

Understanding Baltimore's Violent Spaces: Conclusions

"It is in cities that the place of community is organized relative to the space of capital investment and that the effect upon urban residents – be they in the rapidly expanding cities of developing countries or in the postindustrial regions of the advanced economy – is ultimately decided. Actions taken at all scales of governance are certainly pertinent, but the city is the scale where questions of justice are felt concretely as part of everyday life." (Connolly and Steil, 2011, 6)

- Until the mid-20th century Baltimore was a prospering economic hub and a leading port and industrial city in the United States. However, deindustrialization hit Baltimore hard in the 1960s, sending the city into economic decline as its population and jobs left for the suburbs. Between 1950 and 2010 Baltimore lost approximately one-third of its population.
- Land use and public housing policies dating back to the early 20th century had already laid the foundation for racial segregation in the city. The economic downturn, coupled with continued oppressive city governance, resulted in three distinct Baltimores: the Renaissance City, the Underclass City, and the Suburbs, with the Underclass City feeling the largest negative impacts (Levine, 2000).
- The "Underclass City" – which has persisted in the form of neighborhoods with 25 to 30 percent of families living below the poverty line – has also become the space where Baltimore's homicides take the biggest toll.
- Throughout the end of the 20th century and into the 2000s, Baltimore failed to respond adequately to support these violent spaces. Instead the city focused on larger public and private real estate developments that were aimed at boosting the city's economy and image, without addressing the deep disparities that were largely in majority black neighborhoods.
- Violence prevention and urban revitalization initiatives have made only small gains in improving equity, equality and safety in the city. In 2015, Baltimore stands as one of the most violent cities in the United States defined by murder rate per 100,000 of the population.

Understanding Baltimore's Violent Spaces

In April 2015, the U.S. news media focused their attention on Baltimore City, Maryland following the death of 25 year-old Freddie Gray while in police custody. Gray's death, the result of a spinal cord injury, struck local and national nerves. His death was the latest in a string of highly-publicized cases of black men killed at the hands of the police. For many Americans, these cases represent not only a strained criminal justice system, but also the poor state of racial equality in small and large U.S. cities.

Thousands of people gathered in Baltimore's streets to protest Gray's death. Although protests started peacefully, some protests developed into violent skirmishes between protestors and police and others escalated to looting and destruction of local businesses and property. The major media networks broadcast video of glass shattering, fires burning, smoke billowing, and tense standoffs taking place between riot police and protestors. In separate public briefings Baltimore's Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake referred to looters as "thugs" and the police department warned citizens that Baltimore's major gangs were planning to unite in violent retaliation against the police. These comments played to popular perceptions of violence in America's urban cities: thugs and gangs. Both the mayor and police department later retracted their statements (Knezevich et. al 2015, and Fang, 2015).

Some media commentators compared the events following Freddie Gray's death to the protests and rioting that followed the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. On the surface the events shared similarities: citizens venting anger and frustration in the streets and the National Guard arriving to protect Baltimore's streets. Underneath, issues of racial and socioeconomic inequality and physical segregation motivated that frustration. While Gray's death contributed to the national conversation about race and over-policing and brutality, and it also highlighted those tensions in Baltimore:

In Baltimore, where they've done the math, and many other places where they haven't, half of all young adult black men are in prison, in jail, on parole, or on probation. Most of those arrested, prosecuted, jailed, imprisoned, on probation, and on parole come from and return to the poor, hot-spot neighborhoods where men can have criminal records. ... Short of actual arrest and imprisonment, there is the grinding, intrusive policing endured by many poor black communities. (Kennedy, 17, 2011)

In September 2014, Baltimore's major local newspaper, *The Baltimore Sun*, documented a record of fraught police-community relations in the city. According to the *Sun*, there were 317 lawsuits brought against the city for police misconduct between 2011 and 2014, of which the city of Baltimore paid out \$5.7 million in settlements in at least 100 cases (Puente, 2014).

Varieties of Violence

In her roadmap to urban violence, Caroline O. Moser identifies five categories of violence: political, institutional, economic, social, and an economic-social hybrid (Moser, 2004). Of these categories, 20th and 21st century Baltimore provides examples of all but political violence. The police violence described above represents institutional violence, and although the April 2015 gang threat referenced was without base, Baltimore does struggle with gang violence. The city has developed a reputation for its economic violence manifested in consistently high homicide rate, as well as a reputation for being a heroin hotspot – images popularized in the HBO television series “The Wire.” The economic violence has also spilled over to social violence in the form of domestic violence. However, it is the manifestation of violence through homicides that this paper seeks to explore.

