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Stream 4

Article nº 4-016

MAKING THE GILDED GHETTO

BLACK BRANDING

DEREK HYRA

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Derek Hyra

American University

hyra@american.edu

ABSTRACT

Our understandings of the United States' (US) urban black ghettos have profoundly changed. In the 1970s, 80s and early 90s, these areas were the "no go" zones of urban America. However, beginning in the 1990s, for a variety of reasons, several of these places economically revitalized and became gilded ghettos. In certain cities cultural heritage and "black branding" was used as a redevelopment strategy to attract tourists and upper- income residents to some of these redeveloping low-income communities (Lin 2011).

Black branding occurs when certain versions of black identity are expressed and institutionalized in a community's social and built environments. In this paper, I use a single case study design to deepen our understandings of the ways in which urban African American stereotypes influence black branding in a revitalizing neighborhood (Yin 2014). My case is Washington, DC's Shaw/U Street neighborhood, a historic and once low-income black neighborhood. This neighborhood is an interesting case because its black brand became institutionalized as the community experienced a significant influx of white residents. Using an array of ethnographic data, including participant observation, interviews and archival records, I argue that desires to minimize, and reinforce, iconic black ghetto stereotypes among cultural preservationists, real estate developers, long-term residents, and newcomers influence the black branding process. I also conceptualize the term "living the wire" to help explain what attracts some white newcomers to live in what is perceived by some as an "authentic" urban neighborhood. While the marketing of aspects of black culture as an attractable community asset may signify some improvements in American race relations, it also reproduces and maintains traditional black stereotypes.

Keywords: gilded ghetto, gentrification, black branding, urban regeneration

MAKING THE GILDED GHETTO: BLACK BRANDING[1]

While DC's changing political economy and the associated back-to-the-city movement accelerated the revitalization of Shaw/U Street, Black branding was also important to understanding the community's redevelopment. Black branding occurs when versions of Black identity are expressed and institutionalized in a community's social and built environments. Examples include a National Register of Historic Places designation, a comprehensive Black-themed redevelopment plan, the establishment of Black history walking tours, or historically significant African American labeled signage, artwork, buildings, restaurants, and entertainment venues.[2] Typically a combination of these items occurs within a Black branded district. This definition of Black branding coincides with several components of what Michelle Boyd calls a "racial tourist district," where "organizations create and display cultural symbols that assert the identity of the neighborhood."

The use of Black historic preservation as a community redevelopment approach represents a significant change in US neighborhood revitalization strategies. Not long ago an urban community's association with Blackness was, for the most part, perceived as detrimental to its economic development. During the early 20th century, those living in majority Black communities were unlikely to obtain mainstream home mortgage or small business loans.[4] Furthermore, real estate brokers and speculators, through block busting, used the fear of an African American influx to provoke White homeowners to sell their properties below market values.[5] African Americans were perceived to cause neighborhood decline. Boyd states, "Whites often avoided neighborhoods with black residents because of racist assumptions linking African Americans to crime, drugs, and lowered property values."[6] Today in certain urban African American communities, neighborhood- based organizations, real estate developers, restaurant owners, and urban planners commodify and appropriate aspects of Blackness to promote tourism, homeownership, and community redevelopment.

Scholars suggest that urban ethnic-cultural districts can provide at least four types of potential benefits to low-income people and communities of color. First, cultural heritage efforts can stimulate economic development for low-income communities, which might benefit local residents if they are able to capture tourist dollars.[7] Second, the branding of racial/ethnic areas might make it more difficult for outside groups to claim these spaces through gentrification.[8] Third, culturally rich spaces can institutionalize memory in the nation's urban fabric of the struggles and triumphs of minority group members.[9] Lastly, ethnic groups that culturally brand their neighborhoods can "manage the stigma" by showcasing the fact that stereotypical portrayals in mainstream media outlets do not accurately characterize minority populations and the spaces they inhabit.[10]

While several studies document the use of, and influences on, racial branding in African American communities, few, if any studies, have investigated how Black stereotypes influence the Black branding process in a context of neighborhood racial transition.[11] For instance, Michelle Boyd's investigation of Chicago's South Side, argues that "Jim Crow nostalgia" by Black elite actors shaped the "uplift" narrative formed to stimulate the redevelopment of Bronzeville. She suggests that Black elite actors structured the uplift

narrative, neglecting the community's poor, to entice the return of the Black middle class.[12] Further, urban sociologist Mary Pattillo highlights that Black branding and gentrification can be "part of a racial uplift project," where "black middle and upper classes act as brokers, well-connected to the centers of elite power but grounded by their upbringings and socialization in more humble black surroundings."[13] Lastly, in a study of the Black branding of Atlanta's "Sweet" Auburn district, urban geographer Joshua Inwood details how an African American-led government, preservation effort conflicted with the desires of Auburn's Black business leaders. These studies are insightful as they elevate class disagreements and tensions among African Americans in community contexts where there is redevelopment but little racial transition.

They, however, tell us relatively little about interracial dynamics and how Black stereotypes influence the Black branding process.

It is important to study the inter-racial dynamics associated with Black branding. First, even in predominately Black communities, White capital is needed to stimulate redevelopment.[14] Second, there is evidence that Whites, more than ever, are willing to move to urban African American communities.[15] For instance, some Black branded communities that previously experienced Black gentrification in the 1990s, such as NYC's Central Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, have in the 2000s seen a significant influx of Whites.[16] Moreover, historically Black districts in Houston and Portland have redeveloped and become increasingly White.[17] Thus, White perceptions of Black communities are critical to the community change process. This chapter fills a gap in the existing Black branding and gentrification literature by detailing and explaining the role of racial stereotypes in the process of Black branding. Investigating Black branding and community change within a racially diversifying community can deepen our understandings of 21st century race relations, gentrification, and Black urban experiences.[18]

Shaw/U Street's redevelopment provides an interesting case to understand race relations and community change through the lens of cultural preservation and Black branding. During the 1990s and 2000s, local real estate industry representatives, restaurant and bar owners, and civic leaders, many of whom were White, promoted the community's Black history. The development of the community's Black brand coincided with significant property value escalation and the decline in the proportion of the area's Black population. Shaw/U Street, which was 90 percent African American in 1970, was just 30 percent Black in 2010, and yet much of its African American history has been institutionalized and preserved in a variety of ways. This chapter assesses how racial stereotypes influence Black cultural preservation branding in a community becoming less Black.

In this chapter I tackle two questions. First, how are racial stereotypes related to Black branding? Second, what attracts outsiders, mainly Whites, to low-income Black spaces once negatively characterized as "iconic ghettos?" By investigating these questions, I attempt to advance our understanding of race and redevelopment through investigating particular influences on a cultural preservation redevelopment strategy in a racial and economically transitioning low-income African American community. I argue that desires to both minimize and reinforce iconic Black ghetto stereotypes influence the Black branding process. I use the term *living the wire* to help explain what attracts some White newcomers to live in an "authentic" Black branded neighborhood. Living the wire refers to newcomer preferences to move into an inner city neighborhood because it has been branded as hip or cool, which, to a certain extent, is associated danger, excitement, poverty, and Blackness:

"iconic ghetto" stereotypes. While the marketing of aspects of Black culture as an attractable community asset may signify some improvements in American race relations, it also reproduces and maintains some traditional "iconic ghetto" racial stereotypes, suggesting that race remains a very powerful and complex dynamic in shaping contemporary urban environments. This chapter suggests that consumption explanations of gentrification have some merit as the cultural tastes and preferences of the newcomers shape Shaw/U Street's redevelopment patterns.

