal opposition that in part objects and accepts.

Recent discussions of dropouts, following the billboard-based percentages unveiling, have been relatively speaking far more aggressive in the ways the system is held responsible. Among conferences filled with former dropouts and students, there have been serious discussions of the constraining, containing, discriminatory role played by the current economy as well as embedded racism.⁸⁹ Most of the youth explained how they had encountered various forms of racism, though again, they took it in stride as part of a social apparatus that one learns to sidewind or work. In the Civic Enterprise's 2006 Report, from a study sample of 467 ethnically and racially diverse youth who had dropped out of high school, there were a number of outside factors pulling the youth to drop out including the need to make money (32%); becoming a parent (22%) and the need to care for another family member (22%). Though some left school – *but not the majority* – because of academic challenges, 70% believed they could graduate if they tried (Bridgeland, DiIulio Jr, and Morison, 2006). As observed in the Bay Area, for youth from San Francisco's own Bayview-Hunters Point and Oakland, the need to make money and the problems of economic shortfall are almost always mentioned.

In conversation with young men and women in the neighborhood, aged 16-30, everyone mentions the unlivable aspect of the wage or, the alternative, joblessness, with very few exceptions. Others are part of the street economy often justifying their actions out of a certain necessity or profit-margin logic either to provide for themselves or family members young and old. Boundaries between legal and illegal economies are blurred; making it is making it for the same reasons that equality and justice for all is fast receding (cf. Greenwald, 2012). Young males learn quick that, though hustling on the street does not deliver inflated sums of money, for better or for worse the street can deliver “two weeks wage” – and better treatment – “in less than one day, sometimes in less than two hours.” In this case, the hunger for financial and material stability is right up alongside the quest to crystallize and solidify one's own self-fashioned standards, moral and social standards. These standards include rehabilitating a sense of self and social respect rather than playing the part of submissive, that is, they are integrally tied to the desire for self worth/social respect.

Expressed in the following quote, the vulnerable side of the young male comes forward, though very often he is without such an opening in fashioning his own standards, forced to mute such emotions...

Another reason why youth shy away from conversation is cuz' of guilt. I mean, if it's the first time they have a hit a weed, or start selling, or something like that. That's what happened to me... I felt like I let my mother down and I didn't want to look her in the eye.
- Young man, Oakland, 2010

At a UC Berkeley speaking event, Cornell West in dialogue with Carl Dix explained how things have gotten out of hand in terms of the mounting mis- and dis-information fed to youth. They

⁸⁹ This was the case with both the *Boys and Men of Color Conference* organized by Sandre Swanson held in January 2012, and the recent *Dropout Conference* held at Castlemont High School in East Oakland, March 2012.

highlighted youths' own standards and values in reaction to circumstances: "*Young people are tired of lies ... and weapons of mass distraction,*" he said. "*They've been taught to be well-adjusted to injustice.*"⁹⁰ They struggle against emotional nihilism borne out of a web of exclusion, rejection, disengagement, and decay. At the same time, by the time of the Occupy Oakland movement in Fall 2011, many youth were calling for socio-economic justice, fair hiring practices, an end to racist profiling and 'stop and frisk' policies. Also sought out by a young adult population that quickly aligned itself with the movement was an end to policies incentivizing racial profiling, juridical injustice and kangaroo courts, an end to excessively punitive punishment in education, and an end to resource deprivation with its consequent deepening cuts further depriving the less equipped for a condition of social deprivation.

In terms of school, most youth in the struggling McClymonds High School, a one-time star of the flatland's vocational high schools,⁹¹ would rather see policy reform that was clearly fortifying youth community than driving deep divisions through it. Working to make sense of a long list of grievances, it is useful to consider the insights of Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto*. Written in 1965, *Dark Ghetto* is still one of the premiere portraits rendering the psychology not simply of ghetto poverty or ghetto dread, but of how this dread is directly tied to one's socio-economic position. "A lot of times when I'm working I become despondent as hell and I feel like crying. I'm not a man, none of us are men! I don't own anything..." All too predictably, such a position of despair is made considerably worse under the current conditions of degraded labor, dismantled mobility channels, deep poverty and prospects of permanent social exclusion amidst community fragmentation. As explained by a recent homeless man with his belongings lining one of the local youth nonprofits when told "Good luck", he fired back with "I don't trust luck. Bless you. Bless us all." In seeing how life had unfolded for him, it is clear how someone eschews trickle down universal gains or growth as well as turning to biblical scriptures for sustenance. In the meantime, the local youth are usually courteous, passing by the man's assemblage with a nod and a greeting with a good number discovering their own religious sustenance to aid in stabilizing the tumultuous uncertain.