As of October 13, *The Baltimore Sun* has documented 264 homicides in Baltimore City. Of those, 234 were shootings. It doesn’t require a sophisticated statistical analysis to determine that Baltimore’s homicide problem disproportionately affects the black male population. Table 1 reveals that more than 80 percent of homicide victims since 2012 have been black males.

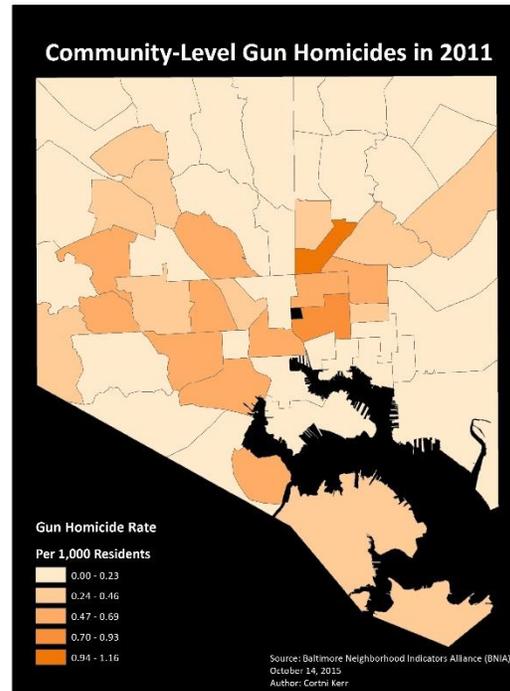
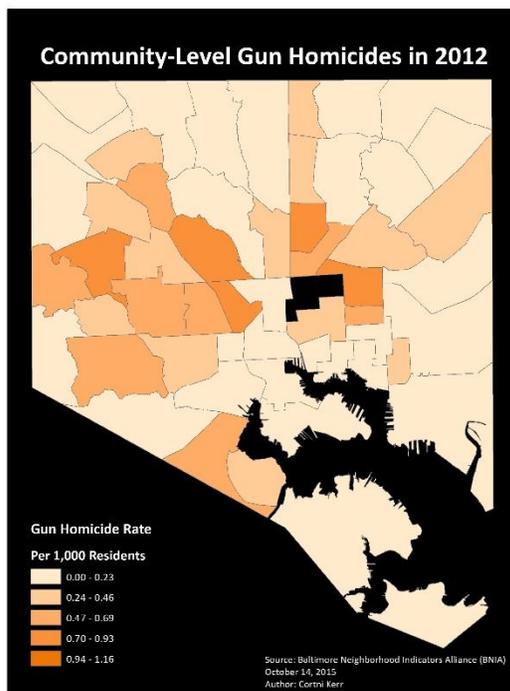
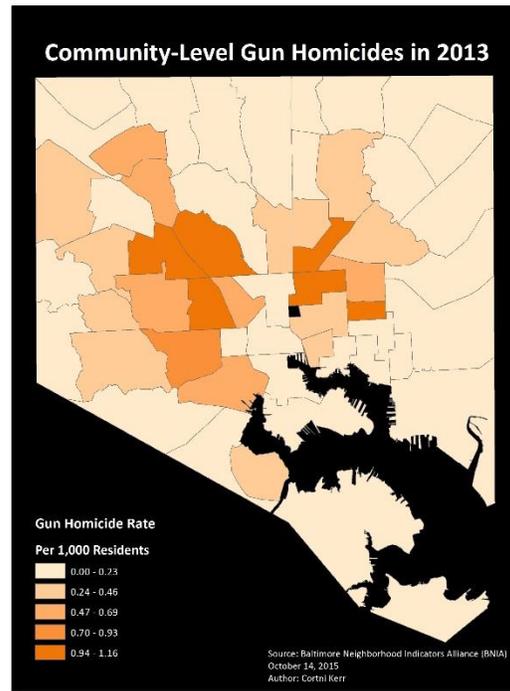
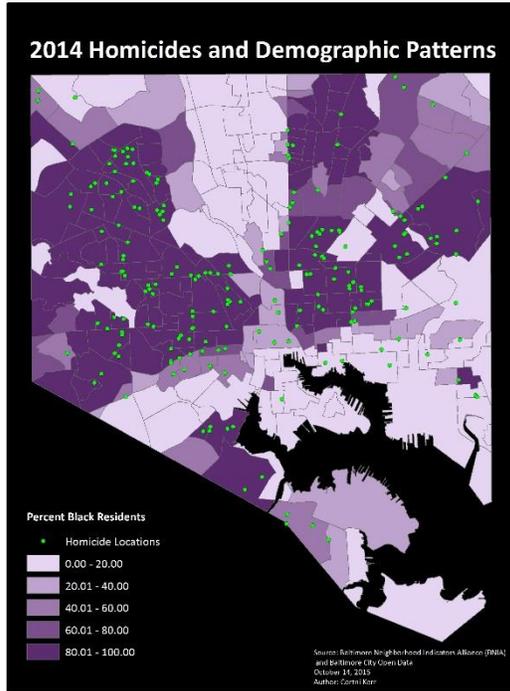
Table 1: Baltimore Homicides 2012-2015

