Racial Banishment

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Radical geography is replete with the lexicon of displacement. The conceptual frameworks of displacement, such as gentrification or revanchist urbanism or eviction, have foregrounded the violence of urban transformation. Yet, these frameworks are limited in their capacity to address two key aspects of displacement: the role of the state and the centrality of race. I thus propose a new concept, racial banishment, which emphasises state-instituted violence against racialised bodies and communities. While applicable to the United States, it is a generalisable concept relevant to many other contexts. Banishment is entangled with processes of regulation, segregation and expropriation and it is embedded in the legal geographies of settler-colonialism and racial separation. It often entails "civil death" (Kingston 2005) and indeed even social death. Banishment shifts our attention from displacement to dispossession, especially the dispossession of personhood which underpins racial capitalism.

The present historical conjuncture of urbanism in the United States makes evident the intricate and interlocked processes of racial banishment. First, in metropolitan regions such as the San Francisco Bay Area, black and brown communities are being pushed out of urban cores and relegated to the far margins of urban life. While often described as the suburbanisation of poverty, this is more appropriately understood as "residential resegregation" (Samara 2016). This peripheralisation goes hand in hand with the disproportionate concentration and containment of racialised bodies in urban spaces of impoverishment and surveillance such as Skid Row in Los Angeles. It is also accompanied by the "policing of integration" (Hayat 2016) including systematic efforts by cities to block black and brown residents from settling in suburban locations.

Second, such forms of segregation rest not only on market-driven displacement but also on the public means of criminalisation, specifically what Beckett and Herbert (2010:1) have pinpointed as banishment or "legally imposed spatial exclusion". From civil gang injunctions to sit-lie laws, these forms of banishment target and expel bodies marked as dangerous and disorderly. These bodies are disproportionately black, brown, and poor. Take, for example, crime free leases and nuisance ordinances which serve as the pretext for the evictions of poor women of colour often through the designation of calls to the police as evidence of criminal activity. These are instantiations not only of civil death but also of social death and at times of literal death. As Kurwa (2018) argues, what is at work is the "weaponisation" of municipal ordinances. Such ordinances are the latest iteration of older practices of segregation and quarantine, for example, racially restrictive

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covenants and redlining. Their proliferation indicates that banishment is not the movement of racialised bodies from one place to another or what we might call displacement. It is expulsion from everywhere. It is the concerted effort of city governments to block residence, often through police power (Hayat 2016).

Third, racial banishment must be conceptualised as a project of the state. Beckett and Herbert (2010:6) highlight the "central role of the state's coercive power in the exercise of this form of spatial segregation". I situate banishment in what Alexander (2010) has called "the new Jim Crow", the perverse investment in state-institutionalised human caging. Carcerality is not a side-show to racial capitalism; it is a necessary logic. In her path-breaking book on carceral geographies, Gilmore (2007:28) argues that "resolutions of surplus land, capital, labor, and state capacity congealed into prisons". I view racial banishment as the territorial proliferation of such prison logics, manifested in geographies of forced mobility and illegalised presence that stretch far beyond the prison but that are inevitably refracted through the institutions of mass incarceration. I also understand racial banishment to be an instantiation of what McKittrick (2011:951) has designated as "urbicide" or "wilful place annihilation", specifically the "ongoing destruction of a black sense of place in the Americas". The banishment of black, brown, and poor bodies marks not just the disappearance of these residents from urban cores but also the loss of communities and the places and histories they have created.

The study of racial banishment has important implications for radical geography. I have already noted how the concept requires a reckoning with forms of penality and carcerality that are often kept separate from the analysis of capital accumulation and social inequality. Historically, banishment has been a form of punishment that imposes exile, often from the demarcated territory of a city or nation (Alloy 2002; Bleichmar 1999; Borrelli 2003). Implicated in banishment are notions of security and sovereignty. Put another way, banishment as exile is dispossession and in turn such dispossession secures sovereign possession. I interpret racial banishment as the necessary counterpart to what Lipsitz (1998) has called "the possessive investment in whiteness". As banishment relies on the law, so does whiteness as possession. Goldstein (2008:836) thus notes that it is legal reason that has built "proprietary regimes", underpinning settlement as "an entitled and possessive relation to place" and casting Indigenous populations as "supposedly unsettled". Possession, then, Nichols (in Goldstein 2017) argues, must be understood not as preceding dispossession but rather as its effect. "Differential racialisation", Goldstein (2017) emphasises, is necessary for this colonial capacity to possess. These are vitally important insights for radical geography and its interest in the histories of accumulation by dispossession.

Racial banishment also has a distinctive temporality. If it portends death, then following Gilmore (2007:28), such death is inevitably "premature". If it portends punishment, then such punishment is prefigurative, generating criminalisation rather than responding to established crime. These temporalities are constitutive of secure and sovereign territory, of the possession of land and personhood through the dispossession of racial outsiders. As Mitchell (2009:239) argues, the forceful and justifiable removal of individuals and populations from "commonly held spaces and resources" is a "contemporary liberal form of sovereign

dispossession" and rests on the designation, in advance, of those who are risk failures. This, she notes, is the making of "pre-black futures".

Finally, the concept of racial banishment raises a set of epistemological and ontological challenges for radical geography. Following Woods (2002), we must ask, is there "life after death"? Woods (2002:62) reminds us that "predictions of the death of impoverished and actively marginalized racial and ethnic communities are premature". How then do we study racial banishment without undertaking what McKittrick (2011:955) has described as the "familiar analytical naturalization of violence, blackness, and death"? As the present historical conjuncture is marked by the revival of practices of banishment, so it is shaped by an exuberant proliferation of resistance. Poor people's movements in cities across the United States are not only fighting against evictions and high rent burdens but also creating new meanings of land, property, and community (Roy 2017). These in turn are bound up with new cartographic and ethnographic methodologies, such as those at the heart of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. Responding to Woods's call, this data visualisation and story-telling collective based in the San Francisco Bay Area undertakes "countermapping", such as "collective and public community power maps", to "render visible the landscapes, lives, and sites of resistance and dispossession elided in capitalist, colonial, and liberal topographies" (Maharawal and McElroy 2018:381).

These movements and collectives remind us that the antonym of racial banishment is neither immobility nor integration. It is a radical imagination that refuses the colourblindness of canonical knowledge. That canon includes the insistence on analysing geographies of late capitalism without a theory of racialised dispossession. It includes a vocabulary of neoliberalisation that elides the repeated and current renewal of colonial expropriation. It includes the talk of justice without considering the forms of social death that make entire communities disappear from urban life. The antonym of racial banishment is, as the black radical tradition insists, freedom. These "freedom dreams" (Kelley 2002) do not always make an appearance in the annals of radical geography. But they animate urban struggles around the world, from Los Angeles to Rio de Janeiro, from Cape Town to Chicago. They centre the unfinished work of black reconstruction and the persistent struggle of abolition democracy. A focus on racial banishment thus challenges radical geography to take up the analytical and political centrality of race and to reflect upon, and interrogate, its own possessive investment in whiteness.

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