Connecting the Dots: Race, the New Economy, and the Search for Authenticity

The past two decades have provided some signs that Americans are becoming more comfortable with people of other races and ethnicities. The elections of President Barack Obama provide one indicator of this, additionally survey research suggests a great affinity for those of other races and ethnicities. In 2007 nearly 80 percent of all ethnic/racial groups had favorable ratings of one another.[19] Intra-racial and ethnic marriage rates have also increased. The interracial marriage rate more than doubled from 6.7 percent to 15 percent between 1980 and 2010.[20] Moreover, metropolitan neighborhoods are more racially integrated than any time in the past 80 years.[21] Some scholars argue that this accumulation of evidence suggests we are moving towards a post-racial society where skin color is increasingly less important.[22] Other scholars, despite strong evidence for improved racial relations, suggest that discrimination and negative stereotypes of African American have not greatly diminished.[23] Social psychologists, such as Adam Person, John Dovido and Samuel Gaertner, suggest that White racism has fundamentally shifted from blatant to aversive racism, where prejudices "get expressed in subtle, indirect and often rationalizable ways."[24] Furthermore, sociologist Elijah Anderson claims that while race relations have improved, there is a persistent stigma placed on African Americans due to stereotypical connotations of the iconic Black ghetto. He argues that the common image of the Black ghetto is of an "impoverished, chaotic, lawless, [and] drug-infested" area. Due to this powerful and persistent stereotype, Anderson argues that African Americans striving to attain middle- and upper-class status in American society must work extremely hard to "distanc[e] themselves from the ghetto and its image."[25]

US race relations have shifted within the context of a changing national economic structure. As noted in chapter three, the country and to some extent DC has moved from a Fordist to a post- industrial economic system, where knowledge production and services dominate and income inequality has grown.[26] At the high end of the wage distribution sits an increased percentage of highly educated, high-wage, mobile labor force.[27] Urban scholars, such as Japonica Brown-Saracino, Richard Florida, Kevin Gotham, David Grazian, Richard Lloyd, Christopher Mele, Richard Ocejo, Frederick Wherry, and Sharon Zukin, argue that mobile, high-wage knowledge producers crave a variety of "authentic," urban experiences.[28]

In some domains stereotypical images of Blackness are strongly associated with authentic, urban experiences. For instance, David Grazian explains how race is central for those, primarily Whites, seeking the ideal blues club experience.[29] Grazian suggests the relationship between authenticity and Blackness is based on persistent stereotypes. He notes that blues club locations and the race of their musicians are critical; those located in "slightly dangerous black urban neighborhoods" with African American musicians are seen

as most authentic. In the realm of the blues, "blackness connotes an extreme sense of authenticity."[30] He concludes that many White blues fans "often draw on very traditional stereotypical images of black men and women in their search for authenticity."[31] Grazian's research begs a consideration of whether persistent Black urban stereotypes and the search for authenticity influence the Black branding process in Black neighborhoods experiencing racial transition.

While cities once primarily focused their resources on attracting jobs, for example by giving tax breaks to companies, some scholars now suggest cities are implementing policies to attract mobile middle-income and upper-income populations with entertainment and amenities as opposed to employment opportunities.[32] Terry Clark's entertainment machine paradigm claims city politics are shaped more by consumer preferences than traditional growth machine actors. He states, "Urban public officials, businesses, and non-profit leaders are using culture, entertainment, and urban amenities to…enhance their locations-for present and future residents, tourists, conventioneers, and shoppers."[33] As was seen in chapter three, DC's politics in the 2000s heavily focused on creating an entertainment district downtown to attract newcomers.

Clark's entertainment, amenity, and consumer-based machine perspective also identifies "new rules of the game for consumption and politics" in a post-industrial city. He suggests that traditional social categories such as "class, region and ethnic background" are becoming less significant in predicting individual behaviors and policy preferences.[34] Clark proposes that entertainment machine-focused governments now implement consumer-oriented policies, which suffer much less from race, class and gender biases, compared to past policies executed by traditional growth machine cities.

One new consumer-oriented preference is for cities with racially diverse neighborhoods.[35] Many US cities are scrambling to implement policies that signal diversity to potential urban consumers by constructing cultural tourist districts in Asian, Latino, and Black communities as places of middle- and upper-class residence, entertainment, and shopping.[36] This chapter investigates aspects of Clark's entertainment machine perspective by exploring whether racial considerations, in particular racial stereotypes, influence the primary developers, sellers, and consumers of Black branded neighborhoods. However, rather than coining DC an entertainment machine, it is a Cappuccino City, where race, in the sense of minimizing and reproducing Black stereotypes, is critical to understanding why the former dark ghetto now entices some upper-income White residents.

Constructing Black Narratives and Fighting Racial Stereotypes

While some Black cultural branding initiatives are mainly spearheaded by African Americans, much of Shaw/U Street's Black historic preservation can be traced to one of DC's premier preservationists, Kathryn (Kathy) Schneider Smith, a middle aged White woman.[37] Smith, a District resident since 1965, was the founding editor of the journal *Washington History* and former president of the Historical Society of Washington, DC. She also founded the DC Heritage and Tourism Coalition, a coalition of over 230 arts, heritage and community organizations, which in 2003 became Cultural Tourism, DC.[38] In the 1990s and 2000s, Smith, through these institutions, vigorously worked to preserve certain aspects of the capital's history in an attempt to draw millions of DC tourists from the

national monuments to the city's diverse neighborhoods.[39]

Smith strove to educate DC visitors of important city history separate from the monuments on the National Mall. She wanted people to know that DC and its neighborhoods had a distinct and worthy past. Smith believed that to fully understand DC's history one had to know its Black history. Shaw/U Street was for most of the 20th century Black Washingtonians' cultural and economic hub and thus to understand DC's Black history, one had to become familiar with this community's past.

For over 15 years, Kathy Smith was intimately involved in a number of Shaw/U Street historic preservation efforts. In 1994 she collaborated with the African American-directed Thurgood Marshall 12th Street YMCA (Y) and Marya McQuirter, an emerging African American scholar of American history, to document both the Y's and the broader community's, history.[40] These efforts helped earn the Y a place on the National Register of Historic Places.[41] This history project eventually expanded and became a temporary public community history art installation known as "Remembering U Street."[42] Along with the art exhibit, in 1997, Kathy created the "Duke Ellington's DC" bus tour, which eventually morphed into a guided walking tour entitled, "Before Harlem, There was U Street."[43]

Kathy Smith's cultural preservation work garnered her and the community local and national recognition. In 1999 she was a lead consultant on a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary special, "Duke Ellington's Washington," which prominently featured Shaw/U Street's Black history. In 2001, the detailed Black history Smith presented on her guided bus and walking tours was permanently institutionalized in the community's street infrastructure through Cultural Tourism, DC's work. The coalition attained federal and city funding to install throughout the neighborhood a series of large permanent billboard-like sidewalk posts displaying information about the area's Black past.[44] These posts made up two city-endorsed, self-guided walking tours: "City within a City: Greater U Street Heritage Trail" and "Midcity at the Crossroads: Shaw Heritage Trail." In 2003 Cultural Tourism, DC collaborated with the community's 14th Street Main Street Initiative to further showcase the community's past by having some commercial establishments display historic photos of important local Black institutions.[45] A year later, the preservation of the community's Black history gained further momentum when the DC Office of Planning released the "Duke [Ellington] Plan," which laid out the city's comprehensive effort to fully transform much of Shaw/U Street into an African American cultural district.[46] The Duke Plan designated Cultural Tourism, DC as the lead implementer of the cultural district. Due to Smith's steadfast efforts, it is nearly impossible to walk through Shaw/U Street without some understanding of the community's connection to Black history.

Kathy recalled in a conversation with me that when she began her Shaw/U Street cultural preservation work in the 1990s she believed, "Shaw had one of the city's richest histories but that the history was just unknown" to most people. Smith explained that part of the reason the community's history was "unknown" was that it was not sufficiently documented but also that in the 1990s the community "felt dangerous" and thus few outsiders went to the neighborhood to learn about it. To attract people to the community, she had to convince outsiders that the neighborhood was more complex than its short-sided association with blight, drugs, crime, and prostitution. So her mission, in part, was to change the negative "iconic ghetto" stereotype associated with the community's more

recent past.

The Creation of Iconic Black Ghettos: A Complicated History

Reconstructing the narratives of African American ghettos can be difficult because of their complex histories. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as part of the Great Migrations, many African Americans fled the Deep South seeking a better life in Northern cities.[47] They sought employment opportunities and the promise of fewer racial restrictions. However, in many receiving cities restrictive covenants legally barred individuals from selling their homes to African Americans.[48] As a result few urban communities were opened to Blacks and racially segregated but economically integrated Black Belts, "cities within cities," emerged.[49] In these Black ghettos, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals lived near those who were unemployed and on social welfare.[50] These segregated, mixed-income neighborhoods raised and nurtured some of the nation's greatest musicians, artists, architects, academics, medical experts, and political leaders.

