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Education by Dispossession: Schooling on the New Suburban Frontier

by

Rebecca Anne Alexander

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree of

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Committee in charge:  
Professor Patricia Baquedano-López, Chair  
Professor Zeus Leonardo  
Professor Ananya Roy

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**Education by Dispossession:  
Schooling on the New Suburban Frontier**

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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Patricia Baquedano-López, Chair

Both the housing bubble and the subprime meltdown ratcheted up levels of class and racial inequality to levels not seen since the 1930s. In the nation's increasingly diverse suburbs, this has meant both new forms of interaction and new forms of division. This dissertation looks at these dynamics through the eyes of an often-ignored subject—youth. Through an ethnographic examination of young people's transition to high school during the subprime crisis, I explore the ways in which a new economic paradigm—one based largely on dispossession—is transforming the educational and cultural lives of both very wealthy and very poor suburban youth. I introduce the framework of “education by dispossession” as a means of linking the current economic paradigm to the ongoing transformation of the educational institutions, ideologies, spaces and practices these youth encounter.

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My parents

Thank you for an inspiring childhood. I love you.

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## **Introduction: Education by Dispossession**

In May 2011 the house I lived in while writing this dissertation was purchased in a short sale. My landlord, Miriam<sup>1</sup>, had lived in the house since she was a girl. Her son, Jose, had been born and raised there. She, I, and a few other roommates, had cobbled together a sort of urban family in this house over the past two years while she waited for the bank to evict her or the house to sell. On one of the frantic five days of packing after the bank told her that a deal on the house had closed and a new family would be moving in, I stood watching Jose in the doorway. He was holding an old hand-held projector up to his eyes, looking at rolls of still photos with captions from the 1940s Worlds Fair. “Look at these,” he called me over. There, looking into the viewfinder, the iron screen door and overgrown lawn disappeared and the houses of Navajo Indians and the rocky landscape of the Arizona, New Mexico frontier filled up the space. There were sepia toned images of a “frontier store” and “a Navajo family and their home” complete with captions. “Do you ever feel,” I asked him, “like you’re part of a long line of people getting kicked out of their houses?” “Yeah,” he replied, and then went on to talk about how amazing it was that these pictures appeared in 3D. I’m not sure he understood my meaning.

That thread of connection between Navajo Indians on the Northwest Frontier and the current “sub-prime” crisis, shapes this dissertation. My intention is not to draw a direct line of descent between my young roommate and the Navajo but rather to talk about the ways in which frontier-making, race-making and identity-making shape the knowledge we value, the way we understand learning and the ways young people engage with and are engaged by schools and the formal (and informal) systems of knowledge they represent. The frontier is not just a line in the dirt, rather it is the idea of territories yet to be conquered, people yet to be civilized and development yet to come. The frontier requires not just the creation of the idea of empty, occupiable, space beyond, but also that of empty, vacant, underdeveloped, impoverished bodies and minds, ripe to be destroyed or incorporated—of villains who victimize and innocents to be saved. It is these constructs of emptiness that enable all which is ‘on the other side’ to be considered not only expendable, but also possessable, and, yes, educable.

Displacement, one form of dispossession (or one part of a larger socio-political act of dispossession), forms a link between the two moments I described at the outset—one captured on yellow rolls of film on an old view projector and the other in lock boxes, foreclosure notices and overgrown lawns. It would be folly to claim that these two acts of displacement are equivalent—the genocide perpetrated against Native peoples hardly seems equal to the short sale of a home amidst financial crisis—but they are related. The lens of history collapses hundreds of years of complex relationships into the catastrophic story that now represents the loss of not only Native land but also languages, cultures, ways of knowing, traditions and political systems (as well as the survival, transformation and ongoing re-imagination of many of these). Recognizing the romanticized (for better or for worse) past in the righteous present is not so simple a task. The small acts that make up history often seem so necessary, so ambiguous and so isolated without the benefit of hindsight. Who will recognize genocide if it happens on our watch?

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<sup>1</sup> All names and places in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

## **Dancing with Dispossession**

This dissertation is a re-engagement with a project I began many years ago—a project of trying to understand, think and write about the borders of race and class that shaped my childhood, my young adult life, and my education. I grew up immersed in dreams of the civil rights movement and visions of equality, yet living just on the White side of a vivid racial and class border that marked the edge of where I was allowed to venture as a child. I was placed in private schools because my parents were afraid of having their “blonde haired, green eyed baby” be the “guinea pig for integration”—their fear and concern about my being the only White student in my kindergarten class in the high poverty, low-performing and reputedly violent local school rapidly trumping their idealism. The progressive education I received—rich in music, dance, arts, laughter, and community; immersed in ideals of peace, freedom, justice and democracy—contrasted jarringly with the disciplinarity and competitiveness of the public high school I would later attend. The deep segregation and entrenched inequality at this “integrated” high school also disturbed the ideals of equality I had been raised with in my sheltered, mostly White, elementary school. As an idealistic child trying to make sense of not only the brutal racial and economic inequality that surrounded me, but also the contradictory messages from adults who tried to help me understand it, I was often confused and frustrated.

My research has brought me back to this border again and again over the years. I have gone back to familiar spaces and to those that were prohibited or otherwise strange to me. I have focused again and again on borders. How do human beings come to identify themselves in and speak a language of power through space? How do lines get drawn not only on maps, but also through our intimate relationships with one another—in our mental, emotional, and embodied space? Particularly, in my case, I am interested in how borders shape (and are shaped by) educational spaces. These questions drew me to Parkside High, a school much like the one I attended, a space riddled with complex borders and boundaries.

I will spend the remainder of this chapter introducing this school. I will explore the theoretical tools that helped me deepen my understanding of the dynamics that puzzled me as a child, and led me to this space with new eyes, new ways of seeing, and new questions. I will describe the questions that emerged for me as I dove deeper into educational literature, social theory, city planning, geography, ethnic studies, sociology and anthropology. I will describe how I set out to answer my questions and how this process actually unfolded as I tried to capture the amorphous worlds of young people, their families, neighborhoods and schools, in a rapidly changing socio-political and economic context. Finally, I will lay out a plan for this dissertation, providing a map for how I will tell the story of education by dispossession.

## **Introducing Parkside High School**

Parkside High School is an extraordinary school. It is one of the most diverse public schools in the nation in terms of both race and class. It is also one of the most highly rated schools in the country—consistently making the list in national rankings of the nation’s top schools. Yet, when educators in Glenwood (the city many of Parkside High’s students of color come from) are asked what needs to be done to help Glenwood

students reach college many answer “we need our own high school.” Why would a group of educators advocate that students who currently have access to one of the top high schools in the country, a high school where they are exposed to students across the race and class spectrum, be relegated to what would be a segregated high school in a high-poverty, low performing school district?

You may think they are simply out of touch or arrogant, but these educators are not alone. Within the past ten years two prominent, high achieving high schools explicitly designed to serve Glenwood youth have been opened—one by a major educational research university and one by a committed group of charter school operators. These schools both serve 100% students of color and have framed their mission explicitly in relation to the poor record of the local desegregated high schools, like Parkside High, in serving students from Glenwood. High dropout rates, low college attendance and oppressive tracking systems are top among their complaints. These schools both boast of very high rates of college attendance for their students (over 90%) despite their relatively low API (Academic Performance Index) scores in relation to schools like Parkside High.<sup>2</sup>

The nationwide resegregation trend is fueled not only by the retrenchment of residential segregation and ongoing legal obstruction of previous desegregation mandates, but also by efforts such as these—efforts that reject the idea that students of color must share classrooms or schools with White students in order to learn and either explicitly target students of color or simply reject or dismiss desegregation as a viable path to educational transformation (Scott, 2008; Rickles, Ong, & Houston, 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2006). Many, however, continue to extol integration, believing it to be the only recent educational transformation that has substantially narrowed the achievement gap (Condrón, 2009), and pointing to its social, political and civic value as a tool in creating common ground, providing equal opportunity, and addressing racism and prejudice (Fine, 2005). Still others, see integration as a basic question of justice—yet another promise made to communities of color and unfulfilled (Ogletree, 2004).

This dissertation cannot and does not attempt to provide answers to questions about the overall efficacy of charter schools, diverse public schools, or racially isolated schools (for work on charter efficacy see: Scott & Villavicencio, 2009; Credo, 2009). Rather, it works to unpack the broader relationships of power, race, class and place that inspire Glenwood educators to reject this top performing traditional, public, desegregated school. Race and racism, produced not only in reference to broader national categories and debates but also in the specific micro-politics of this school, are central to their concerns. To understand the ways in which Parkside High School becomes a problematic space for students of color from Glenwood (if indeed it does), we need to look at how youth and adults engage with and make sense out of—politically, socially and educationally—the dynamics of racial and class power that shape these educational institutions. This dissertation looks at students as they transition from Huerta<sup>3</sup> Middle

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<sup>2</sup> This can occur as very high achieving wealthy and White students can skew API scores of diverse districts, giving them an overall high API score even if their scores for students of color and other factors such as dropout rates are abysmal.

<sup>3</sup> In creating pseudonyms I maintained the use of Spanish language names and words wherever they were used in original place names. In this way, I intend to mark both the ways in which spaces were racialized through naming. In some cases, this naming responded to demands for culturally responsive institutions, and in others, it erased or glossed the histories of conquest and dispossession in California through the Anglicization of Spanish-language referents.

School to Parkside High School and asks the same question many educators are asking: what happens?

My core argument is that the relationship between Glenwood and the upper-middle class and elite White communities where Parkside High School is situated, is fundamentally shaped by a logic of dispossession. This dispossession is rooted in historic struggles over racialized space and resources that have produced continual threats to not only the physical, but also the educational and cultural resources of Glenwood's Black, Latino, and Pacific Islander residents. Just as the red-lining of Glenwood's neighborhoods created the opportunity for the extension of predatory lending through the sub-prime crisis, so too the redlining of Glenwood Schools—particularly in the form of White flight and lack of legal redress for segregation—has created a situation where failure can be portrayed as a “natural” outcome of failing schools, children, teachers, and districts, and predatory and opportunist educational policies and practices may flourish. My work focuses, specifically, on how young people, their families, and their teachers “make sense” out of and experience the sub-prime “frontier” and the racialized social relations which surround and produce it as part and practice of the project of schooling.

### **Research Questions**

This dissertation is centered around the spatial, social, economic and knowledge/power contexts that frame young people's transition to a “desegregated” high school during the sub-prime crisis. My research questions address: 1) The role of dispossession in shaping inequitable neighborhoods, schools and living conditions in these young people's communities, 2) The ways in which logics of dispossession—criminalization, illegalization and gentrification—shape young people's transition to high school across racialized space, and 3) The ways in which young people learn about, contest, produce and understand racialized inequality in the context of a desegregated but deeply divided high school. Specifically, I ask:

- Historically, how have neighborhood borders (and contestation over race and space) shaped education in Glenwood and Parkside? How have these historic struggles resulted in concrete inequalities between local middle and elementary schools? And how have these been transformed by the subprime crisis?
- What are the experiences of families, children, and educators in these contexts? In particular, how do illegalization, criminalization and gentrification shape the border-crossing transition to high school?
- How do young people struggle with, learn about, participate in and contest inequality within these racialized educational contexts and how do educators engage in talking with young people about these conditions and working to transform them? What are the limits of these efforts?

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

During the sub-prime crisis that began in 2007, nearly 2 million young people, a disproportionate number of them youth of color, were projected to lose their homes (Lovell & Isaacs, 2008)<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, many of their families lost years of labor and

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<sup>4</sup> Latinos are more dramatically overrepresented than African Americans in foreclosures (10% more than their share of the population v. 1% more for African Americans, with White foreclosure victims

investment in houses and communities, their cities lost taxes, and their schools lost both students and revenue (Oliver & Shapiro, 2008). This crisis, while it is the latest and most severe national housing crisis since the great depression, is familiar to suburban/urban communities (such as Compton and Oakland) where “White flight” sent home values into a free-fall gutting Black investments and city and school revenues during the 1950s and 60s (Self, 2003; Massey & Denton, 1993). This time, like in previous crises, families of color have suffered dramatic asset losses relative to Whites that have retrenched racial inequality. The present context of foreclosure and sweeping wealth transfer force us to look for theories of education that describe what happens in schools not only in terms of standard relations of class (Willis, 1977) but also in terms of dispossession and crisis (Fine and Ruglis. 2009). Dispossession, as I use it here, simultaneously describes a set of material structures and processes and a collection of cultural practices—it describes how wealth is redistributed and how people act within the context of that redistribution. While theories of class look to the wage-labor relationship as the primary site of capitalist exploitation and seek to explain the reproduction of that relationship, theories of dispossession understand that relationship, in and of itself, as incapable of the type of growth that capitalism demands. These theories look to an additional set of practices—practices that David Harvey (2005) identifies as similar in character to the “original sin” of capitalism, the enclosure of the commons, also known as “primitive accumulation”—to explain how growth is produced through crises.

“Free” labor and private property constitute two fundamental pre-conditions for capitalism. At the advent of capitalism the freeing of labor and privatization of property went hand in hand as feudal relationships were destroyed and peasants were expelled from communally held and used lands. Marx (1970) termed the rapid privatization of “the commons”—these commonly held resources—“primitive accumulation” as it was through these processes that capital was first amassed. Laborers, stripped of any means of subsistence but to sell their labor were thus “free” to do so in the market. Land, streams, and forest products, once utilized for farming, grazing, harvesting, housing and other basic forms of sustenance by all people according to their needs, were now privately held with such goods accessible only by trade for wages earned through employment. Primitive accumulation proceeded globally through colonization, the slave trade, and the seizure of assets until, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the frontiers of primitive accumulation closed with the so-called “scramble for Africa.” Some have treated these enclosures as an “original sin”—something that must be done to create a capitalist system that will, thenceforth, generate wealth through trade, the division of labor, and technological advance. Others have argued the seizure of assets and appropriation of resources continues (Roy, 2011; Maricato, 2009), largely to prop up a capitalist economy that cannot sustain necessary growth rates without such theft.

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constituting 19% less than their share of the overall population). However, because Blacks and Latinos also constitute a disproportionately small portion of homeowners overall, they suffered much higher rates of foreclosure relative to their participation in the housing market. Oliver and Shapiro (2008) note that African Americans and Latinos are twice as likely as white homeowners to suffer sub-prime related foreclosures, with 1/10 African American as opposed to 1/25 white borrowers impacted. More importantly perhaps, because of the very large wealth gap between whites and African Americans (7 cents to every white dollar) and Latinos (9 cents to every white dollar), the later two groups have a much greater share of their overall wealth tied up in the housing market.



Harvey's argument is that this enclosure, what he calls "accumulation by dispossession," is an ongoing process, not a one time initiating event. This is an important argument for theories of education, most of which root the causes of inequality and thus explain its perpetuation, either in the wage-labor relationship or in the production of race, class and gender. Dispossession provides important tools for grounding studies of social reproduction in schools in a set of materials practices that grapple in complicated ways with the role of schooling and the modes of social reproduction within the context of global capitalism. Harvey's analysis must, however, be put into conversation with other analyses such as Critical Race Theory, as his engagement with, and thus explanatory power in relation to, race is limited. In this section, I will first discuss the ways in which the idea of dispossession has been taken up and developed in the field of cultural geography, particularly as this addresses race, and then discuss how this articulates with critical work in the anthropology and sociology of education, particularly that which draws upon Marxist and Critical Race Theory perspectives.

Dispossession and exploitation are closely related concepts in Marxist theory. The difference between exploitation and dispossession, however, is that while exploitation implies a wage-labor relationship, dispossession implies a different type of relation—a taking not necessarily tied to the production process and certainly not to a wage contract. David Harvey has introduced the concept of "accumulation by dispossession" as a means of describing forms of capital accumulation/redistribution that arise to resolve the periodic crises that capitalism produces. Traditional capitalist relations produce crises, Marx theorized, because the profit rate inevitably rises and falls and capital is dependent upon continual, steady growth. One form these crises can take is as crises of accumulation. Harvey argues that these are caused by a surplus of capital. When there is a crisis there is extra labor power and extra capital, but no means to productively bring them together i.e. more has been produced than the market can absorb and capital, which must be invested to grow, has nowhere to go, nobody can buy or use it. Harvey explains the crises of the early 1970s, the late 1980s and the late 1990s as crises of accumulation—arguing that since the 1970s, when we shifted from a primarily manufacturing based economy to one centered on finance and dropped the gold standard as a means of regulating our currency, these crises have become increasingly common.

The solution to these crises of accumulation has increasingly been "accumulation by dispossession." Harvey differentiates accumulation by dispossession from primitive accumulation in that he, following Marx, believes that there was a productive or transformative power to primitive accumulation—the enclosure of the commons. It destroyed the feudal system and transformed the whole of European social relations spurring the enlightenment and the scientific and industrial revolutions. Accumulation by dispossession, in contrast, he argues, entails the destruction of productive (not stagnant or worn out) arenas by fraud, deceit, and violence. This may entail the transfer of public assets to private individuals via privatization, the seizure of new territories by force, or the manipulation of the credit system to produce fraudulent (but not necessarily illegal) profits. Two prime examples of such dispossession, both immediately relevant to the schools, communities and youth in this dissertation, are the sub-prime real estate crisis and the privatization of educational institutions. Both of these practices function to create venues for the absorption of excess capital via the creation of investment opportunities

and markets. In the case of sub-prime this occurs through generating real estate investment by opening up risky lending structures and thus tapping new markets, whereas in the case of schools, capital absorption is facilitated by the privatization of previously public assets (in the form of private charter corporations and educational management organizations), creating investment opportunities.

A theory of dispossession or, more accurately, accumulation by dispossession, is not only important for the ways in which it describes and links together a very diverse set of painful, exploitive and violent processes currently under way. It is also significant in pointing to the ways in which the relations of capital which shape young people's present engagement with schools—and, indeed, their lives more broadly—may be very different than those encountered by, for example, Paul Willis's (1977) lads in 1970s post-industrial England. Whereas the White working class youth Willis studied in the waning years of the booming post-war economy, resisted schooling as a mechanism of class mobility, glorifying and embracing working class jobs, today's young people have few such jobs to cling to. These jobs, despite Willis's clear depiction of their detrimental social impacts, existed within the context of a post-war welfare state and were protected from the most brutal aspects of capitalist exploitation—protections that, in England as in the U.S., were particularly bestowed upon Whites. Dispossession signals a different set of possibilities: Not working class jobs in a working class town, but rather displacement, illegalization, incarceration, impoverishment, instability, regulation, surveillance and dependency—not only for young people but also their parents, families and friends.

This is not simply a matter of rising rates of incarceration and an increasingly undocumented labor force. Rather, they are systemic to what Wacqaunt (2007) calls the “penal state” and DeGenova (2010) labels the “deportation regime.” Various forms of criminalization interlock to constitute means of both regulating surplus labor and ensuring its cheap and flexible supply. Wacqaunt labels this “advanced marginality,” a regime with distinct spatial manifestations including “territorial fixation and stigmatization,” “spatial alienation” and the “dissolution of ‘place’, and the loss of a hinterland.” Wacqaunt, in particular, paints a stark picture of the “precariat,” a class completely divorced from the wage-labor relationship, isolated in ghettos which no longer offer pride or hope but only danger and despair, and are linked and likened to prisons. Addressing education by dispossession entails attentiveness to criminalization, illegalization, isolation and stigmatization, particularly as they work in and through space on young people's bodies.

Attentiveness to spatial stigmatization cannot, however, mean reproducing deficit representations of ghettoized space. Indeed, these singularly negative representations of schools, youth, and communities, and the ongoing narrative of crisis that accompanies them, are critical in enabling an onslaught of privatization, community incursion, and displacement constituted as “development.” Too often work that critiques segregation creates a simple binary between a (White) outside that represents an ideal and a (Non-White) inside bereft with cultural, educational, economic, and other forms of dysfunction. The “deficit” theories of Oscar Lewis (1959) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1965) are notable in this respect, but Paperson (2010) argues that even more progressive figures on the left, including Gary Orfield and his colleagues at the Civil Rights Project and renowned sociologists Massey and Denton (1993) exhibit a singular focus on segregation doesn't get at the roots of racial inequality. They take “racial isolation as a cause rather

than a symptom of inequality” and imply “integration, assimilation and the eradication of the ghetto” as their solutions. Such an approach, La Paperson argues, overlooks the rampant inequality in desegregated schools and fundamentally neglects the reality that “the space of privilege produces, and is antagonistically constituted by, the space of oppression” (p. 12). While the work of these scholars provide powerful critiques of the ongoing retrenchment of spatialized racial inequality, and point to powerful ways in which this can exacerbate harmful social conditions in schools and communities, they leave White space as ideal space, relatively untouched.

Accumulation by dispossession centers a set of economic practices that revolve tightly around relations of space and place—both globally, in terms of imperialism, and very locally, for example, in fraudulent housing markets. To understand in greater detail how accumulation by dispossession and what Harvey calls a spatio-temporal fix become linked to the production of space, it is useful to engage with Neil Smith’s (1996) articulation of the idea of the frontier. The lens of the frontier centers the relational connection between, and the endless mutual constitution of, opposite sides of seemingly fixed and natural borders. It does so, moreover, with continual attention to the way stigmatization is produced as part of the process of frontier making and territorial expansion.

Smith looks at New York in the 1990s, what he calls a “revanchist city,” where anti-poor policies, aggressive policing and rapid gentrification transform the city into a bourgeois space, displacing the poor and working class in the process. This occurs, he argues, because crises of capital depend for their resolution, in part, on uneven urban development. Smith argues that gentrification, or the return to the city, is fueled not by middle class “tastes” but by the quest for profit. Disinvestment produces a rent gap that over time becomes sufficiently large to enable capital to invest heavily in urban redevelopment and still turn a profit. A key mechanism for this type of transformation is the long-term redlining of a neighborhood—closing it off from lending and investment—followed by the reversal of that redlining. While state initiated urban renewal constituted a major source of much previous gentrification, recent projects have largely been private ventures facilitated by the state. These include, for example, the privatization of public housing in New York, which gave individual tenants ownership opportunities but ultimately stripped them of their housing as they were heavily pressured to sell.

It is not only these local forces—disinvestment and the rent gap—that fuel gentrification, Smith argues, but also the search, by excess capital, for new profitable ventures, particularly in times of crisis. Thus, not only does capitalism work towards the annihilation of space by time (the erasure of difference through the collapsing of space by ever faster means of communication and travel) but also towards spatial differentiation—the creation of uneven development such that there is a rent-gap, such that there is territory to be remade. It is in this way that Smith comes to identify the process of the middle class return to the city as the new urban frontier. Not only does this differentiated space, impoverished by years of disinvestment, redlining and active discrimination constitute a profitable terrain for the absorption of capital—much as new territory might—the process of its possession is accompanied by a wild west, militaristic aesthetic that constitutes not only a material, but also an ideological, process of frontier-making.

Urban scholarship based largely on Los Angeles has focused scathingly on the checkpoints, gated communities, and residents-only spaces that fracture the racial

geography of that city (Davis 1990, 2001; Maher 2003, 2004; Flusty and Dear 1999). Much of this scholarship has appeared as a rallying cry against racial exclusion and the privatization of public space. These works highlight borders that visibly mark a racial order rooted in segregation and White supremacy, much the way “Whites only” signs did during Jim Crow (Davis 2001). As overt displays of racial and class power, exclusion and nationalism, they are potent symbols of the viciousness with which the defense of White space continues to fragment the U.S. In the more “liberal” San Francisco Bay Area, however, gates and walls rarely mark the edges of neighborhoods. Nonetheless, a checkerboard geography of race and class segregation and inequality coats the Bay Area metropolitan region (López, 2001). Here, instead of an overt politics of bigotry and nationalism, “colorblindness” and “multiculturalism” dominate public discourse (HoSang, 2010). The “soft borders” that edge even the most liberal cities in the Bay, however, are no more “natural” than the highly visible checkpoints scattered across Los Angeles (Sugrue, 2008; Alexander, 2011).

In all cases, the process of frontier-making is deeply racialized. The divestment that produces uneven development is enabled by racism. The dehumanization of people of color and the association of Whiteness with property (Harris, 1993; Bell, 1987) enable the foreclosure, gentrification and redevelopment of racialized space to remain uncoupled from critiques of the overall justness of the economic system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Similarly, the disproportionate criminalization of people of color, attacks on immigrants, and abandonment of public schools are presented part of the maintenance and protection, rather than the usurpation, of public property. Indeed, the withdrawal of the state has broadly been framed as the protection of the resources of (White) America from graft, fraud, misuse, violent assault and deprivation—all broadly portrayed as the result of investing (White) tax dollars in the (brown) public sector. Through simultaneous radicalization, exploitation, and disinvestment; neighborhoods, schools and individuals are stripped of economic resources and forced to grapple with extreme deprivation. While the social effects of such poverty are violent and painful, people also labor exhaustively to produce—learning, community, work, love, beauty, resistance, and resources—under such conditions. The frontier, however, operates not only through material disinvestment and uneven development, but also through a set of ideological projects that produce images and narratives of Black and Brown people and places as failing, violent, deficit, threatening and unsalvageable.

This production of a racialized and unsalvageable other—whether represented in as individual beings, racially marked bodies, or institutions such as schools and neighborhoods, has its corollary in the production of Whiteness. If frontier-making on the one hand re-works unevenly developed space (something that is constantly being produced) as empty or savage space in need of conquest, it reworks the other of that space as civilized space, or what Hill (1999) calls “White public space.” James Baldwin (1984) writes that Whiteness is nothing but “false and oppressive” (see also Roediger, 1994). It is not a real, authentic, biological or cultural identity, rather it is a phenotypically secured and culturally produced enactment of racial dominance. Whiteness is not equivalent with ‘White people’ but is, rather, a set of ideals and practices through which the production and maintenance of White power is enabled (Leonardo, 2002). Whiteness is not an individual production but a social one, secured in relations of domination and collective social and cultural practices. These practices are

both spatial and temporal. They work through borders, boundaries and frontier and they depend upon particular constructions of time i.e. White time as present time and all other times as past time. White public space constitutes one means of thinking about the spatial production of race and of Whiteness—a production that is not just secured through lines drawn on maps but through discursive and cultural boundary-making and boundary maintenance.

## **Methods**

This research project took place over the two-year period between August 2007 and August 2009 and was based on a pilot project that lasted from August 2004 to August 2005. Both these projects built upon previous work I had done teaching and researching in Glenwood and Parkside middle schools as an undergraduate intern in the spring of 1996 and my own experience growing up in Parkside and attending local schools. My undergraduate work was focused on helping middle school students connect across borders, understand the history of educational inequality in the area, and use community-based economics to analyze and question inequality in these communities. The pilot project focused on a White, liberal, middle-class neighborhood near the Glenwood/Parkside border that was organizing against a local Latino Supermarket. This work explored the ways in which White residents constructed a collective identity as parents and homeowners while utilizing and producing colorblind language to defend neighborhood borders. The dissertation research, which I initiated with the idea of understanding how young people “make sense” out of race and class inequality, emerged out of these two earlier projects.

While I attended high school at Parkside High (graduating in the mid 1990s) and conducted previous research in local schools and neighborhoods, my entry into the schools as I began my research was largely cold and blind. I had not set foot on the Parkside High Campus since I was seventeen and was unsure whether I knew anyone there. A similar length of time had passed since I had been on the campus of the Glenwood school I initially intended to study (Poplar Middle School) and I had never been on the Valley Vista campus. Moreover, the way I set up this research project entailed gaining access not only to three different schools but also to three different school districts. I sent out introductory letters to the superintendents of each of the three districts, describing my project as an examination of the transition to high school and awaited reply.

My initial intent was to focus on these three schools because all are in the city of Parkside—a city that, despite its liberal reputation, is also one of the most segregated cities in the United States. The egregiousness of the area’s segregation is most obvious in the placement of almost all of the students of color in the city of Parkside (about 20% of the city’s overall population), in the Glenwood City School District—a district that is almost 100% students of color. The long, lean city of Parkside, which stretches from the bay to the hills, is divided into three districts, one of which serves exclusively elite hill students, one of which (Parkside Elementary School District) combines the students in the central part of the district, which is primarily upper and upper-middle class, with the very wealthy nearby town of Lakeview, and the last (Glenwood Elementary School District), which combines the majority student-of-color population of the Eastern portion of Parkside with the students from demographically similar Glenwood City. Thus, three

districts are created—two that are upwards of 90% White and one that is almost 100% students of color. A bussing program (resultant from a previous desegregation lawsuit), brings students from Glenwood Elementary School district to the surrounding districts, introducing students of color to Parkside Middle School and dropping the percent of White students down closer to 80%. None-the-less, this deep segregation exists not between city and suburb, nor along the city lines, but bifurcates the city into racially exclusive elementary school districts that are highly unequal in both funding and quality.

Looking at students from the different parts of Parkside as they transitioned into a unified high school, seemed like a particularly powerful and simple way to explicate how racial inequality shaped the lives of these young people. I did not, however, gain access to Poplar Middle School, the school serving Parkside's eastern residents. After obtaining permission from all three superintendents to conduct research, I reached out to principals at the schools. While the other two schools responded positively the Poplar principal declined to participate. Later, I would learn that, consistent with the constant turnover that characterizes Glenwood School District, the principal of that school had just been fired and was serving her last two weeks before an interim took over. Forced out of the tidy frame of segregation within one city, I contacted the principal of Huerta Middle School, a school that, while not in the same city, represented a similar demographic to Poplar Middle School and would send a substantial number of students to Parkside High School. Because my focus was on neighborhood and school district (not city) boundaries, this change, while making my project somewhat messier, did not disrupt the overall thrust of the work. The Principal at Huerta, whose wife was also working on her dissertation, warmly agreed to work with me and welcomed me into the school. The three schools that granted me access—Huerta Middle School, Valley Vista Middle School and Parkside High School could not be more different from one another.

Huerta Middle School is on a big campus approached through Elm Street, a residential street off the thoroughfare, Poplar Road. The parking lot is big with lots of room for cars and large speed bumps throughout. You have to go very slowly. The school is split in half: a long row of classrooms face the parking lot and to the left is the K-5 school and to the right, the 6-8. A set of chain link gates divides the two sides when school is in session, but before and after school these are opened so parents can pick up kids from both sides at once. Huerta serves primarily Latino students, most of them first, 1.5 or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. It also serves smaller numbers of Asian Pacific Islander and African American Students, broadly reflecting the demographics of the district as a whole. Almost all of their students (90%) are low income. The school, like all schools in Glenwood School district, ranks in the bottom 10% of schools in the state in terms of academic performance and only 13% of their students are scoring above proficient in English and 35% in math on statewide exams.

Valley Vista Middle School is slightly larger than Huerta, with 650 students to Huerta's 500. The campus is in the middle of an upper class, mostly White suburban neighborhood less than a mile from downtown Parkside. The demographics of the school largely mirror the neighborhood, with a predominately White and Asian student body supplemented by Latino, Black and Asian Pacific Islander students, most of whom are bussed in from Glenwood as part of a desegregation settlement. With an API of 920, the school is amongst the highest performing in the state and boasts 75 and 82 percent pass rates in math and English on statewide exams. The school has very few low-income

students, with their free and reduced lunch program limited to a single volunteer with a cart handing out sandwiches and snacks.

Students from both these schools, as well as those from as many as 16 others, are brought together at Parkside High School following their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. While many Valley Vista students opt for private schools or charter schools, as do some of Huerta’s, the majority of students from Valley Vista, and a substantial minority of students from Huerta attend Parkside High School. Parkside High is a school in which no single racial group constitutes a majority—40% Latino, 40% White, 10% Black, 5% Asian, and 5% Pacific Islander, it roughly represents the racial demographics of the state as a whole. Parkside’s racial diversity is matched by its economic diversity as it brings together students from some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the state with those from some of the poorest. Coursework at the school is divided into five “tracks”—far below basic, below basic, basic, regular, and advanced/honors—placement in which is based on test scores but often corresponds to students race, socioeconomic class, and neighborhood.

Table 1: Key features of Huerta Middle School, Valley Vista Middle School and Parkside High School.

|                                |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>School District</b>         | Glenwood Elementary School District                        | Parkside Elementary School District                      | Parkside Unified High School District                      |
| <b>School</b>                  | Huerta Middle School                                       | Valley Vista Middle School                               | Parkside High School                                       |
| <b>Student Race</b>            | 75% Latino<br>15% API<br>10% Black<br>1% White<br>0% Asian | 8% Latino<br>4% API<br>4% Black<br>75% White<br>7% Asian | 40% Latino<br>5% API<br>10% Black<br>40% White<br>5% Asian |
| <b>SES</b>                     | 90% Low Income   | 5% Low Income  | 40% Low Income   |
| <b>API</b>                     | 615  | 920  | 770  |
| <b>% Proficient in English</b> | 13   | 82   | 56   |
| <b>% Proficient in Math</b>    | 35   | 75   | 35   |
| <b>Supplemental \$</b>         | 0 per student  | 1,300 per student  | 2,151 per student  |
| <b>Total Teachers</b>          | 29 (26 credentialed)                                       | 40 (all credentialed)                                    | 109 (101 Credentialed)                                     |
| <b>Total Students</b>          | 500  | 650  | 2000   |

The dissertation research itself took place in 8 distinct phases. In the fall of August, 2007 I formally outreached to school districts and school principals, seeking permission to conduct research in their schools and describing my project. By December of that year, I had gained access to all three schools. In January and February of 2008, I conducted initial observations at each of these schools. This entailed meeting school staff, becoming familiar with the maps of the schools, beginning to meet students, learning the structure of the overall program and observing in classrooms and at lunch and recess. I documented my observations and interactions in my field notes, focusing on the ways in

which race, place and borders operated in the everyday discourse and practices of the school and the students. I then engaged in a phase of preliminary analysis before returning to the field for focal student selection, more observation and interviews in May and June of 2008. During this period I selected and recruited focal students, seeking their consent to participate in the study. I also interviewed two 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers from Valley Vista Middle School and three 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers from Huerta Middle School and documented conversations with the principals from both schools and the student counselor from Valley Vista. During the summer, I engaged in a further phase of analysis, focusing in particular on my difficulties recruiting White middle-upper class students into the project. In the fall of 2008, I began research at Parkside High School, focusing on students I had either recruited or known from the middle schools. I conducted observations in a broad range of classrooms, at lunch and before and after school during this fall semester. I took field notes on my observations and on semi-formal conversations I had with students, teachers, and administrators. During this period I also conducted one formal teacher interview, five formal student interviews, and a parent interview. In January, I returned to the high school and focused primarily on student and teacher interviews. Between January 2009 and April 2009 I conducted 13 interviews with freshman teachers and school administrators, 14 with students and one with a parent. At this point I ceased formal data collection but conducted interviews with a few people I had been unable to access during the formal school year including the principal at Huerta Middle school and a counselor at a local college prep program.

### **Researcher Positionality**

The trajectory of my research was also shaped by my own life trajectory. In January 2008 I moved to be closer to my research sites. I had intended to live in Glenwood but as Glenwood houses were mostly not listed on craigslist and I didn't know anybody in the community, I had a hard time figuring out how I might get a place to live. I also realized that, unfamiliar with the neighborhoods and not knowing how I would fit in as a White middle-class woman, the idea of moving to Glenwood frightened me. Before I had time to deal with or confront my fear, a cheap shared housing opportunity came up in the nearby town of Westwood. Unable to resist the price or convenience, I moved in with a motley handful of European postdocs and working class White thirty-somethings in a run down one story next to the freeway. From here it was a three-mile bike ride down suburban streets or through fresh, lovely marshlands to Parkside or Glenwood. While getting to either of these schools was relatively easy, traveling between them (and between these two cities) was not. To do so entailed crossing over congested complicated freeway crossings, tangling with cars entering and exiting, and riding in crushed glass filled gutters—a journey many students of color and their families struggled to make every day.

While I did not work the first semester of my research, during the summer I took a job waitressing at a local restaurant to cover my bills. That fall, I also began working in the after school program at Huerta Middle School. While my formal period of research at the school was over by the time I began working there, being immersed at Huerta for the next three years gave me a critical level of familiarity with the school and the district I would not have achieved through my research alone. As a researcher working two 20-hour a week jobs, my time was stretched. In some ways this limited my immersion, but in



other ways, particularly as I appeared (and was) very real and messy and working, my relationships with the Huerta students in this project were eased—they liked that I worked, all their parents worked and worked hard. Also, being at both jobs immersed me in different aspects of the communities. I would ride my bike through Glenwood to Huerta middle school every day, sometimes running into kids I knew, getting to know the geographies, and generally keeping a pulse on what was going on. My other job was in the hills, at a restaurant frequented by some Valley Vista families. In this way, I was also in touch with some of the day-to-day goings on of Parkside and the surrounding upper class communities. Many of my co-workers at this job also lived in Glenwood, providing me with a touch-point with the community not centered on the schools. At this time I also began serving on the board of directors of a private progressive K-8 school in Parkside, an experience that gave me a better understanding of how progressive (mostly White) parents from Parkside were thinking about and engaging with “diversity” and, by extension, Glenwood. As time went on, I would also develop very close friendships with many people in Glenwood, some who I had known since high school and some who I met through Latin America solidarity work and through this research. As my relationships grew, particularly with Latino families of mixed documentation status and Black and Asian Pacific Islander families immediately impacted by violence in Glenwood, the carceral system and state surveillance, my understanding of the production of illegality (DeGenova, 2010) and the everyday ways in which bodies are racialized and regulated grew. My previous work with solidarity projects and popular education in El Salvador provided a lens through which to understand these dynamics as working through multiple borders.

My ability to enter these different spaces, to freely cross the border between Parkside and Glenwood, or the US and Mexico, to move between the front of the house and the back of the house in a restaurant with fluidity, and to be invited into board discussions on ‘diversity,’ were all shaped by my race, citizenship and class privilege. As a well-educated White woman, I am treated as non-threatening and, at the same time, granted the protection of the state—protection that is also deeply gendered. When trying to explain White supremacy to my students, I often tell them about my experience living in the slums of Nairobi. One night, while there, I accompanied four friends, all physically disabled men, to visit one of their wives who had recently had a baby. The car we traveled in, which had to be push started to run, frequently stalled in the muddy Nairobi streets. Each time it did, my friends would get out and push, leaving me in the car. The fifth time the car stalled, a car pulled up behind us. I believed they were going to push us, but quickly realized I was wrong as machine guns appeared in every window of our small car. The men with the guns were yelling. My friends were also yelling. The men had us get out of the car and put their guns to our backs. One put the barrel of his gun against my friend Mungai, the father of the baby’s, head, while he pushed him against the car and screamed at him. I believed they had stopped us because they had seen me, a White woman, and I was going to be raped or kidnapped or killed. I was terrified. After what seemed like endless screaming, the men with the guns finally turned to me. In only slightly accented English, the one who had put his gun to Mungai’s head asked me “are you kidnapped?” “What?” I replied. “Are you kidnapped?” he asked again. Only then did I realize that the men with guns were police, that they had assaulted my friends because they had singled out my White female body not, as I had imagined, to attack it,

but to protect it. White women are the presumed victims of Black men and the racial state, whether its agents are Black or White, is structured around our protection—even as this deeply gendered construct is also dependent upon our subjugation to White men. This invisible hand of state violence that I am, only sometimes, able to see, shadows my “access” as a researcher and my ability to cross borders safely.