The sense of being "nobody," a serf taking orders in a country that teaches its children that there are no classes, leaving them unfamiliar with the term or concept 'proletariat', 'lumpenproletariat', 'underclass' or 'undercaste' casts the individual towards a nihilism that much further removed from him or herself bound in an unnamable state. It is a nihilism that much more intense in a "dark ghetto" that was, at one-time, a socio-communal ghetto having since fragmented internally with individuals turning inward within themselves. The inconsistency and uncertainty of resource availability is coupled with an unpredictability, instability and anxiety tied to the *inverted control social*, which in the hood includes a series of surveillance cameras hidden in boarded up establishments and a general powerlessness against the military/criminal control state. **EVA** as *exposural engagement, political voice* and *active agency* looks increasingly like remnants of a bygone era, figments of a past. As one twenty-something year old explained, "They're the better gangsters. They have the better guns." They have the legal

⁹⁰Cornel West and Carl Dix guest speakers at UC Berkeley, December, 2, 2011, "In the Age of Obama...Police Terror, Incarceration, No Jobs, Mis-education: What Future for our Youth?" Retrieved from <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/RaceIne>.

⁹¹So much was McClymonds High School the pride of the working class and the country's growth liberal socio-political philosophy in general that the original name was in fact, Vocational High School.

system on their side with the large sections of the country believing in the simple ‘good cop – evil criminal’ dichotomy and/or the myth of national “bankruptcy” promoting the idea that programmatic intervention is not tenable.

Shredding one-time humanistic loyalties between man and fellow man, these ideas grown from the neoliberal weltanschauung are very effective in turning the one-time sympathetic liberal against the disadvantaged poor. Fred Harris of the Kerner Commission remembers that providing a systematic and/or socio-institutional explanation that included “racism,” extending beyond immediate environment to more subtle accounts of political economy enabled the Black man to say, “Maybe it isn’t just me. Maybe it isn’t my fault. I’m not by myself here. Maybe there is something else going on.” In this respect, little has changed since then in terms of the tactics of mass distraction. One dropout saw it as a system,

“It’s a system. It’s like anything... Someone is going to work it. Right now it’s the government (working it).”

From this perspective, echoing Hill’s (2003) reading of neoliberal education, standards quickly become tools, rackets or scams filled with winners and losers depending on who could better work it at the time. Ultimately, the conclusion drawn in observing the education of socially disadvantaged of an urban core in the throes of renewal is that reality abhors a vacuum. That is, no area of the urban flatland will simply lie dormant absent the vital infrastructure once securing socio-communal and socio-political mobilization so much as have investors claim these areas for its own.

If this particular dropout had been respected for his “radical” vision, he could have learned that their own view was not particularly different from world historian Robert Michel’s *Iron Law of Oligarchy*. From here, he could build a deconstructed understanding of historical power in a way more likely aligned with his own experience and, in turn, having felt considerably less alienated on campus and in the classroom where to dismiss their perception is to deny the historical record, the logic of history and to hold down the imagination of the already marginalized. As with Peralta Colleges own Grove Campus’ student body, it was often in such a higher learning environment where politically-charged students were mindful to avoid such things as “communitarian-ism” as a new political language to govern around society rather than through its shorn up channels.

The 1968 Kerner Commission Report forewarned that the country was becoming two countries: separate and unequal, proving a direction taken almost ever since.



In the early 1960s, “block-busting” meant panic selling resulting from fear of minority influx into the neighborhood. “Block-busting” has since come to mean the take-over of a low-income largely minority working class neighborhood through a slow methodical reclamation. While first experiencing college student influx, investors seek buy-up recognizing its middle class potential with North Oakland’s Longfellow and Hoover being two good examples.

(Wide World)

Source: Leinwand, G., et al., *The Slums*, 1970

In 2013, the battle of identities between luxury developers and those seeking the inclusion of working class people continued...



The local mural trying to set the record straight regarding social mix growth and a nearby church are threatened by a said 'social mix' gentrification that takes out local families rather than enabling them. This church, located in West Oakland for more than two generations directly adjacent to this new 1000+ unit condominium housing development, was closed down in 2011, West Oakland, 2010



This is what democracy feels like...in the graduation ceremony of the Honorable Cecil William's Glide Memorial's stipend-based Scholars and Youth Build Programs before their sudden dual closure in summer 2011 shortly after the conservative small schools initiative was abandoned across the country and the conservative "next big thing" charter movement exploded nationally.