In 1948 restrictive covenants were made legally unenforceable and in the 1950s and 60s, many Black professionals left the Black Belts. Consequently, these Black ghettos became even more segregated and impoverished as those with the least resources were unable to leave. Furthermore, federal and local policies steered massive public housing projects to these communities, institutionalizing concentrated poverty.[51] The extremely destitute and segregated conditions of the dark ghettos demonstrated that "America's Dilemma" continued in the 1950s and 60s.[52]

The deprived conditions of the dark ghettos created the nation's worst urban riots.[53] In the aftermath of these riots, between 1970 and 1990, circumstances in many Black ghettos grew even worse. Deindustrialization, disinvestment, Black middle class flight, government cutbacks in social government spending, crime, and the rise of single-headed households are some of the explanations for this decline.[54] As businesses pulled out of the Black ghettos, they were replaced to some extent by an informal economy, most noticeably the drug trade.[55]

In the 1980s and 90s, the drug and gang activity in Black ghettos contributed to the iconic ghetto stereotypical image. Dangerous urban wastelands of abandoned buildings, uncontrollable dangerous Black men, "thugs," undeserving lazy welfare queens who were unable to look after their children, and crack heads were the mainstream images of the Black ghettos. In the late 1980s and early 90s, popular Hollywood movies such as New Jack City and Boyz n the Hood, and rap groups, like the Geto Boys and N.W.A., exemplified the iconic ghetto and brought this inner city image to mainstream America.

While the images of drugs, despair, joblessness and organizational deprivation were part of the Black ghetto's history, it is an exaggerated negative narrative.[56] Some living in these neighborhoods were middle class and the majority of residents were not involved in the drug trade. Most were low- and moderate-income people struggling to survive and cope with concentrated poverty.[57] Because of persistent segregation and discrimination, the exaggerated negative ghetto narrative helps to maintain an association between Blackness and poverty. According to Elijah Anderson, the stereotypical iconic ghetto image is so strong it implicates all African Americans.[58] He suggests that African Americans who are not poor and do not live in the urban ghettos must go through great lengths to shed the

piercing misperception of their association with a stereotypical image of Black inner city life.

Creating a Black Brand and Distancing from the Recent Past

For cultural historians it can be challenging to accurately describe the complicated trajectory of segregated, African American communities that have produced both inspiring and terrifying outcomes. In Shaw/U Street the "Black Broadway" entertainment narrative, with Duke Ellington as the celebrated centerpiece, dominated the reconstructed Black brand. This narrative embellished on the community's "heyday," roughly between 1920 and 1940, when it was a segregated, mixed- income space.

The Greater U Street walking tour's written material, co-authored by Kathy Smith, opens with the statement, "Until 1920, when New York's Harlem overtook it, Washington, D.C. could claim the largest urban African American population in the United States. The U Street area provided the heartbeat. It inspired and nurtured the elegance and the musical genius of Duke Ellington." It continues, "In the 1930s and 1940s, the likes of Cab Calloway, Pearl Bailey, Sarah Vaughn, Jelly Roll Morton, and native son Duke Ellington played on and around U Street, and hung out at after-hours clubs in a scene so full of magic that it was dubbed Washington's 'Black Broadway'"[59]

This Black branding material largely ignores the neighborhood's more recent past.[60] In the late 1970s and 80s, the Shaw/U Street reputation coincided with notions of the iconic ghetto as it was known for containing "the heart of Washington's drug corridor."[61] Not only were drugs a major concern but prostitution was as well. Jackie Reed, one of the community's earliest White "pioneers," describing the community's Logan Circle area in the late 1970s, says, "In 1978, it was hell here. We had the house down the corner, Kingman Place, was an active house of prostitution. The house right next door to us became a house of prostitution…. I never saw much drugs. I just saw women and men going in and out…. It was just awful! 24 hours a day! Cars coming down the street honking. "Hey baby!" you know. It was just awful!"

The creation of the Black Broadway narrative was largely shaped by internal and external community actors' desire to fight certain negative iconic Black ghetto stereotypes. In my conversation with Kathy Smith, she insisted that the Black Broadway narrative came "from the community." During her cultural preservation research she held several community forums and heard stories of the neighborhood from 75 mainly, long-term residents. She said most community meeting/focus group participants were in their 70s and 80s. According to Smith, they told "how they made it" through persistent segregation and discrimination. Smith explained that the residents did not speak about the crime and the drugs of the 1970s and 80s rather they communicated their story of "achievement" and "uplift." Internal community forces were distancing the community's newly created brand from the stereotypical image of the ghetto.

The Black Broadway and racial uplift theme in the Shaw/U Street branding is similar to what Michele Boyd found in Bronzeville on Chicago's South Side.[62] Boyd notes that one of the main goals of the construction of Bronzeville as a Black racial cultural district was to change outsiders' negative perceptions of the area. She claims Bronzeville's "neighborhood leaders were acutely aware that achieving their economic and political goals would require them to transform prevailing ideas about people as well as place."[63] She argues that to fight negative neighborhood perceptions "supporters deliberately reconstructed the

neighborhood's black history" into a rise and fall narrative.[64] As in Shaw/U Street, Bronzeville's reconstructed Black narrative was one of uplift and achievement in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s followed by a prolonged period of decline. Boyd states, "This narrative of achievement and decline helps sell the neighborhood by imbuing its residents with heroism and historical significance."[65] The heroism motif partly distances the neighborhood's association with the community's poor and iconic ghetto images by "obscure[ing] the existence and contributions of average black citizens [and] attribute[ing] racial accomplishments to the miniscule black middle class."[66]

Internal Black preferences to fight racial stereotypes shape Shaw/U Street's Black Broadway narrative but Cultural Tourism, DC staff also played a critical role. Cultural Tourism, DC wanted to market the community to outsiders. To do this they presented a safe, simplistic, non-controversial community narrative. Smith mentioned that Cultural Tourism, DC was trying to tell and sell the neighborhood's history to outsiders that "didn't appreciate African American culture."

Because the neighborhood's history presented by Cultural Tourism, DC was so sanitized, some critics said, "Where're the prostitutes? They were here during the 70s and 80s."[67] Others would ask about the absence of the 1960s history of protest politics where civil rights leaders such as Walter Fauntroy, Stokely Carmichael and Marion Barry organized the neighborhood. Smith lived in DC's Capitol Hill neighborhood in the 1960s and knew of the protest politics stemming from Shaw/U Street but said it was difficult to tell that story, as well as the more recent story of the proliferation of drugs and prostitution in the neighborhood. She rhetorically asked, "How do you talk about tough things?" She said, "This wasn't the way to start a public history of Shaw." Smith spoke about how challenging it was to get funding to communicate a politically-charged neighborhood story. She noted that her major Cultural Tourism, DC sponsors were the DC Chamber of Commerce, the Humanities Council of Washington, DC, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She explained that some of these funders were not interested in communicating a complex and comprehensive history; they wanted a public narrative that would attract development.

The selection of particular parts of Black history to fight stereotypes, market a community to outsiders who might not appreciate Black culture, and receive funding, can be problematic. One of Smith's African American preservation partners, Marya McQuirter, who helped with the research for the 12th Street Y, the public mural installation, and Great U Street Heritage Trail, said that the rise and fall narrative of the walking trail was something that "I totally disagreed with." She noted, "So I was attempting to insert more poor and working class and tensions around gender and all these different things, but that's not the thrust that folks were interested in."[68] She mentioned that interracial class tensions and the presence of poor people were downplayed as well as interracial relations and sexual orientation.[69] McQuirter explained, "You could have narrated U Street as a place of cross-racial, cross-gender, cross-sexual interaction…cross-class interaction…. And then if you do that, then what does that do for the whole rise and fall narrative?"[70] By excluding references to the poor, Cultural Tourism, DC helped to distance the community from iconic ghetto stereotypes.

Often historic preservation initiatives choose what is perceived as the high point of the area's development. Cultural preservation expert Andrew Hurley states, "Highlighting a golden age helped legitimize a neighborhood's historic status…. Privileging the distant past at the expense of the recent past, however, robbed people of the ability to make

connections to the present…. Those who possessed local roots were usually those whose own history was most closely intertwined with the era of decline, precisely the period that booster-oriented preservationists wanted to forget."[71]

Both internal and external preservationists wanted to minimize the decline period because it reproduced a stereotypical ghetto image they were trying to diminish. The combination of the desires of some local residents and Cultural Tourism, DC staff to tell a marketable, uplift story helps to explain the Shaw/U Street's constructed Black Broadway narrative. In this narrative entertainment was highlighted while other community themes like inter-racial relations, intra-racial class conflict, protest politics, prostitution, drugs, and poverty, were minimized.

Some who have intensely studied Cultural Tourism, DC and their actions in the Shaw/U Street area claim their work greatly contributed to the community's redevelopment and its White takeover. Stephanie Frank, in her master's thesis on tourism and gentrification in Shaw/U Street, claims that the "role of historic preservation and cultural heritage activities in the Greater U Street neighborhood is a revanchist one. The efforts guised as those meant to preserve the neighborhood have instead put into motion the refashioning of the former 'heart of black Washington' into a white middle-class neighborhood."[72] Frank explains, "The white middle-class claiming of the Greater U Street neighborhood is aided by CT/DC's [Cultural Tourism, DC] efforts." Kathy Smith remarked that some have told her, "You told our history and made the community look good" and this led to its gentrification.