It was not until after the formal culmination of this research that I actually moved to Glenwood. In July 2009, my landlord decided to sell the house where I lived in Westwood. At this point, the director of the After School Program, who stayed in a friend’s house that was awaiting short sale, offered me a room. I happily accepted. The experience of actually moving to Glenwood, however, forced me to confront what had remained latent and unaddressed throughout much of this research project—my fear. I was still, as I had been as a child, terrified of Glenwood. I wrote about this fear the first night I moved in:

On Sunday I moved in with Yamila and Miriam in Glenwood. I moved my stuff with my dad and Exar, Carlos was the only one in the house. I had no key. We stood outside for a long time trying to wake Carlos. On the street, before we get to the house, there are men, Black and Brown men, dreadlocked, guarding the streets. There is a man across the street washing his car for hours, Latino, skinny, middle aged. There is a window to my room that has no bars on it. Sunday night I sleep at Exar’s and I am up half the night. Worrying about jobs but also worrying about my stuff, about my house, about whether someone will have seen White little me walking down the street and will smash the window thinking my shit is worth something. I worry about taking a bullet through that little window from the street. I worry about the men down the street in a vague and inexplicable sort of way. I experience, in the middle of the night, in the whole process of moving, a terror that is deep and irrational and panicked. I have to go by the house Monday morning and look to make sure the window isn’t broken. I have put my hard drive in the top of my closet to ensure that it doesn’t get stolen if my computer does. I have left my ipod and my guitar at the old house. I felt that my Whiteness made me suspect, made me outside, and I wanted to lock doors as soon as I went through them. Of course partly this is just general advice around town. But there is no neutrality, I realize, in my project. There is nothing close to a neutral or objective position because it is clear to me where I fit on the inside and where I fit on the outside and that registers in the levels of terror. I experience, of course, terror at [my mother’s], but it is not terror of those around me, terror of neighbors. It is terror of outsiders and in this sense I am completely a part of the

neighborhood no matter how much I critique. I understand the fears as familiar, if not rational. Perhaps even rational. But there is a fear of Black and Brown men, Black in particular, that I have to fight every day. I have to fight it. I have to fight my fear of the neighborhood. I have to fight my fear of the city. I have to fight my fear that I am outside of and different than and targeted in and special within. I have to fight the sense of my specialness. And I have to fight terror. (f.n. 8/25/09)

The terror I articulated that night as I moved into the house in Glenwood that would be my beautiful home for the next two years—a space of wonderful family and safety—became a vital part of this project. As did my experience living in the city over the next three years. This is a dissertation about borders, about the material and imagined aspects of spaces and the ways in which these are lived. It is about the ways in which race and racism impact what schools do and how kids function. It is also about the structural emotional realities of poverty and inequality—one of those realities is terror.

When I tell the story of the police assaulting my friends in Nairobi, I often leave off at the point where I left the story above, making a point about violence and White privilege and moving on. Sometimes, however, I tell the second part of the story—the part where I, terrified, angry and confused, feeling my body made us all vulnerable, lashed out at my friends—the same friends who had just had guns pushed into their heads and been slammed into a car on my behalf. I lashed out at them for taking me out at night, “didn’t you know,” I asked, “that I would stand out? That everyone could see me? That I would be a target?” I cried. My sense of my own White female vulnerability mirroring that articulated by the police and unleashing a second round of terrorizing violence upon my friends. In this dissertation, I use my own racial fears, something I treat as normal in a racist social order, as a means of understanding the ways in which White fear, power and supremacy redouble the violence visited upon communities of color, reproducing a terrorizing material and psychological context (hooks, 1992), compared to which my own anxiety about my well-protected body is but a ghost story.

The fear that I wrote about at the end of my research, as I moved into Glenwood, and, indeed, that inspired this project as I thought about my young freshman self as I encountered racial difference, is fundamentally shaped by Whiteness and White supremacy. You will remember, my fear was that I had been spotted as White—as a White, female body in Black and Brown space. I understand it now as a combination of a rational fear—a fear of not being safe and protected that people in Glenwood live with every day and that results from living amidst structural, institutional and physical violence—and a racist, racial, gendered, fear, rooted in White supremacy, for my own identifiably White body and things in the presence of Black and Brown men. Critical Race Theory, particularly that which addresses Whiteness, provides insights that explain both my approach to race and racism in this project, and the particular ways in which race and racial terror constitute the building blocks I used to frame and analyze my data.

While clearly about race, however, my story is also very much about space—it is about border crossing. Mine and others’ border crossing is something a liberal perspective might view as a positive response to natural differences and a means of

bringing people together. A more critical perspective, however, treats the border and the crossing as deeply imbued with relations of power, which are connected to racialized bodies and the movements and demands of capital. Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) writes of her home as a “thin edge of barbed wire,” describing the process of living across multiple, violent, imposed and arbitrary borders. Within the context of imposed and violent domination and subjugation, however, she also articulates how borders can become critical tools for struggling against annihilation, forced assimilation, and territorial, spiritual and psychological loss. Sovereignty is often a critical point of struggle for oppressed communities (Grande, 2004) and borders around space, language, culture and identity are often a last defense against the onslaught of the frontier. The transgression of those borders by people in positions of dominance often constitutes a terrorizing act (hooks, 1992). From this perspective, that of the frontier, my border crossing is potentially violent, not benign or good.

The lens of the Frontier makes it clear that relations of race and power are also relations of capital. The concept of dispossession, specifically accumulation by dispossession, provides the theoretical anchor that describes the economic forces that underlay my move into Glenwood and its historical formation—a series of short-sales, a border that was not only about race but also about poverty, and my own career as a perpetual graduate student. Accumulation by dispossession is about the specific economic moment we live in, the flows and mechanisms of capital that shape how race and borders are lived.

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

In the first chapter, I describe the complex ways in which a set of community borders (which are also elementary school district borders) are forged and understood in a Bay Area suburb. Drawing on data derived from observations at neighborhood meetings, conversations with political activists and educators, participation in multiple community contexts and archival data, I show how struggles over school and neighborhood borders shaped understandings about race and education in these communities. I show how very different projects for Black educational justice converged around the objective of naming, demanding recognition of, and attempting to redress racism—putting racism “on the map” so to speak. I also show how Whites resisted these efforts, focusing on the ways in which “unmapping” racism, deploying and reworking a discourse of colorblindness, became an increasingly effective strategy as legal support for desegregation waned. I demonstrate how an effort to cross borders was transformed into a struggle to defend borders as White resistance to desegregation increasingly threatened the educational resources of the Black community. I draw upon theories of desegregation that have described such processes in other geographies and suggest the theoretical tool of “unmapping” as one useful way to think about the colorblind discourse that became hegemonic in the 1980s. I furthermore suggest, in this chapter, an understanding of “education by dispossession” as part of a struggle on continually shifting terrain in which the struggle for transformed conditions is an educative process.

In the second chapter, I look at how the segregated geographies, and attendant borders, carved through the struggles over desegregation, are lived by families and children within the context of the sub-prime crisis. Situating neoliberalism within historic geographies of redlining and dispossession, and vice versa, I look at the border crossing

and border-defending strategies of families coping with forced displacement, migration, and gentrification. I look at three different practices—makeshift bordering, uprooting, and living in the bankrupt bank—using these to describe how parents work to educate their children in the context of dispossession. I show how, while there is intense pressure toward individualization, personal responsabilization and cultural annihilation on these families, they also work through collectives (however small) to produce and defend both physical and ideological space. The mobility/immobility duality identified here, points in at least two different directions. First, towards the precariousness of investment—whether in education or anything else—within the context of ongoing dispossession. Secondly, towards the complex of survival strategies and strategic relationship with borders, knowledge, and identity not easily pinned by modern or postmodern theory.

The third chapter addresses how class and race conflict have shaped the educational institutions these families have access to. This chapter looks at two middle schools, one on either side of this neighborhood border, demonstrating the gaping resource and educational divide between them. It also, however, situates these schools within the “sub-prime” logic of the educational frontier—asking about the concrete ways in which the “failure” of one school is produced and what is elided in this story of failed spaces, children and educators. Ultimately, my argument revolves around the knowledge/power relationships between these two spaces and the ways in which their respective positions in political struggles over educational opportunity have shaped their educational project. I argue that ‘predatory equity’ constitutes a lens through which we might see the relationship between these schools, as the privatization of ‘failing’ educational spaces, in the form of charters, vouchers etc., becomes a dominant discourse about how to resolve such gaping, and intentional, inequalities.

The fourth chapter looks at the transition to high school through the lens of the different logics of containment and bordering at Huerta Middle School and Glenwood High School. Specifically, I look at the practices of lockdown, lock-up, and lockout to examine how borders become part of the educative process. I argue that both schools make the control of bodies in space a precondition for access to educational spaces, but that at Parkside High School, the control of Glenwood student’s bodies becomes overdetermined by their outsider status. The transition from middle school to high school for Huerta youth thus often includes shift in their perceived status from children in need of protection from outsiders to outsiders who constitute a threat.

The fifth chapter focuses on undocumented students and explores a logic of commodification, a counter-logic to that of containment. Zooming out to a broader lens, it also asks how not only borders, but also discourses of illegality, become relevant for a broader cross-section of Glenwood students. Lastly, this chapter examines the ways in which school officials engage with and speak about Glenwood youth. I argue that colonization, exoticization and illegalization are evidenced in these interactions as, on the one hand, Glenwood youth become part of the territory claimed by these adults as they begin to learn their stories, and, on the other, the commodification of these young people substitutes for solidarity and common struggle. This is not, however, a simple dynamic, as young people (and allies they find at the schools) strategically navigate these spaces, pursuing their own ends, creating their own meaning, and taking advantage of both resources and opportunities.

The sixth chapter looks at the experiences of White students transitioning to high school and the encounters of students of color with them. It asks how these young people not only navigate diversity and difference, but how they engage in the production or contestation of segregation. In short, I ask, how do White students act White? Situating these students (as with the students of color), not as dupes of their parents, but as strategic actors negotiating their own educational advantage, I focus on the particular ways in which White students work to secure and defend space. I argue that White students aggressively avoid racialized spaces not based on their minority or majority status within them, but rather, based on their power within them. Activities such as service, educating and tutoring, as well as anthropological ventures such as learning about, collecting and dissecting are comfortable power-relationships with students of color. In contrast, being placed with students of color (in lower-track classes, disciplinary spaces etc.) is considered degrading and intensely resisted. Whiteness appears in this chapter not as a set of cultural activities but as a relationship to an ‘other,’ rooted in a politics of knowledge and power.

The seventh, and final, chapter enters the classroom context and looks at attempts to discuss race with students on the day of Obama’s inauguration. Here, I draw upon Leonardo and Porter’s (2010) discussion of liberatory violence to ask about the politics of ‘race talk’ at diverse but deeply unequal high schools. I look at the ways in which narratives of progress, rooted in the ongoing logic of White supremacy, become the empty hope offered to students who voice their objections to these narratives through silence and linguistic disorder. This chapter pushes hard against literature that suggests that what desegregated schools need is more “race talk” and asks instead about the politics of teaching in a context where some students safety is more valued than others.

I conclude by retracing the idea of education by dispossession and using it to think about the integrative imagination. What are the different ways in which integration has been imagined and what do the politics of accumulation by dispossession teach us about its pedagogical possibilities and limits? Engaging with decolonial scholarship, I ask about the possibility of educational practice aimed directly at understanding and transforming the brutalizing conditions and rampant inequality young people are subject to on a daily basis.

### **Nine Focal Students**

This research project revolves around nine focal students and their families, teachers, friends and schools. These young people generously let me into their lives (to varying degrees). They let me follow them around school, sit in on their classes, meet their friends and, in some cases, come to their homes. They and their stories weave in and out of this dissertation, but they are not the primary focus of the work so much as the constellation of events around them is—the world as I see it when traveling through their space. I will introduce them here and they will appear at various points throughout this work. Five of these youth are from Glenwood and four are from Parkside. It was a delight to get to know and spend time with each one of them. When I first met them they were kind, thoughtful, caring kids, they have grown, over the course of this work, into incredible adults.

The five young people I worked with from Huerta were all friends. Their allegiances to and relationships with one another shifted throughout the course of this

project, as they had before and continued to after, but they all knew and cared about one another. Dijon and Sevite were best friends, had been since fifth grade, and continued as such throughout the course of this project, despite huge differences between them. Dijon was African American, short, clean-cut (but with style), studious and respectful. He lived with his mother and sister in a small one-bedroom apartment and had been homeless for periods of time. Sevite was a tall, lanky, Pacific Islander with long hair, the shadow of a mustache and a big smile. Living alone in a large house with his often-absent father, Sevite seemed to tangle regularly with authority figures. Both Dijon and Sevite had strong school records and scored at or above grade level in math and English. While Sevite had begun to neglect his schoolwork and had developed a reputation for trouble by the time I met him, his friends and teachers remembered when he had been amongst the strongest students at the school.

Jacqueline was close friends with both Dijon and Sevite and confessed to having had crushes on both of them at various points in the past. An A student, member of the dance team, and very popular, Jacqueline was known for her bright colors, big smile and gregarious personality. She lived with her mother and brothers and her father was incarcerated. Maria and Memo were both also friends with Jacqueline and the others but, having both crossed the U.S. Mexico border when they were ten years old, these two seemed to have a special bond. Maria and Memo were also very strong students, also scoring at or above grade level in math but still, when I began shadowing them, labeled and placed as Limited English Proficient. Both lived in small living quarters with large families, although Memo's circumstances were far more extreme, and both families were deeply religious.

In contrast to the students from Huerta, the young people from Valley Vista who eventually joined this study were more disparate. Though only slightly larger, Valley Vista has much more clearly defined student groups than Huerta and as most of the school (as opposed to only a small sub-set of Huerta students) transferred to Parkside for high school, these groups tended to stay in tact. Tasha and Charlie were both part of what might be called the "drama" group—students who took part in plays, band and other art-related activities. As she describes them compared to other groups at her middle school: "there are, the people that you know, wear Juicy and are just, classic mean girls and sort of stuff like that, yeah, we're sort of the uh, the whoever doesn't make it there can hang out with us. Just, it's the everybody click." Jason, a third generation Chinese-American student, loved acting and debating and was a very high achieving student. He lived with his parents in a house in Parkside. He and Tasha weren't close friends but they ate lunch in the same general area. Tasha was a student who worked hard and struggled to stay in advanced courses. She seemed sincere and open and was known as a reliable friend. She counted her mother as her best friend and lived with her and her father in a house in Parkside.

Caz and Talli were both part of different groups of students. Caz was part of a group generally recognized by itself and others as the 'cool' kids. Extremely outgoing, he was one of eight children and lived in a large house in the wealthy part of Parkside district. He was a student who seemed to get high A's without trying and his father was the CEO of a successful company. Talli also lived in the wealthiest part of Parkside. Unlike other students from Parkside, however, in middle school she largely hung out with students of color who were transfer students from Glenwood. Grappling with her

mother's alcoholism, she struggled to keep up academically, and had perhaps the worst middle school academic record of any student in this study. Caz, Talli and Tasha were all White and all four of the Valley Vista students can be classified as upper-middle to upper class.

As they transitioned to high school, some of the students from the different schools came to know each other. Caz, Sevite and Dijon were all in the same Geometry class; Tasha and Memo took World Studies together, though I'm not sure they really got to know one another; Jacqueline became good friends with Caz's girlfriend and invited them both to her Quinceañera; and Caz, as a member of the homecoming court, seemed known by everybody. The question this dissertation sought to answer was not do and can these students become friends. Of course they can and sometimes they do. They are thoughtful, loving, engaging people and they make and sustain friendships across all sorts of divides. The question is, rather, about the relationships, the context, and the struggles that shape this coming together and the complex ways in which the experience of the Glenwood students, most of whom are hauling as hard as they could on their own bootstraps, and the Parkside students, most of whom didn't even feel the strong tailwind pushing them forward, can help us understand education by dispossession.



## **Chapter 1: Redlined: A History Of Schools And Borders**

On one of my early visits to Huerta Middle School I was talking to the office assistant, Alicia, when the vice principal, Francesca, approached looking for information about High School Assignments she could pass on to parents. “What’s the easiest way for me to get information to parents about student assignments for next year?” she asked casually. She was looking for information about which of the four schools in the Parkside School District Huerta students would be assigned to the following year.

“Call the district,” Alicia replied.

“Is that the best way, just to have them call the district?”

“Probably”

“Do we have some kind of information sheet for them?”

“Yeah I have something here.” Alicia started digging in the black file drawer on the counter.

As Alicia dug for the information sheet, it quickly became apparent that what seemed like a simple question in fact pointed towards the complexity of mapping the transition from Huerta Middle School to Parkside High School. I was listening intently to this conversation because I had, myself, been trying to dig up the answer to this same question for over a month.

I had begun my search by going online and looking for a map of the district attendance zones. I was not able to find a map, only a search engine sponsored by the district. The search engine had the name of the school district at the top, then a colored bar that said “boundary search” followed by the instructions “simply type in your street address to learn the school assigned to that address,” the words “boundary search” again, and the opportunity to fill in your street name and street type (ave., st., way, etc.). You could enter the name of your street (or any street in the district) into this search engine and it would tell you which high school children from that street were assigned to. Depending on the street, the boundary search results would sometimes specify different school assignments for odd numbered houses, or for houses in different address blocks. For example, students from McGee Street were assigned to Parkside if they lived in the 1800-1899 block, Westwood if they lived in the 1900-2199 blocks or the even numbers of the 2200-2216 blocks, and Hillside if they lived in the odd numbers of the 2211-2397 blocks or anywhere in the 2255 block. These convoluted responses produced by a computer to the input of street addresses, while fascinating, offered no sense of the overall map of the district attendance zones. By subbing in different streets from different Glenwood neighborhoods, it was possible to get some sense of how students were assigned, but not a clear picture of the geographic boundaries that shaped that assignment—indeed, “boundary search” obscured precisely the thing it presumed to announce—the attendance boundaries.

Convinced that there must be some sort of physical map available, I contacted the district. “Oh, you can just go online and put your information in the boundary search,” the secretary at the district told me cheerfully when I asked about a map. I explained that

I was looking for something that would give me a visual representation of how all the students in the district were assigned—something I could not get from the boundary search tool. “Oh,” she replied, “I don’t think we have anything like that.” After much persistence I was able to connect with someone who had access to a map—“it’s not recent, though,” she warned. I said that any map, no matter how out of date, would be helpful. A few days later, I drove 10 miles across town to the main district office where I picked up a yellowed, 21X16, typewritten map, folded in eighths and creased down the middle. It read:

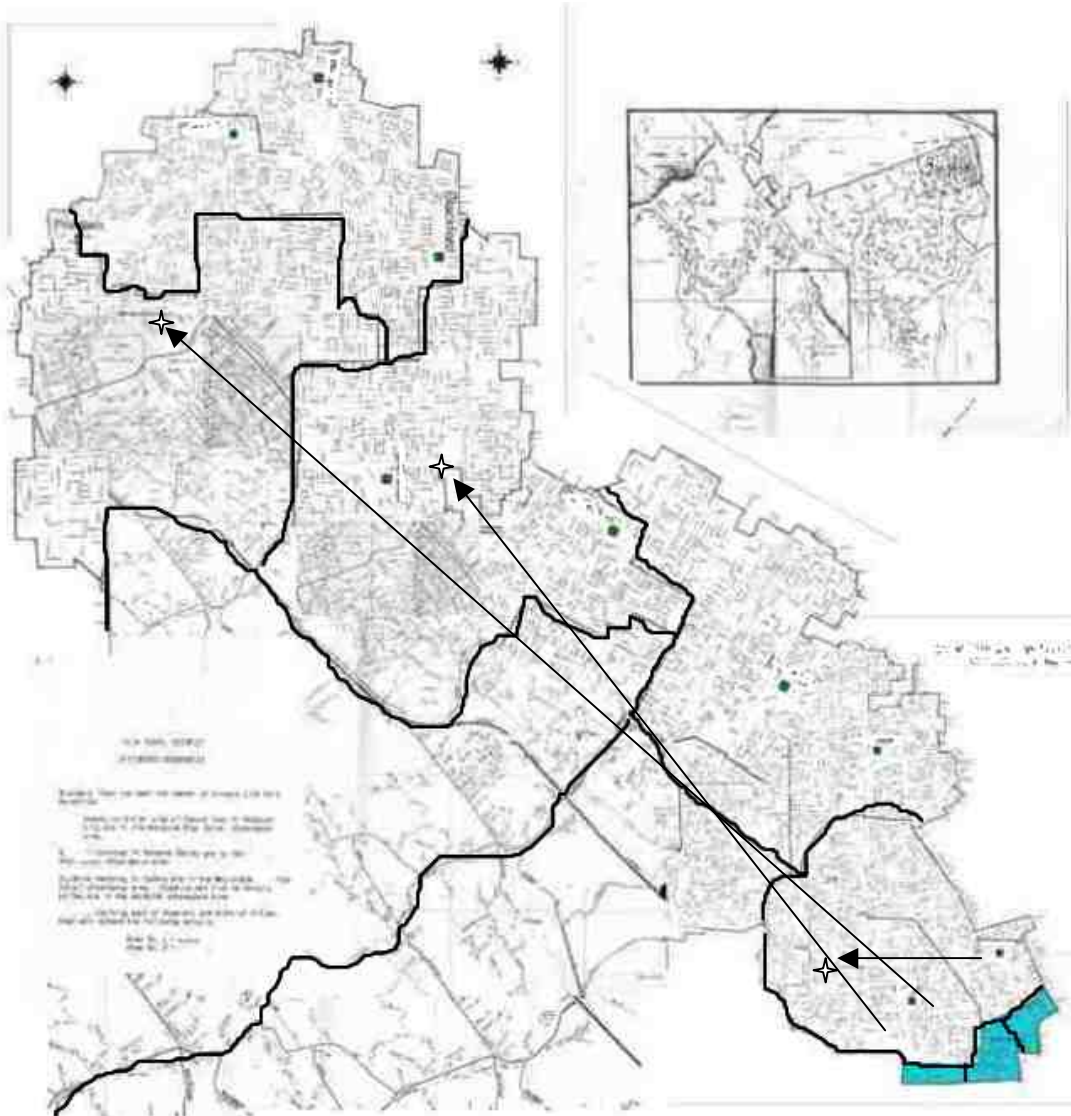
MAP OF  
PARKSIDE UNIFIED HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ATTENDANCE AREAS  
Effective 1987-88 School Year

At the bottom the map read, “Map Copyrighted 1986 by the CALIFORNIA STATE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION” (Reproduced by Permission). Unfolded, the front of the map showed exactly what I had been looking for, the clearly delineated attendance boundaries of the different high schools. On the back it listed basic information about the school district including contact information for all four high schools—Parkside, Westwood, Hillside, and Castleton—and stated the district’s “nondiscrimination policy.” “The Parkside Unified High School District,” it read, “is opposed to segregation in the public schools in any form, be it racial, socio-economic, political, religious, or based on sex” and went on to reiterate its policy “not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed or sex in the admission of students to school programs” and other activities. The tangled attendance geographies on the front of the map and the non-discrimination policy on the back of the map began to reveal what the “boundary search” engine obscured—the convoluted, political and racialized nature of the Glenwood Unified High School District attendance zones (See Figure 1).

**Unmapping Race: Producing A Colorblind Map**

One of my first questions, upon seeing this map, was why 1987? While the Parkside Unified High School District boundaries had undergone intense re-organization in the 1970s as part of anti-segregation lawsuits, the number of schools and the assignment policies were relatively settled as early as 1976 when the last High School in Glenwood—Glenwood High School—was closed down. Nothing significant seemed to have occurred at the High School level during the 1987-1988 school year that would have necessitated a new map or resulted in the cessation of all future attendance map making. It was only when I began to look at the broader history of the area’s educational struggles—particularly those over attendance boundaries—that I began to understand the significance of 1987-88. The 1987-88 school year marked the beginning of a new era for the Parkside district—an era without anti-discrimination lawsuits. This year, which followed the settlement of a major lawsuit addressing segregation in local elementary schools, was the first year since 1951, when the area’s African American population began to grow, that the communities in the Parkside High School district had not been involved in promoting, defending or fighting against racial segregation.

Figure 1: Map of Parkside High School District Attendance Boundaries 1987-1988 School Year. The small shaded area in the lower right corner is Glenwood Elementary School District. Arrows indicate where Glenwood students are sent to high school. The entire map represents an area of approximately 15 X 15 miles.<sup>5</sup>



Indeed, not only in this district, but nationally, 1986 marked a turning point in school segregation. For the first time, in this year, a federal court decreed that once a school district had fulfilled the “Green Factors”—the desegregation stipulations outlined for districts in the Green decision—they could be released from their desegregation mandates (Armor, 1995). If a pendulum could represent desegregation, this year might represent the apex of the ball’s swing, a year in which a movement that has been losing

<sup>5</sup> I created this map as an approximation of the original map I was given by district officials utilizing pieces of maps from different regions throughout the Bay Area, woven together as a mosaic. The original map is not included here to protect the anonymity of the schools and the district.

momentum but still making some forward progress, pauses before beginning a long slide backwards. This year not only marked a shift in the momentum for school desegregation, it also marked a shifting in the broader terrain of racial discourse and policy—the rise of a resurgent racial backlash Omi and Winant (1994), in their book first published this same year, call “color-blind” and Bonilla-Silva (2006) more explicitly calls “color-blind racism.” Parties who explicitly rejected notions of a colorblind constitution when these would have advanced civil rights and undone de jure segregation, now embraced the idea of colorblindness, with a vengeance, as a tool for dismantling the gains of the civil rights movement (Haney López, 2006). Particularly in the arena of affirmative action, but also in school desegregation, the Reagan Administration was able to unravel decades of focus on redressing White racism’s impacts on Black and other students subject to discrimination. Instead, they recognized Whites as the *victims* of racism, which they claimed was perpetrated by “supporters of civil rights” who “exhibit the classical behavior system of racism. They treat Blacks differently than Whites because of their race” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 135). Racism was thus redefined not as discrimination and violence against people of color, but as the notice of and reference to race in efforts to remedy these.

The district map and the anti-discrimination statement on its back side on one hand represent the result of a decades long struggle against racism in Parkside schools—a struggle that forced open segregated White schools, that initiated extensive cross-border bussing, and that transformed the ways in which race was talked about and understood in these regions. At the same time, it represents the moment in time where that struggle lulled—where, in Gramsci’s terms, resistance was incorporated into a new hegemonic formulation (Gramsci, 1971; Forgacs, 2000), one that redefined racism as precisely the type of attention to race that had made what limited remedies had occurred in Glenwood possible. The convoluted map that dispersed students from Glenwood Elementary School District throughout the surrounding White communities was already, by 1987-88, the year after the district’s last desegregation lawsuit was fought, becoming a vestigial remnant of a bygone era.

While the Parkside District map would continue to determine which high schools students would attend for the next 20 years, the dynamics that led to its creation (extreme racial inequality caused by racism) would be increasingly obscured by colorblind frameworks. Now, instead of being able to see how Glenwood is carved up and students are distributed and being led to question why, families are asked to put their street address into a computer program that will spit out their high school assignment. Children are then placed on busses and sent away. Roy (2003) uses the idea of “unmapping” to talk about the ways in which the absence (or contradictory overabundance) of maps or, indeed, of any clear legal representation of or agreement upon land uses, is part of the construction of urban informality. “Unmapping,” she argues, allows for creative, dynamic uses of land and secures the arbitrary authority of the state not through legal, but through extralegal means. While the Glenwood School District is certainly not peripheral Calcutta (the geography Roy focuses on), the concept of “unmapping” is useful in describing what has happened to race and efforts at racial redress in these schools.

Mapping is not only a geographical concept, it is also an historical one—we map out a history, a timeline, and a story. The work that civil rights and educational leaders in Glenwood did was largely about mapping—describing how they were “mapped out” of

Parkside schools, mapping the boundaries of social identities, mapping the historical legacies that led to their exclusion, and mapping racism in ways that produced the strength and the tools to resist. Accumulation by dispossession is both a social and a geographic concept. It is about how power and wealth are redistributed upwards through the literal re-mapping not only of physical space—although this is a core component, one which the annexation in this chapter and the foreclosure and gentrification in the next both highlight—but also the re-mapping of (or creation of maps defining) rights of ownership to things i.e. corn genes.

Leonardo and Porter (2010) argue that Whites experience the civil rights movement and the push for the recognition of race and racial equality as violent—that they feel they are being dispossessed and fight viciously to defend their privilege. In doing so they work to maintain and defend White supremacy. Using Fanon (2004) to distinguish “liberatory violence” from “repressive violence,” they argue that those who are maintaining and benefiting from repressive social relations experience attempts to change those relations as a violent assault on their way of life—even when such actions are “non violent.” Indeed, Leonardo and Porter argue that to the extent that movements do contest and transform social and economic structures, even when they are “non violent,” they engage in a type of “liberatory violence” that forces a change in an unjust system against the will of those who uphold and maintain it. Indeed, efforts by Blacks to obtain housing, attend decent schools, attain social and educational integration and pursue their own independent educational path were *all* experienced by Whites as forms of dispossession—they understood themselves as defending their rights, their property, their way of life, their community and their own interests. To the extent Whites felt dispossessed—experienced as fear, loss, disrespect, invasion etc.-- these moments generally represented important victories for civil rights movements both in Glenwood and nationally. The remainder of this chapter describes the struggles that led to the creation of this map and how “race” was won—that is, how race was introduced into the struggles over rights and resources in Glenwood—and how it began to be lost.

### **Remapping Glenwood: Education by Annexation**

The recent history of Glenwood is one of dispossession via active White racism. Bypassed by economic development, occupied by migrant Italian and Japanese farmers, and utilized as a leisure area for the Bay Area’s elite, the Glenwood area remained sparsely populated until the 1950s. While the community is sometimes remembered as having been “White” before this time, that Whiteness is something that has been constructed over time as a way of telling a story. It is a story that elides the discrimination faced by Italian and Irish American immigrants when they first arrived and, particularly, by the Japanese, many of whom lost their land here through their forceful incarceration in internment camps in 1942. Such a telling also silences the long history of Native Americans and their forceful removal from this area (Hurtado, 1988). Those who carefully reconstruct this multi-cultural history from within Glenwood, note how different times and histories overlap in this space, invoking not only the histories of dispossession, but also the ways in which the traces, remnants and intersecting paths of those who have been displaced still shape Glenwood<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Numerous scholars have written about and done projects in Glenwood. These include an extraordinary play, completed with residents of Glenwood, that details the ways in which race and place weave together

Despite the diverse histories of those who settled in and were removed from Glenwood, by the early 1950s, when African Americans, many having made money in the port industries, began to move in, the area had established itself as “White” space. This is evident in local histories which describe East Parkside as a “1930s housing development for the White working class” and Glenwood as having “an overwhelmingly White population in the 1950s”<sup>7</sup>. Such articulations, including the exclusions that proceeded from them, are part of the shifting terrain of contesting defining who and what counts as White, including processes of Italian and Irish White becoming (Ignatiev, 1995; Guglielmo, 2003). This Whiteness was reinforced by racial covenants that, despite the efforts of some early real estate developers to prevent such exclusion (Jackson, 1987) were common (see Figure 2) throughout the North and West (Massey & Denton, 1993). Tactics that were used throughout the country to create Black access to exclusive White neighborhoods enabled African Americans to break through Glenwood and East Parkside’s “Whites only” borders. But White flight and real estate profiteering also set the stage for the rapid impoverishment of these communities and their new residents via devaluation, redlining and capital flight<sup>8</sup> (for descriptions of similar processes and their consequences in California see Self, 2003; Sides, 2004).

The first Black residents moved into the area using fake white homebuyers as stand-ins for themselves, part of a practice known as blockbusting (Massey & Denton, 1993; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Real estate agents then capitalized on White fear by touring Black people through the neighborhood, posting signs (See Figure 3) and going door to door declaring that Blacks were moving in and prices were going to plummet, generating panic selling amongst White buyers<sup>9</sup> (see Haynes, 2006) for descriptions of similar processes). Induced to flee, Whites sold their houses cheaply, these could then be re-sold to Black buyers who, because of the very limited stock of suburban housing available to Black residents, were willing to pay a high premium. As the neighborhoods “flipped,” White flight combined with high Black demand to create a near total demographic transformation. As this occurred, access to credit, federal support, and housing demand dried up, destroying property values and decimating Black wealth (Oliver & Shapiro, 1997).

Active government and private discrimination in the real estate and lending markets are not, however, the only aspects that led to the impoverishment and dispossession of Glenwood’s new suburban residents. Nearby cities were also aggressive in expanding their own property base while retaining racial borders. Because major White landholders fought the incorporation of Glenwood, the city was not able to secure its borders until 1982. Preceding incorporation, most of the region’s tax base was lost to neighboring cities while physical borders marking Black and White space were fortified, even as the city itself was fractured, by the construction of a major highway through Glenwood and along the Black/White border between East and West Parkside. Nearby Westwood, not content with simple annexation or freeway construction as a way of

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and create the fabric of the city. These are not cited here to protect the anonymity of the participants, but they clearly inform this work.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted from a *A History of Parkside* written by local residents and available in the Parkside City Library.

<sup>8</sup> Multiple dissertations and local historical documents have described these processes in the city of Glenwood. These sources are being withheld to protect anonymity. They draw upon both census data and archival sources to reach their conclusions.

<sup>9</sup> These actions are documented in local historical documented including *A History of Parkside*.

transforming and maintaining boundaries, actually facilitated the re-routing of a major creek, thus acquiring new territory while maintaining 'natural' boundaries<sup>10</sup>.

Figure 2: Text from a racial covenant from a Parkside property. It was mandatory to sign such covenants with the sale of most area properties until 1948 when the Supreme Court declared them unenforceable. Informal use of covenants and petitions to maintain White neighborhoods proceeded well into the 1970s in this area. This text was posted to a Parkside neighborhood news group in 2005 by a friend of a former Parkside resident whose house was covered by this covenant. Names have been changed to hide identity.

"Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions Affecting Portions of Parkside California, Poplar County, California"

1. Each of said lots or parcels of real property shall be used exclusively for residential purposes.
2. No building shall be erected or maintained on any of said lots or parcels of real property, other than a detached single family dwelling, to be used as such, not exceeding two stories, in height, and appurtenant outbuildings, including a garage for private use.
3. No dwelling house, garage or other outbuilding shall be located on any of said lots or parcels of real property within three (3) feet of the side and rear property lines of such lot or parcel nor within twenty-five (25) feet of the street line on which such lot or parcel fronts.
- 4) No dwelling house costing less than Six Thousand and No/100 Dollars (\$6,000.00) shall be erected or maintained on any of said lots or parcels of real property.
- 5) No part of any of said lots or parcels of real property or any building erected or maintained on any thereof shall be used or occupied by any person not wholly of the White or Caucasian race. Domestic servants who are members of a race other than the White or Caucasian race may live on or occupy the premises where their employer resides.**
- 6) These covenants and restrictions shall bind, inure to the benefit of and be enforceable by the undersigned and by any owner, lessee or occupier of any of said lots or parcels of real property, and each owner, lessee or occupier of any thereof by accepting title to, leasing or occupying any thereof consents to be bound thereby and consents to the enforceability of these covenants and restrictions against such owner, lessee or occupier by each other owner, lessee or occupier of any of said lots or parcels of real property.
- 7) These covenants and restrictions shall remain in force and effect until July 1st, 1997, unless sooner terminated by the consent of seventy-five (75%) per cent of the owners of all of said lots and parcels of real property.
- 8) Any remedy pursued to enforce these covenants and restrictions shall not operate to defeat or render invalid the lien of any mortgage or deed of trust, made in good faith and for value, covering any lot or parcel of said real property.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned hereto affix their signatures this 5th day of August, 1947.

GERALD P. WESLEYAN ORGANIZATION

<sup>10</sup> These changes are documented in an account published by a professor at a nearby university and used to educate undergraduate students about the region. This account is derived from historic maps and records and has been redacted to protect anonymity.

Neighborhood and city boundaries were not the only spaces remapped. In 1958, recognizing a trend in the Eastern neighborhoods, the Parkside Unified School District built a new high school in Glenwood, drawing the attendance boundaries such that virtually all African American students within the district were contained within those boundaries. While at the time it was built in 1958, this school was only 21% African American, by the 1970s it was over 90% African American and both the NAACP and the Congress of Racial Equity (CORE) had begun to express concern. Just as property values had dropped in the neighborhoods as Whites fled and redlining prevented further investment, White flight from Glenwood High School resulted in declining enrollments and increasing isolation<sup>11</sup>

Figure 3: Sign designed by a realtor to produce White flight and cheap sales, which could then be flipped to Black owners for high prices. Found in the eastern part of Parkside (part of Glenwood School District) on the wreckage of an old building in the late 1990s. Copied from *A History of Parkside*.



In news articles from the time period, what Black residents most talk about is not the economic hardship, but the profound sense of rejection that accompanied these times: “there’s a feeling of rejection of us as a community<sup>12</sup>,” said one resident referring to the White exodus from the community, “I’m telling you, this has a depressing effect on a minority race.” Another resident, speaking about White flight from the schools and subsequent resistance to segregation said that it was a “knife through our hearts... our kids weren’t wanted.” Black residents responded through a diverse set of strategies to strengthen their community, fight for better schools, and resist racism. These strategies were not always in-line with, and indeed were often seemingly opposite to, one another,

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<sup>11</sup> Much of the data for this section, particularly that which describes the historical battles within the school districts, is derived from the memoirs of one of the attorneys in some of these court cases, who was also a local resident and a long-time desegregation activist. These are referred to as (Lawyer, 2000) throughout this account. These have been cross-referenced against newspaper accounts whenever possible. All sources that might identify the location of this research are withheld to protect the anonymity of participants.

<sup>12</sup> Citations on these news articles are withheld to protect participant anonymity; they were all collected and copied from the Archives at the Las Arboles City Library. These are referred to as (Archive, Date) throughout this work. They are not included in the works cited section.



but they were universally based in the recognition of and confrontation with White racism both in the immediate community and nationally

### **Putting Racism on the Map: Fighting Back**

Residents of Glenwood fought back against their own marginalization on at least three fronts: 1) Integration, 2) Community-based/Afrocentrism, and 3) Anti-Displacement. Many residents engaged in a set of ongoing efforts to integrate both the elementary and high school districts with surrounding White communities. Others (who sometimes were also a part of both groups) focused on creating strong community schools and developing the Black identity of students through engagement with their history and political struggles. Lastly, both of these groups became involved in efforts to defend the borders of the Glenwood community and school districts. These efforts included resisting attempts by White communities to draw themselves out of the Glenwood School District, opposing the closure of Glenwood Schools, and, ultimately, resisting the integration of Glenwood Elementary School District. These efforts did not necessarily occur simultaneously—rather, resistance to integration only developed after multiple efforts to retain Glenwood institutions were thwarted by neighboring White residents.