The "old school" school>training>work pipelines once flowing out of the secondary schools in low-income districts and ratcheted up the social ladder to function out of the community colleges benefiting youths should they

make it that far, while further pushing down the traditionally poor youth stopping education at secondary school. Under the educational model city, youth who dropped out for lack of experiential training and/or engagement or for lack of stipend or salary-based work grown more desperate and more hungry, would be left to sidewind the city, which grew both foreign in its ways and familiar in its foreign streets...

I hope it has something to do with me.

- Black youth commenting on the Occupy Movement and the tents perched on the lawn of City Hall, Fall 2011

Injustice ain't nothing new. That been going on forever. Some times neighborhoods are just made to rot. And then the younger generation has to come up in something more rotten than it was. People made to fight among one another. But the kingpins, they'll be safe no matter what. The city lets them off. That's how they keep things flowing.

- Elder one-time resident of Oakland

While official dropout rates, like poverty rates, remained relatively constant through the early 2000s implying that families were not adversely affected by these radical social service assistential cuts, by the shake-up within public education or by the gutting of the job training programs, more reliable figures suggest the contrary. What Stiglitz found to be true for the neoliberal global order was certainly true for the leading neoliberal, unequal, and dropout nation in the western world: poverty was on the rise.⁹² In fact, the hallmark of an advanced neoliberal state is radical socio-political polarization not only between rich and poor but at the lower reaches between low-level inclusion and socio-institutional exclusion; poverty, deep poverty. The growing number of children born into poverty, youth (16 to 24) unemployment, and the dropout rate were all considerably higher than the official figures at the time – and rising. Though TANF figures showed that poverty remained relatively constant until the Great Recession of 2007, ostensibly amidst a welfare retrenchment that included greater numbers being “diverted” or rejected as ineligible, and greater percentages of families exhausting lifetime benefits, the fact is the number of children living in poverty increased by over 11% between 2000 and 2005. Of those born into poverty, one-third of black children were being born into poverty.⁹³ Seemingly corresponding to this ‘socio-political ‘retrenchment trifecta’ of deepening poverty, joblessness, assistential/resource austerity with its ‘governing through crime’ (Simon, 2007), it has also been estimated that one-third of black children born after 2000 will spend time in prison (Giroux, 2003). Similarly, at least 50% of Americans will experience poverty at some point in their life as a result of the inherent instability of the playing field upon which job security is sought.

⁹² Assessing the successes and failures of neoliberal-based globalization, Stiglitz observes that, in 2002, the divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ had left increasing numbers in the Third World in dire poverty, living on less than a dollar a day. In the 1990s alone, despite promises of poverty reduction, the actual number of people living in poverty had increased by almost 100 million (Stiglitz, 2003).

⁹³ See National Center for Child Poverty http://nccp.org/publications/pub_684.html and The Urban Institute <http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/412219-Poverty-in-US.pdf> Site referenced March, 2011.

The more things change in terms of the persistence of poverty as a form of robust socio-political exclusion, the more they stay the same. Central to the evolution of a high poverty neighborhood is the new porousness of its territory, its permeability. While far from a global city, it is at far remove from images of slums from the early 1960s where social isolation was entangled with spatial isolation. But, the experience has shown that the ostensible ‘social mixing’ does not come with a leveling of inequality, a heightened social integration, and/or heightened active political dynamism. As stressed throughout, the myth that ‘social mix’ would deliver social mobility conceals the necessary erasure of decisive social realities – other than ‘social mix’ – including the shape of a socio-communal *supra-institutional consortia matrix*. Moving a people ‘upward’ in the case of training, stable careers and collective projects or ‘downward’ in the case of punitive punishment/prison, its infrastructure is decisive. Similarly, Wacquant’s “ghetto as an institution of racial control” remains decisive even in the absence of a spatially contained ‘ghetto’ the same way racism can remain definitive in a “colorblind nation.” What Wacquant found in the ghetto in 1997 is no less true. It remains a repository for the economically retrenched while its institutions weaken and “push-out” at the level of residency, school/education, and training/opportunity conduits, “pushing-in” to the prison dragnet. In the hyper-modern era, what needs to be understood in order to deconstruct the persistence of extreme inequality, social exclusion, push-out, and school dropout rates is precisely these supra-institutional currents, channels and pipelines often fortified and/or sanctioned through municipal governance policy.