While some might claim that Smith's cultural preservation efforts contributed to a White takeover, other scholars claim that Black branding should protect a race district from gentrification.[73] Michelle Boyd states: "As entertainment and culture industries rely increasingly on images of racial difference and urban culture, the populations that supply those images are included, rather than excluded, from those economies. By the same token, racial tourism offers the opportunity for marginalized populations to remain in their communities, to cultivate community pride, and to participate in the benefits of economic regeneration."[74] In Chicago's Bronzeville, the neighborhood Boyd studied, the Black branded community stayed, for the most part, Black, but this did not happen in Shaw/U Street.

Shaw/U Street's Black branding work occurred as the community was transitioning from Black to White. This racial transition context complicates the Black history preservation effort. Kathy reached out to ONE DC, which has relationships with many in the community's lower income African American population, to partner on the Black history tours. The idea was to have low-income, long-term residents give the tours. ONE DC's outreach coordinator and community organizer, Gloria Robinson, helped train the U Street tour guides for Cultural Tourism, DC. Gloria, who is African American, at times, has had it rough. Maybe because of the difficult times she has had in her life or the fact the she grew up in the neighborhood, she, much like Dominic Moulden, ONE DC's lead organizer, is extremely committed to helping the neighborhood's low-income residents.

Gloria and I chatted in ONE DC's conference room, where the phrase, "Gentrification is a White Collar Crime" was written on a white board. Gloria insisted that at some point the tours got to be uncomfortable because most of the people on the tours, "Looked like you, Derek." She recalled that the "tourists," instead of asking questions about the Black history, were more interested in the community's crime rates, transportation routes, and the quality-level of the public schools.

She said, "These are people looking to find a home! These aren't tourists." She said that it felt awkward helping to support Black history tours to mainly White people who wanted to redevelop the area. She said she started to resent the "tourists" and decided that it was best for ONE DC to stop sponsoring the tours.

Kathy's Black history preservation effort was a strategy to reduce the iconic Black ghetto stereotype and to build an appreciation for the important Shaw/U Street history. The Black historic preservation effort marketed the community to outsiders who craved an authentic neighborhood experience and appreciated the area's inspirational Black history. However, some newcomers were attracted to the Shaw/U Street because of its recent past and authentic association with the iconic ghetto.

Living the Wire and Reinforcing Traditional Stereotypes

While aspects of Shaw/U Street's Black history and culture have been literally cemented in the community's fabric, and linked with the area's redevelopment, some newcomers are not convinced that Shaw/U Street's historic Black brand is directly tied to its current economic revitalization. Ben, a White newcomer and avid neighborhood blogger, stated, "My observation is a lot of the newer residents particularly of younger…people, 30 and under, who are coming here, it's more commercial attraction than it is any value of…the cultural…. They may see some [of the community's] murals.

They might know who people like Thurgood Marshall [are] but not what he did." Ben's comments reflect an understanding that not everyone is moving to Shaw/U Street because of its African American history.

Shaw/U Street has unquestionably become one of DC's hippest neighborhoods. The title of a *New York Times* article on the community emphatically states, "U Street: The Corridor is Cool Again." A *Washington Post* piece claims that along 14th Street, one of the community's principal commercial arteries, "hipster shops, edgy theater and eclectic eateries form Washington's new Main Street."[75]

The area's hipness is connected to its popular alternative performance venues, such as the Studio Theater, Black Cat, 9:30 Club, Bohemian Caverns, and Jazz Twin's, but it is also associated with the marketing of the community's Black history.[76] Catherine, a White newcomer in her early 20s, enthusiastically describes the Shaw/U Street neighborhood: "U Street has almost always had a cool reputation back, to like, in the 1930s and 40s. It was where you know the musicians came to play." She noted, "I've been here for three years and the difference between what it is now and what it was three years ago is so different even between what it was a year and a half ago. So many different businesses are opening…," businesses that have a meaningful connection to the community's Black history. She explained, "There's Busboys and Poets to remember Langston Hughes, there's Eatonville that's named after Zora Neale Hurston. Um, there's Marvin…," named after Marvin Gay.

Catherine's remarks suggest that the commodification of certain aspects of the community's "heyday" Black history is tied to its redevelopment and cool reputation. She recounts the neighborhood's "cool reputation," based on its reconstructed Black Broadway era. She then speaks about some of the new trendy restaurants, Busboys and Poets, Eatonville, and Marvin, that pay symbolic homage to aspects of the community's Black history. She explains that this history and coolness attracted her to the neighborhood over other "boring" sections of city.

American society is more integrated than it has ever been and for some scholars

this is a signal of increasing racial and ethnic tolerance.[77] Today, when some people select cities to live one critical criterion is racial and ethnic diversity.[78] Some inner city African American communities have now become hip to White America; whereas Whites once fled from Black communities, now the 20- and 30-somethings, like Catherine, flock to them to experience what they perceive as cool, hip living.[79]

Other newcomers are drawn to these areas to "live the wire." This term references David Simon's successful HBO series The Wire, and describes a bundle of dynamics that draws young to gentrifying inner city Black neighborhoods. The Wire offers a compelling and complex structural analysis of urban inequality and inner city Black life in Baltimore.[80] However, much like ethnographic inner city accounts of the drug trade, such as sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh's *Gang Leader for a Day*, The Wire clearly sensationalizes the drug trade and urban violence.[81] I chose the term living the wire because it references and symbolizes the association among entertainment, urban poverty, violence and Blackness: all "iconic ghetto" stereotypes.

Living the wire refers to newcomer preferences to move into an inner city neighborhood because it has been branded as hip or cool, which, to a certain extent, is associated with poverty and the violent past of inner city Black neighborhoods. For some, the hip and cool notions of the neighborhood relate to its heyday history, as Catherine notes, but for others it relates to its status as an "edge" neighborhood the city's mainstreamers once avoided.

Living the wire is a new form of urban slumming, where newcomers experience aspects of low-income neighborhoods, not by exploring them on bus tours or visiting them at night in blues clubs, but by moving into these neighborhoods for the ultimate "authentic" experience.[82] While living the wire has the potential to expose outsiders to the complex conditions of America ghetto life and may reduce stereotypes, racially diverse, mixed-income living environments can also reinforce traditional stereotypes of the "iconic ghetto."[83] The concept of living the wire relates to the dual notion of desiring to experience, first hand, the complex nature of the inner city life but also wanting to be excited and entertained, safely.

Notions of living the wire became apparent one December night in 2010 when I attended a fundraiser for one of the area's civic associations. The fundraiser took place at Town, a local gay dance club. Town, which opened in 2007, is a two-story 20,000 square foot club with large wall- mounted, high-tech video installations and a disco ball. The fundraiser was held in the early evening before the club gets going. On the first dance floor, groups of people, mainly White, gathered around highboys in the middle of the dance floor. I listened in and participated in several conversations as I ate finger food and walked around bidding on several silent auction items. I noticed that some people were talking about area crime in an odd way. People described neighborhood car jackings, shootings and purse snatchings with laugher and jokes. They talked about it like it was something to brag about. It was like they were describing a movie as opposed to talking about it in a serious manner. It was as if they were proud to live in an area that was unsafe and edgy. It seemed the neighborhood violence gave some newcomers bragging rights and something interesting to talk about at parties.

At the auction, one White newcomer who worked for a socially responsible investment firm in a nearby Maryland suburb, described a shooting that took place on her block. She explained that an elderly man was trying to stop a young individual from selling drugs on the block. In retaliation, the teenager shot the elderly man in the head. She said that her

minority neighbors held a candlelight vigil for the man. But she said after the vigil many of her neighbors celebrated the man's life by lighting up blunts of marijuana. She said she could not understand, if the issue was getting drugs off the block, why her neighbors were using drugs to celebrate the elderly man's life.

The conversations I heard were similar to what urban scholar David Grazian explained when he claimed, "Thrill-seekers compete among their peers for the bragging rights that accompany the experience of authenticity."[84] It seems that for some people living the wire helps them "become authentic" by experiencing first-hand poverty and Blackness.[85] It also relates to aspects of what sociologist Andrew Deener discovered in the gentrification of the rougher sections of Venice Beach where elite bohemia collided with the Black ghetto. One of his participants reported, "People are down here on Abbot Kinney [the bohemian corridor] and they're having their tea and coffee, and just kicking it and having a grand ol'time, looking at the little boutiques, and meanwhile, there's murder going on around them. It's stupid, ya know? But it was happening."[86]

The concept of living the wire revealed itself on several occasions. For instance, a new White resident was explaining what made the community exiting and cool. This resident said, "I just knew after like certain nights when it's like really hot out on a Friday night and noticed people hanging out on the street outside a shop or whatever. You could tell certain nights that it was like, 'OK, I'm gonna wake up in the morning, I'm gonna get an email and someone's going to have gotten shot.'"