	2015 to date	2014	2013	2012
Total Homicides	264	211	235	217
Shootings	234 (88.64%)	160 (75.83%)	189 (80.42%)	181 (83.41%)
Male Victims	243 (92.05%)	186 (88.15%)	205 (87.23%)	195 (89.86%)
Black, Male Victims	224 (84.85%)	173 (82.00%)	198 (84.26%)	186 (85.71%)

(Data Source: Baltimore Homicides, *The Baltimore Sun*, Accessed October 13, 2015).

Considering the pattern emerging from Table 1, it is not surprising that mapping Baltimore’s homicide locations in 2014 aligns over demographic trends. Illustrating Baltimore’s Census demographics makes it clear that there are zones of segregation running in a north-south corridor through East and West Baltimore. In Map 1, the communities in deep purple are 80 percent or more African American according to the 2010 Census and the locations of 2014 homicides are overlaid to show the extent to which violence is correlated with demographic patterns. This is not to imply causation from demographic make up of a place. Moreover, comparing homicide rates by neighborhoods, shows clear patterns that hold over the years. See Maps 2-4 for an illustration of homicide rates between 2011 and 2013. How did the relationship of violence to particular spaces in Baltimore develop this way?

Maps 1-4: 1) Homicide point locations in 2014; 2-4) Homicides per 1,000 residents in years 2011-2013