The emergent hyper-neoliberalism of its Neoliberal City embraces inequality as a kind of justice and in this way a ‘just’ outcome or the ‘ultimate equality’ infiltrating the social imaginary with notions of *equitable inequality* and *competitive-based justice*. In every social arena, aspects of the political veneer are revealed not the least of which is the arena of education. Much as Hill (2003) had foreseen ten years earlier, “Capital and neoliberal ideology and policy seek to neutralize and destroy potential pockets of resistance to global corporate expansion and neoliberal Capital...” including within the school and the social learning environment writ large. For Hill, the neoliberal politics of education is the politics of inequality operationalized through the careful reworking, rewriting and redefining of things like ‘motivation’, ‘academic standards’, and ‘social standards’ where the rise of one signifies the waning of the democratic countervailing power force of social resistance. And it is in this tension, the tension between the resistant will that longs to find expressive freedom and the emaciated social (the latter once having claimed social space once occupied by the vital socio-communal) – that youth today struggle to carve their path, while not being forced to compromise their own sense of right and their own sense of real.

Increasingly in Oakland, youth management engage the paramilitary imagination and/or surveillance, policing and/or the OPD. This is especially true for Mayor Quan’s promotion of a police cadet training school for youth as a job relief solution rather than a relatively centralized institutionally-anchored vocational training pipeline tied to the high school. As West and Dix described it, these youth are not opposed to law and order. Though, since so often on the receiving end of what feels like inequitable forms of “inner coloniality” (Grosfoguel, 2003), they would like to see it enclosed in a robust system of generative programs thereby ensuring social equilibrium. In the meantime, the disequilibrium of the system seems to grow further and

further out of sync while youth poverty rises alongside joblessness and paramilitary forms of career fortification.

In the grip of a people's revolution of the 1960s demands were being made for precisely the participatory democracy hailed by politicians as the hallmark of the American way. The vitality of community was a critical component to the larger socio-communal defense. Having lived through the 1950s, it was understood that the lie of political pluralism – equivalent to the lie of contemporary colorblind tolerance could conceivably more easily perpetuate inequality, racism, and social stratification than legalized apartheid. More had to be done giving way to demands in the fight to build society up through holistic and maximal participatory engagement including secured civil (1964) and voter (1965) rights. In particular, to ensure the integrity of democratic integration, there needed to be: 1) greater resources in areas resource-stripped as to give some credence to the conservative claim as to the universality of “competitive advantage”; 2) more effective oversight from higher levels of government preventing misappropriation, misuse and corruption, and 3) a chance for engaging political systems having shown some success to settle in before being condemned as faulty (cf. Altshuler, 1970).

Oakland's history suggests that institutional agency configurations must be aligned with participatory standards or simply produce and reproduce new forms of exclusion and /or pushout. Unfortunately, even stressing synchronicity of operations has not been able to secure a stable societal foundation for the youth experience in and of itself absent the inclusive socio-communal edifice. Today, most youth in high poverty areas have to hustle. Under the circumstances, the “hustle” youth refer to usually does not refer to academic performance so much as to pure social survival – and yet, this is the very arena receiving so little attention under the neoliberal individualism, enterprise, and community. The “hustle” might refer to juggling community college and trying to make a living at the same time or juggling two jobs to make rent and food, but it invariably refers to some aspect of getting by. At the same time, because of the hardship cut down ethno-racial lines, often amidst resegregation, and the return in inequitable conditions, treatment and opportunity, the Kerner Report's warning that America was moving towards two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal – regains validity. However, the current more extreme wealth/power polarization is animated through a more complex institutionally-embedded labyrinth with considerably less available in terms of countervailing leverage and/or opportunity.

Beyond welfare retrenchment, Nik Rose's “death of the social” (1996) has seen the utter dismantling of the youth mobilization premium as a governance retreat from the “youth unemployment problem” premium, both of which were once integral to the larger commitment to ‘maximum feasible participation’ (MFP) steering the generative Great Society vision. Paradoxically, the same material hunger that once inspired neighborhood cohesion now revolves around itself in a silent individuated solipsism often turning inward in retreat or some other fractious form. This too is deprivation. It revolves around itself for a people whose assets have been consistently stripped back. This kind of *silent depression*, the kind that feeds child poverty, is the ultimate context of a deep hunger well beyond the household or the school yard. Beyond the retrenchment of social welfare and assistential services is a move towards the push-out of systemic dualism not unlike the combined rapid industrial growth and rabid child exploitation of the Gilded Age. It is without a comprehensive dynamic engagement made