The term "living the wire" is juxtaposed with "living the drama," the title of urban sociologist David Harding's excellent ethnographic account of how poor neighborhood influence negative outcomes for minority youth.[87] Harding describes the ways in which violence and the fear of violence among boys living in impoverished areas in Boston greatly determine their life course trajectories. For Harding, "…violence and strategies for avoiding victimization loomed large in the lives of boys in poor neighborhoods. Whether it was where to go to school and how to get there, whom to befriend and whom to avoid, or how to interpret the behavior of the adult they encountered, many decisions could not be made without reference to the violence that casts a constant shadow over their lives."[88] Living the drama means to carefully navigate and cope with extreme forms of urban violence.

During the 2000s crime drastically decreased in Washington, DC, however in certain sections of Shaw/U Street major violence still occasionally occurs.[89] In 2015, diners eating at P14's outdoor patio dove under their tables when gunfire broke out nearby. Those shots killed a 29-year old African American man who grew up in the neighborhood.[90] The community has some remnants left over from its days as an infamous drug market. Moreover, the neighborhood has some "hot spots" for robberies despite the redevelopment that has taken place.[91]

For Novella, an African American resident of the Foster Homes, a subsidized development about six blocks from Town, living the drama is an everyday occurrence. Novella describes that even though the neighborhood has changed there is still a lot of gang violence and drug dealing.

She said young men involved in crews, DC gangs, still have territorial battles in the neighborhood and these disputes sometime result in violence. She explained that if someone has a "beef" with a guy who crossed a boundary, they shoot at him. She claimed

her generation used to fist-fight, not shoot. But today she said guys shoot. Novella talks about crime and neighborhood violence as if it was something to be feared, not joked about.

For several long-term African American residents living the drama had real tangible consequences, such as the loss of a loved one. I met Curtis Mozie, known as C-Webb, while playing basketball at the Kennedy Recreation Center. C-Webb, an African American in his forties, has the stamina of 20-year old. He would always want to play one more game when I could barely breathe after playing with him for more than an hour.

C-Webb has been documenting the violence that has plagued Shaw/U Street for decades. He records videos of the youth as they grow up in the community, particular the ones involved in the crews. He attempts to serve as a mentor and show them that running the streets usually leads to jail and/or death. C-Webb has complied numerous videography R.I.P. tributes of many area young men that have lost their lives to the violent streets near the Kennedy Recreation Center.

David Robinson, Day-day, was one of the area's youth who lived the drama.[92] He grew up in the Washington Apartments, a subsidized housing complex, a few blocks south of the Kennedy Recreation Center, and was raised by a single mother, Evon Davis. David's absentee father was rarely around. Although Evon, and several mentors, tried to keep David out of trouble, he struggled in school and lived by the code of the streets.[93] He felt that to protect himself from the area crews, he needed to join one of them. He joined the Seventh and O Street crew and carried a gun. In 9th grade David was arrested after a hallway school shoving match with another area crew made its way out into the streets after school. A few years later in 2009, at the age of 17, David was shot after a fight broke out at a concert.

This near death experience made David change his ways. He got a job at Home Depot, made a commitment to finish his high school degree, and got serious with his pregnant girlfriend. His goal was to finish school and be the father to his son that his father never was. Just before the birth of his son, David was shot and killed by a group of young men that wanted his new $220 Nike sneakers. Instead of giving up the shoes, David pulled his gun and was killed. David and many of the area youth live the drama, with serious consequences despite the redevelopment that has taken place in this community and along the 7th Street corridor.

The Grit and the Glamor

Certain new upscale and exclusive neighborhood establishments, such as The Gibson, play off the community's edginess and the stereotypical image of the iconic ghetto. The Gibson is an upscale, contemporary "hidden" speakeasy. It is located in a nondescript, gray building that looks abandoned. There are no street-facing windows on the first floor or signs to indicate the establishment's location. All that can be seen from the street is a small, unassuming doorbell-like buzzer near a discreet front door. When the inconspicuous buzzer is pressed, a stylishly-dressed, young greeter comes out and if it is early evening you will likely get in, otherwise you have to put your name and cell phone number on a waitlist. When a spot opens at the bar, the hostess contacts you with a text. This can take an hour or more depending on the night. Once inside the environment changes from the outside grit to a posh, retro 1920s-style speakeasy interior with a dark cherry wood monogamy bar with illuminated shelves of liquor, dim lighting, and mixologists serving signature cocktails for $15 bucks a piece.[94] On any given night it is not uncommon to see and hear political

appointees talking over a few drinks.

Directly next to The Gibson is a ghetto-style liquor store with Plexiglas separating the customers from the merchandise, much of which are fifths of liquor. On any given night a group of older or middle-aged African American men hang out in front of the liquor store. A nearby bus stop ensures frequent bursts of activity by people of color outside of The Gibson.

The liquor store's grit provides the perfect complement to the glamour of the speakeasy. The juxtaposition of The Gibson, an exclusive, upscale cocktail establishment, with the grimy liquor store and a group of African American men on the street, gives The Gibson an ethos of hipness and edge based in part on a Black ghetto stereotype. All that is needed next to The Gibson to complete the iconic ghetto stereotype would be a storefront church.

The Gibson's White-business owners, Eric and Ian Hilton, deploy the trope of the iconic ghetto to attract resident tourists.[95] Eric describes how he and his design team came up the concept of The Gibson. He remarked, "Our process starts with an exploration of atmosphere: what else is on the block, who lives in the neighborhood."[96]

This proximity of grit and glamor plays off the notion of newcomers' preference for living the wire and relates to the community's Black brand. The stereotype that The Gibson is working off is that somehow a certain type of Blackness equals the authentic ghetto experience that certain customers, mainly White, seek. The Hilton brothers in Shaw/U Street have located their business where "stereotyped images of the city" give the Gibson its coolness and edge.[97]

The Gibson is one of the hottest DC bars and its coolness, to a certain extent, is associated with an almost fabricated crime "hot spot." The Gibson uses iconic ghetto imagery where, as Elijah Anderson notes, people are "both curious and fearful of 'dangerous' black people."[98] The men that congregate outside the bar in front of the liquor store and the faux abandoned building provide the image people expect to see in the ghetto. Except in this gilded ghetto, studios rent for $2,300 a month and rowhomes sell for over $1 million.

Other commercial establishments use elements of living the wire to cash in. Some incorporate the neighborhood's African American history, in a variety of ways, to make their places stand out and appear cool and attractive to a diverse set of middle- and upper-income customers. One of them is Busboys and Poets, a trendy restaurant, bar, bookstore, coffee shop and performance venue all in one. As owner Andy Shallal proudly and sincerely remarked, Busboys incorporates a variety of African American traditions into its "DNA."

Andy Shallal, an Iraqi-American, described the relationship between the Shaw/U Street community's past and Busboys and Poets, which was established in 2005. "This is historically a Black community. It was called Black Broadway...and I wanted to be able to bring that back in a way that I felt was getting covered up by much of the changes that were taking place in this area…. And so we named this place Busboys and Poets in honor of Langston Hughes who worked as a busboy while writing poetry in Washington, DC."

Not only does the name of Andy's restaurant incorporate aspects of African American history but the menu and performance programming do as well. Andy explained, "I went out of my way to be…more inclusive of African Americans…. The menu clearly had to be representative of things that the community liked…. Things like having catfish on the menu…represent a certain [kind of] hospitality. It is traditionally an African American dish. It is something that we happily make to say to the indigenous community here, which is

mostly African American, that this is a place that speaks to them." He continued, "Another part was the programming, which is really eclectic in its variety and mix. We have open mic here on a regular basis. Which open mic in this area had a real strong tradition, strong history, mostly African American." Andy is clearly drawing on stereotypical notions of Blackness: catfish and spoken word as a form of protest politics.

There is a strong link between a certain African American heritage and culture in Busboys and Poets, but it is not just this culture that is important, the culture is tied to a specific Washington, DC geography. Andy expressed the connection between the neighborhood and his establishment. In explaining why he opened the first Busboys near 14th and U Streets, Andy stated, "It had to start here, because I wanted to establish the brand. I wanted to establish the Busboys and Poets idea, what it was about."