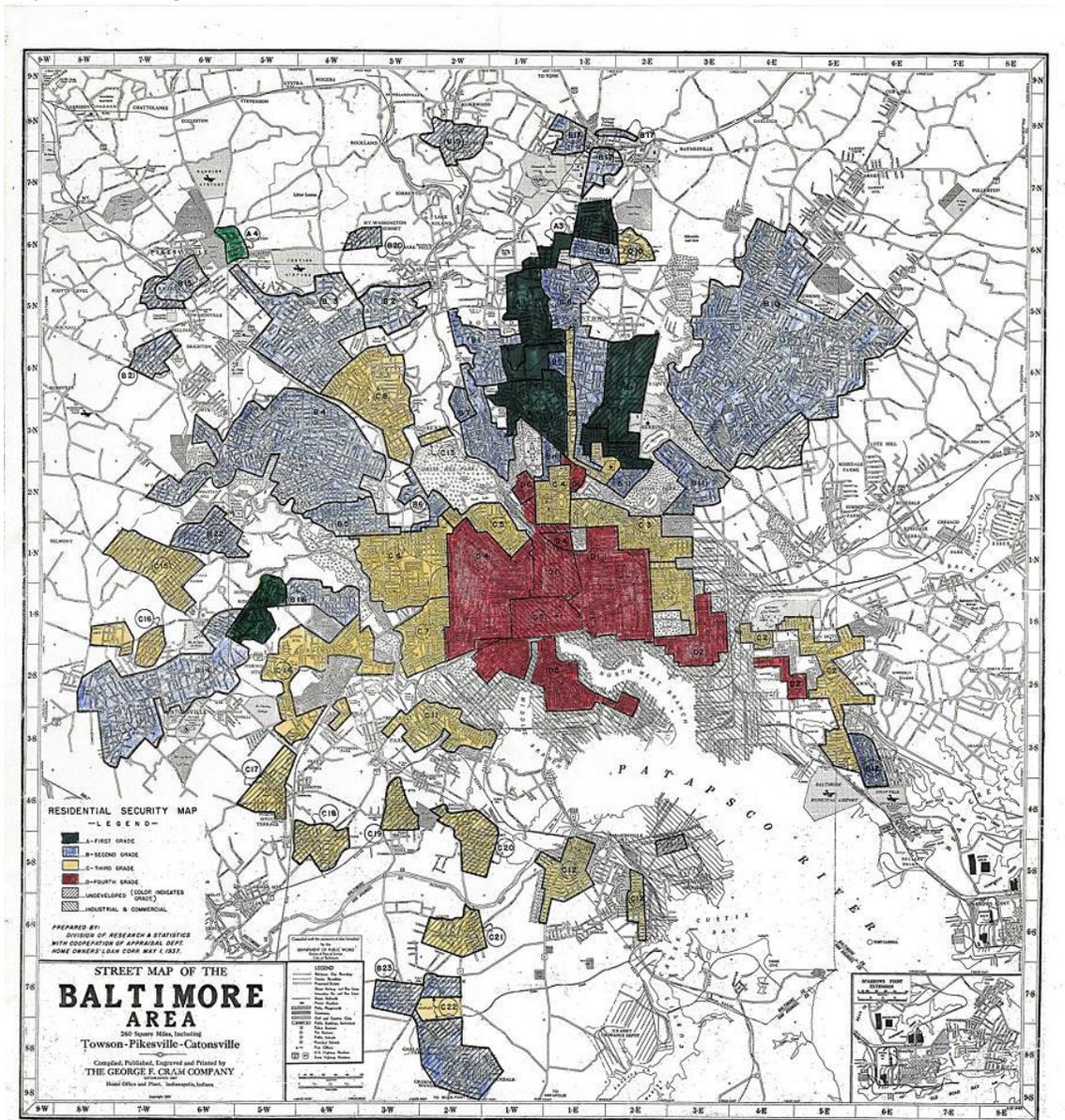
A History of Segregating

Baltimore was among the first U.S. cities to enact explicit racial zoning laws (Silver, 1997). The laws came as the result of tension and violence after two black lawyers had purchased homes and moved into an all-White residential area. The zoning ordinance, first drafted and approved in 1910, had to be redrafted twice within the first year. The stated goal of the ordinance was to ensure: "the preservation of peace, the prevention of conflict and ill-feeling, between the white and colored persons in Baltimore City, for promoting the general welfare of the City." (State of Maryland vs. John H. Gurry, 540). After four iterations, the ordinance (along with other cities' racial zoning laws) was struck down in 1918 by a Supreme Court ruling, but that was not the end of government segregation. (Taylor, 2014).

Like many other U.S. cities, the outlawing of explicit racial zoning laws did not mean the end of residential segregation. Instead city officials and business interests developed policy workarounds that created de facto segregation, even though there were no longer zoning ordinances ordering the city by race. One popular tactic became known as redlining, the practice of systematically denying access to new homes and mortgages.

The map of Baltimore below was created in the 1930s for real estate developers and financial institutions to determine risk involved with property in the city. As you can see, the city center as a conglomeration of fourth grade risk areas buffered by third grade risk areas spreading out into East and West Baltimore (on a scale of first to fourth grade, the later represents highest risk). Redlining effectively prevented preserved patterns of segregated residential settlement.

Map 5: Redlining



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(Source: [Not in My Neighborhood](#), Atero Pietila)

Baltimore in Decline

As Baltimore passed through the middle of the century major economic changes were motivating significant population shifts. A post-industrial turn in the United States cost Baltimore nearly 75 percent of its industrial employment between 1950 and 1995, over 101,000 jobs (Levine, 2000). Major employer Bethlehem Steel had employed a peak of 35,000 workers in 1959, but that shrunk to only 8,000 by the

1980s. Following the decline of the manufacturing job sector, service sector entered as a dominant employment sector for the city's residents.