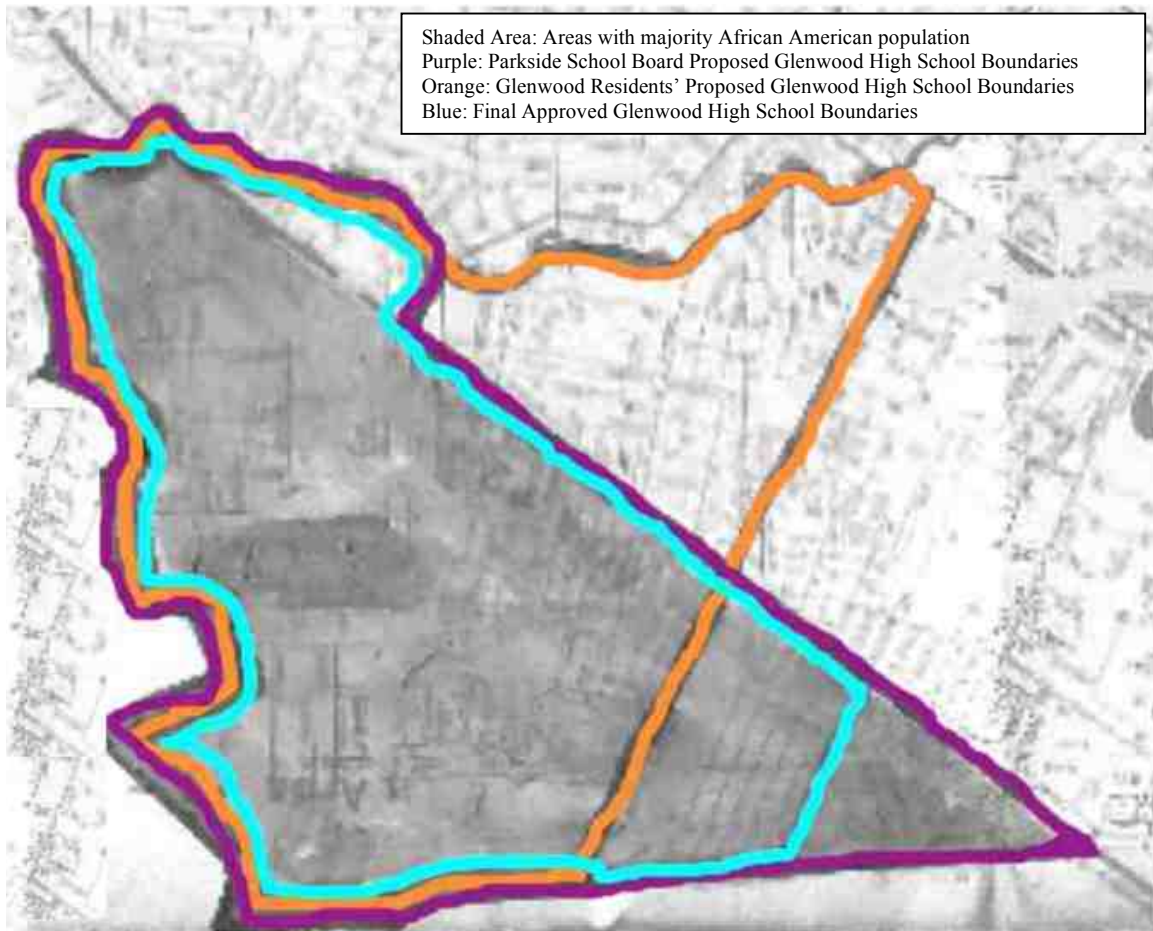
#### **Integration.**

Well before the district became racially isolated, Glenwood residents began attempting to affect the integration of the region's elementary school districts. In 1966 and 1972 Glenwood residents approved regional school integration plans both of which were rejected by nearby White districts. The first major debates over attendance boundaries, however, were not about the elementary school district boundaries, but those implicated in the construction of Glenwood High School—the school built in Glenwood to accommodate the rapidly expanding population. The boundaries of Glenwood Elementary School District had been relatively stable since before the time of Black migration to Glenwood. Attempts to desegregate the elementary schools, thus, while articulated in terms of the massive divestment in Black communities by Whites and ongoing racism, went up against arguments about the traditional boundaries of the school district. The placement of the new high school (Glenwood High School) in 1952, however, and the drawing of its boundaries, pointed to the direct actions of the local school board and their role in not just failing to address, but also producing, racial segregation and inequality in the schools (Lawyer, 2000).

The boundaries the all-White Parkside School Board suggested for Glenwood High School coincided neither with the Glenwood Elementary School District attendance boundaries nor with any city boundaries. They did, however, encompass the region's entire Black population, including all the neighborhoods that had been shifting Black and excluding all those that were stably White. Objecting to this proposal, Glenwood residents submitted a petition with over 3,500 signatures suggesting a counter plan that would follow city boundaries, splitting the African American population between Glenwood High School and nearby Parkside High School, maintaining racial balance at both schools. Residents of the White areas included in the attendance zone, particularly a neighborhood known as "The Alders," objected strongly and vocally to this plan, submitting 225 letters to the school board arguing that these residents "interests lie within this area and West" and threatening that "people who are financially able to move will

leave the Alders area.” (Samples from residents’ letters taken from Lawyer, 2000). In the face of this resistance, the board rejected the Glenwood residents’ plan, instead making only a token effort to include 1/3 of the students from East Parkside in the Parkside High School attendance area and otherwise retaining their originally proposed boundaries (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: 1957 Glenwood High School Attendance Boundary Proposals.<sup>13</sup>

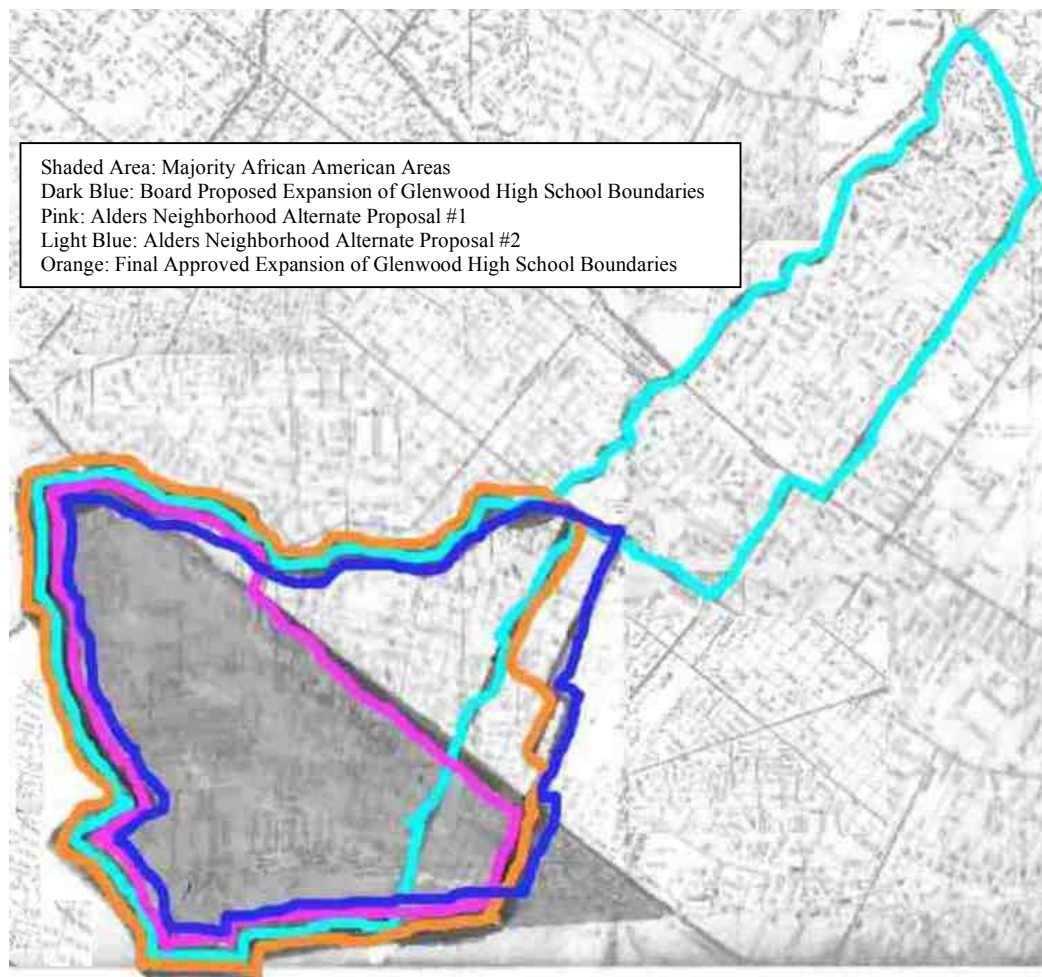


In 1962, only five years later, the boundaries of Glenwood High School again came into dispute as it became clear that the previous plan had produced overcrowding in the White high schools. The school board proposed a re-zoning plan that would shift the Alders neighborhood, a majority White portion of Parkside that was already part of the Glenwood Elementary School District, into Glenwood High. Residents of this neighborhood again strongly objected to being included in the district and formed a committee to develop alternate proposals. They presented two plans: The first, which the

<sup>13</sup> I created the maps in this section based on the written accounts of one of the primary lawyers in the desegregation lawsuits pursued in the Parkside and Glenwood School Districts (Lawyer, 2000). This lawyer, whose name has been withheld to protect the participants of this study, self-published his memoirs on the internet, including extensive substantive detail about the court cases.

Board stood no chance of adopting<sup>14</sup>, included substantial portions of Parkside in the Glenwood High attendance district. The second, suggested a new high school be built in Parkside to relieve overcrowding and that the district boundaries remain as they were. The plans they drafted indicate that the White Alder's residents' objection was not necessarily to Glenwood High School itself nor to attending a school that was not exclusively White, but rather to not being a racial majority in the school their children attended. In this case, Alders residents' objections were not strong enough to defeat the Board's plan and most of the neighborhood was included in the attendance zone. Figures from the first year of inclusion, however, showed that only ½ of the 200 students incorporated into the attendance zone as a part of this plan were actually attending Glenwood High School and it is not known how many of these were White.

Figure 5: 1962 Glenwood High School Attendance Boundary Proposals



<sup>14</sup> This plan included longer bussing distances for white students and would meet substantial resistance from wealthier white families who would be bussed across town into Ravenswood schools. More than a serious proposal, it was, perhaps, a way for Alder's residents to point out to Board members and others that they were not the only white residents of the city who would object to being in Ravenswood schools.

In the following 10 years numerous integration plans were proposed, all of which involved closing Glenwood High School. A 1965 report by the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Ethnic Problems, a 1968 master plan survey contracted by the Board and a 1969 report by the Personnel Standards and Ethics Commission solicited by major California educational associations all recommended the closure of Glenwood High School (Lawyer, 2000). Difficulty maintaining enrollment at the school was often cited as the reason for closure. As time went on, the enrollment problem was exacerbated further as Black residents, frustrated with efforts to pursue integration by other means, began sneaking their children across the border into nearby White schools, using fake addresses and housing their children with friends to verify their residency. While the district did finally, under pressure from the Office of Civil Rights and threat of a lawsuit, pursue voluntary and mandatory integration of all high schools in the district—a plan which involved bussing large numbers of White students to Glenwood High—the plan was short lived, lasting only five years before, as mentioned above, plummeting enrollments resulted in the closing of the school. From the start, it proved difficult to get White students to attend the one high school in the Parkside school district located in Glenwood—Glenwood High School. The district responded, like many others by creating alternative magnet programs and learning opportunities that would lure White students. While these were successful in creating demand and in bringing White students to Glenwood High School for a few years, many Black residents saw them as disconnected from the educational needs of Black students.

Integration was also limited as White students carried with them fears about the community that surrounded them. As one student declared in a local newspaper, “it felt a little strange going to such a great school like Glenwood High for three years and never being able to walk off campus. It just wasn't smart for Whites to go wandering around Glenwood” (Archive, 3/24/1978). The result was that while enrollments dropped from 80 to 50% Black in the first years the magnet program was implemented, by the mid 1970s, the school faced enrollment declines with the Black population having risen back to 65%. In the face of White resistance to sending their students over the border and Black parents sending their students to High Schools in nearby White communities over concerns with Glenwood's program, the Parkside School District decided in 1976 to close Glenwood High School. The loss of Glenwood High School was deeply mourned by many in Glenwood: it meant a loss of community control and connection at the high school level, extensive bussing for all Glenwood students, loss of a core institution for a city that had few community centers or resources, and it also symbolized the many ways in which integration was not a coming together on equal and committed terms but rather a burden borne by Black students and stubbornly resisted and feared by Whites.

First hand accounts of the experience of bussing for Black students illustrate the burdens of not only inconvenience and community disconnect but also racialized terror that they had to bear in this quest for better schooling. One former Glenwood High Student I interviewed described his first experiences being bussed to neighboring White communities after Glenwood High was closed as humiliating and violent. Ironically, he recounted how his experience growing up in the South left him unprepared for this:

T: They would call us nigger all the time. They would call us nigger and when our bus would leave there, they would stand there, up on the hill, and throw pumpkins at it.

B: Pumpkins

T: yeah, little pumpkins, you know the little ones. So we'd get there the next morning and we'd get off the bus and just start swinging. We'd start hitting anything that was White (he starts laughing here, hard, so hard he can't talk for a minute).

B: Wow

T: Yeah, being from the south, you know, I wasn't prepared for that kind of prejudice. I hadn't ever experienced that. (RAA-INT-JE, 9/16/08)

The early experiences of Glenwood residents in seeking and participating in integration with nearby White communities included rejection, dispossession (in the form of school closure), one way bussing and violence. While there is no reason to believe the negatives were universal, they were enough to sour many residents to future integration efforts.

### **Community-based and afro-centric schools.**

Community-based schools and Afrocentric curriculum were not just a reaction to the failure of integration efforts--they represented the vision of Black educators committed to Black history and to nurturing students within the Black community—but the urgency for them certainly emerged out of the recalcitrance of the White community and brutality of both structural and interpersonal racism. As Elanore Deets, the inspired educator who developed the Ujama Freedom School explained to reporters at the time she founded her school “when we had to depend on desegregation life was a nightmare...but now that we offer an alternative, it makes us feel like living again...desegregate if you want, but it's nice to know if you want a real education, you can come on home.” (Archives, 6/20/70). The school Ms. Deets created emphasized Black history, directly engaged with the emotional, intellectual and spiritual content of current events relevant to the Black community, and flourished as not only a school but also a community institution inspiring a community university and a series of projects all by the same name. Describing the school's teaching methods, Ms. Deets explained to a reporter how they dealt with students' emotional and spiritual needs by describing what happened in her classroom when a young boy was acting up the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was shot. A reporter who spoke to Ms. Deets recounted:

“She asked him what was wrong.

‘I want to sing,’ he replied. ‘I want to sing ‘Freedom is Coming.’”

‘We stopped the whole class right there and sang,’ Mrs. Deets said. ‘That little boy has been pretty good since then.’ (Archives, 6/20/70)

In this case, Ms. Deets model of education depended on teaching students the songs, the history, and the sense of the community they would need to grapple with such painful events. She and her colleagues did not treat these as abstract events, distant from students' lives, but as lived relations these students themselves were grappling with. Thus, these students not only learned the song “Freedom is Coming,” they learned to sing “Tell Glenwood Freedom is Coming,” inserting the name of their own town into the song, thereby linking the meaning of their own educational practice to a broader struggle, one that resonated with the lived conditions of racial inequality in their communities. The program filled and grew, brining in applications from all over the country, turning away students for excess demand and filling voluntary Saturday and after school programs with students. Ms. Deets program was not a flash in the pan, but an institution that lasted

almost 20 years and became a model for African American education nationwide. The year the school closed, 1984, again, coincided with the seeming triumph of a growing backlash against the civil rights movement and school desegregation that worked to unmap race, obscure racial inequality, and redefine racism as discrimination against Whites. This is also the time of the last Parkside School District Map.

The Freedom School approach provided a strong anchor for an active part of the community, but it was a private school (no matter how little tuition it charged or how well subsidized it was) with limited capacity. While the roots of later charter and private school efforts focusing on students of color without regard to diversity or desegregation may be found in projects such as Ms. Deets, the ethos of community empowerment and self-reliance embodied in this school distinguishes it from later efforts. Ms. Deets' educational work was an integral part of the Glenwood community, where she worked with and on the city council, ran free after school programs for youth and initiated a range of community projects. Despite these efforts the Freedom School did not supplant integration efforts, nor did it meet the needs of or transform conditions within the broader Glenwood and Parkside School Districts where, Ms. Deets herself complained, her son had graduated from high school without being able to read.

### **Anti-Displacement.**

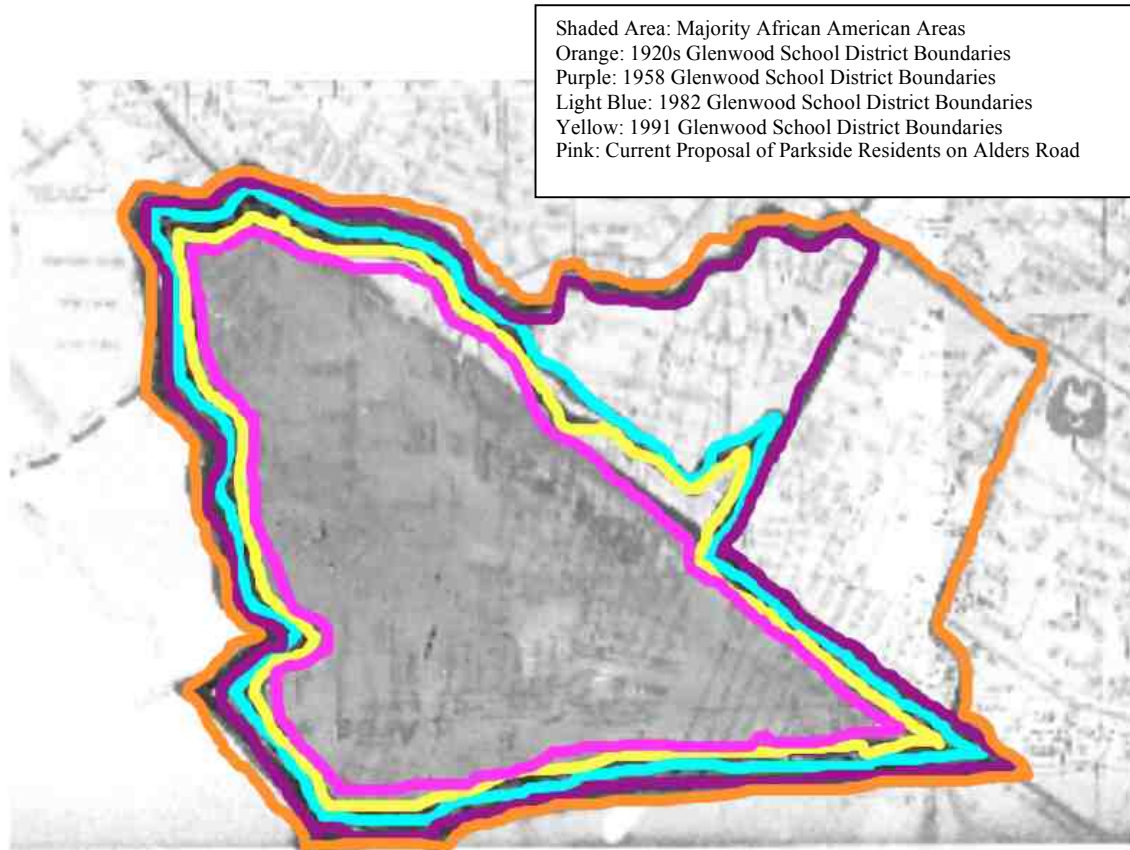
Anti-displacement work lies at the juncture of efforts such as those of Ms. Deets--to nurture African American history and culture, retain Black community, build-up Glenwood, respond effectively to racism and maintain some local control over education—and efforts to integrate and resist the isolation of the Black community, the racist exclusion of Black children from nearby White schools, and avoidance of Glenwood by Whites. As happened in many other communities throughout the country (Ogletree, 2004), White flight and resistance to integration efforts led to the shrinking of the territorial borders of Glenwood schools and districts, attendance loss, school loss and job loss—all of which can be seen as elements of dispossession. These all impacted Glenwood, as did the poverty and rapidly declining tax base that resulted from White housing flight (see Massey & Denton, 1993; Sides, 2004 for analyses of how this occurred in other contexts). The result was that integration efforts began to divide the community as their pursuit came to be associated by many with abuse, resistance and loss. This did not necessarily represent an abandonment of integration as an ideal, but rather an assessment of the very high costs to the community in the face of resistance. To understand how this developed, it is important to understand the more detailed history of border-battles in the district.

If the major battles over the high school attendance boundaries represented one form of dispossession—loss of a school, control, community and dignity—the battles over the elementary school district boundaries and desegregation, which largely occurred after the demise of Glenwood High School (excepting the rejected integration proposals mentioned in the earlier discussion of integration), represented another—loss of territory, resources and students. The transformation of Glenwood Elementary School district, founded around 1818, from its larger 1920s boundaries to the smaller area it covered in the 1950s was a relatively uncontroversial move accompanied by the annexation of this land into the town of Parkside. The 1982 modification of the boundaries, however, was nothing of the sort.

Facing declining enrollments and under continual pressure from White residents of the Alder's neighborhood, the Parkside City Elementary School District Board began in the early 1980s considering a plan to annex portions of the Alder's neighborhood. While school officials and residents in Glenwood immediately recognized such a move as White flight, Parkside officials insisted it was not flight but rather integration. They argued that, as the Alders was the most racially diverse neighborhood in Parkside and the vast majority of the neighborhood's children were not attending Glenwood District Schools anyway (they had either transferred out or were in private schools), annexing the Alders neighborhood would actually diversify Parkside schools with little to no impact on Glenwood enrollments. The numbers they presented indicated that of the 467 White Alders neighborhood children within district boundaries, only 7 were actually attending Glenwood schools. Although it was illegal for decisions to be made on this basis, Alder's residents also stood to gain economically as their property values were forecast to rise with the change. Glenwood officials pointed to this ulterior motive and the long history of resistance to being part of Glenwood schools from Alder's residents, but the integration argument (despite the fact that it only held merit because of White refusal to enter Glenwood schools) won the day and the annexation was approved. Glenwood Elementary District not only lost a portion of its attendance zone and substantial hope for the possibility of its future integration, but also the tax dollars afforded by the higher values of these White neighborhood homes. It appeared to many that integration had become a tool that Whites could use to justify their own property interests and enrich themselves, and that White school districts could use to enhance their boundaries and resolve enrollment problems. Meanwhile, a Black school district that had already suffered enrollment losses (from those hundreds of White children attending private schools) now saw their tax base chiseled away as well.

Another smaller de-annexation battle occurred in 1992 as White residents from a two-block section of the Alder's neighborhood who had not been included in the original plan petitioned to remove themselves from Glenwood District. A local newspaper described the struggle as one between "affluent, educated and articulate yuppies who know how to organize and use local government to get what they want" and "poor and working class Blacks who view local government through more skeptical, suspicious eyes." Residents of Glenwood pointed to the irony of White's claim that stretches of the Glenwood community "chipped away in earlier de-annexations" now didn't match the "community identity" of the school and should, thus, not be included. Meanwhile White residents looked to their property values with at least one resident noting that his property value would increase dramatically if he was transferred to the better school district—a motive many in Glenwood believed to be primary. Glenwood School officials argued unanimously against the transfer and continued to extol integration, pointing to the injustice of the racial isolation of Glenwood students and the "significant culture shock for Black and Hispanic students when they reach still mostly-White high schools in the Parkside High School District." Whites in favor of annexation countered with speculation about their own children's "culture shock." "Imagine," argued one of the leaders of the movement, "the shock to a White preschool child going into a predominately Black school."

Figure 6: Glenwood City Elementary School District Boundaries 1920s-Present



These annexation battles, demonstrate how “integration” increasingly came to be articulated with the loss of territory and control in Glenwood, and, as one White Glenwood resident told a local reporter, a way for Whites to get “Blacks to fill up their classrooms and prop up their schools” (Archives, 2/16/92). It is within this context that the Glenwood School Board, which had supported and pushed earlier proposals to integrate the elementary school districts (which were rejected by surrounding White residents), resolutely opposed a 1985 lawsuit aimed at integration. The “Greely” Lawsuit, brought by 17 Black and 17 White residents from Glenwood and its surrounding area, sought full desegregation of the Glenwood Elementary School District and its surrounding seven White, “hills” districts. Newspaper reports from the time indicate that not only the Board, but also the majority of Glenwood’s Black residents opposed full integration. Their primary concerns lay with the legacy of one way bussing, the destruction of Glenwood community institutions (the elementary schools being one of the few remaining), and the lack of improved educational opportunities Black Glenwood students were seen as receiving in local White high schools.

The ultimate settlement of this lawsuit in 1996 largely verified many’s fears. Instead of a wholesale desegregation plan, the settlement resulted in a limited number (150) of Glenwood students being granted access to the surrounding White elementary school districts. While Glenwood schools were compensated for the loss of these



students, the compensation did not fully account for the costs of lost enrollment. Furthermore, as the enrollment process depended upon parents being proactive in seeking out applications and opportunities for their children to transfer out of district, ongoing concerns about “creaming”—the loss of Glenwood’s most resourced students—remained. Despite the option to do so, very few students from the surrounding White districts transferred in to Glenwood schools. For many residents of Glenwood, this lawsuit demonstrated the contradiction of efforts to desegregate schools. Mired in White resistance, each effort at desegregation seemed to weaken Glenwood institutions, while the benefits to individual Glenwood students seemed murky at best, and those to Glenwood as a whole, entirely unclear.

### **Searching for a Contact Sheet: Mapping the High School Transition**

In their efforts to resist the depopulation and deterritorialization of their school district and fight for fair terms of inclusion, residents of Glenwood had to continually put race on the map. They won to the extent that they were able to get others (i.e. the Congress of Racial Equity or the Department of Housing and Urban Development) to recognize race and the role of race in shaping relations of power, exclusion, annexation, and district bordering. Movements towards integration and those towards Afrocentrism and community independence were practically, but not completely theoretically, opposed. They both relied upon the recognition and naming of racial inequality, subjugation, and difference rooted in a history of violent repression and the urgent need for remediation. As tactics for remediation, both responded to the aggressive exclusion of Glenwood residents from nearby White communities and institutions (and the national context in which this was normalized and resisted).

As we look at the history of Glenwood, at least three types of “accumulation by dispossession” emerge: 1) the enhancement of the school rankings and property values of White residents through the exclusion of and curtailment of funding to institutions serving people of color, 2) The development, over time, of a “colorblind” narrative for explaining these actions and White’s persuasion of the courts that they were, in fact, acting in the interest of racial equality through them, thereby dispossessing of people of color (in this case Glenwood residents) of the very tools they had been using to fight for their inclusion and, 3) The unmapping, or erasure, of this history from how the present context was understood and articulated leading to a persist blindness not necessarily to race, but to racial motivations and racial histories.

These processes are, of course, not the same as the rampant institutionalization of dispossession as a broad-based tool of economic growth, recovery and systemic survival Harvey identifies as defining the period since the 1970s. Rather, we might see the geographical and educational dispossession identified here as a precursor to the more generalized dispossession Harvey speaks of—a mode of economic domination that is still deeply racialized. Harvey would not necessarily agree that the erasure of race and the production of a colorblind narrative constitute a form of accumulation by dispossession, but these have been critical in rolling back the New Deal programs that, ironically, primarily offered benefits to Whites. Indeed, if we do not acknowledge this as we talk about the present crisis, we risk participating in acts of erasure—describing as “new” a dynamic that is, in certain ways, very old for some communities. In the next section, I will address how Glenwood moves from colorblind to sub-prime and how this transforms

youth and schools, but before I do, I want to return to the question of colorblindness and the map of the transition to high school.

The unmapping of race, I have argued, is part of the political project identified as colorblindness. The reconstitution, over time, of the maps of Glenwood cities and schools represent decades of intensive struggle over racial representation, meaning, material distribution and educational program and structure. There is a gap in the library archives I used to construct this narrative—from 1958 to the early 1970s; the Westwood public library has no archival material on Glenwood, despite keeping faithful records both before and after. While it is not clear why this gap persists, I have documented in other works (Alexander, 2010), how the purging or histories of racism from the public record is part of the work public officials engage in liberal, cosmopolitan suburbs. The clippings on hand prior to 1958 make no mention of race at all, even as a contentious school board recall election unfolds. Newspapers in the 1970s brim with mention of race—integration projects, racial conflict, racial togetherness, racial identity etc.—viewed largely through the lens of civil rights. The raising of civil rights to this level of public attention constitutes a substantial victory for the entire movement. The fact, however, that while this record remains, the record of the bigotry and racial violence and exclusion it was raised against is absent, works to locate both the past and the future in White benevolence.

The “unmapping” of this past is not in the erasure of the civil rights movement, but rather of the racism that shaped its development and aftermath. Ironically, while the civil rights movement is represented in present times as a move to abolish race, its substantive victory, as it appears in the archive here, is forcing people to talk about, acknowledge, address and redress race. The work of the civil rights movement, and activism in Glenwood, was to undo the common sense (Forgacs, 2000) understandings of race by forcing Whites to deal with understandings of legal, structural and institutional racism long present in Black intellectual and popular thought (DuBois, 1955; Collins, 2000; Drake & Cayton, 1993)—something achieved by forcing material confrontation.

The map of Parkside High School District was so symbolically and materially important to me because, not only was it an historical artifact, it also held visual clues to the compromises and contortions forced by a movement for equitable and shared educational institutions that met with fierce, prolonged White resistance and fear. The ghost of Glenwood High School is not evident in this map; rather, it is traced in the curved lines that carve the city of Glenwood into a picture puzzle of attendance zones all of which are linked, through city bus routes, to schools far away. In contrast, calling the district, or using the “boundary finder” tool, created an isolated individual out of each Glenwood resident—not a person with a shared regional history and future, a political and social identity that could be mapped—but rather a unit in a system that could be distributed apparently both arbitrarily and at will throughout a maze of distant schools in unfamiliar places.

I opened this chapter with a story of one of my first visits to Huerta Middle School, where I was party to a conversation amongst administrators about how parents might learn where their children would go to school next year. As I stood in that office, watching the office assistant dig for an info-sheet, I attempted to offer what I had learned through my search for a map of the transition to high school with the two women—neither of whom I knew yet. You will remember, the secretary told the vice principal they

should “call the district” but was searching, seemingly without success, for the sheet with their phone number. Below, I reproduce the ensuing conversation from field notes I wrote down later that day:

R.A.: “You can go online too,” I offered. (Speaking of how to find your address).  
VP: “yeah but I have all these parents asking where there kids are going to school and they don’t have Internet.”  
R.A.: “Right...I tried to get a map from them”  
VP: “A map, that’d be good.”  
R.A.: “They have a map but it’s from like the 1980s”  
VP: “Oh.”  
R.A.: “I can copy it for you if you’re interested”  
VP: “I don’t think we’ve met, I’m Francesca Ayalla”  
R.A.: “I’m Becky Alexander, I’m here doing a research project”:  
VP: “What on?”  
R.A.: “On the transition to high school.”  
VP: “Oh, that explains it.”  
R.A.: “What did you say your first name was?”  
VP: “Francesca”  
R.A.: “Francesca”  
(f.n. 2/6/08)

My own awkward attempt to share what I had learned only highlighted the inadequacy of these tools—a search engine for parents who had no internet access and a very outdated map that a researcher with a very limited relationship to the middle school had access to but the school administration did not.

As we stood in awkward silence, Alicia found her info sheet. The sheet had once explained how to contact the high school district, but the phone number and contact information on the bottom was all faded out from lack of photocopier toner.

“Well, maybe this used to have contact information” Francesca said.

“oh”

“We should have something, like some kind of basic information sheet that just has everything on it.”

“That would be good.”

(f.n. 2/6/08)

In the three years I continued to work and conduct research at Huerta Middle School, I never saw such an info sheet appear.

## Chapter 2: Colorblind and Subprime: New Geographies of Dispossession

I interview Dijon's mother, Camella, at 1:00 p.m. on a Thursday in her apartment. I wake her up when I call to tell her I'm on my way. She works nights, coming home at 5:00 in the morning to get the kids off to school before going to sleep. She gets up in the afternoons to visit with them and helps get dinner together before going back to work. Her apartment is in a tired concrete building in a 'gated'<sup>15</sup> complex a few suburban blocks from the well-tended (mostly by housecleaners and gardeners) homes of the Parkside suburbs (with their mandatory two car garages, limits on on-street parking, and occupancy regulations). Inside the complex I am surprised<sup>16</sup> to see slabs of green lawn and laundry hanging. Camella's apartment is up a flight of concrete stairs, down a concrete hall. Inside it is warm. Pictures cover all the walls, two cozy couches (one of which, the most comfortable, is a constant source of contention over who will get to sleep there) create a 'living room' out of the open space, a wooden table with four chairs creates a dining room. Light seeps in through the sliding glass door and falls on the coffee table in the middle of the room and slants across the TV.

Camella is about my age, 36. She is round and her face is warm and bright, skin smooth. She and the kids have lived in this apartment for almost five years, before that they were in the Safe Home Shelter, before that, on the street<sup>17</sup>. She remembers longingly the house she grew up in as a child, a big house in South Carolina with only her and her (adoptive) parents. She talks about the apartment where she now lives as both an accomplishment and a trap:

So I worked two jobs for a long time and it was crazy. So this was, like, the first place I came to after getting' out of the, um, shelter, being able to go look for somewhere to live, this is the first stop... I've been here like, um, almost five years and it was scary at first. I was like, oh lord ,we're only gonna be in a one bedroom. Cause from Texas we come from a three bedroom and we downsized to a one bedroom, but at that time the rent was really reasonable so once I stayed here I said okay, maybe a year or so and I'd save more money and then I'll move on. But then they kept goin' up on the rent and right now we're, I'm paying

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<sup>15</sup> Note that here I am marking not the gates that surround elite neighborhoods but those that surround apartment complexes in poor neighborhoods and are sometimes covered with barbed wire. While both gates are aimed at the protection of residents, the former connotes elite status and privilege whereas the later connotes poverty and vulnerability.

<sup>16</sup> My surprise is related to my positionality. I grew up blocks from these apartments and yet have never seen them from the inside. From the outside, they are cement with small windows surrounded by a wrought iron gate covered in barbed wire. They appear to have no green space, nothing communal. I have also grown, through my Whiteness and class privilege to assume or presume that nothing grows, is tended to, or is cared about in the 'ghetto' and I have learned to think of these apartments as 'ghetto'.

eleven-hundred dollars for the one bedroom and so, so it's kinda impossible for me to kinda move out, but I've been looking.

(RAA-INT-CJ 12/2/08)

Camella worked two jobs while staying at the shelter with her children<sup>18</sup>, saving the money to rent this place. But, while it was intended to be the "first stop," the rent increases (which were exorbitant during this time) have kept her from saving and from moving on.

These rent increases are not mere inflation but part of a 'predatory equity scheme' being waged throughout the West side of Glenwood by Sand Hill Properties, an investment group that bought almost all of the properties on the West side of the freeway around the time Camella moved in. Sand Hill immediately began to aggressively confront the city's rent control ordinance, costing the city millions in legal fees and eventually winning their battle and raising rents on their very low income residents by as much as \$300 in a single month. Not only did they raise rents, they all but disappeared from the daily lives of residents as owners and managers of the building. As Camella explained the daily frustrations of this:

It's strange because you don't know who owns the properties and then when you go in the office to try to talk to somebody, it's crazy, nobody knows what's going on and the person who managed these apartments is not here at the time and so you have to come back and it's really crazy in the office and everybody, all the apartment complexes come to this one office to pay their rent ...the line is extremely long a lot of times and, just, it's chaotic, nobody, you can never specifically speak to that person when you go in there and you say okay, well, Sandra is the manager and you go back and they go 'oh, she's fired, she's not here anymore and such and such is your manager now' and, like, so, you never get clarity, and you never know who you're supposed to be talking to and if things change then you can't, you know, disagree, or, you just have to pretty much go along with it because nobody is consistent.

(RAA-INT-CJ, 12/2/08)

The frustration and confusion described here are systematic. Residents throughout these properties have complained and protested about the neglect and the rents. The city has fought three battles with these properties in the past five years, trying to keep rents down

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<sup>18</sup> Before the shelter they were living in the car but one of the kids told one of their friends and CPS was called and they mandated that they get out of the car so they went to stay in an SRO but the rent was so exorbitant that they couldn't make any progress, couldn't save, so they went back on the streets before finding this shelter. Note that this shelter is unique (I don't know about the particular funding structure) but it is rare to have a shelter where you can "live." They had a mandatory savings plan where you work while living at the shelter and turn over 70% of your earnings which they save for you until you have enough to start up on your own at which point they turn it all back over to you.

and demand maintenance. It is widely believed, however, that Sand Hill Properties is aggressively trying to drive residents out to facilitate a process of condo-conversion—a change that would likely “flip” these properties from low-income residents of color to high and middle-income mostly White residents, like the surrounding communities.<sup>19</sup>

This confrontation with Sand Hill Properties, lived by Camella in the form of relentlessly long lines, illegible (Fairbanks, 2009) office procedures, deferred maintenance and rapid rent increases is emblematic, I argue, of the ways in which young people in Glenwood live the border with Parkside. They are continually seeking access, under siege, and engaging in transformation. While the last chapter addressed the long history of struggle on the part of Glenwood residents to establish a vibrant community and create viable educational opportunities for their young people in the face of intense resistance, this chapter is about the ways in which young people and their families live with, contest, defend, understand, are shaped by and shape the borders forged through this struggle—borders that are neither fixed nor stable. It is a chapter not only about the “bust”—the soaring wealth gaps, rampant foreclosures and extreme instability precipitated by the sub prime crisis—but also about the “boom”—the gentrification, displacement, and racialized revanchism --that preceded it. It is about the ways in which a history of “education by dispossession” informs a politics of resistance that grates against a politics of opportunity and an ongoing barrage of hope. This chapter lays the foundation for what we see in chapters 4-6—the embodiment of a politics of dispossession in the context of the border crossing transition to high school. School and space are not lived separately—the politics of the two are intricately linked. For sake of clarity, however, in this chapter I focus primarily on the neighborhood contexts while in those that follow, I focus on schools. I begin by elaborating on Camella’s story and the ways in which mobility and bordering represent a set of dialectical resistance and survival strategies in her life. I next expand this discussion to talk about other Glenwood families and the strategies they deploy to grapple with economic and geographic insecurity.

### **Making a Home in the Bankrupt Bank: Camella’s Story**

Camella’s son Dijon was one of the focal students for this project. When I first encountered him he was standing at the projector in Mr. Baskin’s (his 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher’s) math class, having volunteered to complete a problem for the class. Students were sitting in rows of four facing away from the doors of the classroom, the room was slightly dark so the projector could be seen, the long Venetian blinds pulled shut but with light leaking through wherever slats were missing and large sections of sky still visible where the pull chords for the blinds had broken and the long white slats lay stacked together gathering dust. Dijon was smaller than most of the other boys, under five feet tall, and had a large birthmark on the edge of his forehead that stood out on the otherwise smooth caramel surface of his skin. His hair was arranged in precise cornrows that wrapped around the contours of his head and extended an inch or so down the back of his neck. After some

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<sup>19</sup> This seems to have clearly been their plan. There is a lot of real-estate here that, given the redevelopment that has already taken place on this side of the freeway, could, if flipped all at once, easily facilitate a gentrification process that would be swift, immediate and almost entirely complete. These plans (if they were the original plans) were upended by the collapse of the real estate market. Now, instead of foreclosing on residents, Sand Hill Properties themselves have been foreclosed on and have declared bankruptcy. This has furthered the deterioration of the properties and neglect. Many, including the local police, attribute a recent crime spike in these apartments to severe neglect.

time working, hesitantly, on the projector, Mr. Baskin came up to him “okay, it looks like this time you didn’t quite get it. (then, to the whole class) Let me show you guys how to do this one.” He began to erase the overhead and Dijon stood to the side. He was not embarrassed, at least not visibly so, he smiled easy and his attempt at the problem was sincere and seemingly assured, despite his miss in this case.