Andy explained what the neighborhood was like before Busboys and Poets came in. "When we first moved here there was the relief recovery center which was right across the street here on the corner to us which was an A[lcoholics] A[nonymous] center for recovering addicts and alcoholics. It was mostly Black men that belonged to that program. So…the whole time before we opened there was a congregation of men at that corner." He noted, "The perspective of many is that there's a bunch of Black men on the corner and there's only trouble that will go on."

Andy recounted racial tensions when some of the new White condo owners perceived a threat across the street. He remarked, "So, we invited the director of the [A.A.] program to come and speak to the community here. We had a meeting right here in this room where a few of the workers were here as well as some the people who were involved with the program were here talking about the program. They [the new condo owners] became the biggest advocates for the program because…it's better to have a bunch of Black men standing on the sidewalk trying to recover than a bunch of Black men that are drug addicts. You know, the people that used to be here."

Andy and many DC residents know that the area where Busboys is located used to be one of the city's most infamous open-air drug and prostitution markets.[99] The community's difficult past and in particular the locations near Busboys which were the starting place of the 1968 DC riots, an open-air drug market, and then recovery center, are part of what gives Busboys its edgy and hip brand and is related to the associations among Blackness, poverty, and authenticity.

40s, MD 2020, and Lottery Tickets?

While The Gibson and Busboys and Poets use traditional ghetto typecasts, along with other characteristics, to fabricate their coolness, sometimes those living or frequenting Shaw/U Street more vividly showcase engrained ghetto stereotypes. Good Libations is a liquor store that some might describe as having a multiple personality disorder but in fact it represents the neighborhood extremely well. It has some features of both a stereotypical inner city liquor store and a high-end wine shop. A worn wooden counter and a large three-inch thick wall of Plexiglas separate most of the liquor and the sales person from the customers. The Plexiglas has a small revolving door that the sale person spins around to take your payment and provide you with your purchase. The liquor behind the Plexiglas includes an array of vodkas, bourbons, and scotches. However, a variety of wines, from well-known regions like the Napa Valley, are not behind the Plexiglas. Near the unprotected wines are high-end beers such as a 22-ounce of Chimay for $12.99. Refrigerators in the back of the store contain pricey micro brews in addition to 22-ounce cans and bottles of Heineken, Miller Lite, Pabst Blue Ribbon, and other cheaper beers.

Ron is the store's African American owner. He tells me he keeps the Plexiglass because it signals to customers that they need to make their purchases and get out, not to linger in the shop. He also remarks that it prevents some petty thefts. Ron began the business in 2005 and says that as the neighborhood has changed, his customer base has also changed. He states that when he began his customers were 70% Black, 25% White, and 5% Asian and Hispanic. He says now its 60% White, 35% Black, and 5% Asian and Hispanic. He says that across the street there used to be subdivided row houses and whose African American occupants used to come and shop at the store. Now, he says the row houses are either single-family homes or have two apartments and are occupied by Whites. He says he has a set of African American customers from the nearby subsidized, Section 8 Washington Apartments, as well as low-income co-ops.

Ron's establishment caters to both lower- and upper-income alcohol preferences. Ron remarks that the new, higher income White and Black populations are "buying more wine, more upscale spirits, and more of the craft beers. Whereas the Blacks who I guess were born here or who have been living here for a long time, the old-timers,…still continue to buy the lower-level items." Ron explains he likes diversity and offers a wide selection of alcohol. He does note that his longtime Black customers occasionally call him a "sellout" for increasing the amount of "White people's wine." It might not be the wine that upsets Ron's longtime Black customers but the fact that the wine is free-standing, while most of the other beverages are behind the Plexiglas.

The city banned 40-ounce single container sales in 2008, but Ron stopped carrying 40s before that because he was tired of younger White, newcomers buying them. He explains,

"For some reason, I guess these kids have grown up watching videos or whatever and now its… This one White guy came in he was just like, you know, straight White guy, glasses everything. And he was like, "Oh, you don't have any 40s?" And I thought he was trying to make a joke because…he came in looking for 40 ounces, MD 2020, and lottery tickets. And I was like, "Huh?" He goes, "Well, I'm going to a party." I said, "What type of party is this?" He told me he said, "Oh, we're going to a hood party." And I'm just like nah nah, get out of here. I have no problem with 40s, but don't come in because you're trying to be stereotypical." Ron explained that this incident occurred frequently enough that he just stopped selling 40s.

The neighborhood's redevelopment, to a certain extent, thrives on the community remaining racially diverse, or more specifically, Black and edgy. It helps give the community its pulse, its vibe, its coolness, but this "construction of coolness" to some extent reinforces and perpetuates traditional stereotypes. Some Whites think it is cool to live in a racially transitioning, formerly low- income neighborhood and throw stereotypical ghetto-themed parties. The Gibson's edge is associated with its proximity to a stereotypical "inner city" liquor store and the group of Black men that congregate outside of it. Other newcomers talk about tragic neighborhood crime and violence as if they were describing a scene from HBO's The Wire. It seems the sporadic violence is just the backdrop for some newcomers who move to Shaw/U Street, in part, for excitement, entertainment, and authenticity from living the wire.

In Shaw/U Street a certain amount of poverty, blight, Blackness, and danger, gives the neighborhood its authentic, edgy brand, which is associated with property demand and skyrocketing home prices. This is a mind-boggling turnaround from the times when Blackness, poverty, and danger would likely be associated with substantial property decline. The concept living the wire helps to explain part of this phenomenon, where certain "iconic ghetto" features provide the "authentic" neighborhood drama, a live reality show of sorts, that some White middle- and upper-income newcomers seek.

For some this scene might conjure up notions of 1920s urban slumming; however, something profoundly different is occurring.[100] Living the wire is just that. It's not visiting an area as a tourist or urban thrill-seeker; it is residing within a Black identified space.[101] Where living the wire mirrors the slumming concept is that the thrill, the edge, the coolness, the Black brand, is based on preexisting Black ghetto stereotypes – Black men and women as entertainers, drug dealers, and lazy people hanging out on the corner. It also brings up images of Black people as the other. The neighborhood is hip, partly, because it is perceived as the place you should not go because it was once dangerous.

Summing Up

The urban landscape is constantly shifting and across the country many African American iconic urban ghettos are being rebranded as hip, edgy, and historic areas for the consumption of Black culture. Some of these communities are experiencing Black gentrification while others are becoming more racially diverse by attracting middle- and upper-income Whites. One common feature is that many of these low-income Black neighborhoods are using forms of Black branding to attract development.

There is no question Shaw/U Street has an African American brand. The streets are lined with walking tour signs that describe the accomplishments of African Americans associated with the neighborhood's past. Several neighborhood roads and alley signs are named after significant Black figures and community murals depict important African Americans. Moreover, trendy new restaurants as well as luxury apartment and condominium buildings are named after African American literary and musical icons.

For some people Black branding, and its association with neighborhood redevelopment, signifies racial progress. We have witnessed a major transition in the acceptance of Blackness. Black branding provides some evidence that we as a country appreciate and value elements of Black history. It was not long ago that many Americans feared the Black ghetto and the majority of urban neighborhoods deemed Black were avoided. Today, historic Black neighborhoods are attracting a much more diverse population and Black branding, in some instances, is associated with neighborhood redevelopment.

While the Shaw/U Street area's Black Broadway brand was shaped by multiple forces, one was to reduce the community's negative iconic ghetto image. Decisions about having the rebranded image not be too Black, too poor or too controversial were influenced by both African Americans and Whites to present a positive community image to outsiders. Often times this external audience focus reinforces Black stereotypes, such as the one of African Americans as musical entertainers, clearly represented in Shaw/U Street's Black Broadway image; but it also relates to elite Blacks and other community stakeholders wanting to reduce negative African American stereotypes. The sanitized racial uplift image attempts to distance the community from its more recent past and iconic ghetto stereotypes.

Many historic Black communities are spinning a similar uplift and entertainment narrative regardless of whether the storylines are spun by Black-controlled governments, elite Black residents or White external elites, as with the Shaw/U Street case with Cultural Tourism, DC.[102] Much like Starbucks has commodified and exported a certain small Seattle coffee shop experience and McDonalds has duplicated a version of the classic American hamburger and fries around the world, Black neighborhoods are attempting to commodify a certain nostalgic Black history experience in cities around the United States.[103] By branding Black culture and mainstreaming the ghetto, we reduce some African American stereotypes but at the same time we lose some complexity about how institutional racism

contributed to creating the Black ghetto.