Baltimore's population started moving to the suburbs; a process that has continued steadily since the 1950s. In his study of American industrial cities in decline, Brent Ryan of MIT refers to Baltimore as a "persistent loser" alongside other cities experiencing similar decline: Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Detroit, Cleveland, and St. Louis. (Ryan, 2012, 42-43). The city reached its peak population in the 1950 Census at 949,708 people, making it the sixth most populated city in the United States. By 2000 the population had declined at an average rate of -0.6 percent annually to 651,154 people (Ryan, 2012). Although the rate of decline slowed, the population continued to decline into the 2000s: In the 2010 Census Baltimore population was 620,961, making it the 21st most populated U.S. city (Census, 2010). Table 2 below from Ryan (2012) shows how Baltimore's population and population density compared to other U.S. cities:

Table 2: "Municipal Inelasticity and Population Density of Ten Largest U.S. Cities (Ranked by 1950 Population)" (Source: Ryan, 2012, 44)

City Name	Municipal Area, 1950 (Square miles)	1950 Density (Pop./sq. mi.)	Municipal Area, 2000 (Square miles)	2000 Density (Pop./sq. mi.)	Density Change, 1950-2000	Population Change, 1950-2000
New York	315.1	25,046	303.3	26,404	+ 5%	+ 1%
Chicago	207.5	17,450	227.1	12,752	- 27%	- 20%
Philadelphia	127.5	16,286	135.1	11,233	- 31%	- 27%
Los Angeles	450.9	4,370	469.1	7,876	+ 80%	+ 88%
Detroit	139.6	13,249	138.8	6,854	- 48%	- 51%
Baltimore	78.7	12,067	80.8	8,059	- 33%	- 32%
Cleveland	75.0	12,197	77.6	6,165	- 49%	- 47%
St. Louis	61.0	14,046	61.9	5,625	- 60%	- 59%
Washington	61.4	13,065	61.4	9,317	- 29%	- 29%
Boston	47.8	16,767	48.4	12,172	- 27%	- 26%
Houston	160.0	3,726	579.5	3,372	- 10%	+ 227%

Source: Data from U.S. Census.

Note: Houston is provided for comparison.

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As Baltimore's overall population was declining, the proportion of Black residents was rising. Most of those leaving were white, middle class residents who could afford to move to the suburbs. Known as "white flight" Baltimore's White population decreased 70 percent between 1950 and 2000. In the 1990s, Whites were leaving the city at a rate of 5 to 1 compared to Black residents (Spiegel, 2003). In the 1980

Census Blacks accounted for 54.8 percent of the city population, 59.2 percent in 1990, and 64.3 percent in 2000 (Census Historical).

As these economic and demographic changes were underway, a seeming paradox developed in the housing sector. Despite the major population decline, the housing stock was increasing between 1950 and 1980. After maxing out at 305,800 units in 1980, the housing stock decreased to 300,477 units in 2000 and 296,685 units in 2010 – a level still 7 percent higher than the 1950 housing stock of 277,880 units (Census 2010, Ryan, 2012). The proportion of vacant lots increased as well. In 1980 vacancy was only at 7 percent of the city's available housing stock. Between 1990 and 2000 the vacancy rate jumped from 9 to 14.1 percent, and vacancy was at 15.8 percent in 2010 (Census 2010 and Census Historical).

Responses to Decline

Mark V. Levine (2000) describes “three Baltimores” that have emerged from the 1960s. They are defined by spatial and economic terms. First, was a “Renaissance City” resulting from urban revitalization projects that captured financial investment and projected Baltimore as a resilient city on the rebound from economic decline. Second, was the “underclass city,” which existed in stark contrast to the redeveloped waterfront and business area; this Baltimore was confined to the “desolate neighborhoods marked by social exclusion, high rates of crime and drug abuse, deepening ghetto poverty, and dilapidated or abandoned housing.” (Levine, 2000, 124). Finally, the third Baltimore was beyond the city boundaries: it was the suburbs. The movement of people and jobs out of Baltimore to the suburbs shifted the economy such that by the 1990s, per-capita income in the city was only 64.3 percent that of its suburbs (Levine, 2000).