Camella’s walls are covered with pictures of Dijon and his sister, Serena. Tiny photos of them in dress clothes, football uniforms, cheerleading suits, and school uniforms, from the time they are babies until they the present, are arranged into collages, hung neatly and framed on the walls. Bigger photos—headshots, family portraits, and school and team pictures hang beside them. She describes where they lived when these different photos were taken and how these photos represent a form of stability amidst seemingly perpetual migration. “I didn’t take too many pictures when, um, the kids were little, um, so I said since we’ve been here we’ve taken a picture every year or so...cause we move around too much and so I said okay, they’re ten years, I have to start taking pictures because I have to have something for them so that they can remember that, okay, we were a family at some point.” She points me towards a picture of the kids when they were babies “this is when we were still in Texas” and then to another of the family when the kids are about seven, “that’s us when we lived in South City, the little tiny one down at the bottom, you can barely see it though. And this is Dijon, he was, we were living, that’s at a, a, at Safe Home, when we lived at the shelter.”

R.A.: how old is he there, like six or seven?

C: No, no, he’s uh, no he was at Huerta, he was in fifth grade I think

R.A.: He was in fifth grade in that?

C: Mhm. Yep. I think this is the beginning of, right here, I think this is the beginning of the hair growing session right here (she laughs).

(RAA-INT-CJ, 12/2/08)

Camella articulated the purpose of these photos—her yearly photo project—as carving out a space for the family amidst ongoing displacement. She began the project, however, only after the family was at the shelter, during the time they began to find a stable (if far from ideal) place to reside. She also articulated the subject of the photos, a “family,” as a sort of temporary achievement; something she didn’t seem to dare to anticipate would survive. The experience of constant mobility pushed her to desire the kind of fixity represented in photos and to “keep it all, our stuff,” holding on to the mementos and photos that were so easy to lose in constant moves and periods of homelessness. Her achievement was having kept the pieces together throughout such upheaval, but the meaning of this small apartment also came through. She was adamant that they were always a family—when they lived with her sister, when they lived in the car, when they slept at the shelter—but this apartment seemed to make it possible to not only document and represent, but also live that family “at some point.”

Here we begin to see the different strategies Camella has used to grapple with economic insecurity. Her narrative and the photos on the wall point in two seemingly opposing directions: on the one hand, hers is a story of having used her own movement through space as a strategy—she draws strength from and, indeed, depends critically upon her own capacity to move (physically) herself and her family. She understands herself as a

survivor and she articulates how circumstances that could have broken her family have, instead, strengthened them. On the other hand, she is continually fighting against her own displacement—trying to arrest the rapid rent increases that threaten her with another move through protest, public address, and complaint.

The city of Glenwood (and with it, the attendant borders with Parkside) is similarly lived by Camella in contradictory ways. She articulates her initial fear of the city and worries about the schools. She does not necessarily see herself as a part of the city, concerned about violence and insecurity as are many residents, and perhaps thinking of herself as above it and both having sought and seeking something more.

livin' in Glenwood was like ... I never wanted to live here cause when we first moved to California, um, to San Francisco Area...and that was a little bit um, calmer, uh community but coming down here I was like oooh lord I gotta get us out of here really fast.

(RAA-INT-CJ, 12/2/08)

At the same time, this is the space she is fighting for and she finds the city fighting to keep her rent low, her neighbors standing up in city council meetings with her, and friendship amongst others in her building similarly struggling to cope.

it's been crazy, we've been to city hall, you know, protesting and I had my two minutes to say what I had to say to the, the Board and everybody here was just crowded in there and we said what we had to say and we were thinkin' that we were gonna get some kind of leeway, which it gave us a cushion for like, um, I guess about four or five months but ultimately the first case that they went to court with, um, Sand Hill won.

(RAA-INT-CJ, 12/2/08)

The city of Glenwood within this context becomes something other than a place. It is hardly simply a geography. Rather, it is a political advocate—a public entity that both recognizes and seeks to respond to the conditions faced by Camella, her family, and their neighbors. It is Glenwood's rent control ordinance that has ensured that there is space that Camella can afford in this otherwise very high rent area. It is, moreover, the city of Glenwood that aggressively fights the attacks on their rent control ordinance by Sand Hill properties. City representatives appear on the side of community members in the public meetings and protests.

To create a home for her children under extreme economic duress and amidst predatory capital and patriarchal domination, Camella literally, for a time, pursued a strategy of permanent mobility, transforming her car into a family home, carrying photos to keep memories alive, generating a fake address to enroll the children in school. She did not just decide to attach herself to a permanent place again but was in part coerced (child protective services threatened to take away her children after she was reported to them by the school) and in part received extensive help and services necessary to enable her to do



so—the shelter gave her and her children a place to stay, provided counseling, helped her find a job, generated a savings plan and provided references. In the United States it is, by and large, illegal not to have somewhere to live. It is thus, simultaneously illegal for Camella to pursue permanent mobility as she did when she lived with her children in her car and legal for her to be pushed out of her apartment by aggressive rent increases—her mobility is thus forced and regulated (Murphy, 2009; Marcuse, Connolly, Novy, Olivo, Potter & Steil, 2009). As the predatory equity scheme falls apart, the high rents continue to suck her income making it impossible for her to save, but crime and disrepair seep in around the edges of her home as lights break and are not repaired, gates break and are not repaired, pools fill with scum, and trash overflows. Camella almost lost her home because it was somebody else’s bank—a corporation’s moneymaking strategy. Now, living in a bankrupt bank—a building held by a bankrupt corporation—where she has deposited all her money, she could not afford to leave.

### **Naming Borders**

Displacement, border crossing, bordering, and mobility are all consistent themes in the lives of the young people in this study and their families. Many are living in the bankrupt bank—their homes carved out of other people’s strategies for accumulating capital, their mobility and immobility uncertain both when prices are inflated and when they are depressed. At times, their own strategies for generating income also become tied up in these homes—sometimes in the form of dependence on low rents, other times in the form of purchase or investment. During the early part of the millennium, opportunities to purchase homes were opened up for families who would never have had access to credit under tighter accounting and lending procedures. Much of this purchasing, however, occurred under predatory conditions where balloon payments, high and flexible interest rates, and minimal down payments were the norm. People were given loans for which their only chance at successful payment hinged on being able to refinance and adjust the terms of their mortgage in a perpetually expanding market. A great pyramid scheme at a national scale kept the economy afloat by digging into the pockets of the working poor for mortgage payments—producing one of the greatest wealth transfers from poor to rich—and, mind you, from people of color to Whites—this nation has ever seen (Oliver & Shapiro, 2008).

In Glenwood, young people and their families deployed multiple strategies to address the instability produced by living in the bankrupt bank. Many youth understood that the spaces they held in this community (homes, streets, schools) if they were neglected and decrepit, were so despite, not because of, the exacting efforts of their parents. They also understood that these resources were unstable. Some young people articulated this dispossession more specifically in terms of gentrification and White privilege. In an interview with Jacqueline she explained how she experienced the creation of middle-class enclaves in Glenwood as being not just about her and her family’s displacement, but about the city “wanting,” and caring for, someone other than them:

J: Glenwood is mostly Mexican, Tongan, Hispanic and Polynesian and Black. Those are the huge different ethnic breakdowns that live in the city. There are probably White people who live there too but when you see one it’s like ‘oh my God. The only reason they’re there is because of the houses by IKEA.’

R.A.: Why those?

J.A.: They're different than the other houses. They're big and nice and they have two floors. If you go, like, one street away from where it starts it's so different, it's so perfect and so clean and there's a little park and there's not garbage on the ground and most of the people who live there are White. I guess that's why they keep it that way, because they're White.

R.A.: How's that?

J.A. : Because White people, they get the privilege of people picking up and stuff because they're White and I guess Glenwood wants them to stay because they're White and they're brand new houses and because they get more rent from them.

R.A.: You think the city wants White people?

J.A.: Because you can get more funding so it's probably a good thing but it's not fair because they get whatever.

(RAA-INT-JA, 4/22/09)

The houses Jacqueline referenced were those boasted (by gentrifiers) to be “gentrifying” the city--a gated community of brand new townhouses erected next to the box store that covered the former site of Glenwood High School, which burned to the ground in the 1970s. As articulated by Jacqueline, the border between East and West was not a fixed political or geographic boundary, but the unstable line that defined who controlled and benefited from and in space. Residence in Glenwood did not entail the same vulnerability for all people (nor did residence in Parkside entail the same security for all). “White people” gated inside a housing complex designed explicitly to boost the city's tax base through gentrification were afforded private security, private clean-up crews, and private maintenance service in a city where neglect, poverty, instability and dispossession have been normative.

### **Uprooting**

Uprooting refers to practices of preservation via loss, transportation and/or destruction. Maria's family was from rural El Salvador. Hailing from a part of the country that was relatively isolated from the Civil War of the 1980s and having inherited more than 40 hectares of terrain, her family, throughout the 1980s was relatively well off—her parents worked very hard raising cows and growing crops but they had money to eat, buy new clothes, pay school fees and visit the doctor. It was only following the civil war, when agricultural support programs began to dry up in the context of structural adjustment and local markets for agriculture products became more impacted, that her family began to feel they were sliding backwards. Basic projects to maintain the farm required money—wells needed to be dug, fences maintained, feed purchased for cattle—and they didn't have the cash. Maria's mother, Consuela, was the first to come to the United States. She hired a coyote for \$7,000.00 (to be paid after her arrival) and crossed Guatemala and Mexico by bus and the U.S. border on foot. She came by herself, knowing almost no one, leaving her five children (Maria, the youngest, was only 7) behind. She landed in Glenwood because a friend of a friend was here—it was one of the only places she knew of. She arrived in October, two months before Christmas, and began working cleaning houses and rented a small room in a garage. “That night,” she remembers, reflecting on that first Christmas, “was horrible.” “I was terrified and I was all alone. I

couldn't call anyone. I just locked the door and lay in that room and cried. It was horrible. I did it for them. I did it for my children so they could have something else than what I had" (f.n., 12/16/09). Maria followed her mother's over-land route four years later, at the age of 10.

Mobility forced by economic insecurity and utilized not only as a strategy to survive, but also to help her family and children thrive, is already evident in the story of Consuela's border crossing. The border crossing that most immediately frames the narratives of Maria and her family is the US/Mexico border crossing that accounts for their undocumented status—something that shapes the entire structure of their family as Consuela seeks to keep the children at home and inside to protect them from possible discovery. It is also this crossing that has most separated the whole family from the place they still call home—their farm in El Salvador. Even though, as this research took place, most of their land had already been sold, pictures of a skinny nine year old Maria carrying pails of feed for the chickens, walking on a stone wall alongside their brick house, the edge of a palm tree and the blue, blue sky in the background, still account for home. Maria's entire family was figuratively uprooted from their home in El Salvador—a strategy her mother pursued with a singular devotion seeking opportunities for her children.

As the entire family reunited in the United States, Maria's family was able to rent a small home in East Parkside—within Glenwood school district, but not within Glenwood itself. They lived packed in with Maria, her two brothers and two sisters, her parents, and her sister's husband and two children all in a three-bedroom house. It was here, as a freshman in high school, that Maria celebrated her Quinciñera--rented chairs and tables, hosting guests on the cement driveway, her mother and father dancing under the awning as she cried with happiness while she videotaped them. Surrounding the party were the immaculate flowers and lawn her family had created from the dirt yard the house had when they moved in—roses, lilies, gladiolas, daffodils, pansies, fruit trees. The yard brimmed with color, it wrapped around the chain link fence and spilled over the walkways. Five years of labor and love evidenced in a yard—and the family around whom it hung dancing together beneath the overhang of their packed little house.

Three months after this 15<sup>th</sup> birthday party, a representative of the bank knocked on Maria's family's door. The house had been sold and they had three days to vacate the premises. Their landlord of five years had been collecting rent while the house while payments were delinquent and had never told them that she was losing the house. If their previous uprooting had been figurative (the uprooting of their family), Maria described a particularly vivid, and literal, process of uprooting that occurred later this night. She described how her brother went out into the beautifully planted yard they had developed over five years and pulled up every single plant:

He was out there all night, just digging them all up. All the flowers, everything we had planted. The next day he put them in the truck and took them over to our cousin's house. You remember how beautiful the yard was, now it's just full of holes. It looks like someone bombed it.  
(RAA-INT-MM, 5/16/09)

This was an act of preservation—metaphorically potent in the ways in which it speaks to the broader experience of this family—all of whom crossed the U.S. border by land—but also vivid in its illumination of the ways in which dispossession and instability can threaten not only monetary or cultural resources, but simple yet meaningful things like five years of work growing plants and building a home.

If their earlier mobility had been a choice under conditions of economic duress, this mobility was forced by virtue of the domino impact of sub-prime defaults in poor neighborhoods. While some have described the sub-prime crisis as, primarily, a problem of people with resources, those who could afford to buy houses, the displacement of families was widespread throughout Glenwood and East Parkside during this time. Just as rising rents threatened displacement during the housing boom—described particularly vividly through the story of Camella—during the bust renting families were suddenly forced to leave homes while owning families, like the one I lived with, tried to cling to properties in the face of eminent loss.

The strategy of uprooting points towards a set of challenges for young people I will address in more detail later but briefly touch upon here. Specifically, it points to the precariousness of investing under conditions of duress. Maria's family, with help from the church, was able to land on their feet—they were able to find an affordable rental in Glenwood (part of a church/charity/support program) that was part of a rent to own strategy on a quiet, stable, dead end street. The plants they uprooted, after languishing for months in their cousin's (underwater) house—back in the alley that had been converted (illegally) into a backyard—were transplanted. While only a fraction of the plants survived, the labor paid off as the new yard of their bigger house became sculpted into a veritable nursery. Not only were they able to put down these roots again, the house came with a large patch of land which the family converted into an urban garden. They rented plows, purchased seedling, installed irrigation systems and began to grow—beans, corn, tomatoes, giant cabbages, and carrots.

As a strategy, uprooting not only entails loss (the loss of many plants, in this case, and suffering of others) but also depends upon mobility being both temporary and isolated. Had the cousin also been forced to move, had the family's time without a home been longer (note: it was shortened because they pursued a lawyer and received permission to stay in their home for an additional month and were monetarily compensated for rent they had paid), or had they not been able to find a place with an ample yard, the strategy would have failed—the labor of planting (perhaps) and the labor of uprooting (most certainly) would have been for naught. Fullilove (2004) calls the trauma unleashed by the processes of displacement that poor urban residents face “root shock.” Uprooting is a desperate strategy for coping with this shock. The uprooting, of course, was also as much a strategy of resistance as it was one of preservation. Leaving the yard looking like a bombed out mess meant that the bank and the previous owner, neither of whom had taken the family into consideration, would not profit off their transformative labor. In my home, also under short sale, the landlord had stopped tending the beautiful yard, letting the grass grow, the rose bushes die and the apple tree sprout wildly, trying to make the house as unattractive as possible to potential buyers—trying to preserve her family's home.

The strategy of uprooting points most directly to the risk entailed in investment under conditions of instability. Investment is tied up with loss. Accumulation by

dispossession depends upon investment—it depends upon people’s productive labor to make their homes, schools, and communities functional and livable—to give them value—just as it depends upon the disregard of that value, indeed, its devaluation, in the process of the fire sale of assets that is “crisis.” Uneven development is not simply about divesting in places so that they lose their value, it is not simply about redlining, it is also about producing default—establishing the conditions for investment via usury and subsequent theft via foreclosure.

### **Makeshift bordering**

The last strategy for coping with dispossession I will address in this chapter is makeshift bordering. Makeshift bordering refers to tactics for creating and maintaining space where there is none. It is the process whereby people carve out something for themselves amidst mobility and loss. Memo, like Maria, came across the U.S., Mexico border when he was 10. With both his parents in the U.S., he lived most of his life up until that point in a small town in Michoacan with his grandparents. They didn’t have the kind of land that Maria’s family had, but rather, lived off subsistence farming and wage labor before they came. When I interview her, midway through Memo’s freshman year, sitting at their kitchen table, Memo’s mother described why she brought the children here:

*Estoy orgulloso de mis hijos, estoy orgulloso porque yo de allí para adelante que les eché ganas y tienen futuros. A este país venimos a darse la oportunidad a nuestros hijos que en nuestro país no se puede, no se puede, no pude uno dale aunque, aunque este, pues si yo hubiera estado allá, no hubiera podido, porque allá niños de ocho años, niños de nueve, ya están trabajando, ya esta...están a las seis de la mañana levantándose para, para ir a acompañar a sus papas en el trabajo, y a veces trabajan igual de un hombre, igual que una persona grande no mas que se les paga la mitad, porque están muy chicos.*

I’m proud of my children and I’m proud because from here forward I know that they’ll do what they need to do and that they have futures. We came to this country to give them an opportunity that we knew they would never have, never have in our country. You just couldn’t even if, even if...I mean, if I had been there, they wouldn’t have been able to, because kids of eight or nine years old, they’re already working...at six in the morning they’re up going to work with their parents. Sometimes they work just as hard as a man, just as hard as a full grown person, but they pay them half of what they would someone whose full grown because they’re just kids.

(RAA-INT-AC, 2/4/09)

Like Maria's mother, Memo's mother used border crossing as a strategy not just to protect and provide for her family, but also to keep her children from having to engage in poorly paid wage labor to support their family and allow them to pursue their education. The strain of being undocumented and living off of very minimal resources in the United States only seemed to enhance the pride that Memo's mother, Angelica, felt in having been able to keep her family together and full of love while enduring the border crossings and separations that made this opportunity possible.

When I met Memo, during his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year, he was sleeping on the floor of a one-bedroom apartment that he shared with his mother, father, three sisters, and uncle. His family shared the living room while his uncle used the other room as a bedroom/office. His stepfather, with whom his mother now lived, brought in the family's only income, working part time at a local pizzeria. Memo's family, like Maria's had sought support from the church when they arrived and, like Maria's, had undergone religious conversion as a part of that process. Maria's family had converted from Catholic to Mormon, while Memo's had gone from Catholic to Evangelical. His mother and stepfather were both devout church members and Memo and his sisters were all raised in the church after arriving in the U.S.

The living room that Memo's family—a newborn, a two year old, a nine year old, Memo, his mother and his stepfather—shared, was divided from the rest of the apartment by sheets. Sheets hung like temporary curtains that could be withdrawn during the day, and furniture stacked strategically to create separate spaces, created an improvised wall between the kitchen and hallway and the family's living space. These sheets didn't only give the family privacy, they also marked the gap between the family's own very clean, evangelical lifestyle, and the business Memo's step dad's brother (with whom they lived) maintained selling Cocaine out of their apartment. While their dire economic circumstances forced them to live, like Camella also had for some time, dependent upon other's participation in the underground economy, the sheets provided a way of marking distance between the good people they understood themselves to be and those who “vienen a ser males”—who come to do harm.

This “makeshift border” marked off what Angelica tried to carve as a zone of safety for her family—a space in which they might be protected (if not physically, then ideologically) from the aggressive anti-immigrant politics and deportations that (along with the bankrupt bank they were also living in as their apartment was also owned by Sand Hill) marked a different strategy of accumulation by dispossession—the production of cheap labor and retaining of reserve labor via illegalization (dependent upon multiple strategies including incarceration and deportation). The sheets, the door to her apartment, all became critical in trying to protect her family from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), something that was also a deep concern for Consuela, Maria's mother..

*Hay muchas redadas, están, um, agarrando personas y deportandolas y todo esto, pero yo pienso que es cierto, soy idealista, hay muchas personas que vienen a ser males....y, no los justifico, también ... nos conocemos que hemos violado una ley, que es, de llegar a este país, de no tener papeles pero a la vez, yo pienso que el dale la oportunidad a nuestros hijos que sean alguien y que sirven y sean útiles*

*por este país, yo pienso que, que a lejos de todo, ah, yo, pienso que, que eso sería una justificación, verdad, de que venimos a este país y y. Pero que nuestros hijos sean útiles a este país, verdad, y que este, que este si, yo, yo digo que, ah, si vale un poquito..de que el nuevo presidente nos, ah, saca el corazón y nos, y nos ayude.*

There are lots of raids and they are grabbing people and deporting them and all that, but I think that it's true, I'm idealistic, but I think that it's true, sure, there are lots of people who come to this country to do bad things...and I don't justify that... and we also know that we've broken a law, that we've come into this country without papers. But sometimes, I think that giving that opportunity to our kids, so they can be someone, and be useful, and do something for this country, I think that that has to count for something. I hope the new president will find his heart and help us.  
(RAA-INT-AC, 2/4/09)

Angelica recounted, moments later, how there had been ICE raids one street over, across from the Laundromat, and also on her street. She expresses the idea that others, perhaps the new president, might see the justice of her own actions, might understand the goodness of her family and the importance of being able to provide in this way for their children. Not just the sheets, not just the physical border, but also this moral distinction, she hoped, might insulate them from not only the badge, but also the consequences of “illegality”—something she created makeshift borders to protect her children and her family from—even as their economically necessary border crossing placed them in this position.

### **The City as a (Bankrupt) Home**

For Memo and Maria's mothers, it was less clear than it was for Dijon's just how the city of Glenwood might protect or defend them. And, even as the city seemed to be rallying with Camella and her neighbors, they were creating privileged enclaves that felt threatening to Jacqueline—that were lived by her as a displacement and invasion, but perhaps more fundamentally, as a lack of caring. As we move through this dissertation, you will see how undocumented migration was normalized in Glenwood, in a way that provided a certain not only ideological but also infrastructural cushion for families like Maria's and Memo's. The churches provided a further cushion. But, unlike some cities in California, the city had not yet taken up a strong stance in defense of the undocumented—they had not, for example, passed laws limiting the amount of time people's cars could be impounded for when they were stopped without a license, or intervened against the secure communities program which linked police to homeland security. That said, each of these families struggled in some way with a sense of their own “illegality” and in each case this was lived, to some extent, through a relationship with space—whether through their forced mobility, the illegalization of that mobility, or disruptions to their sense of belonging, ownership and worth via gentrification. What

becomes evident in these examples are the particular ways in which families were managing and coping with poverty and the role of the city of Glenwood, in particular, and their immersion in a like community, in creating space for that—the services were inadequate, the city lost lawsuits, free legal services were overloaded, food banks dispersed huge quantities of food, and yet, these services were present, and present in ways that mattered in everyday ways for families. A role that is continually in jeopardy as the city itself, under siege of media, lawsuits and poverty, struggles to make ends meet.

The different strategies that these families pursued highlight the extent to which their lives were being lived in the context of extreme dispossession. Protesting to resist losing their apartments, hiring lawyers to resist being immediately kicked out of their houses, hanging sheets to attain privacy, staying indoors to avoid deportation--these are all extreme strategies of survival amidst both economic and political repression. I pointed in the last chapter towards the ways in which Glenwood residents struggle to maintain both city and school resources and boundaries in the face of flight, incursion and resource extraction by nearby White communities. Here, I point toward particular strategies that families use for survival in the context of present day dispossession—sub-prime lending, illegalization and gentrification.

The dispossession described in these families cases signals the precariousness not just of national citizenship for these young people but also that which Harvey and others have linked to the ‘right to the city’—a precariousness of dwelling. The threat of displacement is active in times of both boom and bust. During the boom via gentrification, redevelopment and displacement and during the bust via eviction, joblessness, and dilapidation. Living in the (Bankrupt) Bank refers to the ways in which the “homes” of young people need to be understood as spaces of family and/or dwelling, but also as places occupied by and functioning as a (Bankrupt) Bank. This constant threat of dispossession leads and relates to another set of practices—those which I refer to as uprooting and bordering.

The borders of Glenwood come back into this story as we zoom out from the micro-details of these family’s lives and look at their broader geographies. The border shaped by White flight, blockbusting, school siting, annexation, deannexation, and school closure that we could see emerge and solidify through violent exclusion in chapter 1, begins to appear in chapter 2 as something precarious and precious—even as it is still violent. The border of Glenwood is marked in some places by freeways and creeks and in others it zigs and zags unmarked across neighborhoods. Yet, in all cases, it is a visible, material divide etched not through “natural” processes or divisions, but through years of concerted action on the part of both residents their governments to create and contest segregated space. We saw in chapter 1 how, even as Glenwood residents struggled to illuminate their own racialized marginalization and assert their right to integrated, culturally relevant, and well-funded schools, they were consistently faced with school closure, territorial loss, and isolation. In Chapter 3 we see how the tension between seeking economic opportunity and political and cultural sovereignty plays out as families deploy various strategies of mobility and immobility to attempt to produce possibilities for their families amidst conditions of dispossession.



### **Chapter 3: Predatory Equity: Schooling on the Suburban Frontier**

Predatory equity is a practice whereby real estate developers buy up a piece of land—for example, a block of apartments—by taking out large mortgages (often with balloon payments attached), banking on their ability to attack city rent control ordinances, raise rents and “flip” these properties into high rent condominiums or some other large asset that can quickly be sold. This is the practice the real estate firm Sand Hill Properties was attempting to use on the apartments Camella and her son Dijon and Angelica and her son Memo lived in. Predatory equity depends upon the destruction of public sector protections (in this case through the courts), the presence of uneven development (low-cost properties that can be purchased at fire sale prices), the easy availability of deregulated credit, and willing buyers. In this chapter I use predatory equity as a framework to think about what is happening in the middle schools of Glenwood and Parkside and as a means of telling the story of how the borders between these schools and communities—fought over in battles about redlining and desegregation—translate into everyday educational opportunities for young people.

#### **Uneven Development: Segregated Schools, Colorblind Borders**

Following 1986, the year the last major desegregation lawsuit in Parkside and Glenwood was resolved, the boundaries of school attendance zones ceased to be a source of major dispute and attention shifted to addressing educational inequality through other means. In 2007, when this research began, despite some major reorganizations within Glenwood School District (the creation of smaller schools, a major transition in the administration, and a huge demographic shift that flipped the city from 70% African American to 70% Latino), the basic geographies of the educational landscape remained relatively unchanged. Glenwood Elementary School District was almost 100% students of color (primarily Latino, African American and Pacific Islander), the district was among the lowest performing districts in the state, had one of the highest rates of students in poverty and English Language Learners in the state and seemed to be often mired in scandal. The 1986 desegregation settlement granted that every year 150 students could be transferred from this district (at no cost to the district or the parents) to the nearby high-performing schools in elite communities. In order to enroll in this program parents had to enter their children by 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, with preference given to siblings and most successful parents beginning preparation well before their children entered kindergarten. Glenwood Elementary School District consisted of four major campuses, two of which contained both K-5 and 6-8 schools. The Glenwood Elementary schools operated on an open enrollment policy with students being free to transfer out of their designated attendance zone. This was particularly important given the high levels of mobility of Glenwood students who were often housing insecure—the policy enabled them to retain their school placement despite relocations.

When they transitioned to high school, students from the four Glenwood campuses were divided up between the four schools of the Parkside Unified High School District. The majority of students from East Parkside were sent to Parkside High School, only a few miles away, as were those from the parts of Glenwood located on the west side of the freeway. Students from the area known as The Orchard, were sent to a school

in the hills above Parkside, over a ten-mile bus-ride into neighborhoods where many of their parents may have worked tending gardens and cleaning houses. Students in Central-Glenwood were sent to Craigmont school, again a 15-mile plus bus ride, to a town three cities away. Students were allowed to petition for a transfer outside of their attendance zone, but these were granted at the discretion of the district and could be revoked for poor grades or behavioral issues. There was no public high school option in Glenwood.

The neighboring town of Parkside, having fought off attempts to integrate the Elementary School Districts, but been forced to integrate the High School District, boasted some of the top performing elementary schools in the state. There was only one middle school in the Parkside Elementary School District, Valley Vista Middle School, and that school, like its counter part in the nearby West Parkside Elementary School District, was a top-performing, nationally recognized school. These schools were almost 80% White with large Asian minorities and a small percentage of African American, Latino and Pacific Islander students, most of them bussed in though the desegregation program resulting from the 1985 lawsuit—the schools referred to these student as the “Greely Kids” in reference to the name of the settlement. While the public funds Parkside Elementary School received were relatively similar to those the schools in Glenwood Elementary School district received, the local Educational Foundation raised an extra \$1 million dollars a year which it donated entirely to the funding of extra teaching staff and teacher support. Parkside Elementary School District also benefited from having students with relatively fewer needs and many more private resources than students in Glenwood Elementary School district. I am not talking about the widely misused concept of “parent support” here but rather access to elite private tutoring, after-school opportunities, safety and security in their community, private nannies, cooks, housekeepers and other institutional supports, access to both personal mentorship and internships and exposure opportunities in top fields such as research, medical, law, etc., expansive opportunities for both international and domestic travel as well as the freedom of movement and leisure time to do so, ample well funded, safe and supportive pre-school and early education opportunities, access to safe and secure food, shelter, and adult relationships, the list continues. The students at Parkside High were generally economically, socially and politically privileged and the school benefited substantially from the ample private resources of their families and communities, not only with respect to the private funds donated to the school. The school also had the “privilege” of being relatively “unburdened” by students and families who were socially, economically and politically marginalized, suffering from hardship, struggling to survive, had experienced war and violence, were lacking in historical opportunities and faced illegalization, racism and a fraught relationship to the U.S. state.

These disparities meant that the attendance boundaries forged during years of fighting over both school desegregation and racism in housing and lending markets, radically shaped the educational opportunities available to students. This was not simply a matter of “bad teachers” or “bad schools” or even a “bad district” as often portrayed in popular discussions and the press. Rather, there was a gaping resource disparity between these two schools, which was reflected in parent, community, school, district, teacher and student resources. Given the extremes of these disparities, I look at the schools in Glenwood District, despite their very low success rates, as schools that were performing and succeeding in many respects against extraordinary odds, while those in Parkside are

schools that manage to attain fantastic achievement records, but are able to do so in part through the exclusion of students and families in need and those who do not have access to positions of power and privilege. Their success is thus shaped not only by their own effort and merit, but by dispossession—by racial and economic exclusion, a set of political and economic relations that give them and their families privilege (often at the expense of others) and the withdrawal of public funds from public schools and replacement of these with private money sequestered in the districts and schools with the economic power to collect such funds. Huerta Middle School (a 6-8 grade school in the Glenwood School District) and Valley Vista Middle School (a 6-8 grade school in the Parkside School District) exemplify these disparities.

### **Huerta and Valley Vista: A Portrait of Inequality**

The starkest and most academically relevant difference between Huerta Middle School and Valley Vista Middle School was in their course offerings and teaching staff. This cannot be summed up as a simple matter of teacher quality, but was a much deeper resource issue that impacted the types of teaching opportunities and spectrum of coursework available to students. While Valley Vista had roughly 25% more students than Huerta, they had three times as many teachers working with their eighth grade students and offered six times as many courses. While there were only five 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at Huerta, there were 17 at Valley Vista and while all Huerta 8<sup>th</sup> grade students were placed into two core course offerings (8<sup>th</sup> grade core and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math/science), at Valley Vista students chose from at least 17 different course offerings including 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish and French, Woodshop, Art, Video, and at least three different levels of math. Valley Vista students had a science lab course run by a designated science teacher with full lab equipment while Huerta Students had none. They also had a full slate of electives while Huerta students had none. Huerta students all take Algebra I, while Valley Vista students can choose between Middle School Algebra, High School Algebra, and Geometry (a 10<sup>th</sup> grade course).

The sheer variety of course offerings at Valley Vista was matched by the glamour of the classroom spaces. One of the first places I was ushered into when I began my research was the school's TV studio, connected by closed circuit to individual televisions in all of the classrooms. The principal introduced me to the entire school over this TV system as I began my project. I recorded the experience in my field notes:

Inside the studio there were 5-6 kids sitting at computers with earphones. They seemed to be monitoring or operating the TV program. In front of them was a plate glass window and behind the window, cameras, a microphone and chairs were set up. There were a few students in the studio room. A teacher stood in the first room... The door to the studio opened and we rushed in and the principal gestured for me to sit next to him on one of the two chairs. "I've got a couple of things for you today," he began addressing the students, " but before I start, I want to introduce a very special guest who you're going to be seeing around campus. This is Becky Alexander." I waved at the camera

at said “hi” as instructed and smiled. “Becky is a graduate student at the University of California...and for her research she’s going to be working here at Valley Vista looking at how you get along with and interact with each other and then following some of you to Parkside to see how that experience is.”  
(f.n., 1/16/08)

What made this space particularly glamorous wasn’t simply the technological equipment and the magnitude of the investment in putting a professional TV station in a middle school. Rather, it was the fact of having the resources to also place and maintain TV’s in each classroom linked to this studio, the staff and the capacity to train students in the operation of these and effectively supervise them, and the time and resources to integrate the technology in an everyday way into both the teaching operation and the overall structure of the school. Other elective classroom spaces of a similar level of development included a woodshop, photo lab, and a computer lab (with advanced computers and software).

In addition to these elective classroom spaces, the school also had state of the art classrooms for regular coursework. Each classroom was equipped with a “smartboard”—a digital whiteboard linked to the computer and an overhead projector installed on the ceiling. Teachers were trained to operate these boards and integrate them into their everyday classroom use. They could write on the boards with electronic markers and then import snapshots of this into their computer, which could translate their writing to text; they could show videos or project images and write on these; and they could utilize the computer on the board in concert with students’ writing. These boards were a technology students were familiar with and put into everyday use...even play. I documented my own amazement with the screens while observing a study hall classroom where students were having free time. A few boys were on the computers playing a game that involved catching people on fire, girls were playing hangman on the whiteboard, others were on different computers looking at facebook and Brittany Spears videos and the rest...

Began playing with the amazing technological gadget.  
Turns out the screen in front of the classroom, with two long speakers on either side, is actually an interactive touchpad that is linked to the computer. You can literally touch the projection on the screen and make things happen on the computer. It’s got “pens” that you can write on it with in multiple colors and a keyboard you can pull up on the screen. It links to a computer and the text can be converted into type or captured as an image...the kids were told at a few points to treat the equipment gently but they were treating it pretty casually, pounding on it pretty hard, wrestling around with each other. One person was on the laptop and the rest all trying to use the screen simultaneously. (f.n., 1/18/08)

What is stunning here isn't just the expense and sophistication of the technology, but the ways in which students are granted access to it. There were at least six computers in this classroom (which was not the computer lab) in addition to the laptop and the smartboard, both of which students were permitted to use, even use roughly and for non-academic activities. While this was by far the least regulated use of technology I saw throughout the school, these very expensive items were an everyday part of students' classroom experience.

While fancy gadgets and elaborate technology do not necessarily make for great education or solid pedagogy, the opulence of Valley Vista as a learning space marks the spectacular wealth gap between these two schools and districts. At Huerta Middle School there are few computers in classrooms. There are two computer labs with working desktop computers but they are poorly maintained, particularly so after the technology support staff was sacrificed to budget cuts. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mr. Jackson, purchased a small inexpensive projector for his classroom with his own money so that he could project his lessons. Many teachers functioned completely without a projector or borrowed one from Mr. Jackson or the principal (when working). As you may recall from my description of Dijon completing a math problem in front of the class, the teacher was using an overhead projector, wedged in between the students' desks. Huerta, without the support of after-school programs and extra funds utilized to extend the school day in an effort to raise test scores<sup>20</sup>, would have had no extracurricular courses or activities at all—no art, no music, no woodshop, photography, or even a sports program. At the time of my initial research, they did not have a functioning science lab and students received science instruction only once per week.

The introduction of new facilities, in and of themselves, would make little difference at Huerta. Rather, as the budget cuts Huerta and all Glenwood Schools went through during the course of my research made clear, it was not the material resources per-se, but the personnel to run, maintain, incorporate, and protect these resources that mattered. Budget cuts stripped Huerta's staff to the bone. At one of the first board meetings I attended in the district, support staff, teachers, students and community members packed the boardroom, leaving standing room only, to protest pink slips being given to bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and janitorial staff as part of an effort to cut \$1.8 million from the school districts' budget. The following year, the board cut all the school librarians, the locksmith (whose job it was to ensure classrooms were securely locked and could not be broken into), and the technical support staff (in charge of maintaining all the school's computers). The board considered cutting bus service for students entirely but worried about liability (particularly because a substantial portion of their budget went to addressing five existing lawsuits). These cuts meant that the supplies that the schools did have—library books, computers, the two projectors—all of which were heavily used would not have the staff to maintain and protect them.

### **Divestment: Foreclosing on the Public**

The cuts that hit Huerta Middle School in the '07-'08 and 08'-09' school years did not touch Valley Vista, as the later was very well funded and did not receive state aid.

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<sup>20</sup> Federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funding allowed the district to contract privately run after-school programs which included limited offerings in music and art for students enrolled in the after-school program.

Thus while the Huerta School Board members cried (literally) as they faced a community dependent upon the jobs their district provided, and students dependent upon these already sparse services, Parkside School District continued operations as usual. The disparities were, thus, not simply a matter of one school having resources that the other did not, and thus being able to provide much more extensive educational opportunities. The disparity was also in the level of control over those resources and capacity to weather economic hard times these districts had. The following excerpt, from a school board meeting shows how board members were grappling with cuts to schools not just as something that impacted their educational program, but as something that rippled out through the entire community, hitting the poorest residents the hardest. In light of this, they were considering making across the board cuts, instead of eliminating classified positions:

I know it's hard. It's very hard to get...because people who make a hundred thousand they are living on a hundred thousand but if we make the cuts across the board...they can survive...compared to people who make thirty-thousand ...maybe we'd still have to let go of some people but...if we can find a way (lots of clapping). (GESD Board Meeting Transcript, 7/23/09)

The sub-prime crisis not only touched every family at Huerta in some way (in a way that it touched very few Valley Vista families), it wrenched the basic services members of that community depended upon—from public sector jobs, to educational opportunities, to basic health care. For school and district staff, then, as well as for many parents and students, the concern was not just having less, but the sense that what they did have was continually under threat, in constant need of defending and often, seemingly uncontrollably, disappearing. Instead of finding themselves in a position where they could invest in and grow the school, acquiring much needed resources and expanding services to meet the very real needs of students and families, they were fighting for their life....every year.

The differences that everyday resources made in the operation of the schools is perhaps most evident in the ways teachers talked about their work. While teachers at Huerta were generally positive about the school's administration, they talked about the ways in which a basic lack of resources, in the specific case I explain below, substitute teachers, hindered their ability to effectively care for their students. Mr. Jackson described how he was unable to shadow the high schools the students would be attending or attend their meetings with their high school counselors because of a lack of available substitute teachers. To my asking, in a recorded interview, whether he had shadowed at the high school, Mr. Jackson responded:

We're supposed to, we're supposed to, and this year I was supposed to go again but I couldn't get a sub, and I don't know what my new teacher center guy is doing, he's supposed to have all the data, I've asked a couple of people for help but, that's what I mean, the district, there's no

support. My old school, it's like, oh you need a, okay, go, we'll send an emergency sub but it's just not, they just don't have what they need here. (RAA-INT-MJ, 5/29/08)

In other chapters, I will describe students' transition to high school—the ways in which it is a complex and socially and politically fraught border crossing. Eighth grade teachers having familiarity with the high school and being able to sit in on course selection meetings with students and parents was a critical academic function in allowing them to both align their coursework and ensure an appropriate transition for their students. In Mr. Jackson's case, this was hindered multiple years in a row by lack of a substitute teacher.

In contrast, teachers at Valley Vista described the ample professional development resources they were given. Ms. Hegel recognized the privilege she had working in a district that she felt was both willing and able to respond to her every need:

...what's so nice as a new teacher coming with, you know, so little experience and resources, I felt like everything that I've asked for, they've been able to do in some way, and it's not about just throwing money at the problem but it's oh, I really want to learn more about this and so, you know, they, here's a book to read or here's a seminar to go to. I think the money helps that the district has but you know, I was sent. I've been sent to Virginia twice to be trained in differentiated instruction, you know they've done, they're just so supportive and they have the resources that it's the kind of thing that to be able to be stockpiling all this now for wherever my future takes me is so...I feel so lucky. (RAA-INT-MH, 6/9/08)

While Ms. Hegel reassured me that the school was not just “throwing money at the problem,” the experiences she describes—being sent out of state multiple times for differentiated instruction trainings, seminars, books and the substitute teachers and days off to enable such training--clearly require extensive resources.