worse by the militarism/criminal order of the contemporary *inverted control social*. Writing in 1997, Robert MacDonald was already urging readers to draw out the connection between the emergent underclass and youth noting that the underclass controversy is in many ways a debate about youth, even if some writers are less than explicit that their prime subjects are young people. Contending with the foils of a dual juridical system to disadvantaging the already disadvantaged through stagnant or downward mobility channels - youth are made to pay the ultimate price largely through the contorting of opportunity infrastructure and the intense contorting of socio-educational standards.⁹⁴ Similarly, any vision of a people's educational system having dispensed of credentialing, certification, standards of administrative stability, all comes to fall back on the youth in the low-income districts exacerbating a life certainty leaving the 'stable unstable' as the remaining pillar of certainty.

Just as Polanyi (1944) describes the chaos of explanations used to rationalize England's poverty amidst the rise of eighteenth century market capitalism – explanations that included everything from too much bread to too many oxen – the combined effect of joblessness, welfare retrenchment, degraded wages, universal standards-based testing amidst inferior training and the preemptory life interruptions delivered down by the carceral carousel, escaped most accounts. Unlike poor family habits and bad attitude, even considerations of poor diet is less cited in accounts of low school performance, while also serving as a charter entry barrier in terms deterring enrollment (i.e., when free lunch is not offered). Meanwhile, dropout rates continued to be understated, an error that would not be set right until the Bush administration was out of office. By Obama's second year, the failure of the American public schools would become common news, as would the exceptionally high dropout rates particularly among minorities fueling calls for reform. As with Polanyi's England, explanations for the failure had everything and anything to do with immediate surroundings. With less concern for oxen, tea and dram, accounts focused on environmental staples, that is, teachers, family, peers and genetics. And, just as with eighteenth century England, there was little to no mention of the larger structural transformation of the capitalist political economy that had embedded within it a certain socio-political polarization and abandonment of the struggling peripheral poor who survived off remnants left in regime borderlands and other graying social zones.

Reviewing history, it is difficult to know how current notions of a 20% or less poverty rate within the most unique "recession" known to the country in terms of its structural transformation indelibility are maintained in all earnestness.⁹⁵ A blatant contradiction, the struggles of America's poor – growing against dismantled assistance programs large and small, the loss of unskilled jobs and job securities, austerity cuts to social and public services, notably education, welfare retrenchment, continuous political disempowerment – could hardly be thought to sustain the same levels of poverty. With percentages living in deep poverty doubling and percentages of children in poverty rising to over 30% since the early 1970s, either there is a deep polarization among the poor themselves affecting these populations more intensely or poverty is far more widespread than projected averages of 20 percent. Too quickly forgotten,

⁹⁴ Glenn Greenwald argues that a faux objectivity can be seen in both political and legal arbitration such that corruption and cronyism preclude the possibility of equality before the law (Greenwald, 2012).

⁹⁵ In late 2012, it was estimated that 50% of Americans thought it would take 6 years before the country emerges from the current recession, while 33% held that it was not a matter of "recovery" as its structural transformation was more than mere economic dip and would ultimately prove permanent.

the “youth unemployment problem” was a subject of concerted federal policy and research initiatives in the late 1970s, much as it was in the 1930s with Roosevelt’s creation of the most effective youth employment program: the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). As children quickly became one of the largest groups living in poverty by the 1980s, the “youth unemployment problem” was well-known among policy-makers to be tied to the overall rise in youth poverty (William & Kornblum, 1985).⁹⁶ Foretelling of future programmatic patterns, despite its successes, the CCC was fated to the instability of contemporary youth employment and/or training programs. As in the 1930s, the plans launched in the 1970s to expand subsidized youth employment and training programs calling for up to \$5 billion a year for a wide range of approaches aimed at helping young people “meet the challenge of a smoother transition from school to work” – were short-lived and invariably erratic in terms of operational implementation and efficiency as a result. The programs were eliminated with the historical turning of the political tide be it, in the case of CCC, World War II and the draft, or the countervailing force of Reaganomics’ slashing of *social investment as human investment* programs in the name of ‘necessitous small government’ austerity. In both instances, large federal programs delivering amazing returns in terms of youth jobs, paid training, participant engagement, learning, socio-cultural exposure and in terms of benefits to society as a whole⁹⁷ – are eliminated not long after they are created. By the mid-1980s, youth were clearly caught in the ebb and flow of these political tides as the 1980s foretold of the socio-institutional/operations strangulation that would mark out their future. With less to serve as a countervailing force, with fewer resources available to leverage in combating the high cost of living – even the at times taken for granted people’s colleges, not to mention the student’s union, the reach of its freedom of expression, and student newspapers in general are vanishing. Increasingly, youth are caught in a Gilded Age-like socio-economic gridlock. In what appears a zero-sum game, against the press of the vast riches of Business magnates was a dire poverty of the masses, including its youth, all for whom poverty as one’s fate loomed large to the point of eliciting a taken-for-granted resignation, that is, early signs and emotional states of dis’-engagement.