As the “Renaissance City” label suggests, Baltimore embarked on a number of major urban revitalization projects in light of the economy. These projects included the Charles Center, a 33-acre complex of offices, business, and retail in the central business center completed in 1962, the Inner Harbor Harborplace, a model adopted by other post-industrial cities for waterfront redevelopment (opened in 1980), and the Camden Yards sports complex and significant public investment, which came as the high-profile real estate investments of the 70s and 80s were coming to a crash (Levine, 2000). These major development projects – which were possible in part from private investment, public initiatives, and federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding – sought to attract business and

tourist money to the city. Baltimore's urban revitalization efforts, however, failed to address the city's most economically depressed communities.

In the early 1990s commentators compared Baltimore neighborhoods to those in third world countries, a comparison aided by a new relationship between Baltimore and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In 1994 Baltimore was the pilot city for USAID's new program "Lessons Without Borders," which applied best practices from developing countries to inner cities in the United States (Shane, 1994 and Levine, 2000).

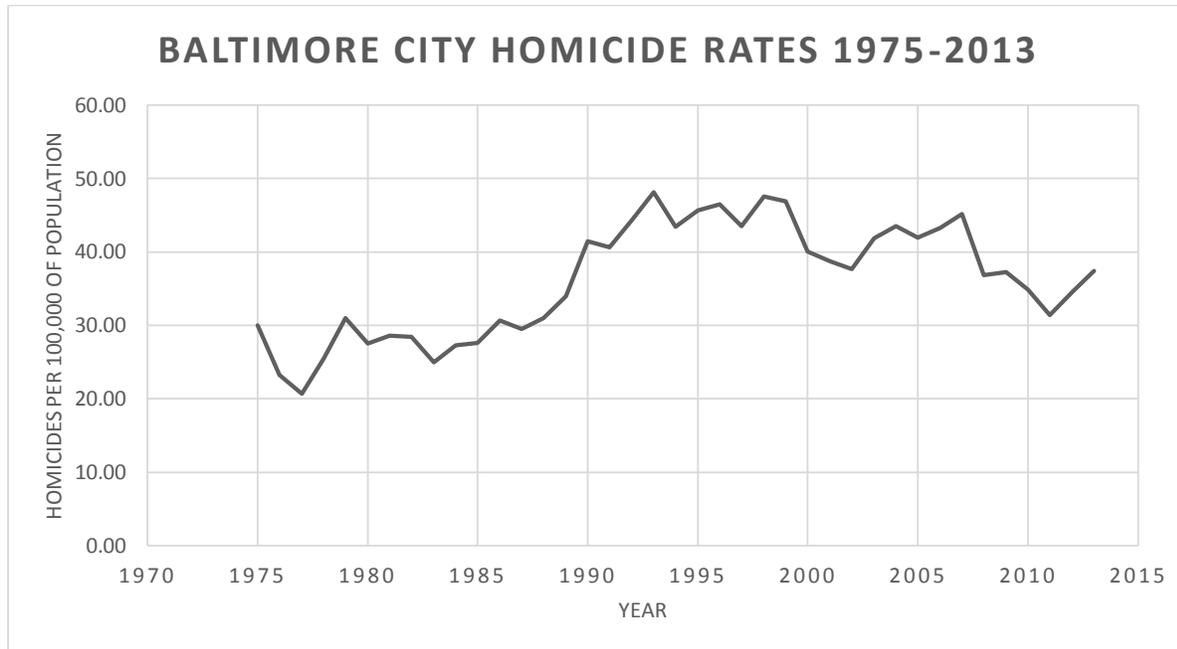
Although the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed housing discrimination, the spatial and economic segregation of Baltimore's black communities continued in the 1990s and 2000s. In Rhonda Y. Williams detailed history of Baltimore's public housing, she writes:

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) believed the city's and housing authority's legacy of residential segregation to be so egregious that it readily filed a class-action lawsuit, *Carmen Thompson et al. v. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development et. al.*, against the housing authority, the mayor, the city council, and HUD in 1995. (Williams, 2004, 235)

The lawsuit aimed to end a "sixty year pattern of rebuilding public housing in solely impoverished, minority communities." (Williams, 2004, 235). In 2005 a U.S. District Court ruled that public officials violated the Fair Housing Act and unfairly concentrated public housing in Baltimore's most segregated, low-income areas.

