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## BLACK CITIES AMERICAS: AN INTRODUCTION

Black Cities Americas is an exploratory platform within *CriticalProductive Journal* that seeks to illuminate the complexity of Black diaspora inhabitation of the American City, in the United States and Latin and South Americas.

As we seek to reckon with the legacies of colonization, land appropriation, redlining, and the dispossession of land and property of formerly enslaved peoples and their descendants, Indigenous peoples, and exploited populations in the Americas, we likewise must reckon with misguided attempts at reconciliation. Urban renewal, Model Cities, Empowerment Zones, enterprise zones, New Urbanism, the creative class, Opportunity Zones, and so forth are emblematic of the neoliberal cloud that hangs over current attempts at amelioration of past and current wrongs.

Black Cities Americas, and the affiliated Black Cities Americas Lab at Cornell University, will develop 1) forensic analyses and narratives of cities with majority Black diaspora populations historically, in order to better understand the loss of wealth and community, and 2) speculative visions for overwriting past wrongs to arrive at new futures, utilizing data visualization of cross-historical trends and intersections. The platform will anticipate reparatory measures aimed at making communities whole, accelerating the closure of wealth and education gaps between Blacks and other citizens. Furthermore, the platform will be synergistic with other municipal, state, federal, and philanthropic actions aimed at achieving reparations for slavery and the multigenerational aftereffects and continuing impacts of racial discrimination and economic inequality integrated into our social and economic systems.

## ISSUE 1

In this issue, we first highlight photographic representations of the George Floyd murder protests taking place in the US cities of Minneapolis, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Embedded in these highly personal interpretations of mass protest events are the paradoxes of the city, as a battleground for both popular movements and fascist impulses. We can see spatial decay as well as virtuous optimism, despair, and delight.

In the abridged dialogue of a 1974 episode of broadcast television program *Firing Line*, we view the positionality of conservative and progressive views on politics and Black progress in one moment in US history, as well as the potentiality of judicious discussion and debate. In contradistinction to contemporary political discourse, this dialogue situates politically oppositional ideologies in mutually respectful conversation, and within this space, a candid exchange of ideas ensues. Correspondingly, the notion of Black progress cannot occur in a vacuum.

Finally, two articles—one investigating *the archive* as a means of reparations and the other the storefront as a metropolitan motif whose meaning is ever-changing—confront the ubiquity of city spaces and the different sets of lenses required to elucidate and uplift Black lives and Black historical narratives.

Together, these works set the stage for expanding the discourse of Black culture as it exists within and is integral to American culture. Future issues of the Journal will continue to feature a diverse array of perspectives that will be intellectually generous toward the manifold intersections between Black culture and other peoples and cultures.