⁹⁶ In *Growing Up Poor*, Terry Williams and William Kornblum observe that, as a result of structural changes in the U.S. economy eliminating hundreds of thousands of entry level manual jobs, youth, often of the inner-city are some of the most adversely effected. While society as a whole remained convinced of a new professionalism including skills jobs for an educated population, this simply reified an already-existing educated/under-educated divide. Whereas in the past, the under-educated got on with their lives through on-the-job skill-building, they had rapidly and with little discussion become “prime candidates for depression, chronic unemployment, homicide, crime, and exploitation” (William & Kornblum, 1985 p.xiv) . In hindsight, Williams and Kornblum tapped its full implications, that is, in noting the direct line between youth unemployment and the health of the nation as a whole as it battles with escalating social problems including addiction, suicide, homicide, crime all of which is marked a priori by a certain unremitting social disengagement.

⁹⁷ According to a study done by Jastrzab, Blomquist, Masker, and Orr for Abt Associates Inc., findings showed that relative to operating costs of Youth Corps set against the value of service to society and earnings gains to participants, overall there was a “\$500+ cost benefit” to society (not calculating for additional psycho-social benefits to participants.) Critically, however, in drawing this ‘net gain’ conclusion the numbers invoke a growth liberal ‘social investment’ political philosophy inasmuch as “earnings gains to participants” are included in the calculation of societal benefit (People, 1997). Alternatively, according to the conservative neoliberal austerity logic driving Reaganomics’ “earnings gains to participants” would be assessed as a “social cost burden,” justifying program elimination. In this case, the assessment, “what works” is mired by ideological orientation and yet, youth performance may well have been unchanging. Retrieved from <http://www.abtassociates.com/reports/Youth-Corps.pdf>.

*Just What Are These Kids Looking For? ~
Dynamic Engagement, “Old School” Audible Voice, and Active Agency*

Like the most destitute youth of the early nineteenth century’s inner-city slums, youth from the city’s *Hungry City* are not concerned about their vanishing adolescence and hardly have the time to contemplate it. For the youth without a job, out of school, time ticks on at its own moribund pace. Even when hanging on the corner, the realities of social exclusion mean that part of them wants simply to be accepted while another part of them knows that acceptance means compromising who they are for the fiscal security of an insecure and/or uncertain path. Like the 1950s, to the extent that there is an opposition to the “technocracy,” there is a deeper politic driving polarized youth outcomes: the politics of civil and human rights. Gary Orfield explains the paramount inequality of undereducated dropout youth, the lives that follow, and the utter polarity of lifestyles to that of mainstream America as the results of a “systematic neglect of civil rights policy and related educational and community reform for decades” (Orfield, 2004). Orfield and McArdle explain the structural nexus at the root of the dropout crisis as revolving around neoliberal education, racism and urban gentrification. There are serious differences in opportunity to acquire housing wealth...good local healthcare...convenient access to areas of greatest job growth, high quality public services, networks to jobs and college, and many other forms of opportunity (Orfield & McArdle, 2006). “Hood” is short for “neighborhood” to the people who live there. In terms of a tool of oppression, it is traditionally an ethno-racial formation that combines and inscribes in the objectivity of space and social institutions all four major ‘elementary forms’ of racial oppression and/or violence, namely: categorization, discrimination, segregation and exclusionary violence. And yet, the lesson in observing contemporary forms of power politics and oppressive dynamism is that oppression clearly no longer requires spatial or material segregation so much as this blatant oppression is peripheral to socio-institutional oppression – a more subtle silent, and ominous oppression.