As I have already pointed out, the resource differences between these two schools are not simply about money, they are also about the capacity to grow, to make investments and to focus on things other than cuts and cutbacks. The resources enable extracurricular classes and allow students to become comfortable with complex equipment, they train teachers, hire bus drivers, pay librarians and provide for sports uniforms. But dispossession is not a finite concept, it is a relational one. None of these things are inherently necessary to produce quality schools, quality learning, and deep understanding, but when some districts are forced to make deep cuts that disproportionately impact their students and community and when some teachers cannot get substitutes so they can be at critical meetings with their students and yet are forced to compete against those who are given multiple opportunities for intensive out of state professional development, they, like their students, suffer.

The current divestment from public education began in California in 1977 when Proposition 13 dramatically reduced property tax revenues forcing substantial cuts in

public K-12 schools. Hot on the heels of the 1971 Serrano decision which ruled funding schools through local property taxes unconstitutional and tasked the state with redistributing school funding in a vastly unequal state, proposition 13 represented a dramatic White retreat from public funding if this meant that funding was to be shared equitably with communities of color (HoSang, 2011). The leveling down of educational funding that followed this decision was deflected, in wealthy communities, by the creation of private educational foundations and local bond initiatives. As deep state and federal cuts continued to pound California schools thirty years later, privileged enclaves that blend public with private resources, tapping into reserve capital that has been freed through tax cuts, retain the image and the resources of ‘successful schools.’ Meanwhile, schools like Huerta, and districts like Glenwood, facing three decades of persistent cuts amidst rising needs (i.e. a growing English Language Learner population), come to represent ‘the public,’ a deeply racialized construct increasingly synonymous in popular discourse with failure (Lipman, 2011).

### **Privatizing Glenwood: Sub-Prime Education**

It is within this context of divestment that the burgeoning school reform movement, and the attendant proposals of its crusaders to shutter failing schools, charterize failing districts, and replace superintendents with CEO’s emerge (Lipman, 2011). The opportunity to attend high school in Glenwood, something stripped from the public sphere when Glenwood High School was closed following the failed integration attempts, is now entirely dependent upon charter and private schools—run not by the local school board, but by university professionals and private boards. Yet these spaces are not without deep contradictions. Increasingly, at the elementary level, the Glenwood school district finds itself battling for its life not only against deep state cuts and persistent student needs, but also against charter schools.

In May 2011 a foundation-run charter school petitioned for a charter in the Glenwood School District. The district denied them on the grounds that their special education plan was critically lacking. This was particularly important as the district had been, for many years, under a burdensome and expensive court-ordered mandate to improve their special education services. Multiple, contradictory, court orders had created a Byzantine system of regulations within which it seemed virtually impossible to meet with all requirements of the law. As the principal at Huerta explained

I guarantee we would be far more accurate in the way we’re keeping our files and the way we’re maintaining service to special education than probably any, most districts in the state.... we’re held to this incredibly exacting standard which we still can’t, we can’t meet because it’s basically like 99 percent error free rate kind of thing. (RAA-INT-MF, 7/2/09)

The charter school, which I will call KP7, proposed to supervise its own special education program, joining the SELPA (Special Education Local Program Area) of another county and “holding harmless” the Glenwood District for any mistakes it might make. The problem with this plan, from the perspective of the County Board which heard



their appeal after the district had denied them, was that it was both unclear that the district would actually be legally “held harmless” and unclear how this charter school would actually serve special education students (or if they would). The KP7 charter was denied on these grounds at both the District and County levels, but like other petitions denied at both these stages, it is more than likely to be approved by the state.

The special education issue, while it gets the most leverage with the district and county boards (because it introduced potential liability and provided legitimate grounds upon which to contest the charter’s educational program) was not necessarily the primary issue for district and school representatives who lobbied against KP7. Both *did* worry about this, and other, charters’ ability to serve special needs and low performing students, their lax expulsion procedures, and the exemptions they received from certain burdensome accountability standards. More worrisome however, was that all these combined to create a situation in which “competition” was supposed to redefine public education (as it has other public institutions in spectacularly underwhelming ways) and yet this the game in which this “competition” was supposed to take place was rigged—some schools got exceptions from rules and an apparent pass on the mission of the public schools to serve all students, while others didn’t.

At Huerta these concerns were exacerbated in the ’09-’10 school year by the departure of the school’s principal, Mr. Flores, a much beloved Latino reformer and activist who had presided over a reign of stability and growth at Huerta. Wooed by a privately operated charter school with the promise of a full year to plan his program and full control over his staff and school, Mr. Flores left Huerta, taking the entire 8<sup>th</sup> grade teaching staff and some of the best seventh grade teachers with him. While the charter he opened in a nearby city had a very successful first year, this departure reverberated throughout Huerta as the new principal struggled to hire and train new teachers and rebuild a school community grappling in multiple ways with this loss.

I liken charters to sub-prime (and perhaps, more accurately, to gentrification) because they take root amidst persistent, ongoing dispossession. The public withdrawal, the uneven development and the redlining of school districts, such as Glenwood, creates the opportunity-space for venture capital (see Lipman, 2011) to seize what were once publicly controlled assets. Just as Sand Hill Properties bought up and repainted 50% of the apartment stock in Glenwood, promising repairs, but driving up rents and driving people out in the process, so too will these reforms, result in the foreclosure of public space—foreclosure perpetrated through a manufactured “crisis” created through the withdrawal (or perhaps, more accurately, continued withholding) of public support for all children.

Yet another form of predatory equity, and another front on which Glenwood School District often feels pressured, is that of state takeover. A newly hired transition coordinator at Parkside High sympathetically described to me during an interview how some wish for a state takeover, believing that local recuperation is untenable:

It almost has to be at the county level, like, someone saying, this is like, or who was it, someone, someone I know from Glenwood was like, they were like I hope Glenwood gets state takeover like they want, and then just blow the whole thing up and give different pieces to

different parts (laughs). I don't know, again, I, it's just, even the state is really reluctant to do that, right, (right), because then you make enemies of the locals. (RAA-INT-GA, 4/23/09)

This discourse of “[blowing] the whole thing up,” dismantling and redistributing the parts of the district, comes in the context of a conversation we are having about the lack of political will for integration efforts, and resonates with discourses of the educational frontier which advocate the complete dismantling of urban school systems.

I titled this chapter ‘predatory equity’ because it is not the specter of this inequality between schools that gets talked about in our media or that is currently shaping educational policy—not the failure of those with resources to commit them democratically to a project bigger than securing educational advantage for their own and their friends children. Rather, the discourse we hear, on movies such as *Waiting for Superman*, in narratives of ‘accountability’ and ‘merit pay,’ is about failing schools and the failing people within them. Bourgois (1996) and Wacquant (2002) have made a compelling case that academics cannot become soft minded and romantic in the face of the brutalizing effects of urban poverty and the full specter of interpersonal violence and troubled relationships between people and the often-deficient institutions that are supposed to serve them. The struggles that are facing Huerta schools should give us no reason to be fuzzy headed about the fact that this district does, in many ways, fail its students, but that narrative cannot descend, as such critiques often seem to, into a crisis-naming despair that induces a specter of empty, desolate space and people so grim that the bulldozer and the wrecking ball seem like the only tools of any possible use.

While the seemingly criminal lending exuberance that precipitated the foreclosure crisis has captured American’s attention, another similar crisis has gone largely unchecked. In fact, this crisis still captures the nation’s imagination much as the promise of eternally rising property values did during the real estate boom years. Just as we once imagined that prosperity would be wrought and wealth gaps closed by the endless profits of a speculative real estate market, we now imagine that the promise of eternally rising test scores and a promised narrowing of the achievement gap can do the same thing in the education market. Just as condo-conversion, redevelopment and speculative investment in the exurban landscape sprung from the well of federal efforts to cure a spectacularly unjust history of housing discrimination and in the process padded the pockets of developers while ultimately bankrupting most of those this “market inclusion” was intended to serve, for-profit charter schools, privatized educational interventions and a swelling “achievement gap” industry now promise to exact the same fate upon our nation’s schools.

Charters become the darlings of educational messiahs, optimistic board members and frustrated school leaders because in their first years they appear to offer so much hope. Those who dream big are drawn to them. Great teachers, parents who are worried about their children’s education and frustrated with district schools, and the cause of a dream, the sense of exception, fuels the desire to “give back”—teachers work long hours, parents volunteer, children study extra hard. The first few cohorts of students to get tested (usually grades are added a few at a time), have a degree of attention and priority given to them that fades as schools grow, principles supervise more teachers, discipline becomes

harder, needs greater, classes grow. Silenced within this discussion are the gaping disparities, the ongoing legacies of struggle, and the promise of redistribution and equal opportunity of the Brown decision. It is the leaders of corporate foundations—leaders whose children and homes are part of these neighborhoods that long resisted desegregation and continue, as we will see in future chapters, to track, sort and deny equal opportunity to students, who are said to hold the key to educating Glenwood students. It is, in part, a narrative of the failure of Glenwood (city, schools, teachers, students), instead of one about the failure of all those who surround them, that enables such hypocritical and fatalistic policymaking.

### **From the Suburban Frontier to the Educational Frontier**

In these first three chapters I have described how Glenwood residents grapple with the persistent threat and reality of dispossession. In particular, I focused on a set of double binds or paradoxes in which the threat of dispossession (in the form of loss of jobs, community resources and territory; homes, national residency, and personal freedom; and funding, resources, and students) create a situation where Glenwood residents must often dig in to protect and defend communities, homes, and schools deemed by others to be blighted, uninhabitable, or failing. I described the ways in which narratives of blight, emptiness and failure, feed a frontier discourse that legitimizes different forms of taking, including the annexation of territory, closure of schools, foreclosure of homes, and privatization of portions of cities. Uneven development, fed by redlining, racism and divestment, created the conditions that leave the residents, schools, and city, all struggling to fend off a tide of privatization (in the form of condo-conversion projects, charter schools, and economic development zones) while desperately in need of the basic resources these may provide (apartment upgrades, new schooling opportunities, and a broader tax base) even if only for the short term, and only for the few. In short, I described how people in Glenwood operate from a complex position in which trying to protect existing resources (through bordering), trying to access resources they are excluded from (through border crossing), both entail the threat of further dispossession.

In the next three chapters, I move from looking at the broader structure of these schools and communities, to looking at the young people within them and their transition to high school. I focus in on three processes—criminalization, illegalization, and gentrification—as a means of examining how young people and adults from Parkside and Glenwood come together on unequal terms at desegregated Parkside High School. I continue to focus on the tensions between crossing borders (national, neighborhood, school, academic track, race and others) and efforts aimed at protecting scarce community, cultural, spatial or linguistic resources. The overarching argument running throughout all three of these chapters is that, as they transition to Parkside High School, the young people of Glenwood are increasingly immersed in a context where they are forced to defend their community even as they are simultaneously made synonymous with it and asked to separate themselves from it. That is, they at once come to be overdetermined by their race and place—seen more as students of color and people from Glenwood than individuals—at the same time they are immersed within a set of discourses that demean the city, schools and people who have been a part of their life up to this point. Moreover, they are told that their future depends upon their capacity to separate themselves from both this place and these people, even as they are increasingly

responsible for caring for, protecting and defending the people (and languages, practices, customs, etc.) and communities they come from.

The local high schools (including Parkside High School) are, as I described in Chapter 1, desegregated. Under threat of a court order, the Parkside High School District desegregated its schools in 1970, generating a plan that entailed extensive bussing of Glenwood students and the creation of an alternative magnet program at Glenwood High School. When Glenwood High School was closed in 1976 the plan became a one-way bussing plan in which all Glenwood students were transported to schools in the surrounding parkside district, some of them as much as a 45 minute bus ride away. The original plan specified that no more than 25% of the population of any of the four high schools in the Parkside District could be minority. In the intervening years, as the populations have shifted, that number has changed substantially, and now upwards of 50% of the students at each of the four schools in the district are students of color. At Parkside High, 40% of students are White.

For students transitioning from both Parkside Middle School and Glenwood Middle School, this is a huge change. Parkside Middle School students go from a school that is 76% White and an even higher percent middle and upper-middle class, to a school in which Whites are a minority and a majority of students are of very limited economic means. Where the halls of Parkside Middle School are relatively open, at Glenwood High they are packed, it being almost impossible to avoid bumping into others. These White students cluster in particular spaces—honors classrooms, a large expanse of grass between C hall and D hall known as ‘the field,’ a set of picnic tables next to the band room. They travel in groups down the halls, clustered together, overweight backpacks on. For Glenwood Students, by contrast, the transition to high school entails a different kind of border crossing. They travel on city busses, bikes or by foot (or on school busses to the schools which are farther away) across the border of Glenwood into Parkside and into a school where, for the first time except perhaps in sports matches, they are around substantial numbers of White students. They are also, for the first time, around substantial numbers of students who come from wealth and have had access to top of the line educational resources. Moreover, they are in White neighborhoods and spaces where their bodies are often marked as different and they are often treated as suspect.

The chapters that follow do not assemble a complete picture of what this transition looks or feels like for students from either school. Rather, they point to a set of dynamics, rooted in the broader community contexts these young people are coming from, that shape how they engage with the High School and how the High School engages with them. Each of these dynamics is fundamentally rooted in the tensions that young people from Glenwood experience as they try to survive and thrive educationally amidst a context of ongoing dispossession. The concept of education by dispossession is drawn out in these chapters through the complex ways in which the education of some comes to be fundamentally premised upon the dispossession of others and the ways in which students from Glenwood become caught in the middle of this dynamic.

**Chapter 4:**  
**Lock Down, Lock Up, Lock Out:**  
**Criminalization in the Transition to High School**

A “high school transition” meeting for students who would be attending “Parkside” was announced on a Thursday afternoon at Huerta. Apparently, news of the meeting had just arrived from the Glenwood School District, although the meeting was to be held later that day. Student volunteers were sent around to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms with the message that anyone who would be attending Parkside should call their parents because there would be a meeting that evening at 6:00 with officials from that school. The meeting was to be held in the cafeteria.

At 6:00 p.m. a small handful of families, four of five in total, were perched awkwardly on the tiny round plastic seats of the fold-down school lunch tables. The high school officials, eight of them in total, dressed in suits and business casual, were fiddling with a slide projector perched in the middle of the cafeteria, shining its trapezoidal light onto the far wall where it was distorted in the middle by an outcropping. There were some piles of paper resting on the stage. Everyone was silent except the youngest children who fidgeted.

As the first official took up the microphone and began the introductions, it quickly became apparent that this was intended to be a meeting for the Parkside District, not Parkside High School and that all four schools in the district would be presenting. Unfortunately, the only students here are those thinking of attending Parkside—a school that is not the default school for most Huerta students. No one corrected this error. Instead, the school officials proceeded with slide presentations describing the assets of their campuses and their exciting course offerings: Robotics classes, a full slate of honors and AP courses, a Water Polo team, a brand new theater, touch screen whiteboards. They described an array of courses most of the students at Huerta would have no access to. Even if they did attend these schools, most would be placed in far below basic, below basic or basic courses, requiring them to attend extra periods of non-college-prep English and Math, and foregoing almost all electives.

The third speaker was from Craigmont School, the assigned school for most Huerta students. She did not have a power point presentation, but instead held up a stack of photocopied papers. “I wasn’t sure what kind of meeting this was going to be,” she said, “so I brought copies of the school rules.” She began to explain that lots of students from this district have trouble with the rules so she thought it was important that they understand them before they enter the school. She handed around copies to the tables and then returned to her seat.

This incident is emblematic of the criminalization that occurs for Huerta students and families when they transition into the Parkside School District. Roy (2010) uses the concept of the “double agent” to describe individuals with strong critiques of power who work from within the institutions they critique to make their “voices heard at the very heart of power” (p. 37). In some ways both Huerta School and the Glenwood school district are “double agents”—they are fully a part of the Eurocentric U.S. education system and yet, also, oriented by and responsive to oppression within and resistance to

that system. Parkside School District, as a whole, merited no such designation. In this instance, as in many others, they treated and viewed Glenwood youth as deviant and criminal.

There is a triad of practices I believe we can use to make better sense of the criminalization of Glenwood youth—or at least the complexity of it as they transition to high school—‘lock down,’ ‘lock out’ and ‘lock up.’ Fine and Ruglis (2009) write that “criminalizing youth of color in their schools is a blunt strategy of educational dispossession,” (p. 22) one that is increasingly common in neoliberal times. Here I extend this idea to think about the ways in which this criminalization became a core part of the educational process, creating education *by* dispossession, a process that was amplified as Huerta youth transitioned to high school.

The three practices I describe are three of the ways in which both schools—Huerta and Parkside—sought to protect, discipline and control young people in their charge. Each of these also corresponds to a different logic of illegality. “lock down” was designed to protect students during extremely dangerous situations and involved sheltering in place and locking and covering doors and windows. “Lock out” was a practice, primarily, of locking classroom doors when class began so students who were late would be forced to go to the office. It also represented a broader logic of expulsion or suspension, wherein students were ‘locked out’ of educational spaces. Finally, ‘lock up’ was used most specifically by young people to refer to friends and family members who were incarcerated—here it may also refer to actions of containment of all sorts.

Through an examination of the differential logics pertaining to lockdown, lock out and lock up at Glenwood Middle School and Parkside High School, I argue that as their transition to high school included a transition into White space and increased proximity with White youth, Glenwood youth shifted from being perceived as potential victims of threats, to the potential source-points for those threats. The resultant disproportionate regulation of their bodies constituted part of what Gregory, Nygreen and Moran (2006) refer to as the “discipline gap”—a gap in access to educational spaces constituted through and by excessive punishment of young people of color. I also point toward a broader significance of these practices, however, as they instruct young people in the fundamental logics of education by dispossession—that the education of some depends upon the lock out and lock up of others.

## **Lockdown**

At Huerta, the kids were excited to play soccer, we were out the door, with them waiting for me and me out with the balls and the cones when the lockdown came... two hours of lots of bored kids in the gym trying to figure out what to do. They put the music on loud and they ran around...the lockdown, bodies everywhere, kids trying to leave, staff blocking the doors physically. Borderline chaos. (f.n. 10/7/08)

Lock down is a response to the wave of school shootings that struck (primarily White) suburban high schools beginning with Columbine (Noguera, 2003). When a dangerous

situation is deemed to be present, a lock down is ordered and students are supposed to go inside, sit or lie on the floor with all windows and doors locked, lights off and shades drawn. The policy, which was designed to ensure the protection of students from threats (both internal and external), is part of a broader effort at securitizing campuses that in some schools has included video monitoring, cameras, metal detectors, police on campus and intense surveillance of students (Bearer-Friend, Vélez Young, Phillips, Nasir, 2010). Compared to these more intensive security measures, the campuses at both Huerta Middle and Parkside High were relatively open. Entrances and exits were not guarded (though the back gate to Huerta was locked during the school day), the campuses were both open to the air and sun, security cameras were not present on either campus and while security guards roamed the Parkside High School campus, they carried only walkie talkies, were not armed, and police were not a permanent presence on either campus. The fact that these security measures appear light for contexts where high numbers of “urban” (read Black and brown) students are present, indicates the extent to which these students are both viewed as threats and as under threat nationally.

The key difference between lockdowns at Huerta Middle School and lockdowns at Parkside High School was in where the imagined threat that would trigger a lockdown might originate. While both schools prepared for a wide array of scenarios, at Huerta, the threat was largely imagined to emanate from the surrounding community, whereas at Parkside, where the surrounding community was deemed ‘safe,’ the threat was imagined as emanating from the students themselves (or, sometimes, from students at nearby schools). A member of the school administration spoke, during an interview, to the overall impression of students, particularly those from Glenwood, as discipline problems:

I think if you talk to people there’s an impression, well, maybe people won’t say it in a formal context, but there’s an impression that the kids from certain areas or certain schools are really discipline problems, but when you look at the numbers it’s really only a few kids who have a lot of referrals. I mean there are some kids that have 17 or 18 but most of them have only 1 or 2 or not any at all. I mean, I’ve known that but it’s nice to see it in the numbers, to be able to look at it. (RAA-INT-ML, 3/5/09)

Threats on campus overall, despite the fact that the impetus for the national implementation of lock down policies were White shooters in mostly White schools, were imagined as coming from students of color, most particularly Glenwood students. This is not to say that Huerta never imagined threats from students—indeed, students who were outside of their assigned school time and space (i.e. older students returning, suspended and expelled students who appear on campus, students from neighboring schools, and students not enrolled) could be considered threats—but the imagination of a threat from the surrounding community overshadowed any perception of students as threats.

There are critical differences between these two imaginations. The first, at Huerta, recognized threats *to* students, dangers to them that emanated not from them, but of which they were victims. The second, while it might also have imagined Glenwood

students as victims, imagined the primary source of threat as these students' bodies, they were the point of penetration, whether that related to their status as victims or to their role as perpetrators. Thus, while the Huerta context naturally lent itself towards, and indeed, demanded, differentiation between different Black and Brown bodies, different actors, and the protection of these students amidst the diversity of which they are a part, it is possible, from the perspective of Parkside High, to imagine that, were these students not present, there would be no problems, no conditions necessitating the potential of a lockdown (this despite the documented record of White shootings on school campuses), except perhaps those which came from nature (i.e. mountain lions). In this way, Glenwood students, students of color, and nature, were elements that intruded upon, and potentially threatened, Parkside High—they were potential public enemies (Meiners, 2007). Even if these same students may simultaneously have been, in some contexts, protected and imagined as victims. The ever-present possibility of their homogenization (and even their collective expulsion) gave a different shape and character to the idea of lock down.

### **Lock Out**

The possibility of expulsion was not an actual reality—there was no immediate threat that Glenwood Students would be collectively removed from these schools. Rather, it rested in the schools' prior structures, which isolated Glenwood students into one school, the intensive activism and court order it took to transform this attendance structure, and the recent unraveling of the legal precedents upon which this structure was designed. It was thus now possible for what was formerly (and perhaps still was by some) desired to become reality—high schools that only serve Parkside Students without the burdens and troubles that come with having to worry about Glenwood students who are (perpetually) so far behind. The murmurs that would actually lend themselves to such a structure came from different corners—educators and parents in Glenwood, some of whom wanted their children to be closer to home and not separated from one another; parents in Parkside distraught that so many school resources went to remediation or worried about the 'culture' and climate of the school. In general, however, it was not the actual reality of any transformation in the structures of the schools, but rather the persistent sense that Glenwood students were 'not from here' that gave expulsion its meaning. This was a collective, and not an individual relationship.

On the individual level there was also a greater risk of expulsion for Glenwood students who, because of the complexity of the neighborhood map which split them, the length of their bus rides and reputations of different schools, often applied for transfer from their home schools. Transfer students were, if their grades slipped or they were involved in disciplinary incidents, subject to the loss of their transfer privileges. They were, in such cases, summarily returned to their "home" campus. From there, the next step on the expulsion line was the community school. The principal of Parkside explained this process, describing how expulsion could be used as a sanction for students (implicitly from Glenwood) who had transferred into Parkside to avoid long bus rides:

Kids don't want to be bussed over there so we have a lot of kids who apply to transfer to Parkside and we require that those kids maintain a 2.0 average and that they not get into



too much trouble. The 2.0 it's not that high a standard, it's just a C average, so we tell them, if you're failing one class just make sure you get an A in PE. But we're pretty strict about that. We also try to get rid of the kids who are fighting, a kid may get transferred after their third fight. Or if they're really confrontational or disrespectful. So kids who are being defiant arguing a lot with their teachers or causing a lot of disruptions. (RAA-INT-MS, 3/5/09)

The fact that Glenwood students were bussed, and their resistance to the basic structural conditions of this bussing (long rides, being split from childhood friends etc.) resulted in Parkside having an extra layer of sanction upon students who were a part of this program. They were doubly visitors—not just outside of their neighborhood, but also considered guests at their schools.

The possibility of collective expulsion is part of the second mode of school discipline—the lock out. As it is used in the schools, lock out literally refers to the practice of locking doors when the bell rings. At Huerta, the use of 'lock out' tactics varied substantially by teacher and the practice was not often described as a lock out. While all doors at Huerta locked automatically and were thus locked after they were closed when class began, typically late students could knock and, if they had a pass, be admitted. If they did not have a pass, they were typically sent to the office to get a pass and then would return, and knock again. While, if a teacher had a well oiled system of door opening and had a relationship of trust and understanding with their students, the disruption caused by late entrance could be kept to a minimum, when they did not, the door could take up a substantial amount of pedagogical time and energy and become a key point of conflict in the classroom. I captured one such moment in Mr. Girard's room at Huerta.

An 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in his second year with Teach for America, Mr. Girard was skinny and White. His fine shoulder length blonde hair, cut shorter on the top, was usually moussed and spiked to the side or straight up. Pastel button up shirts untucked with jeans and outlandish ties constructed him as a parody of the professional. Compliant and yet non compliant, obedient and yet cool. Mr. Girard also boasted some of the highest math scores in the district his first year. Having designed a chart on the wall he used in coordination with careful skills testing to track and measure student mastery of each component of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Algebra standards, he challenged his students to compete with both themselves and each other to master as many skills as possible. Students could come in after school or at lunch and re-take skills tests as many times as they desired. He largely attributed his success to this chart and, as all the 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers did that year, to the quality of this group of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students—a characteristic they attributed to their having had consistent teaching and administration throughout most of their elementary years. Despite his high scores, however, and the general respect he seemed to receive as a teacher, Mr. Girard's classroom could be hectic and the door was a particular focus of much chaos as the following example from my fieldnotes demonstrates.

When I get to the classroom I, like a whole bunch of kids,  
am coming in late from having been out setting up the

multicultural display. We get to the classroom door and it is locked. I knock, softly and politely. There's no response. I wait a few minutes and knock again, a little bit harder. There's still no response. The kids get frustrated and knock again, this time louder, pounding on the door. Still there is nothing. Mr. Flores (the principal) walks up while we are waiting and they knock one more time. By now perhaps four minutes have passed. Mr. Girard opens the door and comes out.

Mr. G: You guys are way too late to be coming in without a pass.

S: We were out with Mrs. Gianni (the vice principal), setting up the thing.

Mr. G: Do you have a pass?

S: She didn't give us one.

He lets them in the door anyways. I come in as well as does Mr. Flores. Mr. Flores doesn't stay. I go and stand in the back of the room. Mr. Girard begins to apologize to the other students who were already in the room for the disruption. Shortly after another student starts knocking. He knocks softly at first but getting no response begins pounding on the door. Mr. Girard goes on talking to the class as if nothing is going on.

Mr. G: I started locking the door again because you guys have been coming in late too much. It was bad at the beginning of the year and so I had the door locked and then it got better so I started unlocking it but then it got bad again so now I'm locking the door again.

As he's talking, the kids are still knocking and someone whines "let them in already." When he's done talking, he opens the door and goes through the same routine about the pass. All of this happens one more time. This time the Mr. Girard is talking about the homework. As the student keeps knocking, the kids start to get really frustrated. "open the door!" some of them are calling. When this next group of students gets let in, they are frustrated.

S: Why didn't you open the door?

Mr. G: Because you were late and I was in the middle of something.

S: But we were knocking for a long time.

Mr. G: When you knock respectfully, three times, like I told you I'll open the door but when you're just pounding on it, I won't open it.

(they had knocked respectfully the first time but lost patience and began pounding, almost panickedly).

He then gives a short speech about how to knock, apologizes again to the whole class for other students having wasted their time, points out that its 20 minutes into class and they haven't yet managed to get anything done and starts into the lesson.

(f.n., 1/29/08)

In Mr. Girard's version of the lockout, the door becomes a central tool for an exercise that seems part lesson, part battle of wills. The lesson is focused around punctuality, adhering to procedures (getting a pass), and respect. He is not only instructing the latecomers, but also those in the room. He does so by pitting them against the latecomers. Those in the room should be frustrated and annoyed with the latecomers. He conveys this by apologizing to them for the loss of their time. The annoyance these students are expressing, however, is not with those who are late, but with the tactic of resisting their plaintive knocks. The knocks seem to convey the growing desperation of those outside, their inability to see or understand why they are not being responded to, the sense of either rejection or concern that might accompany this (rejection if they are being heard and not listened to, concern if they are not being heard). Indeed, the students, perhaps annoyed at the noise, but more likely, like me, finding it difficult to hear the pleading call of the knock without offering a response, without yielding and doing what is asked—opening the door, even if just to provide an explanation—beg Mr. Girard to open the door. He refuses, extending the delay.

Lockouts are about space and time. They are about who has access to what spaces, at what times, under what conditions. Pedagogically, they display not only the desirability, but the necessity to control the flow of bodies through spaces and to define the terms of both entry and exit from those spaces. In the high school, lockouts occur not at the individual classroom level, but school wide. On certain days, it will be announced via the loudspeaker that there is to be a lockout. This usually occurs after lunch. The loudspeaker blares, barely intelligibly, "Lockout! Today will be a lockout day. Teachers, please lock your doors as soon as the second bell rings." Teachers, upon hearing this announcement, go stand by their doors awaiting the second bell. When it rings, they lock the door and no student, no matter how hard they knock, is admitted unless escorted by an administrator. Those students who remain in the hallways are rounded up and issued Saturday school. Again, the procedure emphasizes the halls as controlled space and points to the impermissibility of youth bodies in out-of-classroom spaces. There is, indeed, no place that these youth and their bodies can legally be except in these classrooms without a legitimate excuse (i.e. a doctors appointment).

Lock out also functions, in a different form, in the realm of suspension and expulsion. Here, students are not only locked out of classrooms for being late, they are locked out (though not physically) of school for perceived transgressions. Students (who may or may not desire to be at the school) are banished from school grounds for

anywhere from a period of days to permanently. Despite being required by law to be in school on all other days, on suspension days, students are legally required not to be on school grounds and the school, which during a normal school day, assumes responsibility for all of their actions and acts in loco parentis, assumes no responsibility for these actions on suspension days. For certain students, this type of lockout—repeated suspension—became a routine part of their high school day, although at the middle school it was a much more rarely used punishment.

Sevite, who described himself as a “hot spot,” was subject to repeated suspension. Suspended a total of 30 days during the first semester of his Freshman year for violations of school rules such as fighting, smoking cigarettes on campus and defiance, he spent fully  $\frac{1}{4}$  of his first semester suspended from school. He was subsequently transferred four times—once to another comprehensive high school, once to a continuation school, then to a junior college program, the back to the continuation school, where he completed his high school. Lockouts are the procedures that most directly identify the ways in which schools set their priorities. There are two ways to think about the lockout—one is collectively and one is individually. From the perspective of the school, the importance of suspension and expulsion as disciplinary procedures is in the protection of other students and the maintenance of school rules and climate. Zero tolerance (Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001) toward certain behaviors becomes a way not just of ‘educating’ individual students, but of educating all students in the consequences should they engage in certain acts and the parameters of this behavior. The effectiveness of the suspension as punishment relies upon the presumption that the student wants to be at school—even if this is just to be with other students—and that the suspension will produce reflection, shame, frustration, or a cooling off period during which the student might reflect on and ameliorate their behavior. This is the individual purpose.

To the extent that suspensions or expulsions are about protecting learning they adhere to the logic that behavioral control and the control over both time and space are the necessary prerequisites to learning/teaching. This is prioritized precisely because it is assumed that either this particular student or the collective of students cannot learn if these are not controlled, thus behavior—safety, but also control, trump classroom learning. The exclusion of students from the classroom limits learning to those bodies who have learned how to both obey and control and comport themselves. Academic learning is not seen as a means to these things, but as something enabled by them. When students are locked out, then, they are deemed as ‘uneducable’ (at least for this day, in this moment), they are, in fact, denied access to education (something which is simultaneously mandatory). In diverse schools, students of color are more likely to be disproportionately suspended (Eitle & Eitle, 2004), a procedure that often leads directly to course failure, excessive absence and, ultimately, incarceration (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003).

### **Lock Up**

Lock out constitutes the inverse but not the opposite of the lock up. Interestingly, the only time when a student can (legally) avoid being locked up (confined and assigned to a restricted space with particular rules and procedures governing their behavior) during the school year—whether in a classroom or in a jail cell—is through suspension. At all other times students must either be in a place the school has designated or have an excuse from

their parents (and these must be limited). Lock-up typically refers to prisons, but it is worth asking what distinguishes a classroom from a jail cell, particularly in light of the graffiti Huerta Middle student painted one year on the outside of all their classrooms—Cell Block # (followed by the room number).

Schools are not prisons—they control youth bodies for only a limited part of the day, have limited use of corporal punishment, in their mission they are, at least in part, designed to be additive—to help young people grow themselves, build assets, attain knowledge, and craft futures. They are not intended to be spaces of punishment. The question is, do they become such--places that punish for having the wrong language, for not having had enough or the right kind of prior schooling, for not being able to control your body in particular ways, for thinking differently, for creative use of time and space, for righteous disobedience. Subtractive schooling is schooling that punishes—it discourages, disciplines and controls without creating, generating, growing and adding (Valenzuela, 1999). When schooling becomes subtractive it is still different from incarceration—students are locked up for only 6 hours a day (maybe 10 if they have an after school program), discipline is perhaps less strict, movement is perhaps more free, but what differentiates a school from a prison, is education. When education fails, a school becomes, even if only for some hours, a prison.

The possibility to understand the school itself, not just its disciplinary methods, as a form of “lock up” was articulated by the students’ graffiti. Such a framing invokes what some have called the “school to prison pipeline”—the idea that for many young people, underfunded schools that discipline instead of educating constitute a channel to prison instead of to college or career success (Meiners & Winn, 2010). The problem with this framing is that it implies young people are incarcerated because they lack education. This is not the case. They are incarcerated because they are in conditions of poverty and are subject to racialized violence and criminalization. Rios (2006) describes how young Black and Latino men in the San Francisco Bay are “hyper-criminalized” as the conditions of divestment heighten governance through the criminal justice system. It is, moreover, in part because of their criminalization—through the rhetoric of these youth as irreparably deviant, that the neglect of their education becomes justified.

Another key aspect, however, of the school to prison pipeline, is constituted through the ways in which schools deploy disciplinary procedures that replicate those used in prisons. Foucault (1975) illuminates how power can operate as an “apparatus,” “a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application and targets” (Rabinow, 1984, p. 206), often operating through the use of space, ranging from the arrangement epitomized in Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon<sup>21</sup> (Fine & Sirin, 2007) to the endless repetitive use of doors to the arrangement of desks (Nespor, 1997). Procedures such as zero tolerance, the use of metal detectors, security cameras, police on campus, etc. have all ‘securitized’ schools in ways that both increase the stakes of punishment and resemble prison infrastructure (Simmons, 2010). These in-school measures, pursued in the name of “safe space” for students, teachers or administrators increasingly depend upon the deployment of criminal justice system tactics, artifacts, agents and language. An

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<sup>21</sup> A panopticon is an arrangement of buildings (originally designed for the theoretical control of prisons) in which a guard can see all prisoners at all times but prisoners can never see the guard. It consists of a tall circular tower with windows on all sides, surrounded by building housing prisoners which create a perimeter around an open yard at the center surrounding the tower.

additional layer of practices are deployed around the borders of schools, geared at containment and at keeping neighborhoods (that often contrast students in terms of race and class) “safe.” Young people are increasingly, in the name of safety, subjected to the violences of the criminal justice system through schools.

This is where the slippage between ‘lock down,’ ‘lock out’ and ‘lock up’ begins to occur. In the extreme cases of lock down, the threat to students is severe--students shooting on campus, outsiders with guns on campus. We have had enough incidents of devastatingly tragic school violence to not dismiss these. Lock down is for the immediate protection of students. It operates, however, and functions as a tactic, in a context of neglect—what Rosas (2010) calls ‘criminal abandonments’—neglect of bullying, neglect of gun control, rampant media violence, high stakes education, and rampant racism. During the lock down drill recounted earlier in the cafeteria, some students played with the possibility of escaping, while others were overcome by a panicked insistence that they needed to be let out of the lockdown. These instances point to the uncomfortable slippage between being protected—locked down—and being caged—locked up. In the context of the extreme neglect facing ‘urban’ neighborhoods, the criminalization of poor communities, the aggressiveness of anti-immigrant racism and rhetoric, the danger of streets, many students are in a sort of perpetual state of ‘lock down,’ that overlaps all too uncomfortably with ‘lock up’. The neighborhood both relegates and creates protection from certain forms of racism and state violence, the home becomes a site of attempted safety from both streets and police, the school, in an effort to create ‘safe space,’ encloses, regulates, disciplines and rigidly controls all bodies.

Lock out is also a logic of protection—protection of the academic space, the classroom teaching, and the climate in the hallways. It entails with it a rhetoric of “sweeps” (implying cleaning or cleansing). Locking dangerous bodies out of the campus, locking wayward students out of classrooms, locking particular bodies out of particular schools, locking the borders and boundaries of the country. Whereas lock down operates on a logic of exclusion (keeping bad things out), lock out functions as a logic of expulsion (getting bad things out). All these tactics entail extensive control over space. The use of gates, doors, borders, and boundaries becomes critical to their imagination. Where are the boundaries? Classroom doors, the teachers’ desks, sitting versus standing, and lines (staying in one), among others. These tactics of the school articulate in complex ways with the tactics of other agencies—the police, ICE, and task forces.

These borders are lived by some of Glenwood youth, perhaps most violently, in the figure of the “task force.” Sevite, the Pacific Islander student I followed told me about an altercation he and a group of his Tongan, Samoan and Black friends became involved in following a robbery another youth committed with a toy pistol. As he recounted the incident, Sevite described with stunned horror how the police were “straight dipping little kids” as they brandished their billy clubs against him and his friends and punched one of them in the face. The White Parkside police—“The Task Force”—behaved in a way Sevite felt could only be understood by the fact that the police were White and from Parkside—“Glenwood cops wouldn’t do that. They wouldn’t treat us like that.” He drove this point home by recounting how the last thing he heard the officers say—immediately after they punched his friend in the face—was, “if I could I’d kill every one of you motherfuckers over here, I would.”

This instance of deadly violence and raw physical resistance, illustrates the broader role of the carceral state, not just the school, in the criminalization of Glenwood youth. California “houses” 28% of all imprisoned youth in the United States, yet we have only 12% of the total youth population. Michelle Alexander (2010) has referred to our system of imprisonment—and the denial of rights to vote and legitimate work and housing opportunities for felons that follow—as the “new Jim Crow.” Largely due to the combination of the war on drugs and disproportionate surveillance, conviction and incarceration of Black men (Gilmore, 2007), today one in seven black men have lost the right to vote nationally, and as many as ¼ have in some states (Alexander, 2010, p. 188). As Glenwood youth navigate multiple borders and steer racially marked bodies through racialized geographies, they run directly into this carceral state.

### **Borders and the Pedagogy of Dispossession**

The control of bodies in space constitutes a critical logic of educational systems. Lock out, lock down and lock up, point to the ways in which the logics of neoliberal modernity permeate schools and manifest in the form of classroom doors, school boundaries and neighborhood borders. Huerta, like Parkside, often operates through a logic of containment and bodily control. Issues such as when and how to lock the gate to keep out wayward students, dogs, even parent permeate Huerta. The difference is that, while at Huerta, much of this work is aimed at protecting the students from that which is outside (even though, as they are deeply connected to this community, that which is ‘outside’ is often a part of their lives and even families as well), at Parkside the students from Glenwood (including those from Huerta), often are that ‘outside.’