While Black and White preservationists work to counteract negative stereotypes of the iconic ghetto, some newcomers are looking for authentic experiences based on the expectation that inner city Black areas are dangerous and exciting. This iconic Black ghetto stereotype is associated with contemporary and hip, urban and grit. Real estate developers and commercial businesses have tapped into this valued "edge living" commodity and are selling it for a premium to those who can afford it. It is hard to conceptualize exactly what these real estate developers are selling or what customers are purchasing but part of the amenity bundle can be explained by what I have called "living the wire," which is based on preexisting stereotypical images of the iconic ghetto.

Living the wire refers to a notion of residing in a community that has an energy and an edge that distinguishes people who live in the inner city from those living in the "boring" homogenous suburban and central city areas. Living the wire helps newcomers carve out their urban niche in the metropolis. These newcomers flock to historic Black neighborhoods to experience the thrill of viewing elements of the iconic ghetto.

While the fact that Whites feel comfortable moving to Black spaces might seem like racial progress, it, to a certain extent, is based on stereotypical portrayals of African Americans. Some newcomers move into African American communities based on a perceived association between urban authenticity and Blackness. The relationship between authenticity and Blackness is related to the stereotypical association between Blackness, poverty, danger, and excitement, which symbolizes contemporary subtle racism. I consider this a form of subtle racism, compared to the past, when people would not move into a Black community due to blatant racism.

Harvard University sociologist William Julius Wilson uses the HBO series The Wire as part of his Harvard University course on urban inequality.[104] One of his students, Kellie O' Toole, states, "People in society attempt to distance themselves from the 'other'…. The Wire' works against this idea by depicting the connection between mainstream and street culture. It shows that, while people sometimes think they live in different worlds, we are more alike than we are different."[105]

However, several newcomers to redeveloping ghettos who might be inspired by and appreciate elements of Black culture do not truly engage in the ghetto's complexity. The younger newcomers, the tourists in place, seem more concerned with consuming ghetto-inspired culture than connecting and identifying with those struggling with the ills of racism and structure inequality. The complex relationships among discrimination, institutional racism, and intergenerational poverty is not a narrative told to them in the community's rebranded story, nor is it something often heard from newcomers when they discuss or engage in community politics.

Andrew Hurley notes festive cultural districts often "discouraged visitors from reflecting deeply."[106] Few Shaw/U Street newcomers seriously contemplate the community's past to understand how the neighborhood was structured and produced concentrated poverty. Rather, iconic ghetto elements of poverty, crime, and Blackness, are seen as exciting community backdrops. This situation reinforces Elijah Anderson's observation that "as the urban environment becomes ever more pluralistic and the veneer of racial civility spreads, a profound stigma persists, embodied ultimately in black skin and manifested in the iconic black ghetto."[107]

This is not the first study to highlight that certain people are drawn to urban areas that

contain poverty and posh amenities. Bernard Harcourt's detailed ethnographic study of the redevelopment of L.A.'s Skid Row states, "It is precisely that juxtaposition of high-end lofts and homeless beggars that gives L.A.'s Skid Row a trendy, urban, edgy, noir flavor that is so marketable."[108] In Chicago's gentrifying Wicker Park, Richard Lloyd notes that for upper-income newcomers "sharing it with working class and non-white residents, even if personal interaction remains superficial, is part of their image of an authentic urban experience."[109] Lloyd explains that their understanding of the neighborhood's rough past, as infested with gangs, drug and prostitutes, "coincided with the bohemian disposition to value the drama of living on the edge."[110] Christopher Mele and Sharon Zukin claim that some middle- and upper-income New Yorkers find the close proximity of grit and glamor an "authentic" postindustrial aesthetic.[111] What all of these scholars describe undoubtedly manifests itself in Shaw/U Street and provides concrete evidence that the search for authenticity and consumer culture shape neighborhood development.

The influences of reducing and reinforcing racial stereotypes on Black branding processes have implications for theories of urban development and growth. Black branding and living the wire correspond to Terry Clark's entertainment machine theory.[112] Clearly, in Washington, DC, city officials are backing efforts to merge Black culture, entertainment, and diversity to form a commodity to attract 20 and 30-somethings to Shaw/U Street.[113] While the commodification of Black culture is part of Shaw/U Street's revitalization story, aspects of the community process, particularly the marketing of elements of Black culture, are shaped by a racial framework: reducing some iconic ghetto images, while at the same time promoting and reinforcing others. Both Black and White understandings of the iconic ghetto and its association with Blackness relate to the construction, commodification, sale, and purchase of the community's Black brand. This finding supports Michelle Boyd who states Black branding "does not imply that race is insignificant: despite academic clamoring for its end, race remains important in the political life of African Americans."[114] Race is critical to both Black political life and also for understanding White consumer preferences, which are associated with neighborhood change in inner city America.

Racial understandings are critical to making the gilded ghetto. What we see in Shaw/U Street is not the typical gentrification pattern. But rather the past of the neighborhood as a "city within a city" and Black Broadway in the early part of the 20th century and its more recent past as an iconic Black ghetto in the 1970s, 80s and 90s are critical elements of marketing this community to newcomers. It is precisely the community's history as a Black ghetto that helps to make it cool, hip, authentic, and attractable to upper-income, mainly White, newcomers.

My findings challenge the claim that Black branding can safeguard a minority community from gentrification and displacement.[115] In the DC case, cultural preservation helped make the community "capital ready." Investments to rehabilitate buildings and construct historic districts, murals, and signage, are signals that the community is "tourist ready," but they are also signals to investors and "tourists" who desire to live the wire. Black branding does not ensure that the community can control its own destiny, nor does it predict Black control over a Black branded neighborhood. In Shaw/U Street the rise of the Black brand was correlated with significant decline in the number and percentage of Black residents and an increase in property values. Some of the Black population decline was based on choice, and some on forced displacement based on rising property values.[116] As Hurley claims,

"It is one thing to assess a commitment to social diversity through preservation and public interpretation, quite another to prevent soaring property values from displacing existing residents or a least imposing hardship on those with meager financial resources."[117]

The concept of living the wire helps explain why mixed-income living is so difficult to implement or maintain and why it is not producing the expected results in terms of racial and income mixing. Gentrification author Sarah Schulman states, "Mixed neighborhoods create public simultaneous thinking, many perspectives converging on the same moment at the same time, in front of each other. Many languages, many cultures, many racial and class experiences take place on the same block, in the same building."[118] However, if one population is living the wire and the other is living the drama, crime might be interpreted in very different ways, making it difficult to develop shared understandings and goals. As policy makers promote mixed-income living environments, we cannot assume that people moving into these environments understand community circumstances and events in the same way that long-term residents do. For instance, some newcomers might view the perception of crime as important to the neighborhood's hip identity, while others might view crime as detrimental to their life chances.

This chapter demonstrates the importance of race in the process of Black branding and presents an important explanation for the arrival of some Whites in traditionally low-income African American communities. While interrogating Black branding and the influx of Whites in Shaw/U Street, this chapter generates more questions than it answers. For instance, by what specific mechanisms do cultural preservation initiatives lead to community revitalization? Moreover, at what population tipping point does the Black brand begin to fade? As noted in 2010, the Shaw/U Street neighborhood is only 30 percent African American and it seems as if this percentage will only decline as the community continues to redevelop.[119] Will Shaw/U Street still hold onto its Black "authentic" identity if African Americans are not longer a sizable resident population? Lastly, how do newcomers in historic Black neighborhoods relate to long-term residents?

In the next chapter, I examine how low-income African Americans and new White residents interact within this mixed-income, mixed-race community. As can be anticipated, race conflict emergences but race alone is insufficient for understanding the internal dynamics of this complex community. The influence of multiple social categories must be acknowledged to better understand the tensions and discords that materialize in Shaw/U Street.

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[1] This is a chapter from my forthcoming book, *Making the Gilded Ghetto: Race, Class, and Politics in the Cappuccino City* (University of Chicago Press).

[2] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Pattillo 2007

[3] Boyd 2008, p. XIV and 87

[4] Jackson 1985

[5] Massey and Denton 1993

[6] Boyd 2008, p. 75

[7] Gotham 2007; Hoffman 2003; Hurley 2010

[8] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Lin 2011

[9] Till 2003

[10] Wherry 2011, p. 94

[11] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Heck 2013; Hoffman 2003; Hurley 2010; Inwood 2010; Lin 2011

[12] Boyd 2008

[13] Pattillo 2007, p. 301 and 297

[14] Hyra 2008

[15] Freeman and Cai 2015; Hyra 2008; Hyra and Rugh 2016

[16] Zukin 2012

[17] Gibson 2007; Podagrosi and Vojnovic 2008

[18] Hunter 2013

[19] Taylor 2008

[20] Wang 2008

[21] Glaeser and Vigdor 2012; Rugh and Massey 2014; Vigdor 2013. It is also important to note that while this level of metropolitan racial integration has occurred, poverty concentration in African American communities persists (Jargowsky 2014).