In what Dorceta Taylor labeled "reverse redlining" in book *Toxic Communities*, Baltimore's residents were subject to financial discrimination in the 20th century. Baltimore filed suit against a major U.S. bank, Wells Fargo, in 2011 for discriminatory lending practices toward black residents. Similar suits were also filed in other U.S. cities against Wells Fargo and a subsidiary of Bank of America in 2011. In 2012 Wells Fargo announced a \$175 million settlement with the City of Baltimore. (Taylor 2014, Broadwater, Baltimore Sun). As these major changes were occurring, violence in the city was increasing. Table 3 shows the rise homicides (per capita) from 1975 to 2013.

Table 3: Homicide rates per 100,000 population (1975-2013)



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(Data Source: Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Control and FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics)

Violence Prevention

Moser (2004) outlined six policy approaches to urban violence: criminal justice, public health, conflict transformation/human rights, CPTED/urban renewal, citizen/public/community security, and social capital. Baltimore has utilized a variety of approaches, particularly after murder rates hit all-time highs in the 1990s.

There were large-scale urban and economic revitalization initiatives, but as described previously these did little to impact the spaces of violence. In the 1970s there have been a number of small, very local projects focused on community development that were pushed to the wayside during the period of neoliberalism at the national level. One tactic for upgrading community spaces was the demolition of problem areas, such as public housing.

Baltimore's public housing projects, especially high rise apartments, had become symbols for drugs, petty crime, and violence. Much like in other U.S. cities public housing developed a stigma of "those people" who live "in the projects" treated like "second-class" citizens (Williams, 2004, 130-133). Public housing high-rises and complexes became sites of where "neighborhood indefensibility and inadequate

services” came to the fore (Williams, 2004, 147). Private and public spaces here became sites of violence: Apartment break-ins, assaults, and rape created a sense of insecurity in the private realm, while public spaces were violently occupied by drug traffic. These incursions were compounded by failing services and infrastructure of the buildings, as well as lack of policing (Williams, 2004). Given the stigma and rise on crime in these sites, they were easy targets for a strategy of destroy and relocate. From 1995 to 2001 four of Baltimore’s major housing complexes were demolished. The demolitions were broadcast on local media, branded as destruction in the name of forward social and economic progress. However, as *Thompson et. al v. HUD et al.* revealed, the relocation process turned out to be redistributing the city’s public housing tenants among the low-income neighborhoods and perpetuating the cycle of segregation.

Baltimore has also attempted to implement community-based programs aimed at reducing violence, specifically gun violence. In the 1990s, a group of researchers, community activists, and local police officials crafted a program to reduce Boston’s spike in gun violence and homicides. The program targeted interventions at youth gang members and sought to shift attitudes toward violence in Boston’s most troubled areas. After observing gains in Boston, the model was then launched in major cities across the country.

In his detailed account of implementing Project Ceasefire in cities across the country, David M. Kennedy points out how Baltimore was a complicated situation, unique from previous cities. Kennedy writes "This isn't Boston. ... What had taken a year and a half to invent and implement in Boston, six months in Minneapolis, a couple weeks in Stockton, would take almost two years in Baltimore." (Kennedy, 108, 2014). In Kennedy’s eyes, the violence was worse and the open-air drug markets were so open that they weren’t even concerned with police patrols. It wasn’t just the nature of the violence, however, that stood in contrast to other cities. Politics were playing a major role.

After almost two years, the project seemed to finally be ready for initiation. Yet, Kennedy details how key government and community collaborators pulled out last minute before a major press briefing. A news editorial in *The Baltimore Sun* reporting on the canceled press conference concluded:

“The anti-violence campaign was intended to be a two-year demonstration program that would change the way overlapping city, state and federal agencies dealt with Baltimore's homicide problem. It was supposed to show that deaths and violence could be reduced if everyone pulled together, united by a common mission.

Instead, the effort is now in danger of becoming a monument to the jurisdictional disputes, turf fights and bickering that have demoralized and paralyzed effective law enforcement in Baltimore for far too long." (Baltimore Sun, 1999)

Although the Project Ceasefire model seemed a hopeful approach to curbing Baltimore's deadly violence, Kennedy described the political wrestling between local, state, and federal powers as culminating in: "no criminal justice system, interagency sabotage, intra-agency sabotage." (Kennedy, 2011, 121).