For Alexander, “Although this new system of racialized social control purports to be colorblind, it creates and maintains racial hierarchy much as earlier systems of control did” (Alexander, 2010, p, 13). Alexander concludes that the current exponential rise in the incarceration of minorities is tied to a contemporized Jim Crow that is operationalized through the prison system. In recognizing certain operational patterns, working across domains of social reproduction/production regimes, these hyper-modern forms of oppression are also recognizable and to some extent predictable. The fact that subjected groups will likely not fall perfectly down any clear line of exclusion, be it ethnically, racially or class – only follows a pattern of precisely such operational predictability. *While institutions are perpetually at work reproducing systemic oppression of all manner – it is voice, the voice of the people, not simply the ability to mobilize, march or protest, but structurally-embedded participatory political voice where the outcast, poor, and marginalized have at least enough political sway to influence governance outcomes at the municipal level – that is sought. Similarly, a similar voice is sought by youth, a true participation that would tear down the walls of isolation, lack of exposure, repetition, and alienation.* Currently, this aspect of integrated growth has been deliberately muted precisely as the corresponding socio-institutional infrastructure wherein government enacts laws where the poor/low-income of a district are guaranteed 51% control over the target areas (TAAC) and 75% representative voice on, for instance, the target area community board including veto power.

The central axis of the causal maelstrom of underachieving youth is inequality in America concealed behind a screen of equality and austere-lauded growth that is supposed to reinvest in the people within reason. Youth address to inequality as in “don’t got no clothes”, “don’t no one want to eat that food” or “the houses are cold on the inside with plumbing showing and this kind of thing,” it is almost impossible to situate their experience of inequality in its larger evolving environmental context. As noted by Kozol, when studying inequality in low income school districts and schools, “Equal funding for unequal needs is not equality” (Kozol, 1992, p. 54). Today, the acceptance of a standard of ‘equal funding regardless of need’ has gradually shifted across the aisle in a bipartisanism. A position like that of NCLB where underachieving traditionally low-income schools receive even less funding aggravates inequality for its student youth. Meanwhile, also absent is the increasingly eliminated premium of the socio-communal *production matrix* and a second analysis of its social reinvestment efficiency. Where Polanyi (1944) argued that in order for market institutions to operate with a modicum of fairness they have to be embedded in social norms and institutions that promote fairness, currently a corporate ideal has been achieved turning this reality on its head backbone to the *inverted control social*. Social institutions are subordinated to the corporate ideal of profit making at a premium – such that the correspondence gleaned by Bowles and Gintis (1976) between education and the economy, where the former is contingent on the latter, is still a boon.