Education by dispossession speaks not only to the ways in which students from Huerta shift from being potential victims to being potential criminals as they enter the White space of Parkside schools and neighborhoods. It also addresses a broader logic wherein the practice of education is premised upon the regulation and control of young people’s bodies in space. The logics of prisons and schools come to intersect in the use of doors, gates, walls, and bars to link the educability of young people to their willingness to submit their bodies to regulation. The thresholds of classrooms constitute a matrix with which teachers and administrators work to educate young people in the use of exclusion as an educational tool. The use of borders here, becomes a way of marking for young people that the education of some depends upon the exclusion of others. Ultimately lock up, lock down, and lock out are critical tools in teaching young people a logic of education by dispossession—these work to teach students that to be safe, to be successful and to be educated they must lock themselves down and lock others up and out.

## Chapter 5: The Girl in the Mango Truck: Schools and the Commodification of Struggle

Criminalization was not the only possibility for young people from Glenwood at Parkside High. Indeed, while Glenwood as a geography and Glenwood schools in particular, were often stigmatized, individual Glenwood students could also become romanticized—objects of fetishization. During a series of interviews with Parkside High School adults in April, right around college application time, I was repeatedly told about a girl who crossed the border in a mango truck. In one instance, a volunteer tutor compared this girl to more privileged students who she implied had less worldly knowledge, “you know, they’re not just talking about, oh, I volunteered as a candy striper, I mean, talking about like, coming across the border in a mango truck!” Later that same day another teacher recounted how a student “wrote an incredible essay about crossing the border in a mango truck.” Over the course of the next couple days I heard about this essay from other teachers, all of whom were clearly compelled by both the essay and this student’s perseverance in the face of adversity. While it was clear these teachers meant nothing but respect, there was something in their reference to this story that struck me. While this student had clearly told her story in a way that deeply moved many adults, indeed, that perhaps event transformed their consciousness or understanding, something about the way in which it was recounted seemed to exoticize and commodify border crossing—an act that was as mundane as it was painful and dangerous for many Glenwood youth.

The evocative image of the mango truck (which was always mentioned), the stripping of this young person’s story down to that single moment of peril, and the extraordinary comparison to more privileged youth (candy stripers) who it was implied were cushioned, naïve and inexperienced by comparison, all projected a heroic figure of individual triumph in the face of adversity that depoliticized illegality. The tale of border crossing has become one of the many scripts through which the triumph of poor and marginalized young people can be narrated, a process that constitutes the bread and butter of the college admissions process. The problem with these scripts is that not only do they compel these young people to force the complexity of their lived experience into a commercial narrative that will buy their admission or empathy—let their story be heard in a way that evokes and compels a response—they also produce an individualized narrative of adversity out of what is, in fact, structural and institutionalized U.S. state violence. This violence affects all Glenwood students in different ways, whether they are undocumented migrants or not, and yet it is through the production of these academically successful heroes, not through broad resistance to this violence, that the school makes sense of these conditions.

I argued earlier that the concept of “dispossession”—the ongoing seizure of economic, cultural, social and linguistic resources—constitutes a critical framework that can help us understand how schools not only reproduce, but *produce* inequality. The production of illegality is ongoing, contingent and variable and is linked to dispossession (DeGenova, 2010). Latino youth and their families are increasingly not only “illegalized” but also criminalized context of an escalating Latino threat discourse (Chavez, 2008). Dispossession implicates these regimes of legality and illegality, not only the actions of



caring or uncaring teachers or school officials, but also in the “subtraction” (Valenzuela, 2003) in which schools often collude (for more or less benign reasons).

In this chapter I focus not just on undocumented youth, but on the ways in which narratives about and engagement with undocumentedness took shape at both Huerta Middle School and Parkside High School. My core argument is that while at Huerta Middle School undocumentedness was a rather mundane, but none the less violent force in the lives of young people, at Parkside High School it could become, like other forms of objectification, part of a core narrative that produced critical access and empathy for academically successful students as well as a set of tropes that distanced these students from their less academically successful, but similarly structurally imperiled peers, families and community. The exoticization of Glenwood youth cut two ways. On the one hand, it heroicized those students who did triumph in ways that were often, perhaps, painful for those students themselves. On the other, it naturalized the abject social and educational conditions these young people were grappling with. These stories reified the struggle of undocumented Latino students, presenting education as the triumphant outcome of their struggle, even as the students and their loved ones continued to face ongoing repression. I begin this chapter with a discussion of the everyday lives of undocumented students and their families. Then, I look at the particular ways in which, at Huerta Middle School, undocumentedness was both ubiquitous and silenced, but not romanticized. Lastly, I discuss the ways in which some undocumented students at Parkside High, particularly those who are academically successful, could become commodified objects, agents but also subjects of struggle.

### **Memo and Maria: Everyday Illegality in Middle and High School**

Memo and Maria both came across the U.S.-Mexico border by foot when they were ten years old—she from El Salvador and he from Mexico. They both entered Huerta Middle School’s feeder elementary school in the fifth grade and by the time they were in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, when I met them, both had unaccented, apparently flawless English. When they talked about their own lives, they did not address the border crossing itself, though it had been arduous for both of them, nor on their undocumented status, but rather the problems of fitting in and getting by in Glenwood and Glenwood Schools.

For Memo, being linguistically isolated had been among his biggest challenges when he first arrived. During an interview, his mother described how difficult it had been for him and how she counseled him to triumph.

*Me dice, mama, yo lloraba porque yo no entendí lo que decía la maestra pero, ah, un día le dijo no mas, luego, mi hijo hay que confiar en dios. En este país, pues, todo es difícil porque todo, no es, estamos en otro país, estamos en otro idioma que no entendemos. Otra idioma, personas que, que, que hablan otra idioma, nosotros no entendemos, pero, hechale ganas, si, Rafa ahorita le ve la (unclear) y la gloria de dios porque, ahorita entiende todo ingles.*

He told me, mom, I cried because I didn’t understand what the teacher said, but then one day I told him, ‘no more’ son,

you've got to believe in God. In this country, yes, everything is difficult because we're in another country, we're in another language that we don't understand...now Memo, he sees God's glory because now he understands English completely. (RAA-INT-AC, 2/4/09)

Memo, himself, only made passing reference to these challenges, explaining how when he first started school the monolingualism of his teacher was a barrier for him, "they had me in a class where the teacher didn't speak any Spanish so they switched me to Mr. R." For him, it appears to be the specific structure of his classroom and the knowledge of his teacher that transformed his experience from one of isolation to one of engagement.

Maria, when reflecting on her middle school years, described not her struggles with language, but her struggles with teasing and fashion. In an interview at Parkside High, she described how, at Huerta, other kids would tease her because her clothes didn't match.

Here... you feel so much better, you can talk however you want, they're not going to, at least not right in front of your face, like it used to be at Huerta, that they're going to be talking about you or your clothes, what you're wearing, how you're matching, if you're matching. I mean obviously, I'm not the greatest at that. (RAA-INT-MA, 2/27/09)

Partly Maria's fashion was influenced by the very limited resources of her family—many of her clothes were second hand and those that were not were bought at discount stores. She also, however, had her own unique style that did not match that of many of her fellow students. She liked to wear stonewashed jeans high on her waist, tie dyed t-shirts, and tennis shoes. With pink and green braces, pink flower earrings, and hair pulled back in a ponytail with bangs that washed over one eye she followed her own unique, but awkward, sense of style. For her, coming to Parkside, offered greater freedom from the cliquishness and pettiness she felt subject to at Huerta.

Both of these students, after three years at Huerta Middle School (and one year at its feeder elementary school), entered high school at Parkside High. For many students, including Memo, this transition was understood at least partly through racialized self identification and identification with the city of Glenwood. For Maria, however, who never quite found a space to fit in at Huerta Middle School, the transition was experienced positively on social terms. She struggled academically, however, as the higher expectations (which she welcomed) caused her grades to plummet. While she was an A student at Huerta, at Parkside she worked harder than she ever had and was receiving C's, D's and an F when I interviewed her in the middle of her first semester. For her, this experience was incredibly stressful, particularly as she felt she was letting down her parents.

Uh, I guess I learned the hard way in high school. I got really bad grades...so I, in middle school I had really good grades. I had, just almost straight A's, now that my mom saw my grades she was shocked, she, she just couldn't believe it, she was like, is this really you? And that is something that makes me feel sooo bad. I'm like mom, I wish you went to school every day, sat there and learned everything they're teaching you. I would want to see your grades but, I mean, I can't really say anything because it's not really nice to answer back but those are my thoughts.  
(RAA-INT-MA, 2/27/09)

Not only did Maria feel desperate that her grades were so bad, she also felt she had no way to communicate with her parents about the different levels of expectation at the middle school and high school or her own struggle. She expressed this to me in terms of extreme frustration with the teaching she had received at Glenwood Middle School. When I asked Maria what she would tell her Glenwood teachers if she had the chance, she implored them to teach:

Teach something that's going to help students in high school!! (pounding on the table) And not stuff that's going to help them get paid, like, get them money, to teach to help, not to teach to. I know they say they don't earn much money but, like, I mean, they're there, they might as well like just do a good job, you know.  
(RAA-INT-MA, 2/27/09)

Her anger at the limitedness of the curriculum, the homework and the ethos of Glenwood teachers were all expressed vividly during my first interview with her after she entered high school.

Memo, in contrast, did not express much difficulty with the academic transition. He worked hard, got good grades and maintained a full schedule, including helping out with household chores (as did Maria). Indeed, the one anxiety he expressed to me about the high school was racial—"the only thing I don't like about this school is that it's for the White people." I asked what he meant, to which he replied, "they're mostly whose here and it's their school." I challenged him on the demographics pointing out that the school wasn't mostly White, he would not however, agree, "yes it is, mostly it's White people and then there's us." His wording, "for the White people" implied not only the numerical majority, which he later pointed to, but also an orientation of both service and mission towards White students. Indeed, on this point, I could not disagree.

Memo's revelation to me that he was undocumented came in the context of his inability to return to Mexico to visit his grandparents. They had raised him for many years after both his parents came to the United States and not only did he miss their house with the hills behind it and the tree he would climb, he also missed them—a missing that became all the more painful later that year when his grandfather passed away. He mentioned, matter of factly, that he couldn't go back for the funeral because he didn't

have papers and then moved on with the conversation. For neither him nor Maria were their own or their family's documents at the center of their struggle as they transitioned to high school, although they were both, unlike some young people, acutely aware of their family's and their own legal status.

What appeared in these snippets of the lives of Memo and Maria, many aspects of which I have omitted for the sake of space and time, were identities grounded not only in their undocumented status or the act of having crossed the border, but in their relationships with their parents and siblings, linguistic and academic competencies and commitments, religion, racial identity, friendships, and educational experiences. This does not mean that they did not daily experience the structural and institutional violence of their own and their family's status as well as the strain and vulnerability that comes with not only border crossing, but also leaving home. In the next section, I turn to the specific ways in which the ubiquitous violence of La Migra was lived at Huerta Middle School before turning to the specific ways in which undocumentedness was treated at the different schools and the ways in which this status became increasingly relevant in complex and sometimes unexpected ways as Memo and Maria neared graduation.

### **Huerta Middle School: The Normalization of Illegality**

While there are no specific numbers available, many of Huerta's students were undocumented or had parents who were undocumented. Moreover, almost all the families at Huerta reported living in poverty and many of the families had some kind of connection to the criminal justice system. Within this context, the fact of being without papers became one of many different forms of marginalized status that students and their families navigated. Moreover, the diversity amongst these students—some failing, some thriving, some in trouble, some never in trouble, some in poverty, some more economically stable—more directly defined how educators talked about their everyday needs. It is important not to romanticize either Huerta or the Glenwood community as being free from discourses of exclusion and marginalization (Baquedano-López, 2004), yet here I point to the ways in which the normalization of various forms of marginalization constituted Huerta as a space in which students could be recognized as individuals instead of simply tagged by labels such as Undocumented, Latino, English Language Learner, or poor.

Indeed, neither in a two-hour long interview with Huerta's Latino principal, a man I had come to know quite well, nor in our casual discourse, did the topic of undocumented students, in particular, ever come up. He talked, primarily, instead, about other forms of marginalization. The most salient issues for him, those that came up over and over again, were English Language Learning and poverty. He described how he challenged a conference full of educators to see if any had the degree of demographic vulnerability he did at Huerta:

I said, stay standing if you have language learners right, so they all stay standing. I said stay standing if you have above 50% most people sit down. If you have above 70%, hardly anybody standing. And I said okay, now stay standing if in addition to the 70%, you have above 90% that qualify, that are living in poverty. So by the time I finished

our demographics there was no one left in the room standing. (RAA-INT-MF, 7/2/09)

Mr. Flores lack of inclusion of documentation status in the ways he talked about the primary factors impacting his students (and school), does not mean he lacked awareness or lack of concern for the particular struggles of undocumented students, only that he thought of other issues that also impacted these students first.

Huerta's White male 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers also did not mention students' documentation status. They, instead, focused primarily on the border with nearby White communities and the ways in which students suffered derision and discrimination along this border, derision that was linked to their often-painful transition to high school. Mr. Jackson described how he felt like the city of Glenwood was a protective container that both isolated students from stereotypes about them, but also was a part of how they were stereotyped and characterized. As Mr. Jackson reflected during an interview:

Cause there's the way the rest of the world sees Glenwood right and then there's how Glenwood is when you're inside of it which is...see my kids, we have daily discussions on that stuff. I mean all the time my kids talk about how 'we are not what people say we are, we are not that stereotype, my kids know that here, but the minute they leave it's like, they were so comfortable here and they could talk about it here and Mr. Jackson helps us realize those things here but when we go to high school all of a sudden nobody's helping us realize that and everybody's just pointing fingers and so what do they do, they start pointing fingers back.  
(RAA-INT-MJ, 5/29/08)

Mr. Jackson attributed the difficulties he saw many of his students facing in High School to the particular ways in which teachers outside of Glenwood, he believed, neither recognized nor helped students navigate socioeconomic and racial struggles, but rather, blamed and alienated these students, to which they reacted behaviorally.

For these teachers and administrators documentation status was limited in explaining and describing the specificities of young people's struggles in school. That said, documentation status did impact the educational and home lives of many Huerta students in everyday ways. When there were checkpoints set up in the community, students would get texts or phone calls describing specific instructions for their transport from school. Sometimes parents would stay home and have young people walk (particularly if they were in mixed status families in which the student was documented but the parent was not). Sometimes young people would be instructed that parents who did not normally come to pick them up were coming for them. Sometimes walkers would be told to take the bus. The tactics differed, but the point is that many students were aware of an imminent threat posed by checkpoints and were subject to fear, stress and worry as a result. Students also occasionally missed or were called out of school because they had to help their parents deal with immigration situations—having cars confiscated, needing to get documents, etc.

At a broader level, the ubiquitousness of the immigration system in the everyday lives of Huerta students was evident in a game I saw some of them play occasionally. The game, which is akin to cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers, involves a group of students who pretend to be “la migra<sup>22</sup>”—the border patrol—and another group who pretend to be immigrants. The students who are “la migra” chase, tackle and shoot at the immigrants while the immigrants run from them screaming “La migra! La migra!” This game, perhaps more than anything else at Huerta school, came to symbolize for me, the specific ways in which ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement)<sup>23</sup>, also known as La Migra<sup>24</sup>, constituted a violent and terrifying force that preoccupied the imaginations of many Huerta youth—even if this relationship was not central to how their teachers and principal described these students.

While school administrators at Huerta were aware of many of the struggles their students faced in trying to cope with poverty, documentation status, and stigma, they actively resisted the romanticization of these students and their stories. Mr. Flores critiqued the ways in which stories of the academic success of “urban” students are produced and circulated during an interview. He simultaneously expressed his frustration with Glenwood Middle School being scorned for failing to adequately teach high needs students while single success stories with similar young people are glorified in the media:

Never mind the fact that, like, people write movies and books about single teachers who can get results with just one class worth of our kids, like *Freedom Writers*, like woop di woop. You know *Dangerous Minds*, woop di woop. You know there’s all these, you know, *Stand and Deliver*, all this bullshit of, it’s such, I mean imagine that, it’s such a big deal when just one teacher can actually get results that nobody would care about in Parkside. It’s such a big deal that a movie and book is written about it and it’s watched in the ghetto across the nation. Like how many times did I grow up and have to watch *Stand and Deliver*, like every Latino from the Bay Area’s probably watched *Stand and Deliver* like eight times, you know. Oh, my 8th grade teacher thinks it’s a good idea for me to see this, well no surprise, I saw it in 6th grade and 7th grade and I’ll probably see it again in high school, you know like wow, you’re really connecting with me, thanks, you know. But, not to, I mean it’s a good movie, but I’ve showed it before to my kids, but anyway. (RAA-INT-MF, 7/2/09)

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<sup>22</sup> In the context of these young people’s play La Migra may refer to any number of border patrol agents and even to the regular U.S. police. “La Migra” is commonly used to refer to ICE (Immigration and Customs Agents), the Mexican border patrol, as well as the predecessor of ICE (the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS). It is also, however, used by these young people and sometimes by adults to refer to anyone who might be linked to the surveillance, criminalization and deportation of migrants including police officers running DUI checkpoints and even, in some cases, teachers.

Mr. Flores critique here is not just an expression of frustration with the ways in which Huerta is disciplined for not achieving success, but shows a marked frustration with the ways in which the success of students like those in Glenwood is glorified—a glorification which implies the expectation of failure.

These movies are not simply fictional portrayals of the classroom, but rather the appropriations of the real lives of real teachers and students repackaged for a mass audience primed for particular narratives about urban schools. Drawing upon neoliberal tropes about the need for toughness, standards discipline and order within chaotic urban spaces and classrooms, they project a narrative of individual accountability realized in the successes of these teachers. More recent movies, such as *Dangerous Minds*, combine “tough” representations of Whiteness with “compassion and consumerism,” implying that the struggles of urban communities can be addressed by individual teachers who buck the system by demonstrating toughness and caring and priming young people for consumption (Giroux, 1997). The reduction of the mass divestment in urban and suburban communities of color and their educational systems to the tales of individual successful teachers includes a cynical and implicit derision of other (often villainized) teachers, families and students who also struggle against the ongoing tide of economic and educational dispossession.

It is to these Freedom Writer stories, particularly the way in which they focus on teachers who crack hardened kids open and get them to reveal their inner secrets to which I now turn. These stories not only portray a particular narrative of what it means to be a (White) teacher working with Black and Brown young people, they also articulate a particular confessional version of what it takes to be a successful young person of color from a poor urban neighborhood. Here I look at the broader effort to reveal (or not reveal) and produce these stories, but also return to the particular ways in which undocumented students may become one of them, and the particular ways in which, while stories of undocumented students circulate, the broader set of struggles that constitute their “illegal” condition remain in place.

### **From Much Father Away: Parkside Teachers and Undocumented Youth**

While Huerta Middle School is 70% Latino and under the leadership of a Latino principal deeply concerned with social justice, Parkside High School is not. The principal and many of the vice principals are White, as is the vast majority of the teaching force, the dominant group of parents, and the most elite group of students. Many of the parents at the school support political candidates who have been vitriolic about undocumented migration. Glenwood students are in a subordinate position within the school and there is no clear indication that the leadership or dominant bodies of this school support broad-scale immigration reform or are particularly concerned with immigrant rights.

Many Parkside High School teachers, however, worked with and could perhaps be thought of as allies to undocumented students. Unlike at Huerta, where teachers and administrators did not directly refer to undocumented students, in my interviews with adults at Parkside High School many mentioned undocumented youth. In part, this was likely because the transition out of high school is a particularly challenging and painful time for undocumented young people—one when many feel the direct impact of their own undocumented status on their future prospects for the first time (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Gonzales, 2011). Without social security numbers they

find themselves facing difficulties finding jobs and unable to access in state tuition or financial aid (although this has recently changed in California). They often find futures they had believed, or been led to believe, were possible with academic success and hard work cut off to them. There is also, however, as we saw in the example of the references to the girl in the Mango truck that opened this paper, an element of romanticization of these particular students' struggles and stories that plays into how teachers talk about them. I point this out not to minimize the extraordinary achievement of these students, nor to dismiss their stories which are both compelling and important, but rather to discuss the ways in which these stories are taken up and reproduced in ways that might marginalize undocumented young people, even as educators struggle to include them.

It was, not surprisingly, a counselor who most emphasized the particular needs of undocumented students in our interview. She brought it up while explaining how she was drawn into her current position

When I was a volunteer and a substitute teacher during the four years before I took the job I started seeing what was going on here and getting to know some of the students who were less privileged and I was really, really drawn to those students--the ones learning English, the ones whose parents didn't go to college, the one's who are undocumented, I mean, you name it ... (RAA-INT-MMJ, 1/12/09)

She explained her own commitment in terms of a 'draw' towards individual students who were struggling with structural barriers. She didn't say what in particular, drew her to these students but it seemed to have been a recognition of some of their needs and a desire to and belief in the possibility of helping.

Later in this conversation, she did what many teachers and administrators did, not just with undocumented students, but also with students from Glenwood more broadly, and compared them to White students

We were talking about the stresses on our students, we realized that there are stresses of parents who say you must go to Princeton or your life is over, but stresses on the other side of like, I just saw someone shot in front of my house, we don't have enough to eat, but they're all stresses and they're all legitimate. I think about this stuff constantly. Yeah, it's just really unfair. Life is really unfair. I think a lot about the undocumented students, that theirs is the most unfair. (RAA-INT-MMJ, 1/12/09)

This comparison to White students—uttered or imagined—or to Whiteness, more broadly, is precisely where the romanticization and fetishization of Glenwood youth appears. This is precisely what distinguishes the particular form of exoticization. Having to migrate across a very dangerous border and then live in fear outside of your culture and language and having people shot in front of your houses are not “stresses,” they are



perilous and unacceptable forms of structural violence that are deeply harmful to young people and their families. Presenting these conditions as “unfair” and part of life being “really unfair” minimizes the particular role of policy, governance and racism in producing these conditions. While it may not seem as such, this particular mode of comparison is actually part of deficit thinking that dehumanizes these young people by normalizing the violence they experience.

The articulation of deficit is much more evident in another incidence of comparison, this one articulated by the volunteer tutor mentioned at the outset of this paper. I quoted a small piece of her comments at the outset, but the full text reveals how conceptions of difference and those of deficit interlock to produce the strong, survivor student as a racialized body.

You know it's really interesting, I've spent my whole life trying to transition kids to high school. And, you know, what I've been doing most recently is working with the AVID kids here and that's really interesting because I've always worked with kids who are, I don't want to say privileged, but, I guess, kids whose school was their work and here, these kids, I mean, like one kid, he's worked for five years for his dad without pay and for him working is just something that you do to put food on the table. I think the thing that's been the most powerful about that experience has been reading their college essays because these kids have already led whole lives, you know, they're not just talking about, oh, I volunteered as a candy striper, I mean, talking about like coming across the border on a mango truck! And, you know, with these kids, it's not that they're not smart, it's just that they don't have a culture that's focused on school. (RAA-INT-AA, 3/26/09)

This volunteer's growing recognition of the work ethic, generosity, sense of responsibility and vulnerability of many less privileged students was an important step in countering her own apparent earlier assumptions that these kids were ‘not smart.’ At the same time, her conclusion that they ‘don't have a culture that's focused on school’ demonstrated the perniciousness of cultural deficit thinking even in the face of the recognition of structural hardship. For this volunteer, the fact that these students were shouldering heavy responsibilities and in positions of extreme structural marginality, while engaging in honors coursework and college applications, was not evidence of familial and personal commitment to education, but of a lack of focus. Moreover through her assertion—it's not that they're not smart—she actually implied that they were lacking in evidence of intelligence—despite the clear evidence to the contrary in their level of achievement.

Such discourses are rooted not only in deficit discourses about immigrant youth, but also about their families. Colen (1990), Chock (1996), and Galvez (2011) have pointed to the ways in which female immigrants are often viewed as an unwanted reproductive burden (Colen, 1990) targets of a ‘new nationalism’ (Galvez, 2011), focused anxiously on their reproductive labor. Such discourses not only criminalize young people

and their families, they also neglect the complexity and significance of undocumented parents' engagement with their children's education across multiple spaces (Rogers, Saunders, Terriquez, and Velez, 2008; Mangual Figueroa, 2012). Indeed, these White adults were able to frame undocumented young people as not having a "culture that is focused on school," despite their parents having endured arduous border crossings, subjected themselves to illegalization, and worked extremely long hours to secure precisely such opportunities. The heroization/romanticization frames discussed here depend upon the expectation of failure to make sense.

### **Beyond Narratives and Romance**

Not all teachers and staff at Parkside romanticized undocumented students, or other high achieving students of color in this way. The problem I am pointing to is not, in fact, this romanticization, but the lens that being immersed on the Parkside side of the Glenwood/Parkside border and working in a school like Parkside produced—Glenwood students were seen as abnormal, they were seen as deficit, and their successes were seen as anomalies. Mr. Larson, the Bilingual Resources Specialist at Parkside, reflecting on his experiences teaching near the U.S./Mexico border, analyzed why he felt students living in poverty on the border could attain success in a way Glenwood students didn't. His comments reveal less about the actual legitimacy of the comparison between Glenwood and border students than about the lens through which Latino students at Parkside were viewed—even by those most committed to their success:

Certain stigmas just were not present because everyone was in that boat, you know, um, so I think there were still students that struggled clearly, but there were still students that were, um, living in poverty and living in two rooms with eight or nine people that were in talented and gifted programs and that, um, you know, were very successful. The captain of the football team (right) you know, was in talented and gifted, lived with grandma, two parents and three siblings in a, a shack, you know, um, and, um, and got a full ride to a four year university so you know, it's just, that wasn't every kid but it just seemed far more possible there because, kind of, everyone was in the same boat over there, um, and I guess everyone was close to the same percentage in the same boat in Glenwood, but, I don't know what the active ingredient there is that makes it not that way, I don't know, it might be that, you know, on the border you have to travel hours before you get to an affluent community whereas here it is very present, in the kids face anyway, um, but, you know, so there was, um, there just didn't seem to be the lines drawn, other than the border (laugh) (the big one, the big line) which, you know, was crazy. (RAA-INT-ML, 3/5/09)

Mr. Larson believed that the distance from affluent students shaped the achievement of the impoverished students he taught on the border—enabling them to

attain success on their own terms because they were not stigmatized or compared to others. While I do not have data to compare the two contexts, what does stand out from this statement is Mr. Larson's impression that this is not happening in Glenwood, that students living in poverty are not succeeding, taking on leadership roles, and going to college from Glenwood. The reality is, in fact, quite different. The frames through which Glenwood students and their schools are viewed, however, and placed in constant comparison to White and affluent students and schools with resources beyond their wildest dreams, they appear as failures—an entire geography gets marked as failing and when a success is noticed, it is thus marked as an exception.

### **Becoming Legal: The Stroke of a Pen**

Maria and Memo were both high achieving students in the face of perilous conditions. Maria attempted to apply for papers during her junior year, resulting in a set of legal proceedings that made her deportation seem imminent. During her senior year, at the advice of a lawyer hired by her family, she left high school early, completing her GED and enrolled early in a four-year religious college. Memo graduated with a 3.85 GPA despite having lived on his own and supported himself (and at times his family) financially throughout his last two years of school. Despite these successes, multiple pathways remained blocked for both of these young people. Memo entered community college, but was immediately confronted with having to reveal his status on paperwork and in meetings—something he had never done before. He struggled with transportation to school, unable to get a license, and he continued to struggle to support his family. Maria and her family continued to face deportation orders even after she left for college, a stress that was nearly unbearable for all of them.

The most substantial change—one that is only temporary—for both of these students, was the “deferred deportation” order that President Obama signed in 2012, the year they both started college. The two-year court case that had drained Maria's family of financial and emotional resources as they fought for her to be able to stay in the country suddenly ended. She was sent a green card, could apply for a driver's license, and shortly after became engaged to a U.S. citizen. Memo, struggling financially, was working to scrape together the \$500.00 to apply, a process that, while it would grant him temporary stability and security of status, may ultimately make him vulnerable to deportation should the order be rescinded. This legal change—simple and quietly done—transformed these young people, with the stroke of a pen, from “illegal” into “legal,” placing in stunning relief the juridically constructed, socially produced, and, thus immanently transformable structure of these young people's status. The “illegality” of the young people of Glenwood is not a result of their behavior, their poverty or their geography. It is a choice made by those who make policy.

Memo and Maria's cases place in vivid relief the extent to which the illegalization of young people and their families is socially constructed—a status made and easily altered through policy action. As it strips young people of basic human rights—mobility, freedom of movement, full access to education, access to the means to provide for themselves and their families without being criminalized—illegalization is a fundamental form of dispossession. Each act that intensifies the criminalization of young people and their families constitutes a new taking.

Education by dispossession refers to the ways in which structural relations such as these are individualized and commodified within the school setting. This process entails

doubleness. On the one hand, it represents the growing capacity of young people to articulate what has happened to them and their families to a broader audience. It provides them with the tools to shape and frame stories that will be acknowledged, may raise awareness, and are likely to gain them access to institutions of power. On the other hand, the emphasis on these individual success narratives is largely couched within a larger deficit perspective which locates these young people's exceptionalism precisely in the presumed deficiency and deviance of their peers and families. We see education by dispossession at work here in the ways in which these young people's success comes to be framed as *despite* the actions of the families and communities who have loved and cared for them instead of *because* of the defiant action of their parents who have compromised their own legality for the survival and education of their children.

## Chapter 6

### Education as Gentrification: How White Kids Act White

On the first day I visited Valley Vista Middle School there was an assembly—a well-known reporter from a local paper had come to give a presentation about how to give good interviews for a biographies project the kids were working on. He sat, hair tousled, beard scraggly, skin tanned, jacket wrinkled and slung to the side, on the edge of a table in the front of the packed library in front of row upon row of White students, sprinkled only occasionally by a Black, Brown or Asian face. He told a range of stories, gruesome and adventurous, bold and frightening, empathetic and touching about his contact with and attempts to understand and write about others. Throughout, he engaged in a dramatic performance of the process of racial othering that at once evoked fear and pity and called upon the liberal desire to save the world.

He invoked a set of heroes (Kohl, 1991; Loewen, 1996) with his discourse. He told the kids, “you might interview someone who got a war medal,” or who “started a foundation that saved the lives of everyone in some African country.” He recounted his own interview with “a guy who made a computer hookup for small hut villages so villagers could see if they were getting ripped off.” He infused these with tales of braving the wild. He talked about how they took ox carts to the top of the mountain and there were “tigers attacking” and “jumping leech worms that sucked your blood.” He described floating in rivers laden with dead bodies and how you respect people’s privacy and don’t interview them when they’re holding their dead child’s body.

Mixed in with these “wild” and far away places, he described the urban and rural U.S., linking class and race with violence without ever making mention of race. A student raised their hand and asked if he had been shot at: “sure, sure,” he replied, then “the lower the class of people you’re reporting on (and he drew a line with his hand held flat, like he was splitting the air in two), the more danger you’re going to put yourself in.” He then described “gangsters” and “drug dealers” who have shot at him. When asked where, he said “Oakland.” He ended with tales of the frontier, how, in rural America, “the Indians on the top of the hill started shooting at us. They were shooting at me and we had to duck and hide behind things.” And he closed with the “happy stories” that are his “favorites.” “For example, I did a story on a Pomo woman who was the last woman on earth who can speak her language. It had been neglected so bad that she was the last person who spoke it. In that story, no one was being blown up and no one was sad.” This moment, when a language, a people, a civilization is finally conquered and fades away was marked as the moment of joy amidst all this violence and savagery.

The script this reporter laid out was a mix of the fantastical and exotic, the violent and depraved, it was a fantasy of a knowable yet savage other, a script passed down from a colonial past repeated in even the dusty leather boots and tanned and scraggled appearance of this modern-day explorer of the frontier. This type of monologue—this persistent and unapologetic othering as savagery, in which there are “knowable” others—others who are accessible, can be pitied and saved, educated and reformed, or who are irredeemably violent, stripped of their humanity—provides context for the liberal, colorblind, narrative that shaped education at Valley Vista.

The students sat, for almost two hours, transfixed with their full attention on these stories. Their questions in many ways invoked and drew out the wilder and more fantastical aspects: “were you ever shot at?” “Do you have a gun?” But they also showed hints of the ways in which they were connecting this to their own lives “how does your daughter feel about the work that you do?” “Does she worry about you?” They did not ask about the people in the stories, instead they asked about the reporter and his daughter. This, for them, was a lecture about how to do good interviews and about a fascinating person—the man in front of them (f.n. 1/16/08).

These stories mark a particular set of White fantasies—that of the frontier, of the White man’s burden, and of the desire and the need to ‘civilize’ and ‘know’ (Spivak, 2004; Willinsky, 1998; McClintock, 1995) a savage other. These myths also, in part, mark the fears and desires of White students from Valley Vista as they anticipate the transition to high school. Their fears, of course, are not this fantastical, but the type of ‘frontier’ education described in movies such as *Stand and Deliver*, *Freedom Writers*, or *Dangerous Minds* and the stories they have heard of gangs and drugs shape their imaginations. I do not hear these stories prior to their transition to high school, but after, once students can reflect, laughingly, on them, or explain how others, not they, were scared. “I was surprised at how great it was” Tasha tells me when I ask what’s surprised her about high school, “being raised in a mostly private school area and having friends that have said, ‘oh yeah, Parkside’s just so bad and they have gangs there and they steal stuff and there are drugs goin’ on’” (RAA-INT-TR, 4/30/09) Other students from Valley Vista, all of whom recounted having heard stories about violence, gangs, drugs, and theft at the high school, echoed these comments.

Importantly, these stories of others’ overblown fears and their own comfort at this school marked a kind of triumph, a certain heroism for these students. Parents, school administrators and students all noted how Parkside High School was “the real world” as opposed to the “artificial” world of private schools or even Valley Vista. They linked this realness to the presence of students of color. As Jason, a Chinese-American student explained Valley Vista, “they’re almost 99% Caucasian people...it’s almost more homogeneous in that sense...I would say that the fact that there’s, like, less Blacks and Asians and Latinos kind of makes it almost, you know, artificial” (INT-JS-2/11/09) Tasha compared herself positively to her private school friends, recounting how her “real world” experience at Parkside would give her an advantage “they’re so sheltered that they won’t know things that I will and it’s like I’m sort of outgrowing them maturity wise” (RAA-INT-TR, 4/30/09) All the White students I interviewed at Parkside situated themselves, in one way or another, within a narrative of the importance of this experience, of being exposed to the “real world.” The principal of Parkside echoed these sentiments in an address to parents. After pointing out the segregation in the area, and that this is the “first, and for some the only” time many students will be in an “integrated” environment, he compared the demographics of the school to those of the state: “this is kind of a microcosm of the world we’re living in” (f.n., 9/19/08). He said this both to encourage students to “get to know one another” and to quell anxieties over school violence and course placement by challenging students and parents (this audience is all White but one) to enter the “real.”

The project of the frontier and these White students’ own heroism is embedded within Parkside High Schools’ particular approach to what they call ‘integration.’ Many

of the White students seemed to feel that they were answering a call to be part of desegregation and that they were, by attending this school, participating in this experiment with diversity. Importantly, these students see the (failed) project of the school as ‘integrating’ others into what can only be described as a White-normative space. As Talli, a White student, explains “I know this school does a lot of work to try to, you know, integrate the people that maybe don’t have as much money as the people from Parkside, but there’s only so much you can do” (RAA-INT-TJ, 3/12/09). School actors re-iterate this point, for example, when the vice principal tells me that they try to have teachers who teach “support” (no White students) classes also teach honors (almost all White) because they want these teachers to “remember what the goal is” (f.n., 10/6/08). Or when a teacher discusses how the students of color “just don’t have normal school behavior” (f.n., 11/7/08). It is also evident in the effort the school district puts into retaining White parents and White support for the school, most noticeably through the maintenance of tracking despite the teachers and administrator’s better judgment. To understand tracking, however, and the ways in which ‘saving the world’ is not akin to, and in fact rubs against, ‘integration,’ we must understand how White students simultaneously confront the danger of being and of not being White. This chapter addresses the different ways in which White students and staff at Parkside understand and enact Whiteness before describing the ways in which Huerta students engage with, respond to and resist these practices. I situate these interactions within the previous discussions of space, drawing upon Alim’s (2004) concept of linguistic gentrification in my conclusions.

### **About Acting White**

Signithia Fordham subtitled her 2008 follow up on her earlier work “The Strange Career of ‘Acting White.’” It has, indeed, been a strange career, for the theory is at once one of the most widely cited, widely misinterpreted and widely critiqued. Building off of, but not synonymous with, Ogbu’s cultural ecology theory she (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) identifies the “burden” of “acting White” as a particular challenge Black students face negotiating the tension between the assimilatory (but seemingly unrealizable) pressures of education and the demands of group solidarity and cultural preservation under conditions of oppression. The theory has been broadly (mis)interpreted, however, as reifying notions of Black academic failure and explaining such failure in terms of Black students’ “fear” of “acting White”<sup>25</sup>—thus, by many accounts, reviving and replicating “culture of poverty”<sup>26</sup> theories which place the blame for Black underachievement on Black dysfunction and the onus for transformation of the educational gap on the transformation of Black culture (Akom, 2003; Lundy, 2003; Horvat and O’Conner).

Fordham (2008), in her response to her critics, argues that the ‘burden of acting White’ thesis is not, primarily, about the need to transform Black culture but about the ways in which dominant culture continues to force Black students to “perform”

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<sup>25</sup> Fordham cites Henry Louis Gates Jr., Barack Obama, Michael Eric Dyson, William Darity, Derrick Bok, John McWhorter, Bill Cosby, Roland Fryer, Shelby Steele, Thomas Sowell, Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips as among those who have misinterpreted her results. She divides these into “multiculturalist” and “neoliberal” camps arguing that both camps misuse the concept to “place the major responsibility on the Black community itself, ignoring the formidable structural barriers that defy the nation’s rhetorical idealism.”

Whiteness in order to attain academic success—a performance which they, by virtue of the one drop rule, can never perfect to White satisfaction. Her revised analysis contains echoes of Du Boisian understandings of double-consciousness (the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of Whites) and analyses of colonization, slavery and segregation as cultural processes of power brokering in which token power was handed to educated Blacks in exchange for their collaboration in the perpetuation of White domination<sup>27</sup>. While this revisiting largely corrects for the emphasis on Black cultural transformation in her previous work and addresses some concerns about the homogenization of Blackness (Carter, 2008), it continues to leave Whiteness as a static category, a set of hollowed out practices such as camping and going to the symphony. The theory does not look at Whiteness as also “performed” by Whites, in part in opposition to Blackness (Lundy, 2003). White resistance, White ‘fictive kinship’ and White “education” are all treated as historically oppressive but left relatively silent in the present. The theory “fixes” Whiteness as an authentic set of practices instead of looking at the ways in which Whiteness is constituted, secured and contested as a field of power. It also begs the question of how White people become White, not in Ignatiev’s (1995) historical context (i.e. how the Irish became White), but how Whiteness as an ontological and lived category is continually reproduced in action.