And, the project's ultimate demise was political: newly-inaugurated Mayor Martin O'Malley's administration put the program to rest shortly after it launched (Kennedy, 2014). The O'Malley administration instead preferred a New York-style zero-tolerance policing approach. Kennedy interpreted it as: "The Baltimore Police Department started arresting everybody in sight." (Kennedy, 2011, 121). And, Baltimore did see a decline in violence starting in 2000. The homicide rate dropped from 46.88 homicides per 100,000 population in 1999 to 40.08 in 2000 and 38.74 and 37.70 in 2001 and 2002. However those gains were eclipsed as the homicide rate started creeping up again in 2003 (Maryland GOCCP).

In response, Baltimore again turned to a community-focused approach to curbing the violence. The city adopted the model of another program called CeaseFire, a public-health approach deployed in Chicago, that is now known as Cure Violence and has been implemented internationally. Daniel Webster and his colleagues describe the model in their quantitative study of the program's effects:

Drawing upon his knowledge and experience combating infectious diseases, Gary Slutkin developed CeaseFire—a public health program to prevent shootings involving youth by changing behaviors, attitudes, and social norms most directly related to gun violence. The program targets communities with high rates of gun violence and often contracts with community-based organizations that are best positioned to work with high-risk youth in those areas. Street outreach workers identify and build trusting relationships with youth ages 14 to 25 years who are at greatest risk of being involved in gun violence. By serving as positive role models and connecting youth to educational and job opportunities, outreach workers direct high-risk youth toward paths away from violence. Outreach staff typically work during evening hours, when most shootings occur, and position themselves so they can mediate conflicts that have the potential to lead to shootings. Some outreach staff take on roles as "violence interrupters" and devote all or nearly all of their time to identifying and mediating conflicts between individuals or gangs. The program also attempts to mobilize communities by holding monthly events designed to bring the community together, promote nonviolence, and provide positive activities for youth. (Webster et. al, 2012).

According to Webster et. al, the program experienced “relatively large program-related reductions” in three of the four neighborhoods in which it was implemented. In more concrete terms, the program was associated with prevention of 35 non-fatal shootings and 5 homicides, cumulatively. Moreover, they found evidence of success of the program reducing gun violence in neighboring communities (Webster et. al, 2012).

The two Ceasefire approaches focus on individual agency in preventing conflict and while they may be able to make some reductions in violence, there are larger issues at work on Baltimore’s historically marginalized communities that will have to be taken into account in the next paper focused on policy.

Concluding Thoughts

In his 2015 book *Between the World and Me*, Baltimore-raised author and educator Ta-Nehisi Coates highlights the way in which violent neighborhoods are experienced in daily life:

To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world, before all the guns, fists, knives, crack, rape, and disease. The nakedness is not an error, nor pathology. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live under fear. The law did not protect us. (Coates, 2015, 17)

Although Baltimore has experienced small gains in reducing violent crime, it still remains one of the most violent cities per capita in the United States. What’s more troubling however is the spike in violence in 2015. May 2015 – just one month after Gray’s death – was the deadliest month (per capita) in Baltimore history since the early 1970s (Puente, 2015). Baltimore witnessed 42 homicides in May alone. At the end of May, Baltimore’s homicide rate and non-fatal shooting rates for 2015 were 43 percent and 82.5 percent above the same period in 2014 . The violent trend appears to be continuing as homicides have soared above 260 this year.

Some officials have speculated that the recent violence in Baltimore is attributable to the theft of narcotics from pharmacies during April’s looting (Puente, 2015 and Reutter, 2015). This theory has yet to be verified. On a national level, a spike in violence across several U.S. cities in 2015 has led some commentators to hypothesize that the recent publicity of extra-judicial killings by police has resulted in police relaxing their patrol of “trouble” neighborhoods. This suggestion, dubbed the “Ferguson effect” has its skeptics though (Davey and Smith, 2015).

To return to Freddie Gray's death, a grand jury indicted the six officers involved in Gray's arrest and their trials are currently ongoing in Baltimore City courts. All six of the officers are charged with misconduct and additional charges range from second-degree assault to second-degree murder (Rector, 2015).

Gray's death and the resulting public demonstrations against police brutality are but one piece of Baltimore's complex history and relationship to violence. Baltimore has one hand the problem of *over penetration* of the state in the form of aggressive policing and incarceration and a *lack* of adequate state services to protect neighborhoods from falling into poverty and violence.

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