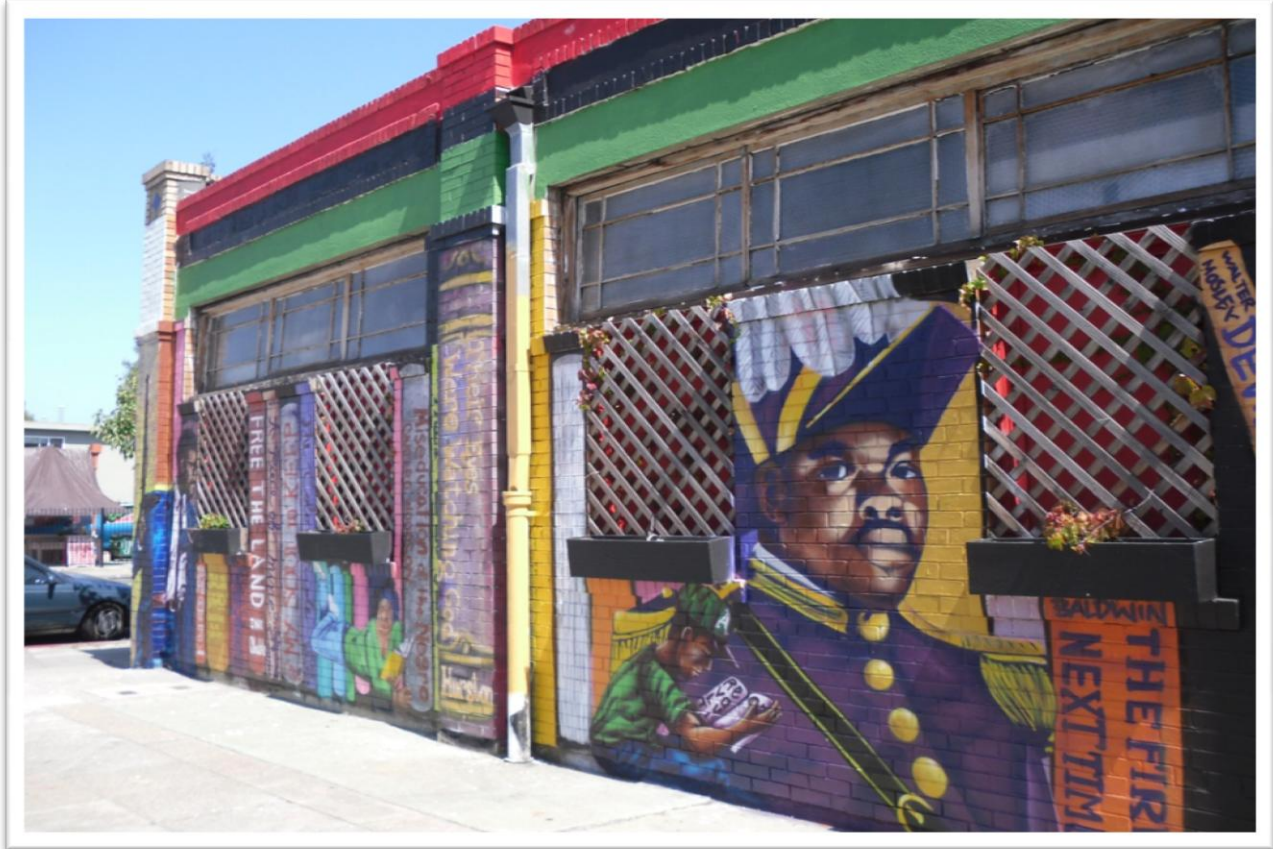
The youth of Oakland, like many of its adults, are at a loss trying to figure out how, absent countervailing power positioning, laws and politics will work in their defense taking on big money and/or power. They are challenged as to how, absent political participation, they can salvage countervailing force in the area of politics. They are further challenged, absent equality defined as providing for the socially disadvantaged as needed in terms of training and skill-building, that they can realize social integration and not socio-institutional hierarchical widening riddled with barriers, push-out and/or exclusion. John K. Galbraith notes that as competition disappears, replaced by a small group of firms, restraint on private power is threatened where monopolistic private power replaces competition (Galbraith & Williams, 2001). In this context there is wide panoramic of bodies of countervailing powers creating a social ecology that included substantive checks and balances: *The American economy was made up of large organizations, and to function properly, there had to be a system of checks and balances, of which unions were a critical element. But not the only element, corporations were acting as countervailing forces on one another. Producers countervailed against retailers and retailers against distributors. There was a whole ecosystem of checks and balances. The government is not a pure representative of the working population, but a mediator of all the voices that impinge on it. Yet, if the workers have no organized voice – and this includes subgroups of workers such as unions, families and young adults, politics grinds towards oligarchy as peculiar pieces and parts of its one-time vital arteries are sliced away as seen in the dwindling of youth inclusionary channels.* In the meantime, in a peculiar correspondence almost celestial in its corollary relations, the country witnesses the plague-like explosion of even higher levels of drug consumption often among these very men and women adrift as to their own vital social arteries, left questioning their own value, use and purpose, sometimes with an arrested development that renders the analytic self-reflection an unlikely way out. Growing numbers doubt their own use value while demonized by suspicions of an inescapable exploitation-driven market value. Analogies and images roll around in their personal imagery towards the American plantation, Dixie capitalism and what other horrors lay

behind man-the-market in a country where profits usurped the value of a people at least since their father and mothers generation.

Ultimately, political dynamism overlaps with social dynamism as they rise and fall as one amidst multiple ongoing retrenchment in delivering the government we have now veering as it is towards oligarchy. The frustration and despair borne of being politically excluded - of having one's voice silenced, being made the outsider of a juridical system that seemingly does not preserve civil or voter rights as much as execute a reigning political will as to what constitutes 'legal' – on top of being unable to find work – can overwhelm. Feeling this kind of oppression, youth have tenaciously sought to construct their own grassroots means to socio-political and socio-communal standards of recovery. While all training and learning is valuable, there is literally a world of difference between creative painting and media projects, and being given political voice; it is the difference between the hunger of the dropout and that of a student in a well-resourced school. Similarly, it is the difference between: *Image-ready America* and its *Hungry Cities*.



Medal winners John Carlos & Tommie Smith Power Fist 1968 seen on West Oakland's Mandela Parkway serving as constant inspiration as to what it means to fight the good fight, 2012. In 2012, it was written over to read "born with intelligence, raised with a fist" in a fiery social climate of seamless institutional exclusion contesting a rhetoric of 'genetic inferiority'.



The difference and distance in beliefs as to how to address what is perceived as a crisis of oppression and miseducation invariably proves its own source of fire as it does communal division, the latter fracturing communities.

Tryin' to make it real compared to what?

- Les McCann, The Swiss Movement

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