[22] Hochschild, Weaver, and Burch 2012

[23] Anderson 2012; Carr and Kutty 2008; Hartman and Squires 2010; Marcuse 2012; Pearson, Dovidio, and Gaertner 2009

[24] Person, Dovido, and Gaertner 2009, p. 4

[25] Anderson 2012, p. 67-68

[26] Sassen 2012; Stiglitz 2012

[27] Knox 2008

[28] Brown-Saracino 2009; Florida 2014; Gotham 2005, 2007; Grazian 2003, 2008; Lloyd 2010; Mele 2000, Ocejo 2011; Wherry 2011;

Zukin 2010

[29] Grazian 2003

[30] Grazian 2003, p. 36

[31] Grazian 2003, p. 20

[32] Clark 2011; Florida 2014

[33] Clark 2011, p. 1

[34] Clark 2011, p. 46

[35] Brumbaugh and Grier 2013; Clark 2011; Florida 2014

[36] Grams 2010; Lin 2011; Wherry 2011

[37] For instances of Black cultural preservation initiatives directed mainly by African Americans see Boyd 2008, Grams 2010, and Hurley 2010.

[38] Frank 2005; Heck 2013; Smith 2010

[39] Not all of those working to preserve the Shaw/U Street's Black culture were White. Both African Americans and Hispanics helped preserve the community's Black history. For instance, Black real estate developer, Roy "Chip" Ellis, spearheaded an eight-year effort to rehabilitate and restore the Howard Theater, a local performance venue that rivals Harlem's Apollo Theater. Frank Smith, the area's former African American councilman, directed an effort to establish the community's African American Civil War Memorial and Museum. Moreover, Alex Padro, a local Hispanic civic leader, who in 1999 partnered with Kathy Smith on one of the community's walking tours, worked for nearly a decade to promote historic preservation and economic revitalization along the community's 9th street corridor. While these important Shaw/U Street stakeholders, and others, such as such as Lawrence Guyot, John "Butch" Snipes, and Henry Whitehead, had an important role in local historic Black preservation, Kathy Smith was clearly the main driver preserving and promoting the community's Black history (Ruble 2010).

[40] Kathryn S. Smith, and Marya McQuirter. 1996. *A Guide to Historical Resources of Shaw*. Washington, DC: The Thurgood Marshall Center for Service and Heritage.

[41] See Heck 2013. As of 2013 there were four community sections that were recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. [42] This YMCA was the country's first Black YMCA and Anthony Bowen, a former slave, founded it. Later in the early 20th century, as noted, it became a gathering place for many Black intellects.

[43] Frank 2005

[44] Cultural Tourism, DC 2003

[45] Frank 2005

[46] DC Office of Planning 2004

[47] Grossman 1989

[48] Massey and Denton 1993

[49] Drake and Cayton 1993

[50] Drake and Cayton 1993

[51] Hirsch 1998

[52] Myrdal 1944

[53] Abu-Lughod 2007; Katz 2012; Sugrue 1996

[54] Jargowsky 1997; Massey and Wilson 1993; Wilson 1996

[55] Venkatesh 2000, 2006, 2008

[56] Small and McDermott 2006

[57] Newman 2000; Stack 1974

[58] Anderson 2012

[59] Williams and Smith 2001

[60] Frank 2005

[61] Dash 1997, p. 11

[62] Boyd 2008

[63] Boyd 2008, p. 75

[64] Boyd 2008, p. 71

[65] Boyd 2008, p. 81

[66] Boyd 2008, p. 156

[67] This quote comes my interview with Kathryn Smith but it is also more formally documented in Kathryn S. Smith, and Marya McQuirter. 1996. *A Guide to Historical Resources of Shaw*. Washington, DC: The Thurgood Marshall Center for Service and Heritage.

[68] Quote from Frank 2005.

[69] See Beemyn 2015 for an excellent history of sexual orientation and gay life in DC and Shaw/U Street.

[70] Quote from Frank 2005.

[71] Hurley 2010, p. 24

[72] Frank 2005, p. 72

[73] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Lin 2011

[74] Boyd 2008, p. 81-82

[75] Alicia Ault. "U Street: The Corridor is Cool Again," *New York Times*, April 14, 2006 and Michael O'Sullivan. "14th Street," *Washington Post*, August 6, 2010 and Annys Shin. "An Unlikely Catalyst in D.C.: Recession-fueled Boom Brings Investors and Development to 14th Street, NW," *Washington Post*, July 22, 2013.

[76] Ruble 2010

[77] Lin 2011

[78] Clark 2011; Florida 2014

[79] Hardcourt 2005

[80] Jagoda 2011; Williams 2011

[81] Venkatesh 2008

[82] Grazian 2003; Heap 2009; Hoffman 2003

[83] Anderson 2012

[84] Grazian 2003, p. 21-22. David Grazian also elaborates on this notion of danger, excitement, and authenticity in his 2008 book, *On the Make: The Hustle of Urban Nightlife*.

[85] Grazian 2003, p. 52

[86] Deener 2012, p. 214

[87] For other ethnographic depictions of "living the drama" see Sudhir Venkatesh's 2000 and 2006 books and for a more quantitative examination see Patrick Sharkey's 2013 outstanding book, *Stuck in Place.*

[88] Harding 2010, p. xi

[89] Markman and Roman 2010. In 1991 there were 482 murders in Washington, DC and in 2012 it dropped to 88 (see http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/dccrime.htm).

[90] Peter Hermann. "Victim of U Street Shooting was Trying to Bridge Two Worlds," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2015.

[91] See Cahill and Roman 2010. For potential explanations of the persistence of crime in gentrifying neighborhoods see Kirk and Laub 2010 and Kirk and Papachristos 2011.

[92] See Paul Duggan. "Guns in America: In D.C. Bullets Leave Another Fatherless Child," *Washington Post*, Sunday 15, 2013.

[93] Anderson 2000

[94] For an excellent analysis of the post-industrial city and mixology see Ocejo 2010.

[95] Melissa McCart. "Brothers Build a Restaurant Dynasty," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2010.

[96] Melissa McCart. "Brothers Build a Restaurant Dynasty," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2010.

[97] Gotham 2007, p. viii

[98] Anderson 2012, p. 69

[99] Dash 1997; Robinson 2010

[100] Heap 2012

[101] The concept of living the wire might also generalize to some extent to those visiting the Shaw/U Street neighborhood but I am particularly interested in how living the wire is distinctive from 1920s style urban slumming where one visited but did not choose to live in inner city environments. Furthermore, the concept might apply to those of other races and ethnicities. While I mainly illustrate the living the wire concept with the testimony of White residents, it is important to note that the attraction of the inner city edge is not isolated to only Whites.

[102] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Inwood 2010

[103] Bryant 2009; Ritzer 2013

[104] See Anmol Chaddha and William Julius Wilson. "Why We're Teaching 'The Wire' at Harvard," *Washington Post*, September 12, 2010. At least 21 colleges and universities have a course that used "The Wire" as part of the class' learning materials (see Taylor and Eidson 2012).

[105] Paul Massari. "Learning the Streets, Scene by Scene: HBO's 'The Wire' Is Entry Point for Course on Urban Life," *Harvard Gazette*, October 21, 2010.

[106] Hurley 2010, p. 20

[107] Anderson 2012, p. 81

[108] Harcourt 2005, p. 8

[109] Lloyd 2010, p. 80

[110] Lloyd 2010, p. 80

[111] Mele 2000; Zukin 2010

[112] Clark 2011

[113] For an important examination of the relationships among Blackness, diversity and neighborhood development see Summers' 2016 work on the revitalization of Washington, DC's H Street corridor.

[114] Boyd 2008, p. 155

[115] Boyd 2008; Grams 2010; Lin 2011

[116] Jackson 2015

[117] Hurley 2010, p. 192

[118] Schulman 2012, p. 36

[119] Annys Shin. "An Unlikely Catalyst in D.C.: Recession-fueled Boom Brings Investors and Development to 14th Street, NW," *Washington Post*, July 22, 2013 and Alexis Hauk. "Planned Eight-Story Development Threatens U Street

Mural," *Washington City Paper Artsdesk Blog*, April 12, 2013.