### **The Danger of (Not) Being White**

The danger of (not) being White refers to the anxieties students at Valley View faced as they transitioned to high school—anxieties about being vulnerable because of their Whiteness and anxiety about losing status (presumably White status). Many Valley View students, when asked what they wanted to do with their lives, talked about wanting to “help people” but there was contradiction within this construction. To be able to “help” they felt they would need to be in the top classes, get into the best universities, and secure the best grades—whether through working hard, ‘kissing up’ or private tutors. This quest for status within the school also, however, fed by deep anxieties about being in spaces in which they were a minority—these anxieties were physical and emotional as they imagined their vulnerability in relation to students of color and feared for their status, in terms of the impressions of other White actors.<sup>28</sup>

A dominant trope throughout many of my interviews related to White students perceiving themselves, or being perceived, as potential victims—the ever present threat to their bodies and their possessions (by people of color) marked their transition into “diverse” space. As Talli described, “I’ve, like, I’ve dropped friends off in Glenwood...but never...just because obviously I’d be scared, you know, I’m a White girl, you know, in such an area and there are like assumptions that you make” (RAA-INT-TS, 3/12/09). Talli feared Glenwood not just because the neighborhood had a reputation for violence, but because she believed that her Whiteness made her a target. We need to relate this both to a particular perception of Whiteness (modes of controlling White women) as well as discourses about deviant masculinity in school and in neighborhoods. This type of fear speaks to a ‘specialness’ for Whiteness as a protected

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<sup>27</sup> She does not, however, cite Du Bois, nor does she cite Fanon, Said, Carnoy and others who have written about the role of cultural hegemony in education in the process of colonization or authors such as Jones and Anderson who situate a diversity of educational projects within the legacy of slavery in the US.



category that contributes to the criminalization of Black youth and association of Blackness with violence (Ferguson, 1995). While divestment and racism have persistently produced conditions that have amplified violence in Black neighborhoods, Black youth have been the primary victims of this violence (Kelley, 1997; Gilmore, 2007; Noguera, 2003). Talli's imagination of her own White body as a target is fed by the historic and present representations of Blacks as pathologically threatening to Whites, White women in particular. I reflected on this when I observed a White teacher tell a group of students of color in a 'below basic' class "you know what people used to believe, you won't believe that they used to believe this, people used to think that if a Black man was around a White woman do you know what they thought?" (silence) "they thought he would rape her. Crazy isn't it but people used to believe that" (f.n., 1/25/08). While the teacher located the fear of Black sexual predation in the past, the discourses of the school continue to situate students of color as a threat.

This formulation of Whiteness as targeted (or, alternately, residents of Parkside as targets of Glenwood) was persistent not only at the level of youth discourse but from official adults as well. I observed the police chief at a Glenwood public meeting tell White adults worried about safety in Glenwood that "the neighborhood is perfectly safe, when you go through, lock your doors and roll up your windows and don't look at anybody. Go straight to your destination" (f.n., 9/22/04). Alternately, in an interview, the principal of Parkside High told me "we had, you know, all these kids from the Parkside, who people just thought stupid kids leaving their backpacks with expensive stuff in them lying around, ipods and graphing calculators" (RAA-INT-MS, 3/5/09). The principal's comments point to how White students identified, by school officials, as targets. These discourses imply that students from Parkside are taught and expected to modify their behavior to expect a criminal other, an other who is implicitly not from Parkside, nor White, nor affluent. They are labeled, by their principal, as "stupid," to the extent that they do exhibit such trust. Again, the stated assumption is that White kids are vulnerable, in part because of their ignorance, in part because of their wealth, and in part because of the assumption that students of color are predators and/or criminals and that spaces of color are dangerous.

For most White students at Parkside High (at least those I talked to) the idea of being in non-White space was incredibly uncomfortable. This idea was articulated by teachers and staff as well. The aversion seemed to stem from a fear of being racially identifiable and targeted, vulnerable because of Whiteness, and a fear of losing some of the status privilege associated with Whiteness (cf. Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Importantly, this aversion pertained not to spaces where White students were a numerical minority, per-se, but to those marked as non-White, where White students were placed, on apparently equal status with students of color. These were also, often, spaces where White hegemony was more directly contested than in those marked as White. Being the only White person in a space could also be heroic. This depended, however, on contexts. It was okay for students to be one of a few White students in a situation where they were doing community service or tutoring or otherwise in power but not to be one of the only White people in an equal status situation.

The spaces that White students avoided (unless they were a tutor, a T.A. or doing community service) were also those where race and class shaped access. These included what they labeled "ghetto" classes (anything below honors in the tracking system),

Saturday school/detention, food purchase areas, and certain busses. When I asked the “regular” English teacher whether any students were trying to move up to honors out of his class, he responded that the students who most vehemently wanted out were the White students, “but they also have the lowest test scores so there’s just no way” (f.n., 4/6/09) This comment indicates that the White students who did end up in ‘regular’ classes might have been only those who scores were low enough to leave no chance of them squeezing into honors classes (or it may be those who lack the political power—or failed to realize the racial dynamics of these classes) and it also hints at the incentive that racial isolation (or the pull that White space) gave these students’ to bolster their achievement.

A similar fear of isolation or humiliation also helped discipline of White students at the school. A teacher and parent, speaking with myself and the principal at Valley Vista school described the mortification White kids must face when they get detention/Saturday school: “well you know if its on Saturday you’ve got all those soccer parents watching and they know what’s going on, they’re looking over and looking at you. And, you know, you’re probably the only person in the bunch who’s not a person of color” (f.n., 1/18/08). The presumption is that the soccer parents are White and that to be seen as the only White person, by other Whites, in a disciplinary space, constitutes a much greater punishment than to simply lose a Saturday. We might understand it as a threat to the students’ status as White.

### **I Guess His Mom Couldn’t Take Care of Him Because She’s Taking Care of Me**

These students thus simultaneously juggled their desire for “equality” and to participate in “diversity” and the reality of a segregated school, which they also helped create. If pushed to make sense of these circumstances they would often acknowledge or point toward some of the powerful ways in which they were advantaged. More often, however, they resorted to blaming students of color, not only for their segregation and academically inferior position within the school, but also, in some cases, for their own academic struggles.

Tasha, a White student, recounted in an interview how the difference in students between her honors (almost all White) and regular (mixed) classes is that “there’re a lot of people in those classes that just don’t want to learn...a lot of people will just sort of lay back and not absorb anything and sort of goof off in class and that brings the whole class back” (RAA-INT-TR, 4/30/08). Caz, a White student, said to me after his teacher finished yelling at students of color in his World Studies class, “those kids, they deserve it, they’re always doing stuff.” (f.n, 12/3/08). Without any context for understanding potential differences between their own educational experiences and those of their classmates or the specific ways in which the school and, indeed, they themselves, might contribute to other students’ alienation or frustration, these White elite students blamed problems in their classrooms on “lazy,” “acting out,” students.

Talli, who was the only White student in my study who consistently spent time with any people of color prior to coming to Parkside High expressed her disappointment with the school and explained how it had help her understand how people could be racist.

It’s like, I didn’t realize there was such an unspoken, like, I don’t know how to phrase it, an unspoken law I guess that

you stay with your own kind...so it kind of helps me to see...how racist people can be racist and like, you see the world through skin color and that kind of stuff, like with any aspect of the school, the classes. I'm in Honors English there's, I noticed, there's not one colored person in my class. (RAA-INT-TS, 3/23/09)

Talli explained this segregation in her courses and in the school as a result of what people are “expected” to do, using the example of how Tongans are “big” so they’re expected to play football. This understanding of racial sorting in terms of expectations is perhaps more sophisticated than that which just assumes “some kids don’t care” but it, like the other, fails to account for the widely disparate circumstances in the feeder communities and school districts as well as within the school itself. Moreover, her language, when she indicates “there’s not one colored person in my class,” points to the degree to which her own ignorance that this term is offensive, and naiveté with regard to race, may have contributed to the isolation she felt, and expressed sadness about, from her classmates of color.

Perhaps the deepest insight from a White student into the types of structures and relationships that shaped the stratification at Parkside High School came from Caz. He, like all the other kids, most often made sense of racial inequality at the school in terms of some kids not caring or ‘deserving it.’ In one conversation, however, I asked him if he knew any kids from Glenwood school district. “I know Hector,” he replied.

R.A.: Whose Hector?

Caz: A punk.

R.A.: How do you know him?

Caz: His mom takes care of me and my brothers and sisters. He went to Huerta.

R.A.: Does he go to school here?

Caz: Yeah, but he’s always getting in trouble.

R.A.: Why do you think?

Caz: I guess maybe its because his mom was always taking care of me so she didn’t really have time for him.

(RAA-INT-CZ, 2/6/09)

Caz’s comment gets at the fundamental dynamic at the root of much of the inequality at Parkside High school. The fundamental dynamic that White students must struggle with. They have been raised on the myth of meritocracy, on the post civil rights discourse that we are all equal, but their classmates of color are often the children of the adults who work for little pay in their parents yards and houses, who serve them in restaurants, change their oil, and tend to them in hospitals. They are the nannies and gardeners who are welcomed into the neighborhood as workers but considered threatening strangers when not on the job (Maher, 2003). These young people are not separate from one another as the discourses of the frontier and the White man’s burden would have them believe, but intimately tied in relationships of power and dependence, relationships that are relived and re-worked in the school, mostly under a veil of silence.

## **Producing and Resisting White Public Space**

“Acting White” is a racializing process, it is a process that produces racial categories and racial borders and that does so through racial domination. One of the ways in which White public space is produced is through language. Jane Hill (1999) argues that the simultaneous monitoring of marginalized populations for signs of “linguistic disorder” and invisibility of these signs in White speech constitute White public space. As an example, she describes how White people use “mock Spanish” freely, often in derogatory and racist ways, but the same disorderliness is not allowed of Spanish speaking Puerto Ricans who must carefully patrol their own speech, as others control it, for linguistic orderliness including the regulation of accents, Spanish words and phrasing.

At Parkside High, certain instances of “mock” language produced White space but also illustrated the complexity of racial production and pointed toward the need to think about how physical, material and institutional power interact with discourse in the production of not only White public space but also dispossession and illegality. In this section, I share a series of incidents and stories that highlight the complex role of linguistic (and physical/symbolic) discursive borders and border crossing in shaping and disrupting White public space.

One day, toward the end of an interview, seemingly out of the blue, Jacqueline began to talk about trouble she’d been having with some of the White students:

J: They’re always saying like, rogue and stuff, and I feel kind of disrespected by that and I asked him, I was like, do you even know what that means and he was like, yeah, I know what it means because I asked a Black person and I was like oh my god, that’s just a sign of how ignorant you are, I mean, like, I told him, you know that’s something that usually people only say when they’re from Glenwood and he was like, so what and he kept on saying it and it just makes me mad.

R.A.: Do you feel like they’re trying to make fun?

J: I don’t know if they’re trying to make fun, you know how when you say something and you’re not really trying to make fun of something and then somebody tells you and you’re like oh, I think maybe its like that, like they’re not really trying to make fun, but it feels like....and he kept saying it.

(RAA-INT-JC, 1/21/09)

We need to understand the moment outlined above as a “racializing event”—an event that creates not only racial meaning, but reproduces race categories themselves. This is done through 1) the enactment of White discursive power—an act which is both enabled by and creates White public space—2) the bulwark of institutional and material relations that provide context for this act, and 3) the resistant, culturally productive language that is the target of this event and the subject of Jacqueline’s response.

Hill argues that White public space is created not only through the act of mocking, but through the creation of a “homogenizing heterogeneity,” through what others have called “appropriation” (Olsen, 1997). For Whites, a bricolage of practices, a heterogeneous appropriation of other cultural styles and symbols is both permitted and valued. Indeed, this is, in fact, central to how Whiteness has been historically constituted (Willinsky, 1998). Utilizing the word, “rogue,” regardless of whether it did, in fact, have the mocking physical style and accented characteristics I have suggested it may have,

implied mimicry (characteristics which would have made it into what Hill calls a ‘classic wiggerism’<sup>29</sup>). The ‘White kid’ appropriated the language of ‘others’ with whom he clearly has only a minimal relationship at best. Evidence of his lack of real relationships or familiarity is found in his response, “I asked a Black kid,” which by neither identifying the name of the person he asked, nor indicating any previous understanding of the word (presumably, prior to coming to his school), points toward his lack of connection with both people of color and Glenwood. While this might appear as a boundary-crossing act to some, a young person experimenting with and trying to understand language they are unaccustomed to, it is, in fact, a boundary *producing* act. How and why should we understand it this way?

Boundaries and borders are not applicable to all people in the same way and it is from this structured inequality that they attain their power. Race, nationality and class all shape border crossing. While those with racial, class, and citizenship privileges can often travel freely and unencumbered across borders, many without these privileges die daily in acts of border crossing or in the squalor of containment camps on the edge of borders they cannot fully cross. Indeed, Whiteness as an identity and an ideal type is rooted in colonial and conquering relationships that treat others’ borders, territory, space and culture with extreme impunity and disregard. Artifacts—linguistic, material, cultural, and physical—are collected as tokens of conquest, proof of adventure, signs of worldliness, and tools of domination (Willinsky, 1998). Whiteness is constructed through the violation of the sacred, the profaning of the order of culture, and the massacre of those who resist. Race is produced through the processes of bordering that enable a human/sub-human divide to organize thought and legitimate action (a way to separate and contain while retaining labor power etc.) and through the simultaneous resistance that seeks to defend against the unending onslaught of dispossession.

“Border crossing,” therefore, is never an inherently ‘bridging,’ ‘equalizing’ or ‘bonding’ act. Indeed, it can be, rather, an intense invasion, a terrorizing act, and a profound violation (hooks, 1992). Border crossing can be the act from which borders are born. It is not enough to ask how and why an individual crosses borders—whether for anthropological understanding, in the name of service or in the name of war. These matter, but what underlies these is a system of meaning and power that defines the significance of those borders and of racially marked (and, perhaps more importantly, politically, culturally and socially tied bodies) (Anzaldúa, 1987). It is very rare, in the context of this school, to find a ‘White kid’ who shares the types of experiences and the types of struggles that students from Glenwood do.

The ‘White kid’ in this example clearly does not have situated knowledge of Glenwood. He knows meaning of the word, *rogue*, because he ‘asked a Black kid.’ He has not indicated an interest in respecting the broader context from which the word comes, Jacqueline asks him to stop saying it multiple times and despite this, he persists. He assumes the position of one who has the power and the privilege of being able to cross-linguistic boundaries with impunity. He appropriates the word into his own discourse and his own repertoire (in a mocking-style) as a tool that may help him gain respect or credibility (he may be seen as tough because he has gone to school with, knows a couple words from the inside language of, and can thus simultaneously put down and produce an exaggerated image of students from Glenwood, Black students in

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<sup>29</sup> Note: this is an offensive on multiple fronts, but it means White n\*\*\*er.

particular). Indeed, this sense of being ‘tough’ and therefore ‘cool’ for attending school with those who are presumed to be dangerous and different is common amongst White students at Parkside High School—and many of the adults who represent them—a type of appropriation Leonardo and Hunter (2007) call “urban without the burden” (p. 796).

This young man’s speech act does not occur in isolation. It occurs in the context of a broader set of institutions and relationships that give it meaning. These are both internal and external to the school where this occurs. You will recall, from previous chapters, that Jacqueline expressed a sense of displacement by, deprivation in relation to and consternation with ‘the White people’ who were moving into the ‘nice new houses’ that had been built as a part of re-development efforts in her neighborhood. In a profound analysis of the interrelationship between racial and class power, she speculated ‘the city wants White people...because they can pay more.’ She also articulated the ways in which the provision of private services—garbage, security, parks and maintenance—gave these residents a separate social and material existence from the rest of the city. This, plus her father’s looming deportation, provided part of the context for Jacqueline’s material and institutional encounter with invasive ‘border crossing’ and the profound applicability of borders to her own life.

The institutional relationships of the school must also, however, be understood as part of the way in which this type of transgression takes on meaning and becomes an act of violence. As previously outlined, the inequalities in academic placement, physical position within the school, parental and student power, and future opportunities amongst youth from Glenwood and those from Parkside are profound. Previously one of the top students in her school, active on the dance team, and a leader amongst her peers, here Jacqueline was largely isolated from her Glenwood peers in her ‘almost all White’ honors classes and yet also deeply connected and committed to her Glenwood friends. She didn’t worry that she was betraying them or her roots, but she was protective toward the city and the people in it—protective in the face of institutional violences like segregated tracking.

Jacqueline was happy with many of her teachers and was open to many of the White students. Especially as the year proceeded, she welcomed many of her new White peers into her world, inviting them to her quinciénra (which they attended) and developing friendships with them in the classroom. She still reported, however, explicit incidents of racial discrimination and unexplained hostility from some of her teachers. She also worried about others from Glenwood who were not thriving as she was.

A recent addition to African American English, the word *Rogue* is quite directly associated with Glenwood. It is a small piece of the complicated work of ‘cultural production’ that emanates from Glenwood. “Cultural production” (Willis, 1977; Lave et al., 1992) is the development of a set of cultural styles and practices that reflect and give expression to experiences and ways of knowing that are not represented or are misrepresented in dominant culture. People who benefit from dominant culture cannot participate in cultural production because they have no incentive to do so. *Rogue* is a Glenwood word, quite literally. Derived from the more formal use of *rogue* to describe a rascal or someone mischievous, here it is used as a common greeting ‘waz up rogue’ and is often associated with hip hop culture (Alim, 2004).

Alim, in his analysis, argues that the sense of displacement in Glenwood, tied to ongoing gentrification and migration, can be linked to the “linguistic gentrification”

Black young people are subject to as teachers attempt “to eradicate their language and linguistic practices in favor of the adoption of White cultural and linguistic norms.” Describing the complexity and nuance of Black linguistic practices, he argues that 1) there is no such thing as *standard* English, that “standard simply means that this is the language variety that those in authority have constructed as the variety needed to gain access to resources” (p. 194), 2) teachers need to ask “how, when and why” we are “all implicated in *linguistic supremacy*” and 3) we need to recognize the variety of Black linguistic and communicative resources and the capacity to code switch and ask why, given this flexibility coercion into White speech styles seems necessary and 4) while Black students may resist imposition of ‘standard’ English, they may also deem access to it as a necessary part of “playing the game,” getting by in the context of White supremacy. He argues that the strategic decision to ‘play the game’ should not abdicate the responsibilities of educators to help “subjugated populations develop survival strategies that seem antithetical to linguistic emancipation” and find ways to “eradicate *linguistic supremacy* (Alim, 2004).” His argument is that while standard/non-standard are mutually constituted and continually shifting, young people’s attempts to access “standard” English, should not be misinterpreted as releasing educators from the responsibility of working to contest White linguistic hegemony and with this, the legitimacy of the hierarchy of linguistic forms.

We need to analyze youth cultural productions in a slightly different way than we do dialects or languages. We can clearly understand ‘mock Spanish’ as part of the broader ‘subtractive’ schooling processes Valenzuela (1999) outlines. The misuse and abuse of African American dialect takes on similar connotations, particularly in light of extraordinary analyses of the order, complexity and depth of this language. Hill’s work is not only, however, about order, but also about disorder—about the complex and inequitable ways in which speech acts are policed and regulated. The bodies, conditions and times in which disorder is permitted and those in which it is not. Youth cultural productions are intentionally disorderly. Hill provides ample evidence demonstrating that Puerto Rican (and presumably other Spanish speaking adults) experience intense anxiety about and are subject to constant disdain for not only ‘disorderly’ language practices, such as mixing English and Spanish, or having accented English, but also for other’s perceptions of these based on their appearance and position within the social structure. Many youth in Glenwood, certainly those engaged in the production and use of Rogue, are, however, intentionally disorderly, at least in the face of dominant, mainstream English—which is not to say that there is not order to their practice.

In texts, on facebook and when given opportunity they inventively re-create spellings and grammatical structures, many Glenwood youth craft a language that clearly identifies them in ways that I believe are tied not only to hip hop, not only to particular racial identification, but that, with careful analysis, could be teased as a Glenwood specific (and maybe even sub-group specific) dialect. They do not write like this because they do not know how to spell, or because they cannot speak “proper” English, but rather as a technique for marking and claiming space and signaling both resistance and community. Below are two examples from Sevite’s facebook page. In the first, he writes to a friend asking about when they might record in the future. In the second, his sister writes to help him register for classes:

Sevite: wen we gon hop baak in da studio git some slaps down.

Delmi: smelly check ur PORTAL to see wen u kan sign up for class and does mac need help with aplying and oing that too hahah I shall have a meeting about this a seminar Imao how to apply and register for classes! LMAO miss u kall me okay or I will just come thru wen its my day off and help u mac and ton do this! LETS GET WIT IT! ☺

Glenwood youth engaged in substantial free mixing of languages (although there are lots of rules that shape this), what Hill calls ‘crossing.’ Thus the language many (but importantly, not all) Glenwood youth spoke with each other, in both written and oral forms, was substantially and intentionally differentiated from the ‘order’ enforced by the school (and perhaps other spaces as well). Words like *rogue*, and the ability to use them in appropriate contexts, with a respectful tone (and to be interpolated as such), represented a form of belonging—an identifying symbol. These linguistic formations marked a border. A border that was not just about Glenwood students stubbornly rejecting or resisting dominant linguistic formations. Rather, we can understand this border, as Alim does, within the broader lens of gentrification and dispossession. As they struggled to claim and retain space—a concept of space that was not simply geographic, in the sense of the ‘right to the city,’ but linguistic, intellectual, theoretical and juridical, Glenwood students needed to be able to identify one another, they needed to be able to know who would, no matter how great their distances, would be, as Jacqueline said, “with us.” Carving out counter-space amidst White space became one way of doing this. The White student’s border crossing misappropriation of language violated this marked space.

### **The White Man’s Burden and the Integrative Imagination**

The inequality between and within schools along lines of race and class are no secret to education scholars or the general public. The persistence of institutional mechanisms such as tracking (Oakes, 1981), White flight, tax aversion, and private funding of public schools have long been associated with the resistance and political acumen of White and wealthy parents. The circumstances which led to gross inequalities between Glenwood and Parkside school districts are neither new nor unique. Scholars have also noted the pervasiveness of both institutional colorblindness and racial anxiety within schools. This study joins with others in looking at how liberal “multiculturalism” in conjunction with colorblind ideologies and extreme inequality may exacerbate inequalities through the particular work of these discourses on the educational trajectories of powerfully situated White students (see Lewis, 2003; Perry, 2002; Nyack, 2003).

White and wealthy students, animated by and called to frontier desires to “save the world” are able to understand themselves and be understood as wanted, heroic and worldly for their presence within diverse schools. At the same time, they find themselves confronting previous notions of equity and grappling with both rejection from students of color and their own anxieties and fears about Whiteness as manifest in their thoughts and bodies. They seek friendship with other White students and actively seek to avoid spaces in which they are minorities—spaces that are thus marked as “ghetto.” They carve out “safe” space for Whiteness in the upper echelons of the academic hierarchy and, if shut



out, seek relentlessly to enter this space. To be ‘deviant’ or to be ‘behind’ in this context both constitute threats to Whiteness.

Teachers and the school administration participate in the production of Whiteness through their unidirectional attempts to ‘assimilate’ students from Glenwood into the school. They praise, invite and entice White parents and students, recognizing their presence and satisfaction as both a political and economic necessity. Admittedly, they cave to parent demands—in part generated through student feedback—to create honors tracks and adjust grades.

These dynamics point to the ways in which “acting White” in schools is not a matter of studying hard, wearing particular clothes or going camping. It is fundamentally about a framework that degrades and otherizes while securing privilege (often the privilege to save others) through political manipulation and the leveraging of existing disproportionate resources. Desegregation was not intended to invoke the White man’s burden. It was a project aimed at securing equal access to citizenship rights through the equitable provision of and access to school space and resources. ‘Integration’ has been a more problematic concept for it implies not just the sharing of space, not just ‘inclusion,’ but a mutual sharing in the production of an educational project (from the writing of the curriculum, to the setting of common outcomes, to the contribution of resources and the articulation of goals). Integration will never be achieved if it is forever predicated on the challenge of the achievement gap and an others lack. The White man’s burden will never animate an integrative imagination.

**Chapter 7:**  
**Post-Racial Obama(nations):**  
**Race-Talk at Parkside High School**

On the morning of Barack Obama's inauguration, the San Francisco Chronicle ran the headline "The World Has Changed" (Headline, 2009). They joined newspapers across the nation in heralding this moment as a mark of racial progress and possibility within the United States (Filbright, Kuruvila, & Hendricks, 2009). At Parkside High School, however, the popular elation and hopefulness about this moment seemed to be limited to an unexpected group of students—the "White kids." In the halls, at the lunch tables and in classrooms White students and teachers were animated by the victory, their excitement contrasting jarringly with the surprisingly blasé reaction of students of color.

The primary reaction of Huerta students (a diverse group of students of color) to the inauguration event at Parkside High School was boredom: "I liked his speech, I heard it, I liked that part, the rest of it was boring," (Jacqueline-Mexican-American), "I was in there for one period but you couldn't even hear it. It was boring." (Maria-Salvadoran-American), "Yeah, I saw it, I liked his speech, the rest of it was boring," (Sevite-Fijian), "Yeah, I watched it, I don't know" (Memo-Mexican<sup>30</sup>). Packed in the gymnasium, they had watched the inauguration events on video from the bleachers. There were problems with the sound, and many students only got to go to part of the event (as it spanned two periods and individual teachers chose whether or not their classes would attend), but these didn't seem to be the only reasons Huerta students were ambivalent about the inauguration—despite having generally liked the speech.

As Jacqueline, Maria, Sevite, Memo and I sat around a picnic table, Jacqueline expressed what seemed to be a more generally felt uneasiness with White students' (and teachers') enthusiasm about the event.

R.A: Are people excited about Obama?

Maria: Yeah, kind of.

Jacqueline: No offense<sup>31</sup>, but mostly White people are excited about it.

R.A.: Doesn't offend me.

Jacqueline: Good.

R.A.: Mostly White people?

Jacqueline: Yeah, they were all screaming and stuff and like ooh, ooh and this one girl was crying, it was hella funny.

At this point they all started to giggle and nod (f.n, 1/20/09).

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<sup>30</sup> I use the term Mexican-American with Jacqueline and Mexican with Memo to distinguish the fact that Jacqueline is a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrant, born in the United States and Memo is 1.5 generation, born in Mexico, having immigrated to the U.S as a youth (when he was 10 years old). Central American, in Maria's case, carries the same connotation as Mexican in Memo's, she was born in El Salvador, immigrating to the U.S. at 10 years of age.

<sup>31</sup> Huerta students commonly prefaced any talk about "white people" with "no offense" when I was around. This self-consciousness about using a phrase that was common in their every-day discourse around me both demonstrates the various ways in which my positionality affected my data collection and the ways in which students regulated their discussion of race and use of race-words (Pollock, 2004).

I was surprised by their lack of enthusiasm. The news was full of stories of youth of color rejoicing—or adults rejoicing for them. My colleagues who were working in schools that were 100% students of color reported an outpouring of enthusiasm amongst the youth they worked with and the news reported the same for youth throughout the Bay Area (Asmiov, Doyle, & Tucker, 2009). Was the Huerta students' boredom, I wondered, because they were somewhat isolated in Glenwood—not in touch with big city politics and split off from the conversations that animated the bubbling joy of the White students? Was it because these students—most of them neither Black nor White—were more removed from the binary legacy of racism that framed Obama's election than Black students in nearby cities? Was it because they were simply less politically engaged—more cynical about the entire process? Or was there something deeper? Was this lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Huerta students in some way related to what they perceived as an excess of enthusiasm on the part of White students? Jacqueline's comments and other's affirmation of her assessment of "White people's" reactions through their giggles and nods, indicate not only boredom with the inaugural event itself, but also with the sentiments White students expressed about the election.

I understand Jacqueline's mocking of the White students' joy less as an expression of her own political disengagement, or an expression of distance from the immediate racial binaries that framed the election, than as a critique of the disproportionate excitement of these students and the ways in which this seemed either inauthentic or suspect—a critique also expressed by many scholars who observed the national election euphoria (Bonilla-Silva & Ray, 2008; Asukile, 2008). I hear in her critique of the Obama euphoria, a weariness with what Duncan-Andrade (2009) has termed "mythical hope"—"a false narrative of equal opportunity emptied of its historical and political contingencies" (181). Buried in Jacqueline's offhand remarks, was a sense that not only was these students' enthusiasm for Obama annoying—it was also silencing. The conversation that would occur in Mr. Washington's World Studies classroom later that day drove home the idea that this mythical hope doesn't only silence, it also dispossesses.

I have argued throughout this work that dispossession is a fundamental logic at work in education systems in the United States. In this chapter I look at the "race talk" and "race teaching" that surrounded Obama's election as, paradoxically, a form of dispossession. I call this "hopeful dispossession"—in which the very act of cultivating optimism, the very idea and ideal of progress, threatened to take away not only material, but also important intellectual resources and hard-fought ways-of knowing. Leonardo (2011) argues that while communities of color possess hope—the capacity to survive, resist, struggle and continue to imagine a future in the context of ongoing violent repression—Whites articulate optimism—the persistent belief that we have arrived at the end of progress, that race has been fixed and we can all now move on. The former, hope, is tied up with a post-race politics, one that imagines moving *through* race by recognizing and struggling against racial oppression. Doing so would eventually mark the end of the 500 year-old system of demarcating and distributing that is race. The later, optimism, is tied up with colorblindness, a politics that imagines the best way to get beyond race is to deny it, to cover ones eyes and pretend not to see it—a set of practices that perpetuate and reproduce racial inequality. Hopeful dispossession takes the attempted articulation of

hope (what Duncan-Andrade calls critical hope) and offers optimism (what Duncan-Andrade calls mythical hope) in return.

The chapter primarily draws on observations of one of the only detracked classes at Parkside High school--Mr. Washington's Freshman World Studies course--during the first year this course was 'detracked' (meaning, it mixed students from the whole school without sorting by their purported ability) (Oakes, 1981). I have chosen to illustrate this set of interactions, in particular, because they provide a platform through which to think about what it means to educate students amidst extreme structural inequality—one that causes us to seriously reflect on the roles, possibilities and responsibilities of teachers in educating about race.

Through these events, I show how “hopeful dispossession” drew not just on Obama's election but on a broader narrative of racial progress and post-racial colorblind discourse to not only mute race, but dispossess students (through silencing) of histories, realities and interpretations of racism—of their intellectual power, resources and voices--or at least the space in which to have these recognized. To do so, I first elaborate upon the concept of mythical hope and theorize how it can become violent and dispossessive, then warn about the ways in which this ethnographic project itself participates in and is shaped by this dispossession, before recounting and breaking down what happened in Mr. Washington's class on that inauguration day. As I re-examine the events in Mr. Washington's class, I focus on the ways in which what I call (Un)Safe Space—space that becomes safe for some at the expense of the safety of others—is produced through the interpolation of a (White) public, maintained through the interpretation of dissent as violence, and made violent through both colorblind race talk and stories of racial violence. Lastly, I return to the concept of dispossession, contextualizing what takes place in this classroom as an institutional, not individual, phenomenon and looking at the ways which efforts to create safe space within what I call colorblind multiculturalism, fail to account for and reproduce racial violence, terror and the impossibility of safe space. I conclude with a discussion of critical hope.

### **Hope and Violence**

Duncan-Andrade (2009) in his note to educators “hope required when growing roses in concrete,” addresses three forms of “false hope” perpetuated in schools: “hokey hope,” “mythical hope,” and “hope deferred.” “Hokey hope,” is that described by Valenzuela (1999) in her book *Subtractive Schooling*, in which meritocratic rewards are doled out in a system of “aesthetic caring” to students based on their willingness to comply with an unjust school and society. “Mythical hope” is that potentially furthered by Obama's election, in which “a false narrative of equal opportunity emptied of its historical and political contingencies” is advanced. Finally, “hope deferred” refers to a “progressive politics of despair” in which the pervasiveness of “the system” becomes an excuse for not engaging in transformative educational work.

The danger of these false hopes is that they neglect the very severe conditions facing students of color while offering up the scarce possibility of meritocratic advance as the only means of improvement without providing adequate support to make such an advance even a remote possibility. While these hopes are operative in racially isolated and segregated schools attended only by students of color, they assume additional significance in racially diverse schools and classrooms where Whites are in dominant

positions. Mythical hope, in this case, can become something that not only denies the experiences of students of color, but also becomes a critical condition in creating safe spaces for White students wherein racism and racial microaggressions (Chapman, 2007) remain unaddressed to spare White students the pain of “looking racist” (Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

Leonardo and Porter (2010) describe how safe spaces, by which they mean classrooms where attempts are made to protect the feelings of all students during racial dialogues, are spaces violent towards people of color. For people of color, they argue, “violence is already there”—in the form of structural and discursive racism. The discourse of “safety,” they argue, is, in and of itself, a form of violence because it protects the safety of Whites, who are implicated in racism, at the expense of the authentic expression and truth claims of student of color. “In public settings,” they argue, “if minorities follow the analytics of color, they run the risk of incurring White symbolic racism at best or literal violence at worst. . . participating in public race dialogue makes them vulnerable to assault on many fronts.” To undo racism, they argue, certain types of violence, libratory violence, are necessary. Drawing on Fanon, they argue that confronting the violence of domination (enacted through both physical and ideological means) entails actions and words that, to those who participate in domination, do not feel safe, they feel violent. Within this understanding of violence, even the “non-violent” protest of Martin Luther King, “was a form of violence to Whites” as it forced a confrontation with a system of White domination and Whites “felt and returned” the violence in the form of aggressive repression, surveillance, physical violence and institutional resistance.

I suggest that the construction and preservation of mythical hope is a critical mechanism through which young people, particularly young White people can feel safe while making sense out of race. For young people of color this optimism can be painful, but more importantly, it can be disenfranchising as it shapes the types of knowledge, understanding, discourse and theoretical positions that are valued and rewarded by the school. The mythical hope that surrounded Barack Obama’s election broadly described this moment as a culmination of aspirations for racial equality and speculated that race would no longer be a relevant excuse for the struggles of youth and communities of color—a discourse that contrasted jarringly with the reality of entrenched racial inequality in America (Bonilla-Silva & Ray, 2009; Reed & Louis, 2009; Robinson III, 2009; Asukile, 2008). Paulo Freire (1968) reminds us that all education is deeply political, here I demonstrate how these discourses of hope and racial progress become part of a politicized educational process I call “education by dispossession.”

### **A Note on Method and Silence**

This chapter is full of silences. These are the silences both of racialized students who do not, cannot, or refuse to speak, and of a kind of talk about race that refuses to acknowledge the racism in the room. There are four Black male students in this account and they are all unnamed. They are unnamed because they were not the focus of this study, they were not ever identified by name by their teacher, and I never heard anyone else in class utter their names. The one student I heard the teacher mentioned by name is Brittany (pseudonym), a White student who spoke repeatedly on inauguration day. While the four Black male students represented in this chapter never utter any words, they are

not silent, but silenced. They speak with inhales, body movements, and eye contact and then, after they are quieted by their teacher, they speak with silence, with eyes that will not meet their teachers or their classmates, with stiff bodies instead of bodies that relax and lean toward one another. Within the context of this chapter, however, they speak no words for themselves. The meanings of their inhales and gestures are left to mine, their teacher's and their fellow student's interpretations. All the reflections on their meaning that appear in this chapter, including my own, are constructed by White people. This is part of what it means to experience dispossession-- to be denied the opportunity to speak for yourself, to become nameless, to be one of an indistinguishable group of four racially marked bodies rather than a complex, multi-sided, thoughtful human—a condition Fanon (1967) describes as “straddling nothingness and infinity” and that leads him to weep.

In that sense this chapter does not escape the very paradigms that it critiques. I attempt to bring depth and context to the interactions I see between these young men, their teacher and the other students in the room. I do so by carefully drawing upon the work of scholars of color who have, from personal experience, historical narrative, and intensive academic analysis, produced accounts of racialization and racial violence that have not only shaped my understanding, but also forged the foundations of critical scholarship. No matter how carefully I might do so, however, these authors, like the students I describe, become mediated through a White body (mine). Every speech act entails acts of listening and, as Black authors are at pains to point out, arguments and frameworks constructed by people of color attain more attention and renown when claimed and spoken by White researchers (Kelley, 1998). Thus drawing on and using critical race theory (Ladson-Bilings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004) and theories built by others, appropriating them and turning them back (insider's knowledge, reflected through an outsider's gaze), while my intentions are to converse with and bring whatever resources I have to this body of work, is none-the-less, one of the cornerstones of dispossession. As Conquergood (2002) has pointed out, as White researchers read, observe and write about those who are subordinated to them by White supremacy, they may mistakenly presume they can transparently read not only the world, but the texts of other subordinated peoples they use to make sense of it. Too often they forget that these text are likewise shaped by the relentless surveillance, appropriation, and domination of scholars of color within and outside of the academy. My analysis of students of color and use of authors of color, while it may afford me some insight and allow some intervention in dominant interpretations of these students, may also be silencing, not only because with White audiences my White voice may quickly become dominant, but also because I may both misread and misrepresent—or even be intentionally led to do so as a means of protection in a racist system. This re-representation, thus, constantly risks becoming both an appropriation and a farce.

Not only does this chapter risk appropriation, there is another danger, should I effectively give voice to what these young men are trying to say—that their expression will be turned back against them, so that to represent themselves (and be represented) even in this limited way becomes a dangerous act. The re(re)presentation as stories travel through me to you and through you into other spaces, become distorted, take on a life of their own, and are eventually turned back as “culture of poverty” or “broken windows theory” represents yet another level of dispossession. Gayatri Spivak (1988), when she asked whether the subaltern can speak was actually asking whether they can be heard,

whether we can hear that which does not articulate itself within a frame we know and understand. As Harris and Carbado (2006) have pointed out, however, the frames we already possess are overdetermining in their force and it is only through intentional acts (which we are prone to miss) that these frames might be disrupted, whether or not that produces any new ability to hear. These students silence is a social and political act, a means of both communicating and surviving. There is a risk, in breaking that silence, as this chapter attempts to do, of not only subverting their intent, but of doing and producing violence against them. All too often knowledge about people, perhaps collected and articulated with the best of intentions, is turned against them. The subversion of this transparency, through silence, through obfuscation and through evasion are tactics that may defend against this, as Hurston writes:

“The white man is always trying to know into somebody else’s business. All right, I’ll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho’ can’t read my mind. I’ll put this play into his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I’ll say my say and sing my song.” ([1935] 1990:3 in Conquergood, 2002)

These are the stakes of race work.

### **Mr. Washington’s Class**

Mr. Washington was one of four Freshman World Studies teachers at Parkside High School. He was young but not inexperienced. As a sports coach, he had a good rapport with many of the students and his classroom felt under-control without an excess of discipline or rigidity. Mr. Washington had a social justice oriented approach to his teaching that in some ways went beyond the standard diversity (Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010) and heroes and holidays (Kohl, 1995) approaches pursued in much K-12 multicultural education. He began the year with lessons on colonialism and racism and highlighted civil rights struggles throughout the year. He sought to elicit participation from his students, encourage discussion, and incorporate current events, but his teaching also exhibited many troubling characteristics common to social-justice educators in inequitable multi-racial spaces. In particular, his efforts to maintain a safe space for all students seemed to marginalize students of color even as he struggled to address and include them.

My focus on Mr. Washington’s classroom here (supplemented by materials from other classrooms) is not intended as a critique of his teaching, in particular, but rather as an illustration of the ways in which efforts to talk race (Schults, Buck and Niesz, 2000; Pollock, 2004) in the classroom were uncomfortably constrained by a broader context of White domination and supremacy (Leonardo, 2004) within the school site. The discussion in his classroom on inauguration day illustrates some of the complex ways in which talking race can work to produce dispossession—it also, importantly, points to the possibilities for what Leonardo and Porter (2010) call ‘liberatory violence’ in desegregated classrooms—a possibility that implicates the importance of the politics of

knowledge (Mohanty, 1989-1990; Tuck & Fine, 2007) in unraveling the achievement gap.

### **Creating a Public, Creating (Un)Safe Space**

There were 26 students in Mr. Washington's World Studies class—10 White, 8 Latino, 6 Black and 2 Asian Pacific Islander. They sat in two distinct rectangles, facing one another, with an aisle down the middle that ended in a podium in front of the overhead projector and whiteboard. Three of my focal students, Jacqueline (Mexican-American), Memo (Mexican-American) and Tasha (White) were in this class this period, and all usually sat with their backs to the door, as did I and as did most of the White students. While this side of the room was largely White with a few students of color, the other side of the room was largely African American and Latino with a few White and Pacific Islander students.

The basic drama in Mr. Washington's class on the day of the inauguration involves his attempt to get students to describe what they will "take away" from Obama's election. While Mr. Washington clearly intended this idea to be additive i.e. what did you *gain* from today, it is critical to also be attentive to the *subtractive* implications of the phrase "take away." Valenzuela (1999) has described how schools subtract cultural and linguistic resources from Mexican-American students. Her focus is on the impact of U.S. educational policies that discourage Mexican cultural and linguistic expression and development combined with a lack of authentic caring for students' well-being, persons and knowledge. This focus on subtraction, while it provides an important critique of the education provided to Mexican students, does not address the role of this mode of education in securing White supremacy and producing a specific narrative of the nation and structure for White national identity. The double-entendre "take away" points toward not just subtraction but also accumulation by dispossession—an act through which one gains through the other's loss. As Mr. Washington's class unfolded the "take away" lessons described by White students as well as Mr. Washington's own apparent hope for a positive "take away," steeped in a narrative of racial progress, "took away" the opportunity to articulate dissent—an opportunity vital to some student of color's, (African American students in particular) possibilities for participation. White students and Mr. Washington's attempt to "take away" a narrative of racial progress is disrupted, however, by the gasps and bodily reactions of Black students, who in their reaction to stories of racism contest the benevolent authority of White students. The conversation, as it unfolds, reveals the complicated ways in which race, poverty, and gender, are all constructed, reconstructed and performed within the classroom.

### **Maintaining (Un)Safe Space, Interpreting Dissent as Violence**

Mr. Washington began the conversation of the inauguration after clarifying his prompt: "okay, who wants to start us off?" At first, it appeared that the class would follow the celebratory path Jacqueline complained of in the intro to this chapter. The first three students to raise their hands were White women and all three of them articulated different versions of a story of this election as a symbol of racial progress. Tasha raised her hand first, "I think," she said, "that it is sad that Martin Luther King couldn't be here to see it because this is what he worked so hard for, to see a Black president elected in the country that brought segregation." Next another student, also a White female, said she



was glad to be able to see such an important day and that she felt really lucky to be alive for it. After this there was a small pause and then a thin White girl, dressed in designer jeans and a white cotton shirt, her light blonde hair tied back in a ponytail raised her hand. “Yes?” Mr. Washington called on her. She began haltingly “Well, there are, like, some people in my family who were, like, born in the 20s who, like, wouldn’t vote for Obama because he was, like, because he was Black...”

With this comment, the smooth fabric of the racial progress narrative was abruptly disrupted. There was an audible sound of “aw no!” and a hissing noise as four Black students, sitting in the chairs opposite her, facing her, inhaled through their teeth, shifted in their chairs and began to react. One male student, tall and lanky, sitting in the front of his row, slouched back further into his seat and leaned over toward the other Black male student sitting next to him. They were both shaking their heads and moving, not aggressively toward the girl or the conversation, but, as if they were exhausted with the topic, sick of having to hear this type of story again. Their bodies rocked back and forth and slumped slightly in their chairs. The particular meaning of their reaction was not entirely clear. Were they upset about the idea that some people wouldn’t vote for Obama because he was Black? Were they tired of hearing this story over and over again or did it shock them at this moment? Did they believe the girl telling the story was racist? Did they believe that her relative’s beliefs also reflected her beliefs? Were they angry? In a state of despair? Frustrated? Were they also longing for the narrative of redemption to be true and saddened at this ever-present reminder that it was not? Were they reacting to the word “Black” which disrupts colorblind norms? All of this is unclear, and it never becomes clear.

Mr. Washington quieted them quickly “wait, wait and hear what she has to say!” as he extended his hand out toward them in a *stop*, calm down, gesture, palm facing their direction. It appeared, based on his movement (he put his body between them and the girl, hand reached out toward them) that he perceived their comments as potentially violent...if not physically (which is possible), then verbally, a perception common to White educators in the context of Black dissent (Schults, Buck, & Neisz, 2000). It is not clear whether it was the presumed content of the complaint or the mode of expression (sort of an interruption within particular discourse styles) that he objected to. His movements, however, were geared toward creating a safe space for the White student to tell her story. “Go on,” he coaxed. The girl was now facing only Mr. Washington, her voice so quiet it was impossible to hear from only a few seats away. She appeared intimidated by the reaction from across the room--the degree of change in her tone amplifying the sense that she was somehow in danger. Mr. Washington let her finish, then, perhaps recognizing that she couldn’t be heard (or perhaps believing that she would not be understood), tried to translate her words for the class. In doing so he placed her story into what Bonilla-Silva (2006) would identify as a classic colorblind narrative—a ‘disclosure testimony’. “What I think she’s saying is that for people who are older, who have lived through a time when there was segregation, that this has more meaning for them...this is a moment that shows just how much we have overcome.”

His rearticulating appeared to be aimed at diffusing what he perceived as a tense situation. He appeared to want to calm the Black students down by explaining that the White student was not saying that she was racist or that it’s okay to be racist, only that some people lived through racist times and that, for those people, this event was a

significant symbol of how far we have come. In his reframing, he eviscerated the overt racism this White student was clearly, bravely perhaps, sharing existed within her family. Instead, the problem he identified was not that some people in our families are still overtly racist (a statement which, in and of itself Bonilla-Silva (2006) identifies with “colorblind frames”—the racist as alibi). Rather, the problem was that some people lived through times when there was segregation. Furthermore, the focus of his reframing was not on the ongoing impact of that racism on everyday Black students and leaders, but on the White catharsis he implied had occurred as a result of this event (“it was really important for them”).

The actual silencing (telling them to wait), the physical implication of potential threat (getting between them and the girl), the White student’s reaction (becoming quiet and timid) and the diffused reframing (not about racism) all worked together to silence the Black students. In part, this occurred through the anticipation of their presumed complaint and the work that went on between the teacher and the White student to deflect it before it (still only presumed) was made. In part it occurred through the protective stance taken toward the White student (not, for example, toward the Black students who were being faced, once again, with a story of the ongoing perpetuation of legacies of violence towards Black people). In part, it occurred through the fear that seemed to be induced by a few small gestures and some shifts in body. The expressions of fear and nervousness, on the part of both the teacher and the White student are not insignificant, rather they are grounded in historical legacies of the imagined racialized vulnerability of White women (and the presumed sexual predation of Black men) and discourses of White racial hatred and fear. White bodies, trained in a racist imaginary, react somatically to Black bodies, without need for conscious racial intent. Yancy (2008) describes how these “subtle habitual performances” of nervousness not only produce the white body as vulnerable, but also the Black body as dangerous, thus, for him creating a space where the history of “inhuman brutality and pernicious acts of violence” against the Black body becomes “the threatening space within which [he] move[s] and [has] his being” (25). The protection of Brittany implied by Mr. Washington’s body is, thus, not only inappropriate, it is also, as it re-marks these Black bodies as dangerous, violent.

Despite this series of missteps in the face of a tense moment and the violence done by his own, perhaps inadvertent, reactions, it is possible that Mr. Washington could have recuperated the moment... perhaps by apologizing to the Black students for cutting them off and asking what they had to say, directly, and as if it were important. Perhaps. Instead, however, he appeared to accuse them, “minority students,” of not participating.

### **Enacting Violence through Colorblind “Race Talk”**

Following Brittany’s remarks, the brief moment of tension that accompanied them, and Mr. Washington’s silencing and awkward rephrasing, there was silence in the classroom. Mr. Washington waited, expecting students to raise their hands and continue contributing. Nobody did. The Black students who had reacted when Brittany first spoke now stared not at Mr. Washington, but past him, their bodies slouched back in their chairs and their gazes averted. Many Black scholars have described such deferred gazes as a necessary component of the pursuit of safety through invisibility, non-confrontation and forced deference in the presence of Whites. bell hooks (1992) describes how “black people learned to appear before Whites as though they were zombies... casting the gaze

downward so as not to appear uppity” (hooks, 1992, 340). While in what follows Mr. Washington appears to read the Black students downward gaze and silence as disengagement or even anger, it is possible that their posture was, in fact, a recognition of danger—the danger produced by crossing that thin line behind which they must stay to not only not appear uppity, but to not appear dangerous and, by extension, to remain safe.

“Does anyone else have anything to add?” Mr. Washington prompted after a few moments of silence. “Anyone?” Then, without acknowledging the earlier interrupted, but not failed (for indeed, there was a contribution), attempt by Black students to contribute to the discussion, Mr. Washington calls them out, “not to point out the elephant in the room, but there are only three people who have talked so far and they are all, um, from a non-minority group. Do any of you from other groups have anything to say?” This phrasing, “non-minority group” at once signaled Mr. Washington’s awkwardness in talking about race, produced a color-blind discourse that failed to mention race and reproduced a whole series of racial offenses. He could have simply said, they are all White. He didn’t, although this is clearly what was meant. He further identified Whiteness with power by calling Whites a “non-minority” group, when, in fact, they are a numerical minority in this classroom and this school and this state. Thus, the minority “others” are minor precisely because of their “other” status, reinscribing Whiteness as normative (Hurd, 2008). This was not, however, the most significant potential harm of Mr. Washington’s move here.

The worst potential harm was his denial of the Black students who spoke earlier as individuals, as Black individuals, and as thoughtful participants in the classroom space. For, even as he was taking them to task for not participating, he elicited their participation from within a broad and non-descript “other” category. He did not acknowledge that it was *only* Black students who reacted forcefully to Brittany’s comment. No similar response came from Latino, Pacific Islander or Asian students. In his haste to elicit non-White participation, perhaps to make up for the earlier moment, he denied the specificity of Blackness and thus also Black agency in defining this moment. In so doing, he appeared to collapse, as common discourses often do, “Blackness,” as well as the individual identities of these young people, into a broad “minority” category.

Not only were they collapsed, these students were then, instead of being silenced, being *produced as silent*. Mr. Washington was making a claim that they had been silent. They had not. They were silenced (Castagno, 2008). The production of people as silent, empty, and having nothing to say is a cornerstone of dispossession (Freire, 1968). Just as land must be made to appear empty, ownerless, and open so as to be colonized, so too must people be made to seem to have no thoughts, culture, values or meaning of their own for ideological space to be possessed. This is a double bind for the Black students. If they speak, there is a) a danger that they will again be interpreted as violent, b) a danger that, if they dampen their meaning so as to pacify the White students and protective teacher, they will be interpreted as participants in the narrative of progress Mr. Washington has suggested, and c) a danger that if they do not participate, they will be interpreted as either defiant or (perhaps combined with this) as not caring, unprepared, academically and culturally deficient, failures—the type of interpretation that is ultimately used to justify re-tracking classes such as this and their marginalized position within the school as a whole.

## **Violent Stories**

The ontological violence done to the students in this small interaction is linked, in the next moment, to the ongoing legacies of real, brutalizing violence against Black bodies and ambitions. Mr. Washington asks the class to speculate on why, if Obama is the most popular man in Washington, he is surrounded by bullet proof glass and wearing a bulletproof suit. It is Brittany, the student from earlier, who again responds, slightly louder this time, with renewed confidence. “There are people in my family, um, like, who wouldn’t vote for him because he was Black and people who grew up like that, um, well, they might not be happy, that, like a Black person’s in office and because of that...” Mr. Washington asks for clarification “you said it, but you’re saying that people are scared that somebody might assassinate him because he’s...?” “Because he’s like, because he’s Black,” she finishes. “Yeah,” Mr. Washington affirms, “because he’s Black.”

I have little doubt that Mr. Washington meant this particular point to be a means of empathizing with the points he might have anticipated “minority students” making and as a means of acknowledging ongoing racism. In the context, however, of his bodily intervention in the interaction with Brittany and his visible frustration at the fact that none of his “minority students” were talking, it sounds almost like a threat. It sounds almost like a reminder, that Black people who don’t know their place, and do what’s asked of them, that those who are too ambitious, or haughty or brave, are under constant, violent threat. It issues almost as a warning to those four students who almost spoke once and are now silent.

## **Contextualizing Dispossession**

What goes on in this classroom is not about Mr. Washington being a bad teacher. It is, rather, about structural failures in the ways in which desegregated spaces are conceived both in, and well beyond, this school and classroom. Overwhelmingly, in popular discourse, both desegregation and detracking are understood as important to closing the achievement gap because they allow students of color not just access to the resources and opportunities bestowed upon and exclusively to White schools, but because Black and Brown students are said to benefit from the exposure to the high achievement, good behavior, and worldly knowledge these students are purported to have. Despite *many* scholars having pointed out that this framework is violent towards students and communities of color, harmfully privileging White students and families, reifying racist stereotypes, and missing the fundamental issues that produce racial inequality in this country, it persists both at an everyday level in schools and in much scholarship (Noguera, 2003; Fine et. al., 2005).

At Parkside High, both the resistance to de-tracking (Oakes, 1981) and the impetus for tracking were largely framed in terms of the deficits of students of color. Parents who objected to and derailed the schools’ previous detracking efforts, did so on the grounds that their children needed more advanced coursework, but as one teacher explained, White parents “didn’t want their little Suzie in with the other kids, they wanted them in with little Suzies who were just like them.” Arguments that students who were not in advanced tracks (most of whom were not White) were not prepared, didn’t care about school, and were holding back the advanced (White) students abounded. These same arguments, framed as concerns/problems, also underlay many articulations of why detracking was important. When Mr. Washington described his own hopes for his

detracked classroom he described how he hoped the “students who [were] more prepared academically” would “rub off on” and “improve” students “like SDAIE<sup>32</sup> students who all have behavioral issues or outside of school things, where it’s gang problems or a lot of family concerns” (RAA-INT-MW, 3/10/08). Given his previous framing of the classrooms as, generally, segregated by geography, geographies that were coincident with race and class, we can read this statement as a hope that the White students will “rub off” on students of color. He equated struggling to become bilingual (SDAIE) with having behavioral issues and having family concerns and responsibilities with the same. This “rub off” framing centers the White students as the privileged actors in the classroom, those who constitute a model to be retained while it is the students of color who must be transformed, by their whitening, through their contact with White students.

Within these contexts, desegregated spaces are inherently spaces that are not safe for students of color. Many scholars have suggested this is because of the operation of colorblindness in multi-racial spaces and have argued that teachers (and administrators) need to “talk about race” (Pollock, 2004) with their students and each other if they hope to transform these sites. But what does this mean? Mr. Washington is surely following this advice—he not only talks about race, he talks about racism. Indeed, he was far from the only White teacher I heard do so at Parkside, either inside or outside the classroom. In fact, race talk was ubiquitous at Parkside and teachers often attempted to include discussions of racism and prejudice in their lessons, literature and discussions. This pedagogical intervention often, however, as we have seen, reinscribed and reinforced both colorblind and deficit narratives—locating racism everywhere but in this school and this classroom, anywhere except in these young people’s lives, and approaching students of color as deficient, violent, and a potential danger to White students.

Colorblindness and multicultural education are often understood as polar opposites on a spectrum between denying/ignoring race and emphasizing/seeing race. Where colorblindness is a set of ideological claims that to see or acknowledge race is to undermine American ideals of equality and individualism, multiculturalism is, at root, a theoretical claim that race, culture and language must be acknowledged and appreciated to attain equity (more than this, it also includes emphasis on social justice and structural inequality). These frameworks affect the particular ways in which schools create their own cultures and engage with students from diverse backgrounds. What I talk about as colorblind multiculturalism takes up a longstanding critique of classical multicultural education, which “emphasizes the heightened visibility of difference without a critical analysis of power” (Kandaswamy, 2007; see also Sleeter, 2010; McLaren, 2008). Traditional (Banks, 2004, 2006) and progressive (Kohl, 1995) multicultural education theorists have long critiqued the heroes and holidays tokenist approach to including others in what is essentially a little-changed assimilationist school program. Even approaches that go beyond mere tokenization and engage in a deeper celebration, study or inclusion of culture are often critiqued for addressing the safer terrain of ethnicity (often equated with nationality) without delving into complex issues of race, racism, inequality, poverty and legality, particularly as they impact students’ immediate lives (see Sleeter, 2010; Abu El-Haj, 2002, 2006 for critiques).

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<sup>32</sup> SDAIE stands for “specially designated academic instruction in English” and is used to indicate subject matter courses conducted in English specifically designed for students who are still learning English.

Many education scholars have suggested what is absent in schools is “race talk” (Pollock, 2004) or teaching about race (Tatum, 2004)—notions that center the need to inform about, learn, understand, or embrace culture and race, even racial inequality. Yet the contexts in which these dialogues take place are often deeply inequitable and such dialogues often depend upon the work of White teachers only minimally, if at all trained to do such work (Schniedewind, 2005; Schoorman and Bogotch, 2010). Bringing “race talk” into schools, teaching about others, and even teaching about racial inequality absent clear theoretical frameworks and pedagogical tools may, in fact, reproduce instead of contest power inequities.

White supremacy is, itself, inherently multi-cultural and has persistently depended upon the discovery, representation, education, classification, and teaching about other cultural and racial groups (Willinsky, 1998; Said, 1993; McClintock, 1995). The fact that color-blindness, a concerted ideological agenda which seeks to undo the gains of the civil rights movement by undermining people of color’s race-based claims to deserve equity, not just equality, is a dominant form of racism at present, does not mean that talking about race and/or culture necessarily constitutes its opposite. In fact, as the term multicultural colorblindness implies, the two may often work in concert. Critical education work must take as its core the task of not just teaching about race, but working to confront and contest the everyday and structural injustices young people experience and delve deeply into understanding and respecting the knowledge and resources students utilize to navigate those conditions (Duncan-Andrade, 2009; Al-Haj, 2002, 2006). Even these efforts, however, must be constantly interrogated as they risk reproducing savior/saved dichotomies (Spivak, 2004) and invoking problematic universalisms (Tsing, 1993; Grande, 2004) when deployed in unequal and power-laden educational spaces.

The colorblind multiculturalism evidenced in Mr. Washington’s classroom constitutes a form of “education by dispossession” precisely because of the lack of a connection between the desire to “talk race” (cf. Leonardo, 2011) and a concrete engagement with the lived struggles and lives of the students of color in the room. Instead, he shows a commitment to protect the White students, Brittany namely, from a collectively imagined threat heard in the righteous utterances of Black students. The dispossessions here are multiple: 1) The taking-away (subtraction) of the desegregated classroom as a space where the democratization of knowledge is a lived experience rooted in the struggle for greater equity and the acknowledgement of the violence of past and present racism, 2) The taking-away (subtraction) of the legitimacy of the righteous knowledge of racism as a lived reality that occurs through the production of hope surrounding Obama’s election and the narrative of progress that accompanies it and 3) The taking-away (addition) of a sense of mythical hope about the realities of race in America today—a hope that seems deeply ironic given the entrenched racialized inequality, poverty and authority present in this desegregated classroom amidst deeply segregated space.

### **Racial Violence, Terror and “Safe Space”**

“Fanonian violence” writes Bhabba in the forward to the *Wretched of the Earth*, is both the “continued agony” of the colonized-body, soul, culture, community, history and “part of a struggle for psycho-affective survival and a search for human agency.” (Fanon, 1968, xxxvi) It should never be forgotten that the relationship between poor people of

color and the dominant, mostly White, faction of the US State, remains steeped in violence. In the form of mass incarceration, border defense, police brutality, and perhaps, more importantly, the ever present threat of past violence yet to come (by which I refer to the living example of White terrorism, visited alternately upon different people's of color, in the name of White dominance). Debates over education echo daily with calls to uphold the values, traditions and founding customs of those who massacred Native people's, enslaved African's, took Mexican land at the barrel of a gun, possessed Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa by force, and used Viequez as a bombing range. Despite the Civil Rights Movement and the uneasy compromise "desegregation" represented for Black leaders offended by the notion that their child must sit next to a White child in order to learn, "inclusion" has remained both mythical and, in part, revolting, to large slices of America.

bell hooks (1992) describes how the "terror" of White violence and White supremacy becomes latent, but in no way disappears, in a colorblind, post civil rights world in which overt racist acts and structures persist, but the liberal denial of racial significance and racial meaning exerts its own particular kind of violence. She describes White women joking behind her back after she confessed, at a conference, that she feels terrorized. "Their inability to conceive that my terror...is a response to the legacy of White domination and the contemporary expressions of White supremacy is an indication of how little this culture really understands the profound psychological impact of White racist domination" (hooks, 1992, 345). This lack of recognition is its own particular kind of violence, but it is also backed by the ongoing exercise and threat of structural and physical violence. It is unlikely that there are many children of color today whose parents do not try to teach them the lesson hooks says she learned as a child, "that to be 'safe' it was important to recognize the power of Whiteness, even to fear it" and that part of this recognition involved an effort to "wear the mask"—to put on a face of comfort in the presence of Whites.

It is to this institutionalized terror, the ever present threat and reality of violence, that Leonardo and Porter (2010) refer when they argue that multicultural educational projects that seek to create "safe space" for cross racial dialogues are misguided because there is no such thing as "safe space" for people of color in race dialogue. One of the primary logics underlying multicultural education has been that of "inclusion." Difference goes hand-in-hand with this logic, with the basic underlying pretense being that difference" can be included and appreciated. A relational theorization, however, points to the ways in which what we think of as difference is, in fact, constituted through unequal positions of power in social structures that are not, in fact, compatible unless one accepts an existing set of power relations. Silencing occurs when a person is unable, within the permitted frames, to express their version of the truth—when there is either no audience or there appear to be direct negative consequences to speaking. It also occurs through direct quieting, ignoring etc. (these are the acts). Silencing constitutes a particularly vivid form of violence as it implies the successful invocation of a set of ideological frameworks that implicate and depend upon both past and future racial violence.

What goes on in Mr. Washington's classroom, therefore, is not just subtraction, it is not just the denial of or violent behavior towards the cultural tools and resources (the cultural capital) of these young Black students, it is education by dispossession. It is

dispossession because their silencing, the protection of White students, the creation of safe space reproduces the racial power and dominance of White students. It creates a space in which Brittany feels empowered to continue speaking, in which her hesitancy and nervousness following the initial, embodied, objections to her remarks, give way to confident assertions that people may want to kill Obama “because he’s Black.” It seems unlikely that Mr. Washington has transformed the Black students consciousness, understandings or culture in this moment, what he has done, rather, is assert that this classroom will not be a space where those are permitted should they make White students uncomfortable. Not only does he silence them however, he also produces them as silent beings—as minorities who do not speak. I argued earlier that the logic of the frontier, the logic that underlies the concept of education by dispossession depends upon the production of emptiness—empty land, but also empty people. It depends upon dehumanization.

### **Critical Hope**

Duncan Andrade differentiates mythical hopes from what he calls “critical hope,” which, he argues, “has been a theme in the lives and movements of the poor and dispossessed in the United States.” This hope, he argues is vital to combating racial inequality and fostering transformative change, but has been met with an “assault” in recent years as cuts in education, expansion of prisons, and labor market inequality have eroded real possibilities for sustained change. Critical hope rejects both “cheap optimism” and despair, engaging instead in “active struggle” and it is, according to Andrade, material, Socratic and “audacious”—it involves providing resources and connections, instilling courage to struggle against great odds, and engaging in solidarity, self sacrifice and collective action.

Pedagogically, critical hope entails taking the gasps and utterances, the shifting bodies, the momentary engagement of those four Black students as the central pedagogical moment in the room. What were those students attempting to say? How do we hear it? How do we give them the theoretical tools and the intellectual space to be able to express that gasp and make it into a roar that cannot be silenced?

The detracked classroom and desegregated school matter here. They are not the only spaces that are violent towards people of color. Indeed, under conditions of White supremacy, we can speculate that there are no spaces that are not, in some ways, White space (Hill, 1999). Part of the pedagogical question, then, is what most effectively disrupts, troubles and destabilizes White space? What intervenes in the racial narratives that are allowed free reign there? I have argued that this classroom space is dispossessive—that it operates within an accumulative logic of multicultural conquest (Willinsky, 1998). This is not, however, a process without slippage. If the Black student’s utterance here is a “dead letter,” (Pratt, 1991), an intellectual effort that cannot or will not be heard, it holds within it none-the-less a signal that lets these White students know that everything is *not* okay, no matter how quickly they and their teacher might explain the utterance away.

There is always an inherent possibility, in desegregated classrooms, of what Pratt calls a ‘contact zone’ and Leonardo and Porter call a “risky space”—a pedagogical space in which “no one [is] excluded and no one is safe” (Pratt, 1991, 39). People of color still bear disproportionate burden in these spaces (of educating, disrupting, correcting) but



they can at least be relieved of the burden of keeping White people ‘safe’ from the pain their racism causes and the structural domination and ideological violence that supports it. This can only occur, however, within a broader movement to defend people of color, to engage directly in the contestation of racism, poverty and violence (which is almost always, first, directed against people of color) in these schools, communities and beyond. The fears and desires of White parents, teachers and administrators (as well as White youth) limit the possibilities of this, but high school spaces can and have been created that directly interrogate privilege, that disrupt the politics of knowledge which place narratives that ensure White safety at the center of classroom discourse, that demand a radical re-ordering of what knowledge is valued and how—a re-articulation, essentially, of *where* and *for whom* there is a gap, that works at the center of the abolition of the so-called achievement gap. Critical hope demands, however, that if as we look towards this possibility we be realistic about the broader racial politics—and the deep investment in Whiteness—that shape not just this classroom space, but the school as a whole.

After the discussion ended in Mr. Washington’s class that day in January, Mr. Washington rolled the TV to the center of the room and attempted to put the coverage of the inauguration on for those who had not seen the original events. As fuzz appeared on the screen and the noise of static blared into the room, he began to mess with the rabbit ears. He was having a hard time getting good reception but finally found a station that was reasonably clear. Obama was talking in English and there were Spanish subtitles scrolling across the bottom of the screen but then, quickly, the broadcast switched to commentary in Spanish: “see,” he said, “we only get the Spanish channel.” He changed the channel, only to be met with static again.

A few of the Spanish-speaking kids started to speak up, Memo first “Hey, leave it!” and then a chorus “dejalo,” “why didn’t you leave it?” “Dejalo alli primo!” “Leave it.” Mr. Washington ignored all of these comments as he began to mess with the rabbit ears again and flip through the channels. Some students began to work on their essays while the rest either continued to watch him or turned and begin talking to each other. Memo began talking to me but insisting that I only speak Spanish. He was already done with his essay. He wrote it during the conversation. I asked to have a look. He had, essentially, skillfully copied the conversation in the room as it unfolded, he had included a segment from Mr. Washington about the importance of youth and Tasha’s phrase “the country that brought segregation” from the comment that started the conversation. The only wholly original part of the essay was the last line: “I think that Obama will help the Mexican’s because he’s not White and we’re not White either.”

Memo had written a letter in the language of the room, in the words of the White teacher and the White students, a translated document that nonetheless insisted on his specific desires and hopes not for Obama as a president who would transcend race, but as one who would confront and transform it. His hope for Obama was not in the ways in which his presidency might free the nation from the burdens of racial history, but rather for how this president might address the injustices of the racial present—something that, for Memo, depended upon him being “not White.” Memo’s schoolwork was an artwork of translation, a bricolage of borrowed words and phrases used to insert ideas that could not seem to gain admission into this space. He was insisting, however, that I speak to him in Spanish. He was leading a rebellion against the changing of the clear Spanish-language signal, for the hopes of a clear English-language signal amidst the blur and static. “Leave

it!” He was claiming educational, intellectual, space, contesting the language not just of English-only, but also of colorblindness in this classroom.

### **Toward a Post-Race Becoming?**

The title of this chapter, post-racial Obama(nations), speaks to the ambiguities of the election of Barack Obama. On the one hand, through the eyes of much White right-wing discourse, Obama appears as an Abomination, a veritable socialist anti-Christ. The overt racial hatred in these reactions—something Mr. Washington tried to discuss with his class—is only thinly, if at all, veiled. On the other hand, the counterpoint from White liberals, particularly in the immediate afterglow (Leonardo, 2002) of the election, has been to imagine the ObamaNation as a unified entity, one liberated at last from the past of racial oppression, in which whites no longer need to feel guilty and “we” no longer need to feel divided by race. Mr. Washington recongized and critiqued the first framework, but sought refuge for himself and his White students in the later. The sharp inhales of the Black students, the cries of “dejalo” from the Latino students, point toward a different (if not yet articulable) imagination of an Obama Nation, one that Memo hinted at when he said “I think that Obama will help the Mexican’s because he’s not White and we’re not White either.” Memo’s words point toward the mutuality of Black and Mexican oppression as products of Whiteness. Clearly locating Mexican as a racial (as opposed to national) identity, he looked to the possibility of collective struggle, not the immediate transcendence of race, as the hope offered by Obama’s election. To the extent that it located racism in the present context, indeed, in this very classroom, and acknowledged a struggle ahead, Memo’s hope was also critical. Memo’s words contested the colorblindness and optimism in the room, but did they work as “liberatory violence?” Did they work to contest Whiteness, and with it, race? Not quite.

I have read the Latino students’ calls of “dejalo” as a form of resistance against White and English-speaking hegemony in the classroom—an insistence that, to the extent that the teaching about and listening to Obama remains an English-only affair, Whiteness is secured and their exclusion reproduced. This lens, however, associates Obama with Whiteness and frames English as a White dominion despite the Black students in the room, who may or may not speak Spanish but whose first language is almost certainly English, and yet who are also excluded from the discussion in the room. What would it mean in this context to recognize English as an African American language, and yet to recognize the impossibility of speaking in this White classroom space? What would it mean to de-center Whiteness? Leonardo (2011) looks toward a post-race project, one in which the abolition of race is the end-point of a liberatory politics that seeks to aggressively contest and confront ideological and material systems of racial domination. The sharp inhales, the calls of dejalo, and Memo’s dead letter, all suggest ways in which post-race (Obama)Nations face a similar question to that identified by Spivak in the post-colonial context: “can the subaltern speak?” This question points, as does the later work of Motha (2011) towards the reality that a post-colonial becoming (and I think this chapter suggests, also a post-racial becoming) entails a radical engagement with the language and even the very framework of the nation (see also Grande, 2004).

## Beyond the Educational Frontier

I opened this work by asking why educators in Glenwood would argue that they need their own school. The dissertation traced out pieces of their arguments, looking at the ways in which the desire for “our own school” is fed not just by the injustices of the present, but also by those of the past—those that I described through the logic of dispossession. I described a persistent double-bind as families, schools and communities faced with poverty and racism struggle to protect space, stave off annihilation, and defend their sovereignty (as diverse, changing and complex as they may be), while simultaneously looking to mobility, access, and the equitable distribution of resources as critical tools of survival and rights. This double-bind is brought into vivid relief by the relationship between the deeply inequitable middle schools and the segregated but internally divided high school these students transition between. The exclusions, humiliations and neglect of the highly resourced high school in which Glenwood students are, in effect, second-class citizens, make it easy to see how such vision holds sway, yet the very real resource, personnel and programmatic constraints, coupled with the broader narrative of failure, facing Glenwood middle schools, also give such sentiments an air of fatalistic self-isolation. Within the broader context of persistent racism and entrenched inequality, neither option offers a clear path.

The sub-prime crisis frames a particularly vivid, though not isolated, moment of dispossession in which the connections between the promises of speculative real estate investing and those of speculative educational ventures is revealed. In an every-day sense, sub-prime also points to the context of extreme insecurity facing families in poverty and the multiple borders they must both cross and defend. The crisis vividly illuminates how what families in Glenwood are struggling to articulate is at base something akin to, but not necessarily synonymous with, the idea of the right to the city. It also, however, points to the ways in which the pursuit of local autonomy and voice and the defense of basic needs leaves the glaring economic inequality along these borders intact. The right to the city, the right to belong, participate, live, becomes, in part, the need to defend, protect, and articulate pride in that which others have deemed failing, decrepit, and dangerous. Efforts to contest inequality at a broader level, at least through integration, seem to threaten complete eradication under an onslaught of deficit-based critique and economic penetration, thus, protecting the city (and the school) become defensive, rather than productive, postures. What is produced (i.e. flowers for a garden), and what is repaired (i.e. apartments being repainted and spruced up), and what is achieved (i.e. test scores) seem to be continually undermined by the onslaught of foreclosure in the context of uneven development.

The first three chapters of the dissertation lay out how dispossession has functioned and continues to function in shaping the relationships between families, schools and communities in Glenwood. The unmapping of race and the unraveling of integration efforts set the stage for a fragmented desegregation project simultaneously informed by narratives of racial and community empowerment and integration, and overridden by a colorblind logic in which the persistent denial of racial inequality and racism operate simultaneous with a convoluted school assignment plan that could only have been and is clearly shaped precisely by these. As “bussing” becomes unhinged from

the politics of exclusion and derision to which it was a response, families find their children scattered across expansive geographies and immersed in a context where the “problem” is said to be their deficiency (and that of their communities and schools), not the structural inequalities and specific, ongoing, acts of racism and class positioning that have produced such inequalities.

The lives of families struggling with the sub-prime crisis point towards the connections between these histories of border struggle in these cities and the present threat of displacement. Families living in the (bankrupt) bank struggled in both times of boom and bust to sustain basic dwellings and secure spaces in which to raise their children. They did this not just as individuals, but also within the context of a city that sometimes fought on their behalf and with allied neighbors in similar circumstances with whom they sometimes join in struggle. Despite these efforts, the dramatic swings of capital markets and others’ investment and moneymaking strategies resulted in sudden evictions, dramatic rent increases and deplorable living conditions. Despite the limits of their circumstances, however, the families in this study placed great value on the spaces they occupied, however constrained, and worked in both small and large ways to make them safe and beautiful, and to create homes out of them. Strategies of uprooting and makeshift bordering describe how families, who depend upon their own capacity to move as much as they do upon stability, struggled to maintain resources, protect investments, and create safe space amidst both material and ideological onslaught.

The sub-prime crisis and the speculative investment, privatization of public goods, deregulation, and massive racialized and classed asset transfer it represents are not, however, limited to housing. It is a mistake to think of this crisis outside the context of a broader set of neoliberal policies that have successively withdrawn the welfare state at precisely the moment those historically excluded from it began to make gains in their demand for inclusion. The withdrawal of public support for schooling in California closely followed the court-mandated redistribution of those funds to address glaring inequalities. The privatization of public education, now entering a second phase with the expansion of for-profit and privately managed charter schools and massive education cuts, began with this divestment, supplemented and enabled by the private educational foundations and local bond measures used to prop up elite suburban public schools. These public schools have long been semi-private and this privatization has facilitated the withdrawal of the state (in this case, by popular vote) from public schools and the resultant decimation of schools in neighborhoods where racism has concentrated poverty. In Glenwood and Parkside, the result of these processes were two glaringly unequal school districts, one of which cared for children and families greatly in need of support on a shoestring (and continually threatened) budget and was hung, for its efforts, with the mantle of failure and the continual threat of takeover or usurpation. The other, which thrived on a combination of public and private funds, offering elite education to very well resourced children and families, and were touted and rewarded for their success. These schools were then evaluated against one another as achievement targets, high-stakes tests, and sanctions were established with ‘successful’ schools like Parkside in mind. A relational perspective, one that looks through a lens of dispossession, points to the ways in which ‘success’ and ‘failure’ are mutually produced and intricately linked in this context such that the success of one is, in fact, dependent upon the failure of another.

The next three chapters looked at students, teachers, and administrators as they transitioned from these disparate middle schools into a common high school. Each chapter teased out a different dynamic of dispossession-- criminalization, illegalization, and colonization-- as they were produced across space and time in the lives of these young people. Criminalization operated through the interrelated logics of lockdown, lockout and lock-up. Comparing these practices across Glenwood Middle School and Parkside High School, I showed how the capacity to control the spatial and temporal movement of bodies was the precondition for access to educational spaces and materials in both these contexts. Differential logics of student protection, student discipline and student threat were brought to bear upon student bodies, and shaped through student and adult movement and discourse. Dispossession signals how increasingly carceral logics both shape practices in schools and mark the edges of educational space. These operated in both Glenwood and Parkside, but became overdetermined in Parkside by the 'outside' status of Glenwood students.

Illegalization, yet another logic of neoliberal dispossession, was shown in Chapter five to be a more contextualized, complex and shifting relationship than a simple juridical analysis would imply. As undocumented students moved between contexts, the types of support they were able to access as well as how they and others framed their status shifted. At Huerta their diversity and complex individuality were more visible as their status was commonplace. They were uniquely affected in multiple ways by their own and their parents' lack of documentation and the school was sensitive and attuned to this, as well as broadly politically allied with them and their families (as were other major institutions such as churches), but these students were not seen as special. In contrast, at Parkside, particularly as they neared college, undocumented students became fetishized and their struggles commodified as adults, newly exposed to their stories, and operating from a deficit perspective which did not anticipate their success, heroicized them. Undocumented youth, themselves, and their parents, in contrast, engaged in a complex navigation of multiple educational systems and discourses, crossing and creating borders, positioning themselves strategically to maximize their freedom of mobility, rights, and economic and educational resources.

Lastly, I examined how Whiteness was produced in these contexts not through a set of "White" cultural practices such as camping, but rather through the control over and domination of spaces of power. I looked in particular at White students' desires to participate in the "real world," sense of their own strength/heroism in entering dangerous spaces, desire to help and bridge, and articulation of the advantage they feel they have gained through these processes. I contrasted these with the discomfort White students expressed with spaces where they were not dominant and that were not classified as White—the lunch line, lower track classrooms, Saturday school—and examined how participation in these spaces (except in service, researcher, or leader roles) was seemingly experienced as both a danger to their academic and physical being and a humiliation, the root of which was linked to the challenge to their status as White. I described how these racial and geographical dynamics were also rooted in a localized system of class relationships that placed students and their families in direct, unequal, contact with one another. And, finally, I showed how students of color contested liberal White border crossing, establishing linguistic, intellectual and physical space, which was uniquely theirs.

In the final chapter, I addressed the prospects for a more deeply integrated high school (and nation) through an examination of the violences produced in a multi-racial dialogue about Obama's election in a detracked World Studies classroom. In this last chapter I argued that integration is not and cannot be about simply bringing students together in space or talking about race, but rather, that it must fundamentally alter the conditions for participation in the production of meaning and the terms of understanding. In Leonardo and Porter's (2011) terms, it must enact a "liberatory violence" that risks the discomfort of students who feel accustomed and entitled to positions of dominance. Such action entails addressing, and taking a committed stance toward acting upon, the structured social inequality and relations of domination that shape but extend well beyond the classroom—what Duncan Andrade (2010) calls "critical hope." In the final anecdote, asking what language we will hear Barack Obama in, I point to the powerful ways in which multiple, overlapping, intersecting relations of domination and exclusion shape even the most diverse classrooms. To address these we must unsettle the most basic terms of our collective discussions—the language, rituals, practices and premises through which we communicate (Motha, 2011).

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